CHAPTER TWENTY

CHRISTIAN ART IN INDONESIA

In 1925 the Catholic bishops, apostolic prefects, and heads of the religious orders held a national conference in Batavia, presided over by a papal representative, the Dutch Dominican Friar Bernardus Jordanus Gijlswijk, Vatican Apostolic Delegate in South Africa. Following the instructions given to him by the Vatican, Gijlswijk put forward the problem of the national pride of natives (nationaliteitsgevoel der inlanders). He connected this with the characteristic culture of the various peoples of the archipelago. Bishop Aerts of Langgur bluntly reacted with a statement about his region of the southern Moluccas and Papua: “There is no native culture. Anything coming from the West is highly valued.”¹ In that meeting only the Javanese culture was highly appreciated and the efforts to create a specific style of Javanese Christian art by a businessman in the sugar industry and scholar Dr. Julius Schmutzer were supported. The culture of societies in the outer islands remained underestimated until the mid-1960s, when the decisions of the Second Vatican Council became known. Until that time there were only minor adaptations to local cultures in the Catholic community, with few exceptions that will be discussed below.

In the Protestant mission and churches things were not much different until contextual theology became an important issue, starting in the late 1960s. Of course, since the beginning of Christian mission there was much research on languages and cultures, but first of all for the sake of Bible translations and for the expression of the basic teaching of Christianity. From the very beginning of Christianity in the archipelago also the singing of hymns and related music was very important. Ambonese Christianity is more or less identical with a spontaneously singing Christian community. Ambonese music has also in its secular expression a special mix of Portuguese music with Indonesian tradition, the kroncong style of singing and instrumental music, with a dominant role for the violin and the guitar. In other regions of Indonesia Christians have also developed a strong tradition of choir music. Batak, Minahasa and Toraja Christians are known for their joyful and very strong tradition of singing.

¹ ‘Eigen cultuur bestaat daar niet. Wat van het Westen komt, wordt juist hoog gewaardeerd. De moeilijkheid komt van den kant der protestanten en mohammedanen, terwijl juist hier gevoeld wordt de rem van art. 123.’ AJAK E 4–1.
This chapter will describe some expressions of Christian art in the twentieth century, most strongly under influence of the relative freedom of expression as was proposed by the second Vatican Council and by the global trend towards a contextual theology as promoted by international Protestantism within the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA).

The first expressions of Christian visual art, 1920–1940

The encyclical letter of Pope Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*, published in 1919, was an important step towards the creation of indigenous clergy worldwide, first of all in China. This document was also an incentive for the development of expressions of visual art, taking into consideration the local cultural varieties in various mission areas. It was first visible in the mission of Central and East Asia. A quite impressive international stimulus for indigenous Christian art came from the international exhibition of Catholic mission that was organised in the Vatican in 1925. The Catholic mission of Java sent a number of artefacts showing the cultural and artistic style of Javanese handicraft. Out of the 111 objects that were sent to the exhibition 103 items showed copper, leather handicrafts, woodcarvings kitchen utensils and beautiful *batik* (traditionally painted cloths). This was more an anthropological exhibition and not yet a display of indigenous Christian art. As to the mission work there were some maps with statistics, the model of the buildings of the Muntilan mission and albums and standing displays with photographs. For some displays the Ursuline Sisters of Batavia had used Japanese folding screens as background.

The most beautiful objects for the 1925 exhibition were not given back, but remained in the mission museum attached the St. John of Lateran church in Rome. For later exhibitions the priests were afraid that again the best pieces would be kept in Rome, without the Vatican paying anything for these precious and fine examples of Christian art and for the 1950 exhibition there was only a modest contribution from Indonesia.2

One of the earliest specimens of Christian expression with Javanese conventional techniques is the image of the Trinity by Raden Mas Joesoef Poerwodiwirjo. This young man entered the primary school of the sugar estate Gondang Lipoero that was opened in 1920. After finishing primary school and conversion to Catholicism, he continued religious courses and became a catechist. According to one of the two directors of the estate, Dr. Julius Schmutzer, he drew the picture at his own initiative and came to Schmutzer to ask for his opinion. In this drawing the three figures are nearly identical.

