

# EXCHANGES BETWEEN BALINESE ARTISTS AND WALTER SPIES

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## INTRODUCTION

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens  
can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*

**Margaret Mead**

The explosion of creativity in Balinese art was first recognized in the late 1920s and lasted through the early 1940s, at least up to Spies' death at the beginning of the Japanese Occupation in 1942. It has since prompted a central question: what were the roles of the foreign artists visiting and living in Bali, in inciting, driving and sustaining this decade long transformation of Balinese art and society? This debate has occurred primarily in the arena of academic authors and researchers from the West.

The pederasty allegations and conviction against Spies, the attempts to expel him from Pita Maha, and the ultimate abandonment of Pita Maha after Spies' death added more drama to the debate. Furthermore, the decline in creativity during the 1940s provided fresh evidence for the assertion that Spies was the sole agent of change and even greater contributions to his fame. This was echoed by John Stowell (2011), furthering Bonnet's introductory remarks at the last Pita Maha exhibition in Batavia (Jakarta):

*"Although the trend towards free development was already a matter of historic fact and decidedly not merely a latent possibility among the Balinese, it still remains a miracle that this seed could develop into such a rich fruit ... the reason for this must most likely be sought in the close contact a single western artist has had with this artistic people."<sup>1</sup>*

The first analysis of Spies' contribution was offered by the Dutch archeologist W.F. Stutterheim in his publication of "A new shoot on an old branch" in 1934. In the publication of "Walter Spies and Balinese Art" in 1980, John Darling posed two

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<sup>1</sup> Catalogue to the exhibition, *Balische kunst van heden* (collectie Bonnet), Batavia Kunstkring, 29 October to 20 November 1940, as quoted in Stowell (2011), p. 290.

questions: (1) How did the island of Bali influence Spies' own work, and (2) How great was Spies' influence on the emergence of "modern"<sup>2</sup> Balinese art. After 40 years, we still cannot provide definitive answers. In this chapter, we will give an overview of various attempts to address them. We will first examine the core questions, their intent and purpose, and the many discussions and research over the last forty years.

Since these questions were posed, there has been a major book: "Walter Spies – a life in art" by John Stowel (2011) and a doctoral thesis: "Walter Spies, Tourist Art and Balinese Art in Inter-War Colonial Bali" by Geff Green (2002) of Sheffield Hallam University, United Kingdom. Also addressing these questions is the book by Adrian Vickers (2012) that deals with the development of Balinese art, paintings and drawings from 1800 – 2010.

In these studies, the roles, influence and contributions of Spies to the birth of "modern" Balinese works of art come into question. The conventional narrative, in popular and introductory books on Balinese Art, is that Spies and the Dutch artist Rudolf Bonnet were the central figures that gave birth to the new forms of Balinese art that peaked in the mid 1930s.

The opposing view stems from the argument that the self-serving narratives proposed by western writers were based on a conscious or subconscious *colonial* viewpoint: that colonial subjects were too primitive and therefore incapable of major inventions and innovations. In reality, they argue, the dynamics of such cultural interactions and exchanges are far more complex, and the conventional narrative did not appreciate the capability and capacity of the cultures where these new forms of art were born (Vickers, 2012). Vickers has presented the most complete record and arguments for the nuances of the relationships between western and Balinese visual forms and the roles of the different stake holders and players in the development of the new forms of art, and on the sources of innovation in Balinese art.<sup>3</sup> (Hildred Geertz's Review).

As pointed out by Green (2002), there is a built-in paradox: that by focusing on the role of Spies, it immediately promotes Spies as the arbiter of taste and his role as superior to the contemporary Balinese painters who were participating in the same discourse during his time in Bali. The fact that he was a westerner with a close relationship to the ruling family of Ubud, immediately raised him to an authoritative figure. This immediate inequality furthers the bias of western authors, researchers, artists and even their Indonesian counterpart and Indonesian elites who have been exposed to and educated

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<sup>2</sup> *Modern* marks the deviation from the Wayang painting tradition

<sup>3</sup> Hildred Geertz's review of Vickers (2012)

in western ideas, narratives and viewpoints, leaving them vulnerable to unconsciously adopting the prevailing *western* narratives.

