

## INDONESIA REVISITED

Claire Holt

My all too brief, six-weeks' visit to Indonesia in the beginning of 1969, after an absence of twelve years, was in some ways like catching up with family news--what had become of the youngsters? How were their parents doing? And who of the older generation was still around to compare notes with and reminisce a bit? On the other hand, meeting old and new friends, seeing how they live and work, and listening to some of the problems besetting them--and there were always many problems--made vivid reality of complex processes for which we have such labels as "cultural change," "economic development" or "modernization." Signs of these could be seen and felt everywhere, not least in the sphere of the arts.

It was clear in the 'fifties that among individuals and groups consciously concerned with the cultivation of the arts, especially in Java, love of the past, awareness of the present, and aspirations for the future produced efforts in three different directions. There were those who strove to preserve traditional art forms in their classical purity, as in music, dance and dance drama; those who tried to meet the challenges of modern times by grafting new elements upon the solid body of tradition or even modifying some of its basic principles; and those who, turning away from tradition entirely, were introducing new inventions or adapting borrowings from outside. (Sometimes all three of these directions were pursued by one individual or were the declared policy of one organization.) This, as far as I could judge, remained true in the 'sixties, but the lines seemed more sharply drawn.

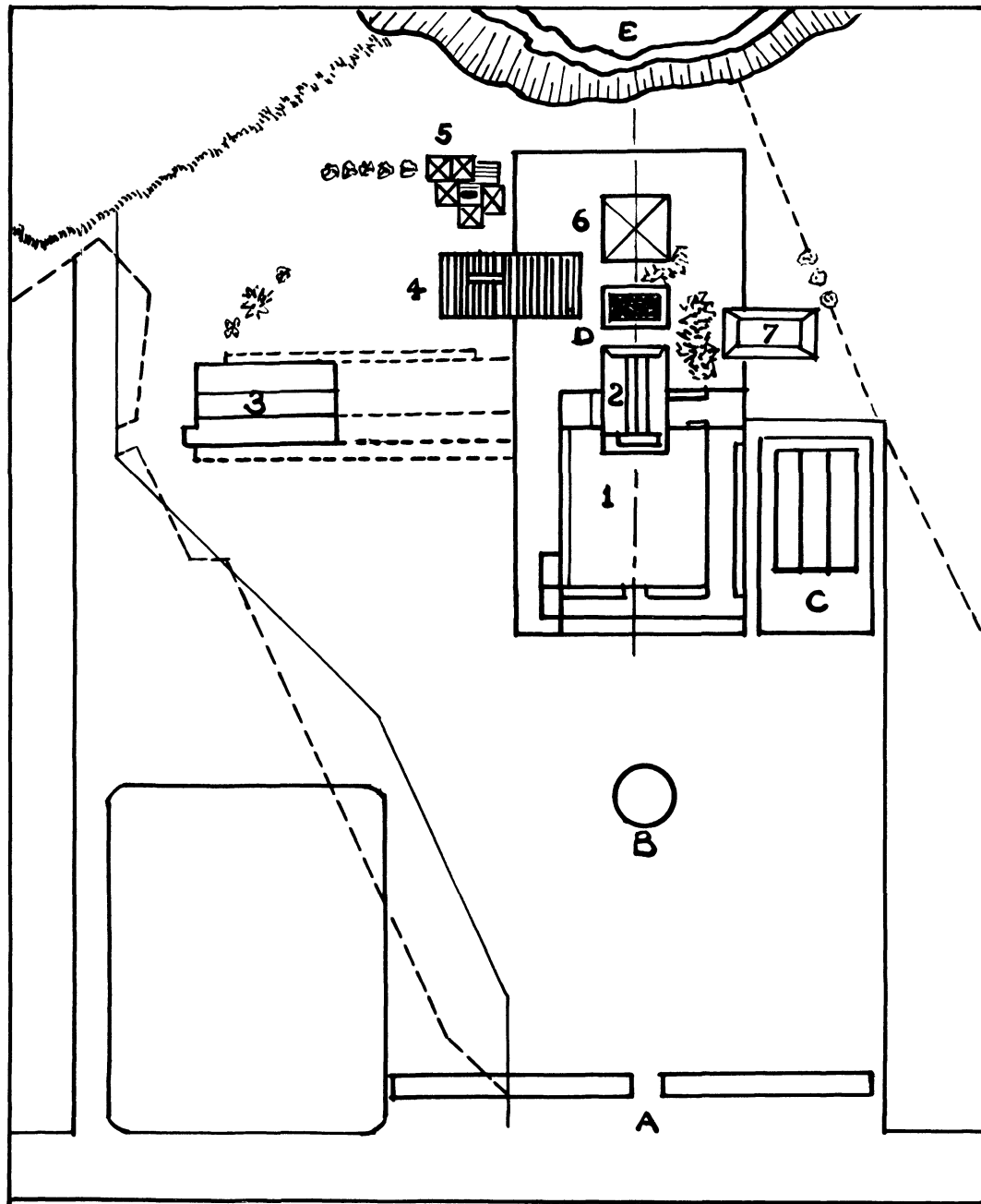
In the field of modern art there was in the 'fifties a sharp confrontation between proponents of nationalism and of internationalism. In 1969, the bitter debate was no longer raging. If it continued simmering below the surface, signs of it were not discernible. Notable changes had taken place in all three of the principal art centers--Djakarta, Bandung and Jogjakarta--where I had last observed the scene in the 'fifties.<sup>1</sup>

### Djakarta

As of 1969, Greater Djakarta's most valuable asset was its energetic and unorthodox Governor, Ali Sadikin. Not only has he

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1. Cf. Claire Holt, Art in Indonesia, Continuities and Change (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).



Situation Sketch Djakarta Arts Center

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|----------------------|---------------------------|
| A. Entrance gate     | 1. Open-air theater       |
| B. Planetarium       | 2. Closed theater         |
| C. Residential units | 3. Moving picture theater |
| D. Water basin       | 4. Exhibition hall        |
| E. River             | 5. Studios and workshops  |
|                      | 6. Arena theater          |
|                      | 7. Dance studio           |

played a decisive role in the city's physical beautification, but the Governor's enterprise has also enriched the city's cultural life in various ways. One of his significant achievements has been the creation in June 1968 of an Arts Council<sup>2</sup> to be in charge of a projected Arts Center, which miraculously became concrete reality six months later.

Djakarta's Arts Center was built on a site off Tjikini Raya, now called Ismail Marzuki Park. Originally, the famous 19th-century painter Raden Saleh had maintained a zoological garden there for his animal studies, and the zoo long outlived its founder. At some point it was graced by a planetarium, which is still there.

The construction of the Center was the fulfillment of long cherished dreams. I recall that back in 1956 futile efforts were made to promote the foundation of an "Indonesian Kunstkring." There was a Preparatory Committee for the building of a House of Culture (*Gedung Kebudayaan*) led by Lt. Col. Widya (then Chairman of the Association of Art Amateurs of the Army), Mrs. P. Subardjo (then Chairman of the cultural organization Pusat Gabungan Kebudayaan) and Usmar Isma'il (of the Indonesian National Theater Academy Foundation), but the prospects then were hopeless. Only later was a House of Culture built, however by the Communist-led art federation LEKRA.

The new Arts Center has four theaters, a dance studio, an exhibition hall, a few small studios for practicing artists, and residential units for some members of the administration. One, not quite completed structure, is to house the future National Academy. There is space for offices and conferences, and a pleasant cafeteria. A water basin, shrubbery, handsomely paved walks and terraces, and some modern sculptures placed on the lawn or in some corner, provide an attractive environment for buildings devoted to the performing arts. Their unpretentious architecture is a felicitous adaptation of indigenous Indonesian architectural styles enriched by modern elements in design and materials. (Pl. 1)

Having created an organization and a physical "receptacle" for the cultivation of the arts, Governor Ali Sadikin passed on the responsibilities for its functioning to the artists themselves. Reportedly he had remarked, in his laconic way, "I have made the investment. Now the artists must invest."<sup>3</sup> And since November 1968, artists *have* been investing in the Center, probably more than they have been earning there. Popular performances, both traditional and modern, are given in the open-air

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2. See Appendix.