In the centre the Father is known from his beard, while the Son is known from the symbol of the cross in his right hand and a small beginning of a beard. The small circle in the left hand is the human nature of the Son, while the larger circle represents the divine nature. All three rest with a hand on this larger circle and are placed at the same height, strengthening their equal status and nature. The lines of communication and generation are like stalks of a flower, also a life-giving connection. The image owes much of its detail to the traditional imagery of the hermit Vyasa in the classical shadow play of the wayang. In the traditional art of wayang the puppets must have been made of leather and painted. But they should be able to move with arms and at least one leg. This is all impossible here. It was quite interesting in this case that a recent convert made a drawing at his own initiative, while most of the examples that we see for this early period, 1920–1940, were made at the suggestion or even command of European promoters of Christianity and its enculturation through local Indonesian art.\footnote{Schmutzer 1928:62–68.}

The most spectacular product of this European-guided indigenous art was the church and Sacred Heart Chapel in Ganjuran, on the premises of the Schmutzer sugar estate south of Yogyakarta. It started with Dr. Joseph Ignaz Schmutzer’s encounter in 1924 with a gifted West-Javanese sculptor with the single name of Iko. Iko had been known since about 1900 as an artisan sculptor who made high quality wooden and stone statues and went from house to house in luxurious quarters to sell these himself. In early 1924 he addressed Joseph Schmutzer (then living in Bogor as a member of the provisional parliament of The Indies, the Volksraad). The impetuous Schmutzer immediately knew that he had found his man to create Christian art in Javanese style. His first order was for a Mary with child and the second was a great carving in jati wood representing the Trinity after the drawing by Poerwodiwirjo. Here the Father is sitting on the left, the Holy Spirit as the expression of the love between Father and Son, is seated in the middle. They wear Javanese dress on the lower body, with the batik motive of parang rusak (lit. broken knife) the basic striped pattern, in classical times used exclusively for the royal family. The slendang or wrapper on the shoulder is traditionally the sign for deities, hermits and teachers. The Father has a crown in his hands, symbol of supreme power. The persons have put their feet on an open lotus flower, symbol of divine sanctity. Outside the stalks there is first a circle of radiant light, because the Son is ‘light from light’, while the edge of the carving shows many tongues of fire, recalling the miracle of Pentecost.
Fig. 1. Drawing of the Trinity by Raden Mas Poerwodiwirjo. Schmutzer 1928:90.

Fig. 2. Holy Trinity after design of Joseph Schmutzer, stone carving by Iko. Schmutzer 1928:90.
Joseph Schmutzer knew that the sculptor Iko was a nominal Muslim and that many other Muslims could be disturbed by the representation of the divine Trinity in the form of three human persons. He ordered also an example as just one person with several attributes of the Trinity, but in general he felt that Christianity would be closer to the Hindu past of Java (that ended about 1518 with the death of the last Hindu ruler of Majapahit) than to the present dominating religion of Islam.

The statue of the Trinity was used, with comparable statues of Jesus, Mary, angels and several others, in the church on the sugar-estate that was designed after the model of the fifth century temple of Arjuna on the Dieng plateau. Its altar was to be built in the centre. During the service the baptised faithful would face towards the east, but the catechumens were to be placed on the other side of the altar and would be orientated towards the west.

Another statue by Iko, representing Jesus showing his sacred heart, was in 1930 placed in the Sacred Heart chapel of the Schmutzer estate in Ganjuran. The chapel was built as a replica, about 10 metres high, of one of the major temples of the Prambanan compound. This classic compound, devoted to Lord Shiva, with minor shrines for Brahman and Krishna had been built in the ninth century and it is still considered (along with Borobudur) as the climax of classical Javanese religious building. In many details the Sacred Heart shrine imitated its Hindu predecessor. An unfinished statue of Jesus was even blessed and then incorporated in the basement as had been the habit with Hindu architecture of the classical period. This shrine has become a place of pilgrimage from that time until this day. Once a year, mostly in June or July on the Sunday near to the Catholic feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a great celebration is held to honour the Eucharist with a procession where all functionaries must still be dressed according to Javanese tradition, and the gamelan plays accompanied by choirs that sing new words to the old music.4