In this chapter, this author will further the arguments that debunk the conventional narrative and the perpetuating myth of the primary, exaggerated role of Spies, Bonnet and the Pita Maha artists' association on the emergence of the new direction in the development of Balinese art. For more complete and in-depth discussions and arguments, the readers are referred to the doctoral thesis by Geff Green (2002) that specifically targets the myth. In addition, we will draw on the capability of the living Balinese artists, as suggested by Green, who on a daily basis are *proactively* creating new inventions and innovations. The emergence of such towering figures in the Balinese art scene, such as Ni Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih (1966-2006), will be highlighted. The focus will be on the innovative forces exhibited by contemporary Balinese artists who, just like their counterpart in the 1930s, are autodidact. Emphasis will also be given to primary accounts by Balinese artists and other witnesses, who worked directly with Spies and Bonnet.

One of the difficulties in writing this analysis is the necessity to borrow and use terminology, terms and concepts which were mostly developed in the western world and for the western society and readership. It is especially problematic that the non-western audience may not be familiar with the origin, context and intent when these terms were proposed. When necessary the meaning and intent will be clarified.

## **BALINESE ART BEFORE WALTER SPIES ARRIVAL IN BALI**

Before we embark on the exchanges and interactions (*touch zones*<sup>4</sup>) between Balinese artists and Walter Spies, it is important to describe the artistic backdrop prior to the arrival of Spies in Bali. Bali is a place where artistic endeavors and creativity flourish abundantly due to the practices and ways of living of the Balinese, as dictated by and as an integral part of their culture and tradition.

Herman Neubronner van der Tuuk (1824 - d. Surabaya 1894) was sent to Bali by the Bible Society as early as 1868, and eventually arrived in north Bali in 1870. Here he studied the Balinese language in earnest, with the intention of producing a Kawi – Balinese – Dutch dictionary. It was for the illustration of this dictionary that he commissioned and collected over 400 Balinese drawings. Hinzler's (1986) research

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<sup>4</sup> *Touch zone* refers to multiple areas of interactions, see Green (2002)

concluded that there were at least fourteen artists who were involved in the production of these drawings, mostly from north Bali and at least one from Mas in south Bali<sup>5</sup>. Two artists have been identified: I Ketut Gede from Singaraja and I Madé Telaga, originally from Sanur. The paper size provided by van der Tuuk limited the ability to make drawings with multiple scenes, resulting in a single scene focus that later became popular in Ubud and its surroundings. One example is the depiction of a tantric story of the palm wine tapper, Papaka, defeating a tiger. It is a realistic and natural rendering with a sinuous depiction of a Jaka (palm wine) tree showing the wine tapper, Papaka, conversing with the tiger (left). In the following scene Papaka was able to subdue the tiger. The artist shows high adaptation of the small size medium as well as the use of available colors, most likely given by van der Tuuk. This marked the first known deviation from the Wayang painting tradition.



Figure 1. The palm wine tapper, Papaka and the tiger. (Collection of Leiden University libraries, Or. 3390: 185).

<sup>5</sup> Vickers (2012) on p. 100 described that there were seven painters from North Bali and also seven artists from South Bali

The first arduous and meticulous documenter of Balinese cultural life and objects (buildings, temples, crafts, weapons, etc.) was W.O.J Nieuwenkamp, who first came to Bali in 1904. He described his finding and referenced specific items, noting artistic achievement was one of the pinnacles of Balinese culture. He documented realism as the mainstay of Balinese art as evidenced by the many realistic statues that had been produced over the years to adorn the many temples in Bali.

Stutterheim recounted the first discovery of a “modern” Balinese drawing, as reported by the Dutch artist Rudolf Bonnet while he was visiting a Balinese priest family in the village of Tampaksiring. Hildred Geertz, in her last book on Storytelling in Bali (2017) indicated that Bonnet initially stayed at a government rest house in Tampaksiring and it was there that he spotted these non-wayang drawings by two sons of the Brahmin houses, later identified as Ida Bagus Mukuh and Ida Bagus Gerebuak. Indeed, Geertz was correct to suspect that soon afterwards he would have tracked down Ida Bagus Kembeng, who was originally from Tampaksiring and the kin of the parents of these two aforementioned artists.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Bonnet drew a portrait of Ida Bagus Kembeng, which recently surfaced<sup>7</sup> (dated 1929).