3. Quoted by the late Trisno Sumardjo in his address at the Art Center's inaugural ceremonies.

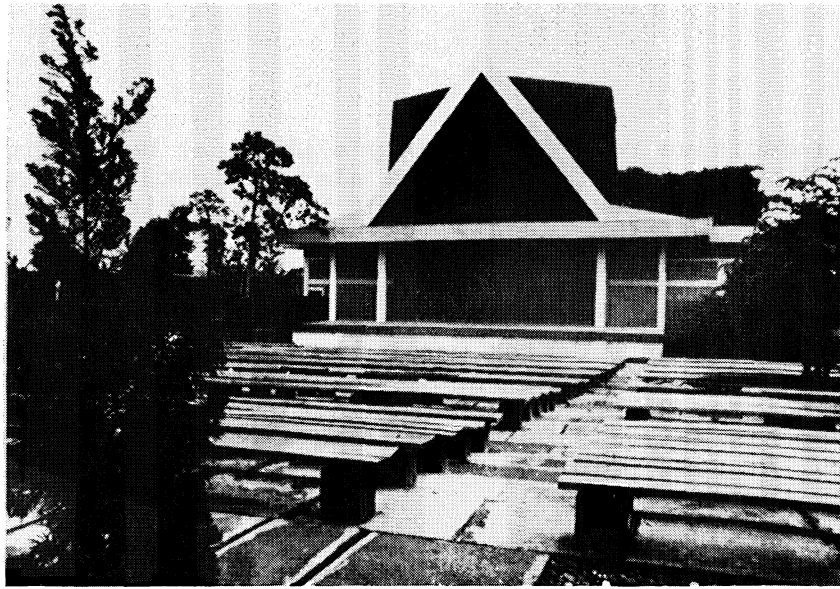


Plate 1: Open Air Theater, Djakarta Arts Center.  
Photo: D. A. Peransi, 1969.

theater, which accommodates 2,000 spectators, or in the other, smaller theaters, one of which is built on the arena principle. Different drama, dance, and music groups, including artists from other cities or regions as well as touring companies from abroad, now can perform under conditions more congenial than those of the antiquated pre-war concert hall, or some make-shift arrangements elsewhere.

The main problem is that of continued financial support. Under Trisno Sumardjo's leadership, the Council had rejected a manager's proposal for entrance fees intended to make the Center nearly self-supporting--the price would be much too high for the average Djakartan and would limit the audiences to the rich. Market principles should not apply. So the manager quit. Perhaps municipal or governmental support or private subsidies will now be forthcoming.

One of the main surprises for me at the Djakarta Arts Center was the visible emergence of the formerly insular (and insulated) Balinese into the wider world. Not only is the present Director-General of Culture, Prof. Dr. Ida Bagus Mantra, a Balinese, but here, in the Art Center's spacious and mirrored dance studio, I watched dance-master I Wajan Dija conducting a rehearsal. He had spent seven years in India--at the well-known Kala Ksetra school near Madras in the south, and at the Ajanta Kalamandala center in Assam, in the north. In some mysterious way, either by ancient heritage or by assimilation, he looked more Indian than Balinese. Under his direction, two

male dancers were recapitulating passages of a larger original composition. In style their movements could not be identified as either typically Balinese, Javanese, Indian or derivative from Western forms of modern dance. Yet, the precision in the execution, and the role played by subtle hands, the head, the intensity of the glances, unmistakably echoed age-old Asian techniques and distinguished these modern dance creations from their Western counterparts.

Another of the outstanding dancers of the new generation, whom one can see rehearsing in the Arts Center's dance studio, is Sardono W. Kusumo. From his training in Central Java, he has retained a mastery of the classical traditional style. From his training abroad, he has acquired a new range of possibilities for expressive movement and gesture. In his view, the traditional school of dance and dramatic art deadens a dancer's personal emotions, numbs his senses and makes him an automaton. Sardono obviously does not want to be an instrument, but a creator. He injects a new spirit and individual modes of expression into classical roles, such as Rahwana or Hanuman, protagonists of the Ramayana. In his students, Sardono tries to awaken spontaneous feeling, and a keen perception of nature, of themselves and of their senses. He is still young (in his early twenties), but already a budding choreographer of whom we are likely to hear much more in the future.

My first attempts to gain an impression of what new developments had taken place during the last ten years in the field of painting in Djakarta were richly rewarded through the generous help of Mr. and Mrs. Alexis Papadimitriou. A diplomat attached to the Brazilian embassy, Mr. Papadimitriou is a spirited collector of Indonesian modern art. In his large and varied collection of several hundred paintings, I found recent works of artists whom I knew in the 'fifties, works of young painters unknown to me, and also some older works I had never seen, by artists I knew in the past.

I was at once struck by the charming work of a young Djakarta painter, Soeparto. His delicate, whimsical and tenderly colored compositions were original in style, mood and technical execution (Pl. 2).

From the paintings in the Papadimitriou collection I could sense immediately something of the changes I would find outside Djakarta: that new forms had been developing in the Art Academy in Jogjakarta; that something must have happened to bring about a dramatic change of mood in the talented Bandung painter Srihadi; and that at the Bandung school, dominant painting styles I once knew had all but vanished.



Plate 2: GIRL by Soeparto (1967). Oil, 84 X 61 cm. Collection of Alexis Papadimitriou. Photo: F. Bodmer.

The full impact of the latter development came when I visited an exhibition of 44 works by three young painters of the Bandung school held in Djakarta's Balai Budaya gallery. The participating artists were Atjeng Arif (born in Tasikmalaja in 1938), Jusuf Affendi (1936, Djakarta; he is currently studying in the United States) and Wisaksono (1938, Tegal). Here were representatives of the new generation of Bandung painters, graduates of the Fine Arts school and teaching there themselves as assistants. They were trained by artists whom I knew in the 'fifties as graduate students and assistants, and who had since received additional training abroad.

Immediately upon entering the gallery, one sensed vital presences--resonances of the earth, its rocks and geological riches, of the natural elements, the heavenly galaxies. They emanated mainly from the works of Atjeng Arif. Most of them were almost three-dimensional rather than flat paintings. Thick and irregular layers of paints and metallic substances protruded from the canvasses or boards to which they were applied in knobs, dots, or glistening specks on winding masses. One didn't have to know the titles (such as "Glowing Cloud of Descending Lava," "Two Notes for Apollo," "Voices of Gold," or "Twin Nebulae") to be caught up in the irridescent shimmer of these little universes created by Atjeng. Unfortunately not even an approximation of these paintings can be reproduced here to convey their effect.

Excellent craftsmanship characterized the works of all three painters. Jusuf Affendi's attractive abstractions derived mainly from local moods in nature ("Morning," "December by the Moon," "Wind," "August Images"), while Wisaksono's paintings, apart from abstract plays with color and mass ("Black Spot," "Red and Green," or "Arrangement in Blue"), also included representational themes, among which the best were boats--an inexhaustible source of stimulation to Indonesia's painters.

It was only the second day of the exhibition but already more than half of the paintings were marked "sold." As before, Djakarta remains the great marketplace, not least for the artists. Many, though not all, art buyers are foreigners.

