Beautiful Bali was put on the map of international tourism in the 1920s and 1930s. It became famous for its so-called unspoilt exotic character, its fantastic nature, its beautiful temples and statues, its dances and rituals, its lovely gamelan, and its apparently easy way of life in general. Many Westerners venerated the island as a paradise, a dwelling place of amazingly happy people whose only goal in life was to serve the gods and the white man. Happy, lovely, exotic, unspoilt Bali was a product of white imagination, created by a group of Dutch civil servants and politicians and an international (jet-)set of white photographers, writers, artists, musicologists, dancers, tourist agencies, and profiteers who settled in the island where the sun shone eternally and the servants were cheap; the image of happy Bali was presented to the world in scholarly and journalistic books and articles, films, photographs, novels, and in (semi-)pornographic publications. In some of these publications Bali was just a lustful, culturally rich resort for sunlovers and love-seekers. In more serious attempts to analyze Bali, the island was compared to an imagined ideal society in medieval Italy where religion and government were still harmoniously united and where everybody was not only happy, but also very democratic.

Dr. A. J. (August Johan) Bemet Kempers, the author of this recently reprinted book on Bali, was a Dutch scholar in the Netherlands Indies who did not belong to the idolizers, though socially he had every chance to become a member of the fashionable group that created the popular Bali myth. Bemet Kempers was a sober, analytical thinker, a hard-working man with a strong mind and a strong body who in his 75th year could outwalk many a young Indonesian during one of his tours around the Indonesian monuments about which he knew all there was to be known at that time. Born in 1906 in the Netherlands, he studied archaeology and became in the 1930s librarian of the Royal Batavian Society in Batavia (Jakarta). His dissertation (1933) was on the bronzes of Nalanda and Hindu-Javanese Art.

After the transfer of sovereignty Bemet Kempers became professor of cultural history and archaeology in Jakarta and Yogyakarta, as well as director of the Archaeological Service of Indonesia. In 1956 he repatriated to the Netherlands where he had to find a new niche. Helped by the Academy of Science he found it in the study of Dutch folklore, gaining tenure as a professor of European Ethnology at the University of Amsterdam, as well as becoming director of the Open Air Museum near the city of Arnhem which had suffered badly because of its reputation (and the fact) of having been pro-German during World War II. He invested his enormous energy and talent in the remaking of the museum. But he never lost interest in and contact with the culture of Indonesia; he wrote books on Ancient Indonesian Art (1959), Ageless Borobudur (1976), Herstel in Eigen Waarde (on the preservation of Indonesian antiquities) (1979), and a collection of articles, The Kettledrums of South-East Asia (1988). His book, Monumental Bali, was written in 1979 and has now been updated, with new color photographs, and reprinted under the same title. Professor Bemet Kempers was a regular visitor to Indonesia and advised the Indonesians on archaeological subjects; he died in 1992.

Monumental Bali is an intelligent book by a man who was interested not only in the visual aspects of Balinese arts, but also in the cosmological dimensions of Balinese culture and in the history of the island. In his introduction he stresses that the Javanese influence mingled with Balinese tradition, and that, after a Javanese interlude, Balinese again became the court language. This is an important point; in the more romantic perception of Bali, a sharp dis-
tinction is made between an essentially Javanese court culture and the tradition of the simple "real" Balinese folk who could do very well without the superfluous layer of autocratic cultural "Javanese" influence. This perception goes hand in hand with the negative Dutch colonial attitude towards the original (an origin going back to the tenth century and Majapahit) Javanese aristocracy in Bali, which in fact had for centuries intermingled with the Balinese. What the Dutch wanted to pretend with this perception was that the simple folk preferred a colonial to a royal regime, and that a sharp distinction should be made between folk culture and court culture.

In fact, the distinction is an impossible one, as, for example, Dr. Henk Schulte Nordholt pointed out in his dissertation on "Een Balische dynastie, hierarchie en conflict in de negara Mengwi 1700–1940" (1988). Dr. Bernet Kempers, of course, explains which characteristics of Balinese culture were rooted in Javanese traditions, but he does not involve himself in political discussions, nor did he in 1935 when he first visited Bali.

Another aspect which Bernet Kempers introduces at the beginning of his book is the fact that many temples are not old at all, and that Bali is not a static society, as for example Margaret Mead and her husband Gregory Bateson stated in the 1930s and 1940s. Dr. Bernet Kempers does not identify culture with antiquity; culture in Bali is recycled permanently and, as Bernet Kempers points out, nothing is wrong with that. Recycling or repetition has nothing to do with blind imitation, and the fact that in 1979 many now "antique" temples were in the process of being built, does not diminish in any way their beauty or importance. Yet Bernet Kempers' main interest lies in (pre-)historic Bali. In his first chapters he puts Bali in the wider setting of the geological history of Indonesia and Southeast Asia, concentrating on the bronze drums which, because of their material, have had a long life and tell a lot about culture in its oldest detectable phases.

Prehistory in Bali ended when the first contacts with China and India were established; the religious impact of Buddhism and, especially, Hinduism was to remain because of the domination of the isle by the Wong Majapahit who prevented it from coming under the influence of Islam. Many inscriptions and statues are witnesses of that, and Bernet Kempers explains their meaning and background clearly, with reference to the still-functioning legends like the Calong Arang story in which the queen Durga is not a witch but a noble woman. With this well-argued statement, Bernet Kempers contradicts the very influential Dutch scholar of the 1930s, Dr. Rudolf Goris, who, in spite of his solid scholarship, was an easy victim of anti-royal colonial wisdom.

In the chapter about the monuments, Dr. Bernet Kempers gives a short survey of the material and architecture of the temples and other commemorative buildings, on which he throws a further light in the last part of the book when the reader is taken on a tour around, for example, the Besakih temple, the inscribed Sanur pillar Belanjong, and the Goa Gajah in Gianyar. But before leading the reader to these actual places, Bernet Kempers explains in a chapter on "Recovering the Past" how research into Balinese culture was carried out. He gives much credit to archaeologists and linguists of the prewar colonial period, including the influential "amateur" scholar W.O.J. Nieuwenkamp. In spite of criticism by Hooykaas in 1979, when the first edition of Monumental Bali appeared, Bernet Kempers continues to praise Dr. J.L.A. Brandes who finished Van der Tuuk's famous dictionary, Kawi-Balinesisch-Nederlandsch Woordenboek. But he does follow Hooykaas' advice regarding his index, which is better in the present volume than in the 1979 edition.

Altogether, Monumental Bali is a modern and readable book every intelligent traveler and researcher should read and remember.