All of these accounts demonstrate the ability of the Balinese, prior to the arrival of Walter Spies in Bali, to depict their many stories and myths on various changing media (stone, wood, leather, cloth, paper, Masonite, canvas, etc.) and show their versatility, capability and capacity to adapt, and their resourcefulness and flexibility in response to external influences. This is truly a reflection of their doctrine *desa-kala-patra* (place – time – situation)<sup>8</sup>

The authors and researchers who have rejected the portrayal of Spies as the sole agent of change in the modern artistic developments in Bali include Hinzler (1986), Kam (1993), Hohn (1997), Hildred Geertz (1994, 2017), Geff Green (2002), Adrian Vickers (2012) and others.

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<sup>6</sup> Geertz (2017), p. 27

<sup>7</sup> Venduhuis de Notarissen Auction House, the Hague, Lot 189, 25 May 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Personal communications: Ida Bagus Alit (son of Ida Bagus Tilem), 21 September 2020; I Made Griyawan in 2016.

## WALTER SPIES PRIOR TO HIS ARRIVAL IN BALI (1924 - 1927)

Prior to his escape to the Netherlands East Indies, Spies had been considered a budding talent in painting. His works, inspired by Rousseau, featured the depiction of leaves and vegetation with great attention to detail. It was during his internment in the mountain of Urals that he found his love for folk art and primitivism: art produced by peasant artisans without a formal education.<sup>9</sup> He produced drawings at this time in the manner of *magical realism* (Franz Roh, 1925). His experience of a simple life among the natives in the nomadic tribes of the Urals, changed not only his view of life, but also was reflected in the manner and style of his paintings. The avant-garde style acquired during his stay in Dresden dramatically changed into what he termed "the form of simplified realism."<sup>10</sup> One of his paintings (*Baskhir Herdsman*, 1923) depicted four cows grazing on the hills of the Urals mountains, with the herdsman resting. This memory may have inspired Spies to create many depictions of Balinese farmers with their cows, either working in the rice fields, grazing on the hills or going home: peaceful memories of a simple life that he had had in the Urals. Other work during this period in the Urals, showed his fascination with the works of Chagall, with their chaotic perspective and composition from multiple viewing angles, allowing him to depict images that defy the normal (single) perspective vanishing point. The play of lights he developed later in Bali, may have resulted from a combination of the sounds of Gong Kebar and his fascination with the tropical morning sunrays in Bali.

Walter Spies arrived to Batavia on or about October 24, 1923 (having left Europe on August 26, 1923, and pretending to be a crewman aboard the S.S. Hamburg.) Upon arrival, he escaped to Bandung. In November 1923, he went to Yogyakarta and met with P.H.W. Sitsen, who was Director of Public Works and more importantly a board member of the Association of Arts Societies in the Netherlands Indies. With the help of Sitsen, he secured an appointment as the director of the Royal Dance Orchestra at the Sultanate of Jogya.<sup>11</sup> During this period, he travelled throughout Java to Batavia, Bogor, Bandung, Semarang and Surabaya. By mid-February 1924 he moved into the palace quarters of Prince, Raden Mas Djodjodipuro, the foremost musician of the Palace.<sup>12</sup> Here he began learning Javanese culture and arts and started taking lessons on the gamelan from Prince Djodjodipuro. By July 1924, Spies began playing gamelan at the rehearsals, but it took him two years before he claimed any competence in

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<sup>9</sup> See Green (2002) for other definition for Primitivism

<sup>10</sup> See Rhodius (1980), p. 11

<sup>11</sup> See Stowell (2011), p. 85

<sup>12</sup> See Stowell (2011), p. 86

gamelan music.<sup>13</sup> For more detail account on his stay in Jogjakarta see Chapter 3 of Stowel (2011).

Around the time of his planned visit to Bali in April 1925, during the month of fasting (Ramadhan), he approached Jaap Kunst who had just published the *Music of Bali* (1924). Kunst introduced him to the Regent of Karangasem, Goesti Bagoes Djelantik. In addition, Kunst introduced Spies to his friend Tjokorda Gede Raka Soekawati of Ubud. During his visit to Bali he traveled all over the island and stayed only a few nights at the government rest house. The rest of the time was spent with Balinese aristocrats, peasants, woodcarvers and silversmiths.<sup>14</sup> (Interestingly, there is no mention of painters!)