Foreigners are also stimulating through their purchases a new form of batik art--batik painting. I saw magnificent, newly produced batik paintings by the imaginative and enterprising Djakarta artist Mardijanto--bold modern designs on cloth of varying sizes, some rivaling the work of abstract painters and all the potential delight of a Western interior decorator. But there were interesting innovations also in the traditional batik industry: new designs and unusual color combinations, sometimes with the added *cracquelé* effect (long used in France). I saw some very attractive examples of this in Pekalongan, the main batik center on the north coast. Yet they take a lot of time to produce.

There is nothing new in the fact that the pressure of industrial technology threatens many traditional institutions, including some that are both beautiful and valuable in the total context of human existence. Among these are arts and crafts which require much loving care and time. It is ironic that in our American culture, which also is "in transition," such arts and crafts may well become therapies and hobbies as our surplus leisure grows. Skills that in "underdeveloped" Indonesia are now possessed by puppet-makers, leatherworkers, weavers, batik-makers, silversmiths or mask-carvers, may well become treasured expertise in late-industrial societies. Must then such skills, developed to fulfill a community's needs and serving as a source of livelihood for their practitioners, first vanish in a modernizing society, only to be re-discovered in a later phase of history, for the individualized production of luxury objects in a vastly changed social context? While some American universities are purchasing ensembles of gamelan instruments and are teaching American students to play Indonesian music, the gong-smiths may be vanishing from the Javanese scene.

### Bandung

In the middle of the 1950's, the Department of Fine Arts (*Seni Rupa*) of the Bandung Institute of Technology was decried by nationalists as an alien enclave in independent Indonesia. In 1969 I found it a firmly embedded creative center of modernity, whether national or international. Of the group of young painters whom I knew in the 'fifties, the majority were still there. Achmad Sadali was now Dean of the School of Planning, Architecture and Fine Arts. But Muchtar was chairman of its Fine Arts Department. Srihadi, Popo Iskandar, Sudjoko, and Angkama were members of the teaching and administrative staff. Newer faces included the painter, Mochtar Apin, the sculptor, Gregorius Sidharta (who were both studying abroad in the 'fifties), and the sculptor, Rita Widagdo, along with young assistants who had graduated from the school. Staff and assistants of the planning, architecture and fine arts departments were hard at work in 1969 designing the Indonesian pavilion and displays for the Osaka Expo 1970.

The changes that had taken place during the past decade in the painting styles of members of the "old" group were in part in consonance with world art trends, in part of strictly individual growth. Sadali's earlier compositions of delicately layered planes with semi-abstract figural representations have been succeeded in the 'sixties by completely abstract works--from dense, mosaic-like, colorful agglomerations of cells to bold compositions of effectively contrasting large masses breathing in space. The "Reading Man" of 1959 (P. 3) is a transitional piece between his old and recent style. In this brilliant canvas, the background is horizontally divided into



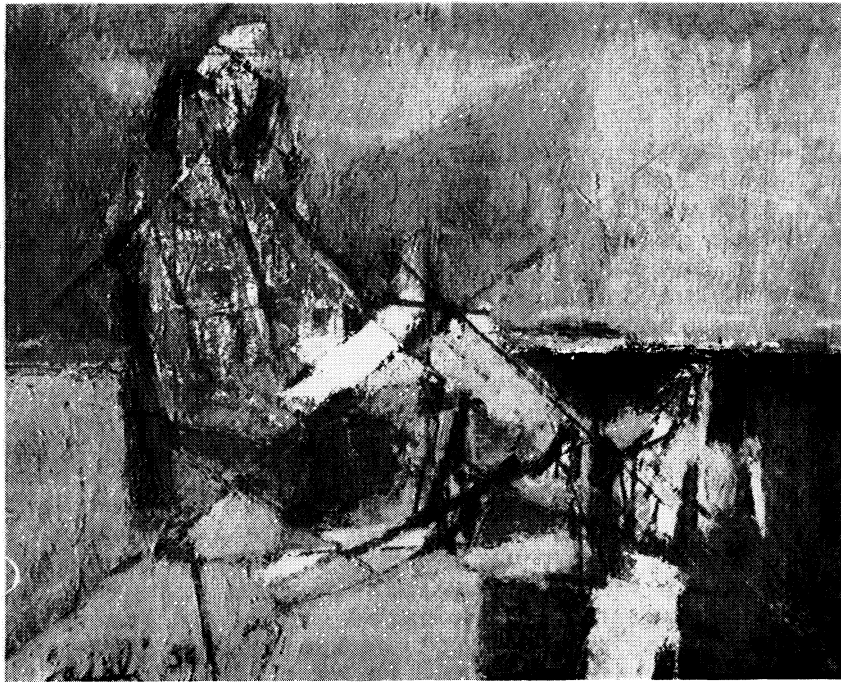


Plate 3: MAN READING BOOK by Achmad Sadali (1959). Oil, 58 X 72 cm. Collection of Alexis Papadimitriou. Photo: F. Bodmer.

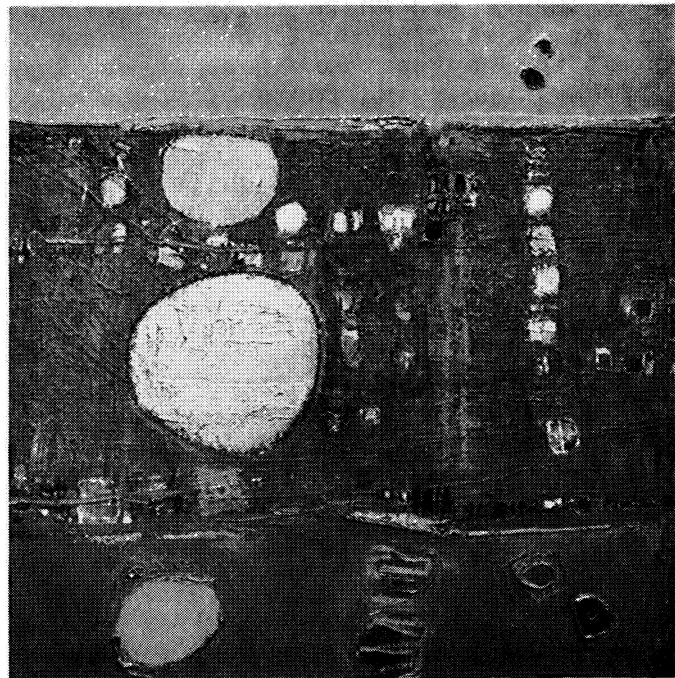


Plate 4: ABSTRACTION IN RED by Achmad Sadali (1967). Oil, 65 X 65 cm. Collection of Alexis Papadimitriou. Photo: F. Bodmer.

an upper, deep sky-blue section, and a basically lavender-and-purple section below. The half-reclining figure itself is "many splendored." "Abstraction in Red" (Pl. 4), painted eight years later, is bathed, as the title indicates, in a raspberry-red light in which floats one large, irregular, sand-yellow disk with a smaller, lapis-blue one above it, and an orange one below. Animating yellow, blue, and orange dots and specks are scattered between and outside the two subtle horizontal lines that delimit the somewhat darker central section of the painting.

But Muchtar, who in 1956 painted in a style typified by his "Still Life with Toys" (Pl. 5), produced in 1965 his "Pilgrimage to the Kaaba" (Pl. 6)--crowded forms in black-grays, white, and light ochre, with purplish tints in between, massed under a rectangle of light vacant space. Three years later, he delighted in tender violet-blue, pink, light orange and aqua colors shimmering against a graduated ground of greens, in his composition "The Land of God, I." A luminous red patch in the lower part of this painting seems to be the spark that brings all the other colors to life.<sup>4</sup>

The dramatic change in Srihadi's painting, to which I alluded earlier, can be illustrated in part by comparing two paintings of different periods but with the same theme--"Balinese Boats." One, made in 1955 (Pl. 7), is full of color: the upper part of the canvas is sky and sea of different blues divided by a light streak of curving horizon; the graceful shapes of boats stand out clearly against the sun-drenched sandy beach--black-bottomed, orange-red in the middle, greenish in the distance, pale orange and white in the foreground. In the 1966 version (Pl. 8), the foreground of unrelieved darkness rises two-thirds of the way up the canvas where, breaking the straight strip of sky, upcurving forms of boats in very light, bluish, whitish and pinkish hues are eerily perched.