The shrine of Pohsarang, near Kediri in East Java, must be mentioned again here (see also chapter fourteen). It was as daring and special as the compound of Ganjuran and would serve not only as the parish church for the small community of Catholics, the result of a little school in a plantation, but also as a place of pilgrimage, with an entrance (gapura) in classical style, an open church in refined bricks with many images, an elaborated way of the cross, a theatre for biblical plays and a graveyard. Henri Maclaine Pont who designed this compound was the architect who had worked for years in the archaeological excavations of the palace of the thirteenth century Hindu kingdom of Majapahit in Trowulan, in the northern region of East Java. With hundreds of local workers he had build a museum in the early 1930s, in the

---

4 Schmutzer 1928:79–84.
style of the old palaces of the Majapahit period and in 1936–1937 this was applied to the Catholic compound of Pohsarang. After some decline in the period 1950–1990, this sanctuary was totally renovated and enlarged between 1993 and 2001 to become the most prestigious place of pilgrimage of East Java, with a *Mausoleum Pieta* where numerous Chinese have already found a place to deposit the ashes of their beloved dead, a replica of the great way of the cross of Lourdes, a very large construction imitating the cave of Lourdes (size: 40 metres across, 20 metres high), a building with pictures for the 15 mysteries to be meditated upon while praying the rosary, a house of retreat, a camping-site for the young people and a large religious shopping centre. Ganjuran and Pohsarang have given direction to a development that has become more and more popular among Catholics in Indonesia: the pilgrimage, a religious practice that may take several days.

Another important example for the architecture of the churches, in the 'native style' of the 1930s, was not a religious structure, but the great audience hall of the sultan’s palace of Yogyakarta, the *Bangsal Kencana* or golden reception room. It is an open building, with a grandiose roof, starting at some 2 metre from the floor. This was used as an example for the church
in Kenteng, Kalibawang, dedicated on 6 July 1936. A defence of this choice reads as follows:

Although the Bangsal Kencana is not the place where the prince uses to receive the homage of his people—as such the Bangsal Witana is used on the Siti Inggil (exalted place) situated outside the palace at the edge of the ‘aloon-aloon or the vast square in front of the palace—it is the place within the palace where he receives his friends, where he gives his banquets, where he meets his guests and strangers visiting him, in a word, it is the richly decorated part of his princely mansion where he appears as the hospitable ruler, the king who is nevertheless accessible to his sentana (his relations and most intimate servants).5

It was the founder of the Catholic Java mission, Frans van Lith, who coined the translation of ‘Thy kingdom come’ as suggesting the royal presence of the Sultan among his people. It is this mythical, nearly divine, royal power that was evoked in this style of architecture. The Jesuits of the 1930s imitated the classical Hindu style of the eighth century, or the court style of the nineteenth century, but not the architecture of the Muslim mosque.

A quite peculiar person among the earlier Javanese Christian artists was Franciscus Xaverius Basoeki Abdullah, born 1915 in a family of artists. His father Abdullah Soerio Soebroto and his brother Soedjono Abdullah (b. 1911) were well-known artists. As a young boy Basoeki fell sick and as a distraction he draw a picture of Jesus. While working on this drawing he was healed and decided therefore to embrace Catholicism. In the mid-1930s he had already painted many images of Mary and made sketches for stations of the cross. The great hope, expressed in 1938, that he would become ‘the founder of the first Christian Javanese school of painters’ did not come true.6 After independence he became the painter for the new Indonesian elite society and later for the international jet-set until he death in 1993, in Thailand.

Another great exhibition of mission and art was planned for 1940 in Rome. In 1938 the preparation for the Indonesian contribution was already set up. Fifty works of art would be sent, 42 of these from Java. From the Outer Islands the following selection was made: from Sumatra an altar in Batak style, with very rich woodcarving. From Kalimantan only some minor pieces were sent: traditional woven clothes suited for the decoration of statues of saints and bamboo cases for the preservation of incense. From Makassar a model of a church in the style of a Toraja house, while from Flores a church in the style of a Manggarai house was prepared for the exhibition. Not less than 42 pieces were gathered from Central and East Java. These were models of the

---

6 Schüller 1938:60.
famous churches of Ganjuran and Pohsarang (see above), of the church of Yogyakarta-Pugeran in the style of a grand Javanese mansion; bamboo, stone and wooden altars, utensils for the liturgy like lamps and a monstrance, but the largest number were 16 statues of saints.\(^7\) Perhaps it was a relief for the owners of these beautiful objects that the exhibition was postponed until 1942, and then delayed again. For the 1950 exhibition the Indonesians sent a much more modest contribution.