Spies stayed in Ubud for a week and was mesmerized by a performance of the Sang Hyang Dedari Dance at the royal palace of Ubud. He was enchanted by the music accompanying this trance dance performed by prepubescent girls. He described the music as having "infinitely sinuous winding melody."<sup>15</sup> Music and dance had become his preoccupation between his heavy work schedule.

Spies' first painting exhibition took place in Surabaya and opened on May 1, 1925. John Stowell (2011) indicated eight paintings were shown in this exhibition.<sup>16</sup> The familiar bluish color dominated the background landscape, similar to the Baskhir herdsman painting (1922), but now depicting the landscape he experienced in Java. Two of Spies' masterpieces came after the exhibition: the awkward view of the Sekaten (1926) and the *Dream Landscape* (1927). The latter marked his development of multiple horizons stacked from the bottom to the top, which culminated in the creation of *Deerhunt* in 1932.

On June 20, 1925 Spies mother arrived in Batavia to visit him and she left on August 25, 1927. Soon after his mother left Indonesia, at the end of August in the same year, Spies moved to Bali. John Stowell (2011) characterized Spies' stay in Jogya as one of "... exploration and discovery, particularly in music."<sup>17</sup> After visiting Bali twice (during the Ramadhan months of 1925 and 1926), Spies wrote to Frans Roh in June 1926 with his main reasons for breaking the contract with the Sultan of Jogya and moving to Bali:

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<sup>13</sup> See Stowell (2011), p. 91

<sup>14</sup> See Stowell (2011), p. 95

<sup>15</sup> See Stowell (2011), p. 94

<sup>16</sup> See Stowell (2011), p 310-11

<sup>17</sup> See Stowel L(2011), p. 106

“...I want to submerge myself entirely. There is nature there, both in man and landscape, which is terribly important to me. ... All is simple, unconditional, there is no radical doubt. To be at once dedicated to all and inwardly subject to nothing, and to be completely in control, without the exercise of any power.”<sup>18</sup>

## EXCHANGES BETWEEN BALINESE ARTISTS AND WALTER SPIES (September 1927 – 1938)

Balinese art tradition was born, designed and intended to produce architectural structures, objects, paintings, music and performances for devotion (*bakti*). These have become imbedded into and thus an integral part of their religious sites, rites and rituals that play a dominant role in everyday life and the religious practices in Bali.

Painting tradition is often seen as the least important of these, mainly because of the intrinsic use of paintings and the fragility of the materials used in producing them. Paintings made of cloth deteriorate over time and are discarded or even burnt as part of the cremation ceremony. Nevertheless, the existence of *sanging*, the important profession of produce drawings and paintings, was described in old manuscripts long before the arrival of foreign influences.

It was the Wayang shadow puppet makers that developed the skills to draw and color various Wayang figures, producing hundreds of characters each with their own characteristics and attributes. (Vickers, 2012 and Widagdo, 2019). They made use of paper and other media such as linen, Masonite, plywood, etc. that became available to them in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as new paints, materials and techniques, such as tempera, oil, crayon, pencil and acrylic.<sup>19</sup> The resourcefulness, adaptability and the innovative capability of the Wayang puppet makers and Balinese *sanging* and painters of the 1920s and 30s has often been underestimated.

In the following section, we will discuss the innovative capabilities of Balinese artists through physical evidence and interviews with Balinese artists across generations. Emphasis is given to those without any formal art education. Formal art education is a relatively recent phenomenon in Indonesia, starting in Bandung in 1947, followed by educational art institutions established in Jogjakarta, Gianyar and Denpasar, Bali.