During the graduation ceremonies which I attended, an extensive exhibition of students' work was held in the school's well-lit class-rooms and halls. I could see that great improvements had been made in the divisions of graphic arts, sculpture and ceramics.<sup>5</sup>

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4. Because the black-and-white photograph of this painting is not only inadequate but distorts the balance of color nuances, it has not been reproduced here.
  5. Prizes, ranging in value from \$50 to \$75 each, were awarded for the best works in each section. They were donated by the Wendy Sorensen Memorial Fund of the Asia Society of New York; the Rainsborough Fund of Mr. Stanley Rainsborough (representative of the International Overseas Service Association of Zürich in Bangkok); and the Bouchouareb Foundation in Algeria.

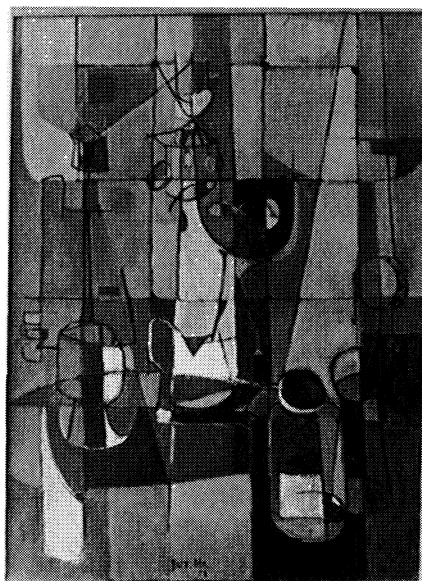


Plate 5: STILL LIFE WITH TOYS by But Muchtar (1956). Oil, 92 X 123 cm. Photo: Claire Holt.



Plate 6: PILGRIMAGE TO THE KAABA by But Muchtar (1965). Oil, 100 X 100 cm. Collection of Alexis Papadimitriou. Photo: F. Bodmer.

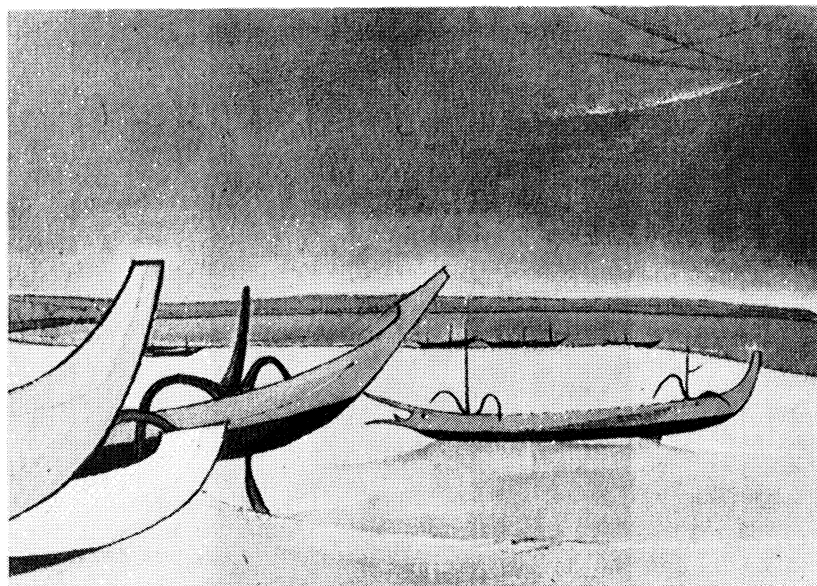


Plate 7: BALINESE BOATS by Srihadi (1955). Oil, 123 X 92 cm.  
Collection of Ambassador Francis J. Galbraith.  
Photo: Claire Holt.

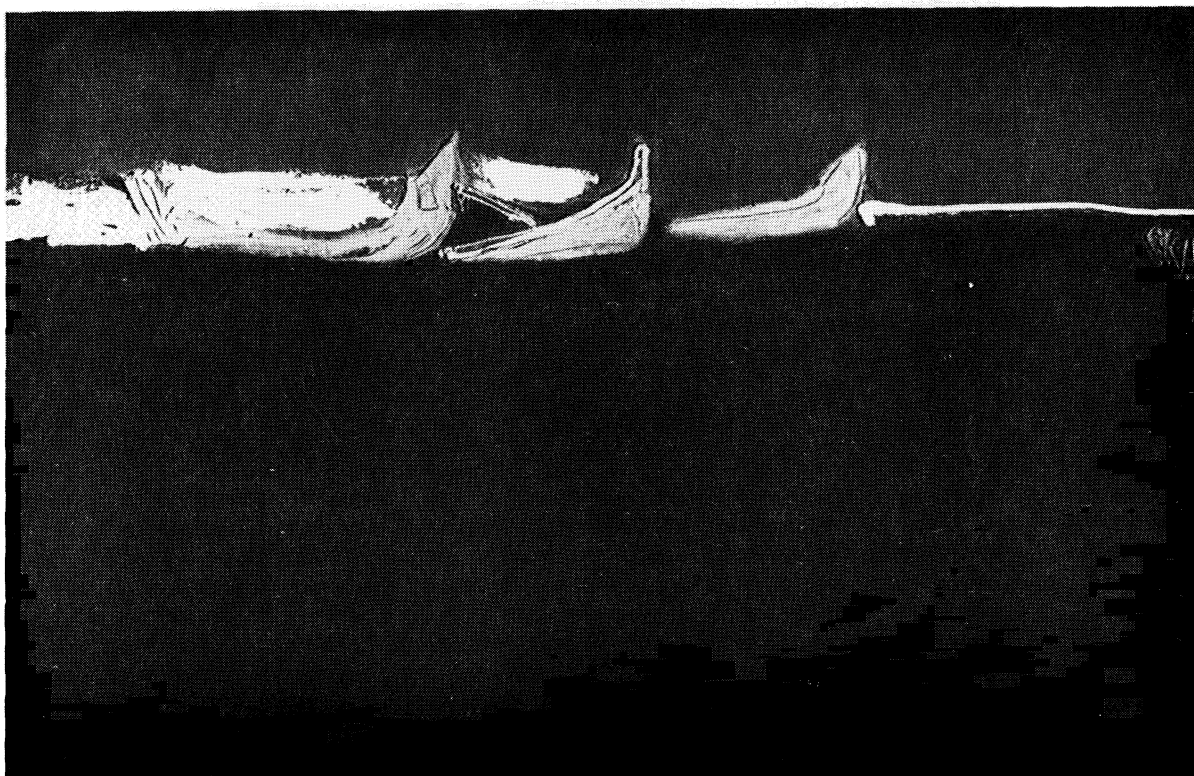


Plate 8: BALINESE BOATS by Srihadi (1966). Oil, 79 X 130 cm.  
Collection of Alexis Papadimitriou. Photo: F. Bodmer.

It was interesting to note the subjects on which art history students had written theses in 1968. One dissertation, by Sanento Suleiman, dealt with problems of art criticism in Indonesia, especially of paintings; another, by Djuhaeri Sutarman, focused on the Sundanese *Wayang Golèk Parwa* (puppet plays with episodes of the Ramayana and Mahabharata as themes); a third one, by Anak Agung Gde Rai Kalam, was about the art of painting in Bali.<sup>6</sup>

The Fine Arts School of Bandung is looking forward to further improvements and expansion. Its leaders envisage research projects in the history of art in Indonesia and the comparative study of Indonesian regional arts and would also like to exchange theses relating to Southeast Asian art with other universities. A part of their plans concerned with the immediate functions of the school can be realized because of a generous grant from the John D. Rockefeller III Fund in New York.