The still modest beginning of the Catholic mission in Bali applied from its very beginning Balinese elements in its churches and chapels. They were stimulated by the SVD priests who liked this style of Christian art. On the Protestant side it was somewhat more difficult. As described in chapter fifteen, it was only during the Japanese occupation, when the Dutch ministers were put in prison and church life was not well organised, that Balinese Protestants started again to use traditional decorations from palm-leaf, coconuts and bamboo in the style of the decorations and offerings used by all Balinese at religious ceremonies. Only in the early 1970s Balinese Protestants developed a keen sense for a distinct Balinese style of Christian art.

\(^7\) Full lists and detailed descriptions in the Archives of the Archbishopric of Jakarta, AJAK, E 11–10–1.
It was not only in Java that some churches and chapels were built after models of traditional architecture. In the 1930s a church was built in Manggarai, West Flores, in the style of a traditional house. Most churches and chapels, however, followed the neo-gothic style that was common in Europe at the time.

1940–1970. The quiet interlude. The Balinese exception

Not much can be said about further development of Christian art between 1940 and 1970. The Japanese occupation and the struggle for independence were not the best periods for the development of an outspoken and forthrightly independent expression of Christian art. This was not a period of quick expansion, but rather of restoration and slow development. One special element that may have prevented the further development of specific Indonesian Christian art during this period, was the spirit of national unity, the result of the fight for independence. However, there was not yet any overall Indonesian
artistic tradition. The visual arts, but also expressions like theatre and poetry, were related to the various local traditions. That remains the situation even up to the present time. There is Javanese, Balinese, Sumatran and Sumbanese art and even many more traditions are continuing. Asmat woodcarving of Papua is still definitely related to one area alone. Because of this focus on regional rather than national art, the period of nationalist fervour may have been less suitable for the development of Christian Indonesian art.

The major religious building for this period was the Catholic church of Palasari, designed after the overall structure of a gothic cathedral but so richly decorated with Balinese ornaments and embedded in a garden with an elaborated entrance, pools, many plants and flowers, that the whole compound looks truly Balinese.


From the beginning of the development of Indonesian Christian art it was lay people who were active in the arts, although often at the instigation of the clergy. It was not always the most orthodox or pious who worked in this field. We have seen above the example of Iko in the 1930s, a Muslim artist who worked at the initiative of Joseph Schmutzer, and Basoeki Abdullah who
was active in religious art in the middle and late 1930s only and then turned into a society artist.

For the visual arts it was in most cases not the faithful of the first generation who created new Christian art. The new converts were people who had left their former religion, and they were not yet really able to create a new Christian artistic idiom. It was the generation succeeding the first converts who in most places started with individual development of Christian art. In 1993 the editors of the book Many Faces of Christian Art in Indonesia could give illustrations of the work of 40 individual artists. Some of them will be discussed below as examples. The two best known, Bagong Kussudiardjo and I Nyoman Darsane, will be discussed in somewhat more detail.