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<sup>18</sup> See Stowell (2011), p. 106

<sup>19</sup> Masonite was invented in 1930s and acrylic paints were used in the 1970s



I Gusti Agung Wiranata (1966) was inspired by Walter Spies painting and learned to paint in his style from the Hans Rodius and John Darling book published in 1980. He produced his first paintings in the late 1980s or early 1990s. By 1995 he was actively exhibiting his paintings at the first Keblan Seni exhibition at the Museum Puri Lukisan. He has never seen a painting by Walter Spies in person, and does not know the actual techniques and processes that Spies used to create his paintings. Spies was notoriously secretive about his entire painting process. It is known that Spies worked on his paintings in seclusion. In an interview with Spies' former cook, I Jedog in 1995, he told the author and Pak Muning (curator of the Museum Puri Lukisan), that Spies would paint in a closed room for days, insisting that his food be delivered to his door.<sup>20</sup> He only emerged from hiding once he had completed the work and burned all of the supporting materials, such as sketches and preliminary drawings. This process was corroborated in an undated letter from Hans Neuhaus who was in the same internment camp on Sumatra:

*"He permitted me once – he jealously guarded anyone from seeing any of his pictures in their early stages – to see his painting of the jungle at the underpainting stage. I was vastly astonished by his technique. The whole surface of the painting was carefully blocked out in abstract areas, green upon green, with only the areas later to be lighter in a bright yellow. No sign of a drawing or hint of the details to be added later."*<sup>21</sup>

Around 1995, the author saw unfinished canvases by Gusti Agung Wiranata (b. 1966) at his studio. It is evident that he was able to deconstruct the process of the making of Spies-style painting on his own. It should be noted that this is actually an old technique used by traditional Wayang shadow puppet makers.

In 2015, a painting by Ida Bagus Made Kembeng was discovered in the Netherlands. The painting depicts the same story about the origin of the coconut tree as the one originally in the collection of Bonnet, and now in the museum of ethnology in Leiden (RMV 135-6) and discussed in Vickers (2012).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Anak Agung Ngurah Muning was the custodian of Museum Puri Lukisan, who knew Rudolf Bonnet personally.

<sup>21</sup> See Stowell (2011), p. 274

<sup>22</sup> See Vickers (2012), p. 114



Figure 2. (a) The birth of Coconut Tree (c. 1930s) by Ida Bagus Kembeng (Left) and (b) the unfinished drawing by the same artist on the reverse (Right).

On the back of this recently discovered Kembeng was an unfinished drawing that clearly showed the creation process of Kembeng derived from his experience as a Wayang shadow puppet maker. The figures were colored, and ornamentations were added after.

Balinese artists are observant, inventive and capable of independently creating drawing and painting techniques of their own. As an example, I Nyoman Bratayasa (b. 1980), who was self-taught in expressionistic techniques, developed an innovative use of acrylic medium in the manner of oil to produce the effects and feel of an oil painting that he desired. Just by seeing finished paintings and photos, he was able to deconstruct the technique on his own.

Ni Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih (1966 – 2006) could be the poster child for the creativity and innovation of recent Balinese artists. An uneducated Balinese woman originally from Tabanan, she apprenticed with an innovator from Pengosekan, Dewa Putu Mokoh (c. 1936 – 2010). Her use and mastery of lines and distorted figurative drawings, rivals what was accomplished by Lempad. Murni completely abandoned the story telling tradition of the past, and replaced it with her own personal experiences. Her ability to

use her artistic talent to heal and transcend her own painful life experiences was remarkable, and an achievement on its own. She created from the Pengosekan school, a new artistic vocabulary and grammar, and ended up with a visual language that she used effortlessly to produce a wealth of works (about 2000) in her short thirteen years of productive artistic life (from 1993-2006). Adrian Vickers (2012) characterized her as follows:

*"While Mokoh's work focuses gently on intimate personal relations, Murni's experience as a Balinese woman was less positive and her work turns Mokoh's line into harsher delineations of the image of women. Her paintings blurred the distinction between a global pop sensitivity and Balinese linearity."*<sup>23</sup>

The personal leap taken by Murni has parallels to the collective leap taken by Balinese painters in the 1930s.

### ***Legacy of Walter Spies in the eye of Balinese Artists.***

As popularly reported, the first Balinese artist that Spies met was Anak Agung Gde Sobrat and his neighbor Anak Agung Gde Meregeg. In an interview with Anak Agung Gde Meregeg in 1995, with the help of his grandson, Anak Agung Gde Anom Sukawati, as an interpreter, Meregeg corroborated the story that both he and Sobrat often painted at the home of Spies and that Spies provided them with the materials. Similarly, when Bonnet arrived in Bali in 1929, he visited known Balinese artists on occasion and in informal settings.