I couldn't help recalling, while in Bandung, the predictions of Ries Mulder, the teacher of the Bandung painters' first post-war generation, that his students would eventually emancipate themselves from his then very strong influence. They did. Some have inclined towards other, indefinable, but world-wide trends, and all keep distilling and transforming their own aesthetic sensibilities and skills. The process will obviously continue.

At the other end of the scale, and of Bandung city, was Hendra Gunawan. In the collection of Alexis Papadimitriou I had come across a painting that Hendra made in 1959 of a man in a clown's cap playing with *wayang golèk* puppets (Pl. 9). The popular theme, in gay carnival colors, spoke of what Hendra loved best. Now he sat behind prison bars in his native town. The leader of one of Indonesia's most active art associations in the 'fifties, the People's Painters (Pelukis Rakjat) of Jogjakarta, he had joined the many thousands of political prisoners in Indonesia. His destitute family could see him occasionally. I was told that he was allowed to paint in prison.

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6. The author of the last thesis is the son of the well-known painter A. A. Gde Soberat of Ubud. In years past he would have remained his father's apprentice, but in the 1960's he was graduating from the Fine Arts School in Bandung. Paradoxically, in Bali itself, the head of the Art Department of Udayana University in Denpasar is Dr. R. Moerdowo, a Javanese physician, painter and art critic, and formerly cultural attache at the Indonesian embassy in London.



### Jottings en route--the Past in the Present

A car lent by a friend made it possible to travel to Jogjakarta via Tjirebon, Semarang and Solo. I could reabsorb the loveliness of Java's landscape, long to reach its mountains, and remember trips to remote and sacred sites on their slopes. Passing along some sun-scorched, dusty road that I had once seen lined with ancient shady trees that made it into a high, cool, green tunnel, I felt the earth bereaved. But then delight again: familiar coves along the northern coast sheltering graceful fishingcraft as before; in the teakwoods near Weleri grey monkeys scampering down to the roadside as expected. I knew their ancestors.

Tjirebon. Remnants of the old *pasisir* Javanese world lie still and decaying in the overgrown plaza of the *Kasepuhan* kraton. A hall with rotting woodcarved pillars and a now earthen floor; the terrace of an elevated pavilion, perhaps a former *sitinggil* in which the sultan once sat in state under a graceful shingled roof. Only a few youngsters play on the terrace. In the abandoned place an old world disintegrates in sunlit silence.

Pekalongan. The Nirvana, a new hotel, has pleasant accommodations and seemingly efficient management. But it is filled to capacity. We spend the night at a roadside inn across the railroad tracks--at immeasurably lower cost and corresponding lack of amenities. The reward is first-hand experience of how and where small traders and other journeying Indonesians put up for the night. A row of dark cubicles, each with a small barred window at the back, stretches along a narrow roofed gallery giving out on an inner courtyard. Two cots and a bench furnish the room. Outside, on the gallery, near the door to each cubicle, stands a chair on which a guest can sit, gaze at the plants in the courtyard or sip a cup of coffee. Two washrooms across the courtyard, with the usual water-tanks and dippers, are shared by all.

There seem to be more and bigger batik factories and batik shops. Batik peddlers besiege you as you settle down for a meal in a restaurant. New colors, such as mauve-gray, have appeared. The backgrounds are no longer always flat and clear, but are animated by light veins of dyes that have seeped through the cracked wax cover. The effect--greater softness.

Semarang. An animated visit with an old friend--Yanto. When I knew him in the 'fifties, he was an amateur painter, mystic, and barber-masseur. He does not paint any more. But *kebatinan*--mysticism or spiritual discipline--is still a vital focus in his life. For him, kebatinan is combined with a keen awareness and knowledge of the human body, and the role of breathing. Yanto still adheres to his yoga-like exercises and, despite some added flesh, is of enviable, burning energy. A bakery shop run by his wife helps eke out the family budget.



Solo. The Sriwedari amusement park beckons as of old. In Pak Amat's restaurant the host is now his son, Kasmidi, but the menu is almost unchanged. In one of the large theater sheds where you would expect to find a popular *wayang orang* show, a visiting company from Djakarta presents a musical revue. The performers sing into a microphone to the accompaniment of guitar music. The indisputable star is a corpulent comedienne with a magnificent alto voice. Her allusive songs, her gestures and her expressive face with its flashing eyes, keep the audience in gusts of laughter. She reminds me of the comical female attendant of the wayang, fat Limbuk.

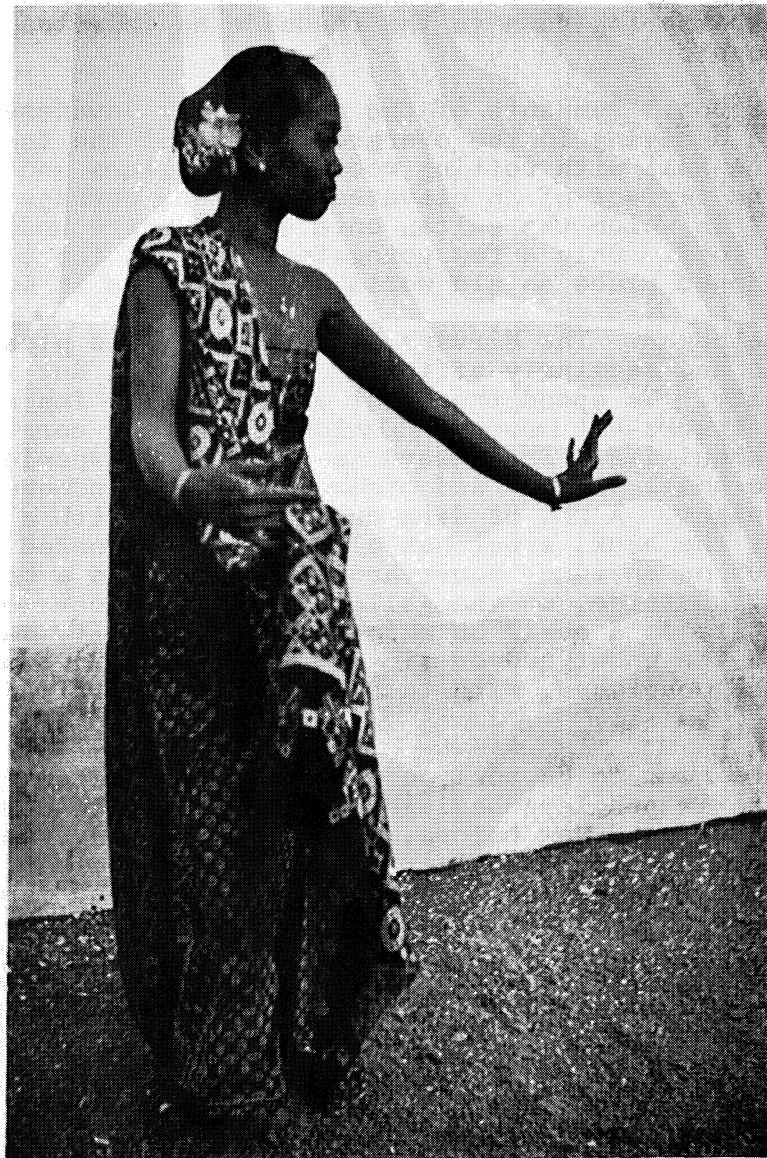


Plate 10: Djaikem as taléḍèk. Mangkunegaran, c. 1933.  
Photo: Claire Holt.