There are two centres for modern Indonesian Christian Art: Yogyakarta and the southern area of Bali. In Yogyakarta the most prestigious art school of the nation is established, ISI, Institut Seni Indonesia. In this town many tourists arrive for visits to the old Hindu temple of Prambanan and the Buddhist shrine of Borobudur. There is a Catholic Catechetical College, a department of the Sanata Dharma University, where much time is spent on the performing arts (music, dance, theatre). The Television and Radio Studio PUSKAT (after Pusat Kateketik or Catechetical Centre), started in 1969 by a Jesuit priest, Dr. Ruedi Hofmann, and initially located in the Saint Ignatius College of Yogyakarta, moved in 1995 to a large compound in Ngaglik, north of Yogyakarta, where amidst a large media village a unique house of worship was built. The four walls of the building are dedicated to the four great religions of Indonesia: Islam through a text from the Qur’an (“God does not love destruction”), Christianity not through the cross (“there is too much violence associated with the cross” as stated by founder Hofmann) but through a bird, after Mt. 6:25–27: “Do not worry. Look at the birds of the air: your heavenly father feeds them. Are you not more valuable than they?” Hinduism is represented with a swastika sign and the words: “I give life to everything growing,” while Buddhism is represented by the OM-sign and the text: “Let all creation rejoice.” For all religious programmes in Indonesia PUSKAT has played an important role. It was the first to start with religious drama and documentaries (in order to show something different from church and mosque services or only one person delivering a speech or sermon). This initiative was soon taken over by the other religions.

Since 1998 the Asian Christian Art Association (established by the Japanese Dr. Masao Takenaka) has chosen Dr. Judo Poerwowitzgo as its chair and the seat of the association moved to Yogyakarta. The great studio of the painter and dancer Bagong Kussudiardjo was also located in Yogyakarta.

Although the Christian community of Bali is relatively small, it has produced a good number of artists who sometimes fully, sometimes in part are
dedicated to Christian art. The most important, besides pioneer and leader I Nyoman Darsane (about whom more below) are I Ketut Lasia, Ni Ketut Ayu Sri Wardani, Komang Wahyu, Gede Sukana Kariana, I Gede Yosef C. Darsane and Tina Bailey. Many Javanese painters also moved to Bali to develop their artistic gifts and to find buyers in the many galleries of the island. Among these are Koni Herawati and Rev. Yatma Pramana (one of the very few ordained ministers active as an artist; Pramana was born in Purworejo but is now working in the GKPB, the Protestant Christian Church of Bali).

As a third vibrant centre for Christian art we must mention the Asmat area of Papua. The Asmat people are known worldwide as woodcarvers who make giant statues of their ancestors. In 1981 US born bishop Alphonse Sowada (in office as bishop between 1958 and 2001) started the Annual Asmat Art Auction that has attracted buyers and enthusiasts from around the world. An international panel of jurors select carvings from over 1,000 submissions representing nearly two-thirds of the Asmat villages. Since its beginning this intersection of Eastern and Western aesthetics, has attracted many admirers. Much of that work dates back to 1958 when the Ordo Sanctae Crucis or Crosiers of the United States responded to an invitation to serve among the Asmat people. The American members of this originally Dutch and Belgian-based religious order founded in the Middle Ages have tried to maintain the integrity and dignity of Asmat culture by insisting that all members of their order be trained in anthropology prior to engaging in work in the Asmat region, by incorporating indigenous art and symbolism into church structures, and by encouraging the Asmat to continue their carving traditions, and by collecting and preserving Asmat art.8 In fact, collecting Asmat tribal art was already started by MSC priest Gerald Zegwaard in the period 1947–1956.9 Notwithstanding the openness of Asmat artists to new ideas (besides the commercial replicas of traditional tribal art) they were not so creative in the field of Christian art. Therefore, our small selection of portraits of individual artists is restricted to Javanese and Balinese only.

A.B. Dwiantoro (b. 1953, Yogyakarta) did not initially follow a formal training in the arts, but learned from friends. Still, some time later he obtained a degree in the fine arts and became vice-director of the ISI, Institut Seni Indonesia, in Yogyakarta in the later 1990s. He has a very fine line bending style. In his ‘Fall of Mankind’ Eve is moving backwards, although she offers the apple to Adam, who is moving forward, with one extremely long arm. The snake is in a gentle curving approaching to her, but plays no decisive role. The lovely atmosphere of paradise is accentuated by the small animals

8 See also the site of the Museum http://www.asmat.org/.
all roaming around in the trees, many of them in couples. The thin objects, humans, trees and animals, all show an attractive world and there is no prefiguration of anything wrong or bad about to start here. Adam’s male status is accentuated by a grand moustache and a curved penis. Original sin is not an important issue in Indonesian theology, as it is not in Indonesian traditional culture. The bad figures of classical shadow plays, the giants or raksasa, are not bad by permanent and inborn character but only for some time after bad deeds. The picture does not have the tragic depth of an eternal damnation, notwithstanding its title.