With the formation of the Pita Maha artist's association, the membership of about 125-150 artists began meeting weekly. The foreign committee members (Spies and Bonnet) selected paintings that met the standards set by the committee, thus functioning as the arbiter of taste (Vickers 2012), and assigned a monetary value for each piece. Ida Bagus Made Poleng (1915-1999), the son of Ida Bagus Kembang, recounted a disagreement with Bonnet over the price of his work (which he thought was too low compared to other works). He withdrew the work and sold it himself at a much higher price and afterwards treated Bonnet to a meal of satay. It was a triumph for him to be able to reverse roles (Anderson, 2008).

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<sup>23</sup> See Vickers (2012), p. 233

Ida Bagus Made Poleng had a high opinion of Walter Spies. He admired Walter Spies' artistic imagination and innovation and admitted that it was beyond his grasp. Ida Bagus Made was also amazed with Spies marketing and branding strategy. He learned to imitate this strategy and implemented it in the controlled and timely release of his works for sale. Ida Bagus Made was notorious for rejecting buyers who he did not like, or who he thought were buying paintings for the wrong reasons. Spies bought him an easel that he kept and used until his death in 1999.<sup>24</sup>

Ida Bagus Made Poleng chose to study under Rudolf Bonnet, and proudly declared him as his teacher. In the estate of Ida Bagus Made, we found sketches made on transparent paper and on canvas with rectangular grids as are often used in the teaching at art school. In addition, there is evidence of Bonnet correcting a work-in-progress by Ida Bagus Made Poleng.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Perceived contributions of Spies to Balinese Art.***

Speaking of Ida Bagus Togog (c. 1911-1989), a leading proponent of Batuan modernists, Vickers (2012) described the influence of foreign artists as a source for new techniques:

*"Togog represented the paradoxes of the art of the 1930s. His art was stimulated by the growth of a new market, yet he was not pursuing material ends. His painting was rooted in Balinese stories and ways of seeing them, but he sought out westerners to teach him new techniques. He was firmly based in tradition, but led his contemporaries in creating a daring new way of representing their world."*<sup>26</sup>

Historically, we were led to believe that foreign artists were wholly responsible for modernizing Balinese art: changing from the Wayang style to a more naturalistic style, including the shift from story-based subjects to depictions of everyday life scenes. This assumes that modern development came out of vacuum. It ignores the fact that the Balinese artists and craftsmen already had the ability to depict the world around them in a naturalistic manner, as exemplified by stone reliefs and carvings that adorned their temples long before the first western visitors came to Bali. Furthermore, it contradicts the historians' own depiction of Balinese as being multitalented and Bali being one of

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<sup>24</sup> Personal communication. Ida Bagus Made Poleng, 1995 – 1999.

<sup>25</sup> See Anderson et. al (2008), *Ida Bagus Made – the art of devotion*, p. 104

<sup>26</sup> See Vickers (2012), p. 112

the most creative cultures. Many of the artists, to the westerner's astonishment, were able to play music, dance, carve and paint. Even Walter Spies, an accomplished western musician, admitted his admiration, respect and amazement at the sophisticated system of Javanese and Balinese music.

One specific artistic influence of Walter Spies often cited and demonstrated in his paintings was the adoption of the technique or styles of highlighting leaves and creating circles and swirls in the water. The swirl around an object in water was further perfected by Balinese painters with much more decorative patterns such as shown by Meregeg and even by Ida Bagus Anom in the collection of Baron von Plessen, and further developed by Ida Bagus Nyoman Rai of Sanur in his chaotic and discontinuous pattern of the ocean waves. The attribution of the adoption of the swirls and the highlighting of leaves by Balinese artists are petty and even diminish and reduce the true contributions of Spies in a social discourse of reciprocating environment.