A visit with H. H. Mangkunagara VIII and his wife in the Istana Mangkunagaran brings back many memories of the 'thirties. For the last twenty-five years the princely courts, deprived of their former means, have been unable to afford to maintain their full retinues of servants, attendants, dancers, musicians and craftsmen. Now the great pillared reception hall (*pendapa*) stands largely empty. We wander to the glass cabinets holding the precious collection of bronzes and ancient Javanese jewelry assembled by the prince's father. It is a treasure that should be acquired by the state--the prince wishes to sell it--but the Government cannot now afford to spend the money, and will not permit its leaving the country. One can own treasures and be hard up for funds. The splendid collection of masks from different regions of Java and Madura is still there, though in some disarray--another potential treasure for some museum. The whole place, not least the beautiful *pendapa*, one of the finest examples of stately Javanese wood architecture, now seems to belong to the realm of the museum.

Another sentimental journey: Njai Bei Mardusari is the official title and name of Djaikem, whose renown as the singer Marduraras has outlived her fame as a dancer in the pre-war Mangkunagaran. In 1956 I heard her in the gamelan ensemble at an all-night shadowplay performance in the presidential palace in Djakarta. Her voice was lovelier and richer than ever. I found her in a modest little house with one spacious, empty room. A few gamelan instruments stood at one side. She gives dance lessons there. On the wall--a few enlarged photographs of herself, fully costumed for her star roles in the dance-opera Langendriya, a specialty of the Mangkunagaran in the 'thirties (Pl. 10). She was then a prized and ornamental servant at a prince's court. Was she now a free woman? Hence happier, the way we think of it? I didn't ask. It was only certain that in her eyes was experience of passing time and fortunes.

### Jogjakarta

The days in Jogjakarta were filled, kaleidoscopically, with glimpses of the new, the old, and the ancient. Yet even more than in the 'fifties, Jogjakarta was a city of youth. School children, university students and other young people filled the streets, in lively groups on the sidewalks or on endless streams of bicycles. And in the courtyard of every house I visited were hordes of boisterous youngsters.

The most active and politicized art associations of the 1950's have disappeared since the 1965 coup. The communal hall of the People's Painters stands empty. The association's former members are scattered, some in jail, some reportedly dead. The same is true of the Young Painters of Indonesia (SIM), originally



Plate 11: WHITE, RED AND YELLOW FLOWERS by S. Sudjojono (1959).  
Oil, 85 X 82 cm. Collection of Alexis Papadimitriou.  
Photo: F. Bodmer.

The envoy in the upper right reads:

To hit and to jeer  
is easily done  
Man's life is like foam  
on the sea of the gods  
Clear water is ever clear  
A great soul lives forever.  
My lovely flowers  
do you know  
my wife has given you [to me]?

founded by Sudjojono. Sudjojono himself, after his expulsion from the Indonesian Communist Party in 1958, is said to have settled in Djakarta. The last evidence of his painting that I saw was a fine still life of flowers produced in 1959 (Pl. 11).

I heard of only one new art association formed in the last few years--Sanggar Muslim (Islamic Studio), led by Amri Jahja. I had no chance to get acquainted with its activities.

Affandi, as vital and genial as ever, has built near his airy, elevated studio-house a long, cave-like gallery made of concrete. In it he exhibits his own paintings, of which there are many. His style has not changed noticeably, though one work of 1966--a nude--is treated in a more fluid, softer manner than before (Pl. 12).

Rusli too lives in Jogjakarta now. What I saw of his works was no longer so precious, so dreamily exquisite as before. The treatment was bolder, the colors stronger.

At the Art Academy (ASRI), which now occupies a solid, but clumsily designed building in Gampingan, whose construction had just started when I was last in Jogjakarta, leadership has been passed on to Sabas Alibasjah. Together with Widajat and Fadjar Sidik, both long associated with the Academy, he also teaches painting. Sculpture is taught by Edy Sunarso (who was studying abroad in the 'fifties) and Saptoto. Each division has three young assistants. Compared with the Bandung school, painting at ASRI has undergone far less revolutionary changes. Craftsmanship is not as highly developed. Alibasjah himself, however, has abandoned his former realism and has evolved a stylized, somewhat mannered way of painting (Pl. 13). The sculpture classes have many more students than in the 'fifties. An array of female torsos in clay on about two dozen stands crowding the classroom testified to the use of live models, a practice not common in the 'fifties.

The newly developing art of batik painting has taken root in Jogjakarta too. Among its practitioners is Bagong Kussudiardjo (who is also a dance-master), in whose home I have seen a few very attractive examples hung on the wall beside his other paintings. In the art gallery Argojo, which lies away from Jogjakarta's main trading area, to the west, near the Art Academy, there was a display of colorful or subtly tinted cloths no longer destined to be worn as *kain* (the traditional wrap-around skirt) but to be hung, like abstract or other framed paintings. In composition and treatment they were very different from the batik paintings I saw in Singapore, which often show groups or single female figures, clearly delineated foliage, and other decorative elements.

Jogjakarta is still a stronghold of classical dance and dance-drama. At the Krida Beksa Wirama school, which was fifty



Plate 12: NUDE by Affandi (1966). Oil, 96 X 128 cm.  
Collection of Alexis Papadimitriou.  
Photo: F. Bodmer.

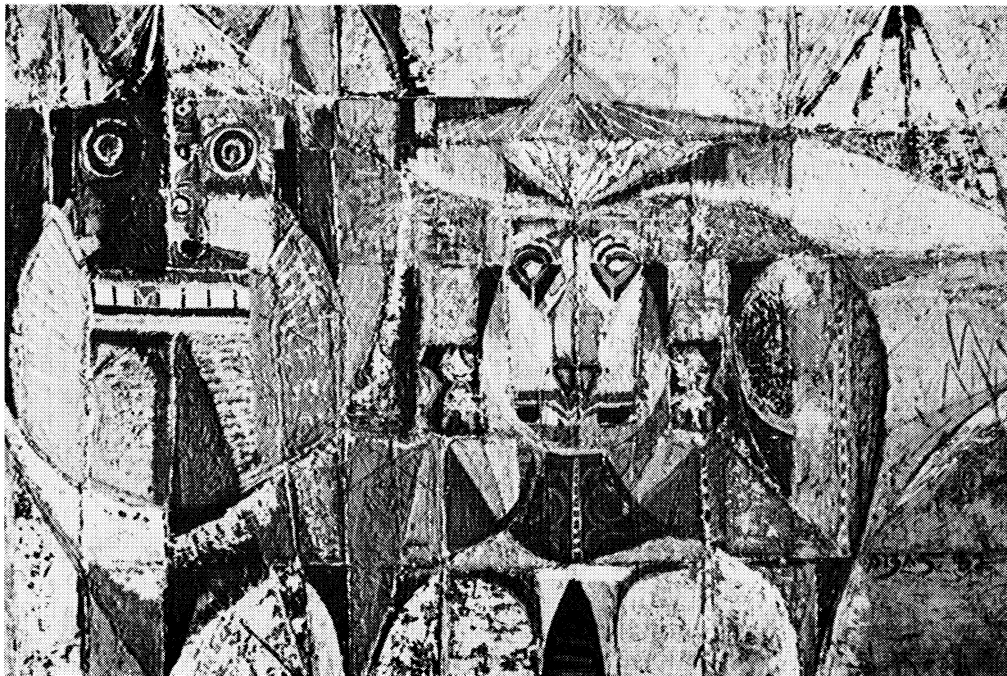


Plate 13: MASKS by S. Alibasjah (1962). Oil, 64 X 43 cm.  
Collection of Alexis Papadimitriou.  
Photo: F. Bodmer.

years old in 1968, well attended classes go on unabated. As before, crowds of children gather to watch the rehearsals and performances given in the pendapa of the Tedjakusuman. However, they are no longer docile, silent, wide-eyed spectators, but a rowdy, gay lot. The school's former master, Gusti Pangeran Aria Tedjakusuma, is now too old to teach. His son, R. M. Kusumobroto, and his nephew, R. M. Wasisto Surjodiningrat, direct the school's activities. Both are descendants of Jogjakarta's royal lineage and carry on the nobility's traditional devotion to the art of the dance.

In the spectrum of trends pursued by Jogjakarta's numerous dance schools, Krida Beksa Wirama, representing purist traditionalism, is at one extreme. Old Java is resurrected there when one watches, as I could in 1969, a mask play of the story of Ken Angrok or sees accomplished dancers act out a glittering episode from the Ramayana (Pl. 14).

At the other end of the spectrum lies Rendra's Bengkel Teater (*bengkel* means workshop). A very gifted poet, dramatist, actor and stage director, Rendra and his company are the avant-garde of Indonesia's theatrical world.<sup>7</sup> Like most other groups, they operate on a shoestring. Rendra stages plays (some performed at Djakarta's Arts Center) ranging from "Oedipus Rex," in which the actors wear ingeniously designed masks (Pl. 15), to short plays known as "Bip-Bop," a name derived from one of them. "Bip-Bop" plays are akin to the theater of the absurd but could be conceived also as poems of gesture. For Rendra, whose own body is marvelously expressive, believes in the poetry of body movement. On the stage there are practically no props, merely a chair or two, a box, a ladder, to vary levels; no colorful costumes, but simple, tight-fitting, mostly dark dress. Dialogue is virtually non-existent; words, reduced to a minimum, are more like pure sounds that punctuate the silence, or like rare dots scattered on the canvas of an abstract painting. They are "mini-words" (*mini-kata*), as the poet Goenawan Mohamad calls them, and he speaks of the "theater of mini-words." For that matter "Bip-Bop" plays are "mini-plays," lasting from fifteen to twenty minutes each. With their moments of pathos and farce, they suggest the bewilderment and yearning of human beings surrounded by, but unable to communicate with, their fellows.<sup>8</sup>

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7. Rendra's views and literary tastes appear in an interview published by Wing Kardjo in Budaya Djaja, 1968, pp. 288-292.

8. I Putu--a Balinese and until recently one of the finest actors in Rendra's company--staged a "Bip-Bop" show in Den Pasar, Bali. The actors were local Balinese, newly recruited and briefly rehearsed; the audience--Den Pasar's elite.



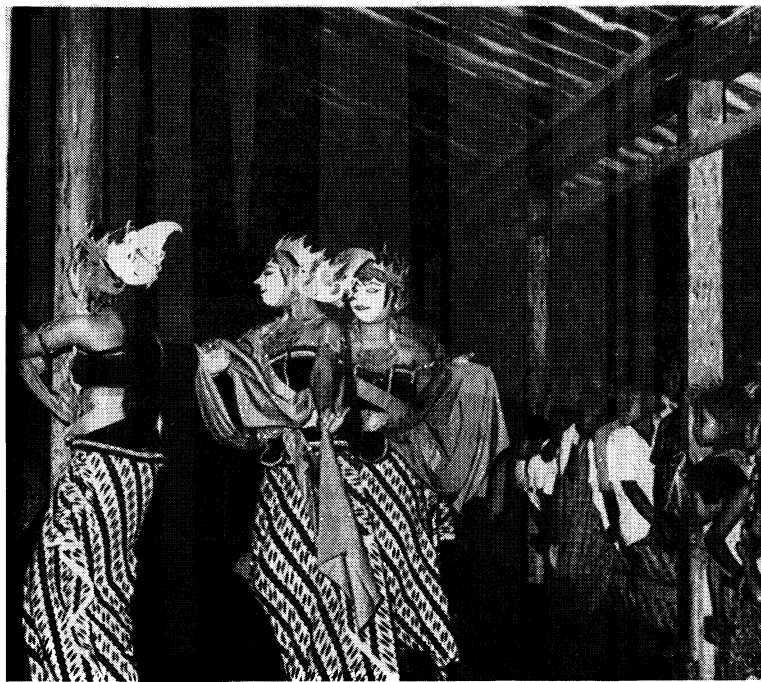


Plate 14: Scene from the Ken Angrok play, wayang topeng.  
Krida Beksa Wirama, 1969. Photo: Merle Ricklefs.

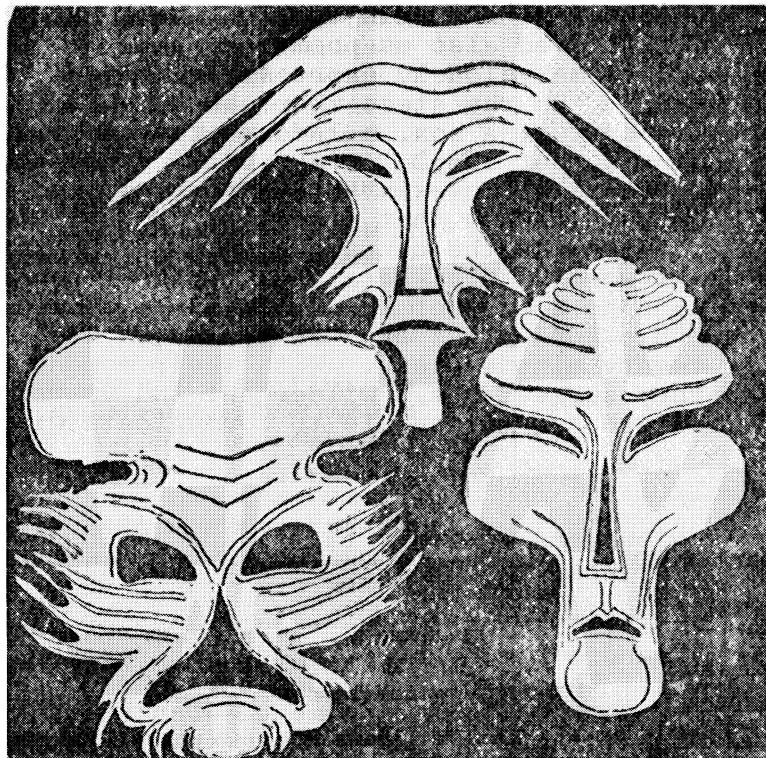


Plate 15: MASKS FOR OEDIPUS REX (Tiresias, Creon and Jocasta).  
Performance staged by Rendra, Djakarta Arts Center,  
1969. Sketch: Danarta.

Between the two poles--Krida Beksa Wirama and the Bengkel Teater--lie several dance-drama schools of mixed tendencies. There is the Indonesian Dance Academy (ASTI), whose director, Sudarsono, returned last year from a prolonged stay abroad; there are the schools of Bagong Kussudiardjo and of Wisnoe Wardhana, innovators in the 'fifties, but now no longer startling. They teach their students a whole range of dance styles, from traditional Indonesian to modern improvisational, as well as new choreographic compositions of their own. But irrespective of style, the desire for and devotion to music and dance, as well as the other arts, remain strong and vital ingredients in Jogjakarta's cultural life.

From Jogjakarta I made some pilgrimages to Central Java's antiquities. It was sad to see the deteriorating Barabudur, with its magnificent reliefs darkened by seeping moisture and overgrown with lichen. A formerly narrow crack in the wall of the first gallery has widened to a breach and the wall leans menacingly outward. Scaffoldings deface some of the facades. In places, the upper parts of a leaning wall, which have been removed to relieve internal pressures, lie stacked on the ground below. If international financial aid does not permit the start of intensive technical work on restoration soon, the damage will be immeasurable.