### ***The role of Pita Maha.***

It is hard to separate Spies from Pita Maha's efforts in promoting and branding Balinese art. Spies was one of the founders and a very active member of Pita Maha. His role as the curator of the Bali Museum, beginning in 1931, was instrumental in securing a shop at the Museum to sell the paintings and woodcarvings of Pita Maha members. While Bonnet was more active in organizing various exhibitions around the world, Spies, as mentioned by Ida Bagus Made, was an effective salesman for the artists that he admired.

Spies was instrumental in securing commissioned works for Lempad. The Helena Potjewijd collection of Lempad drawings made in the early 1930s was intended to illustrate a book on Balinese folklore. The book was never published, and the drawings are now at the World Museum of Vienna. Another large commission for Lempad, was a set of drawings of sacred Balinese dances commissioned by Rolf de Mare in 1938 and now at the Dance Museum in Stockholm.

Pita Maha had a scaffolding effect in curating and marketing selected works by selected artists. The Pita Maha organization was more a marketing effort than an engine of creativity. Their curatorial activity was based on what was regarded as important art from the viewpoint of the Orientalism school of western art.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See Green (2002)

Widagdo (2019) has argued that the impact of the American anthropologists, Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead, on the development of Balinese Art in Batuan was actually more significant than that of Pita Maha. They were the patrons, as well as the influencers and commissioned many drawings mostly from the village of Batuan, presumably because Batuan was isolated in 1930s from the influence of foreigners who congregated mostly in Ubud.

As anthropologists they were being careful not to influence the artistic aspects of the output of the Batuan painters. To test their hypothesis that the Balinese had schizophrenic tendencies with regard to their ability to accept an unseen world and to enter into mass trance during religious ceremonies, they asked artists to visually express their dreams. It was presumably a guessing game on the part of the Balinese artists to fulfill this request. It is from these exchanges that the artists conceived their paintings, based on their traditions and belief systems but necessarily innovating beyond the framework of the Wayang paintings, as it would be impossible to paint such imaginative dreams in the manner of the Wayang style with its prescribed stories and representations.

Bateson and Mead directly commissioned works from the Batuan artists, as well as purchasing works, mostly non-Batuan drawings, both from Pita Maha and the Neuhaus brothers in Sanur.

In the modernization of Balinese art, the role of the Neuhaus brothers is also evident. They arranged the production of colored drawings for their shop as these were more attractive and thus command much higher prices. They worked with I Pica and Pugug to color black and white drawings produced by other artists.

## EPILOGUE

*One can lead the horse to water, but cannot make it drink (proverb)*

Undoubtedly, from the perspective of Balinese painters today, the legacy of Spies is intact, especially with those who are the direct descendants of the Pita Maha generation. For most of them, his patronage to their forefathers is well regarded and welcomed. However, the memory of Spies among the contemporary artists of Bali is fading fast.

It is time to put to rest the debate on Spies' contributions, roles and legacy on the development of "modern" Balinese art during the 1930s. No single person can be put on a pedestal as the sole mover and driving force behind the emergence and explosion of creativity in any movement.

One stake holder that has been *grossly* underestimated is the collective memory and creative ability of the many Balinese artists of the time. It is their courage, ingenuity, and drive that made all of this happen. Whatever external forces and motivations, the movement to modernity could not have happened without the artists embracing it. Their creative outpouring ultimately reflects the inner power of the artists to use these external influences. It is also a reflection of their life doctrine of *desa-kala-patra*, (place – time – situation) which at the core, is the foundation for their cultural adaptability and sustainability and has guaranteed their cultural existence for many generations.

It cannot be denied that there were major contributions by Spies, Bonnet, the royal family of Ubud and Peliatan, Lempad and all of the artists of Bali in forming and participating in the Pita Maha organization, which eventually led to the establishment of the Museum Puri Lukisan in 1956. Important influences aside from the Pita Maha network were the other foreign artists (such as Theo Meier), linguists, film makers, musicologists, anthropologists, ethnographers, explorers, art dealers and traders, and many others, all of them critical and necessary stakeholders, who were part of the fabric of a distinct ecosystem, which organically developed in the newly created paradise of Bali in the late 1920s, peaked in the mid 1930s and ended with the second World War. Political, social and economic forces, other than just artistic and voyeuristic endeavors, also played important roles in the totality of outcomes, the emergence of creativity and the vigor and reverberance of that creativity until today.

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