On the positive side, it was good to see that on the site of Tjandi Sambisari,<sup>9</sup> the whole body of the ruined temple has already been fitted together in a temporary reconstruction on the ground above the excavation site. The principal images now stand in the niches where they originally belonged. Below, clearer outlines of the temple's base are emerging as the excavation around it progresses.

One last pilgrimage was to the Ratu Baka plateau, one of my favorite places, overlooking the beautiful plain of Prambanan. The mystery of Ratu Baka was revived in my mind by a meeting a month earlier in Colombo with Dr. Paranavitana, the former Head of Ceylon's Archaeological Survey and Research Professor of Ceylon Archaeology at the University of Ceylon (retired). He told me of his discovery in Ceylon of inscriptions engraved between the lines of some earlier inscriptions which, according to him, prove that the princes of the Shailendra dynasty, who ruled in Java between the eighth and ninth centuries, were related to a reigning dynasty in Ceylon. Indications of connections between Java and Ceylon appear also in an inscription on a stone discovered on the Ratu Baka plateau. It was deciphered

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9. See Sri Kusumobroto, "Preliminary Note on Tjandi Sambisari: A Recently Discovered Temple in Central Java," Indonesia, 7 (April 1969), pp. 1-4.

by Dr. de Casparis<sup>10</sup> and found to date from 792 A.D. This inscription mentions the erection of a monastery called Abhayagiri-vihāra, a designation which corresponds to that of a famous monastery in Anuradhapura in ancient Ceylon. Dr. Paranavitana interprets the meaning of the contextual line as indicating that the monastery was built for Sinhalese monks then living in Java.<sup>11</sup> De Casparis does not regard their presence as certain, but this does not affect the validity of the principal point concerning contacts with Ceylon at the time.

Whether or not the intriguing remains of a complex in a recessed part of the plateau are those of the Abhayagiri-vihāra is by no means established. But if the monumental stone platforms (one of which must have been the floor of a large pillared hall), gates, stone-paved passages, stairs, shrines and chambers were once a retreat for monks and ascetics--Sinhalese or Javanese--it must have been a very imposing site indeed. The remains of these stone constructions lie some distance away from the fortified front part of the plateau which, apart from its gates, has a peculiar elevation whose function has so far remained unexplained.

The mysteries of Ratu Baka may eventually be clarified by archaeologists and epigraphists. I mention them mainly because they give me an opportunity to publish here a rarely reproduced photograph of an image which may be relevant to Java's ancient links with Ceylon (Pl. 16). The image is of a female deity seated in a recess framed by a gloriously carved double makara motif above a niche of the Buddhist Tjandi Banju Nibo. It lies in the Prambanan plain, not far from the Ratu Baka plateau. This image always impressed me by its exceptionally strong facial and bodily forms, which reminded me of India. While in Ceylon, I was struck by a very similar image in a niche above the entrance to the House of Pilgrims behind the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy. It was placed too high for close examination, but I thought I was seeing a duplicate of the Banju Nibo goddess. (I hope to procure a photograph to reassure myself that I was not dreaming.) But, if my eyes and my memory did not deceive me, the Banju Nibo goddess might for stylistic reasons be added to accumulating evidence of cultural relations between Ceylon and Java more than a thousand years ago.

Toward sunset, the view from the Ratu Baka plateau is one of extraordinary, serene and unforgettable beauty. Sitting near the edge of the retaining wall, I saw again in utter

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10. J. G. de Casparis, "New Evidence on Cultural Relations between Java and Ceylon in Ancient Times," Artibus Asiae (Felicitation Volume presented to G. Coedès), 1961, pp. 241-248.

11. S. Paranavitana, Ceylon and Malaysia (Colombo, 1966), pp. 183-190.



stillness the fertile earth far below, its inundated rice fields shimmering between bamboo groves, feathery palms and dark lines of trees. Involuntarily I said aloud: "Inilah tanah Djawa!" Behind me, a voice--of a peasant I did not hear approach--softly said, "Benar."



Plate 16: Image of a female deity at the Buddhist Tjandi Banju Nibo, Central Java. Photo courtesy of the National Archaeological Institute, Djakarta.

# Appendix

## Members of the Djakarta Arts Council (as of November 1968)

### Executive Council

|                    |                       |  |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Chairman:          | Trisno Sumardjo*      | Painter, essayist, art critic, editor and translator (age 52).   |
| 1st Vice-Chairman: | Arief Budiman         | Psychologist by education, essayist and literary critic, one of editors of the literary journal <i>Horison</i> and member of the Board of Film Censors (27). |
| 2nd Vice-Chairman: | D. Djajakusuma        | Drama and film director, lecturer at the Indonesian National Theater Academy (ATNI) and Chairman, National Theater Federation (49).                          |
| 1st Secretary:     | Pramana Padmodarmadja | Stage designer, teacher at ATNI and Secretary-General, National Theater Federation (35).   |
| 2nd Secretary:     | D. A. Peransi         | Photographer, cinematographer, painter and essayist, (29).   |

### Other Members

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Adhidarma       | Musician (violinist) and conductor of Symphony Orchestra, Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) (38).   |
| Ajip Rosidi     | Writer, poet, critic, editor of <i>Budaya Djaja</i> , teaches at Padjajaran University (Bandung), member of Sunda Institute for Languages and Literature (30). |
| Asrul Sani      | Poet, essayist and editor, drama and film director, Dean of ATNI (42).   |
| Binsar Sitompul | Musician and writer on music, teaches at Teachers' Institute (Djakarta) (45).  |

\* After the death of Trisno Sumardjo in April 1969, the former Director-General of Mass Media, Dr. Umar Khayam, was appointed to succeed him as Chairman of the Council.

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Darsjaf Rachman        | Journalist and editor of <i>Sastra</i> (45).  |
| Gajus Siagian          | Author, journalist, scenario writer and translator, columnist of <i>Pelopon Baru</i> (48).  |
| Goenawan Mohamad       | Poet, essayist, journalist and editor, writes for <i>Harian KAMI</i> and <i>Horison</i> (27).   |
| Irawati Sudiarso       | Concert pianist (31).   |
| I Wajan Diya           | Dancer and choreographer, staff member of the Music Section, Directorate for the Arts, Department of Education and Culture (30).  |
| Misbach Jusa Biran     | Author, scenario writer, drama and film director, writer for <i>Minggu Abadi</i> , also a playwright (35).  |
| Oesman Effendi         | Painter and art critic (49).  |
| Rudy Laban             | Pianist, Chairman of Music Department, Teachers' Institute (Djakarta), Director of Foundation for Music Education (31).   |
| Sardono W. Kusumo      | Dancer, member of Ramayana Ballet (Prambanan) and other groups (23).  |
| Sjuman Djaja           | Cinematographer and author, teaches scenario writing at ATNI, Director of Film Directorate, Department of Information (35).   |
| Nj. Setyawati Sulaiman | Archaeologist, lecturer and writer, staff member of the National Archaeological Institute, Chairman of the Foundation for Archaeology, member of the cultural foundation Mitra Budaya, member of Board of Film Censors. |
| Suryabrata             | Musicologist, writer on history and theory of gamelan music and Indonesian performing arts, leading member of Karawitan music and dance academy (42).   |
| Taufiq Ismail          | Poet and writer, editor of <i>Horison</i> , columnist of <i>Harian KAMI</i> (31).   |
| Teguh Karya            | Actor and director of stage and television plays, teaches at ATNI (31).   |
| Wahju Sihombing        | Drama and film director, teaches at ATNI, Chairman of Council on Production of National Films, Djakarta (35).   |
| Zaini                  | Painter, one of the founders of Djakarta's Jajasan Seni dan Design, member of the editorial staff of <i>Horison</i> (44).   |