Dudut Panuluh is a member of the East Javanese Christian Church (GKJW) and is a very serious, not to say stern and strict, painter. He studied theology for some time in Yogyakarta, but did not finish his study and moved towards painting. He often follows European examples of Christian art, but introduces Javanese elements in his work. The Trinity is here depicted as an angel with three heads, like the Brahma statue in the Prambanan Temple. While the Brahma figure is usually supported by Angsa or the swan as the carrier animal,
the Trinity is carried here by two dragons, breathing fire. The dragon (*naga*) of the Indonesian world is not the devilish beast that must be killed by the angel Michael or Saint George. It is the symbol of grounding, attachment to the earth and fertility, but also of royalty, temples and palaces and guardians of the sacred in general. The fire from the *naga* is not the fire of destruction but the purifying power as is also mentioned in Isaiah 6:6–7 and the four faces and four wings amidst lightning and fire of Ezekiel 1:4–6, here in the Indonesian-Chinese style. The lamb looks at first sight like a bearer animal or vehicle for the Trinity. We must understand it as a symbol of Christ, but its relation to the Trinity as symbol of the Divinity is unclear. Is it related to the rather vague and uncertain concept of the Divine Trinity among Indonesian Christians in general?

Andi Harisman is an artist living in the greatest harbour town of Indonesia, Surabaya. He works in a very realistic style, by some people compared to Paul Gauguin, because of his very naturalistic pictures of the native population. He wrote as a comment on the painting of ‘the birth’ (made for Christmas 1990): “Birth, for the Javanese, is a religious event. It is almost as important as the crucifixion is for Christians. Birth reflects something new. In this newly emerged life is new hope and a purification of life values, which have declined. Traditionally, those of Javanese culture believe a baby symbolizes good fortune.” The Baby Jesus lies calmly, still with the umbilical cord. Jesus
lies on a carpet that looks like rays shining, although it may also just be an old carpet unravelling. The light in fact comes from three oil lamps, while a fourth is not lighted. It is mostly older and younger women sitting around the baby: only one young boy and one young man are joining this group that is really concentrated on the new life here.

Anton Sudiharto has no formal art education, but in many respects can be seen as someone who is influenced by various streams of European art. He lived for several years in New Zealand and Australia, before he settled as an artist in Bali. His painting of the crucifixion shows the influence of cubism, especially in its background. Jesus is a quite active figure, without blood marks. Although he is bound on the cross it looks as if he wants to leave his place for somewhere else. This is more active than passive surrender. The three women under or rather besides the cross are painted in a very stylized way. It is not even easy to notice that there are three women. The painting is not in dark but even rather bright colours. On the whole the Indonesian image of the crucifixion is not that of the long and bloody passion but of the joyful event of salvation.

Agnes Y. Kawuwung was born in Cimahi, close to Bandung, West Java. She is of Minahasan descent. She failed to enter the Fine Arts Department of the Technical University of Bandung and learned the technique of painting in a
small art studio under the guidance of the famous artist Jeihan (born 1938). She has a rather surrealistic modern Western style. Her painting ‘Sleeping Faith’ shows a young girl sleeping, while a fine small angel comforts or at least joins her. She lies between a sky with the moon (or is it the sun, shining in bright colours?) and a landscape of waves where a boat in the form of a duck is passing by. Is the girl sleeping herself on the waves and so fulfilling what Peter could not perform, walking while awakened (John 21:1–14), or should we see an identification of the believer with Jesus sleeping on the shore of the lake? Apart from the form of the boat, a typical fishing boat of many Indonesian regions, the picture does not show traditional local features.

Two major artists: Bagong Kussudiardja and Nyoman Darsane

Bagong Kussudiardja (1929–2004) was born into a family of Javanese Muslims (abangan) belonging to the local gentry (bangsawan) of the Sultan’s palace (kraton) of Yogyakarta. He would stay his whole life in that town. Being married to a Christian wife he converted together with his children in 1968/69. Other families in the kraton followed his example. After his baptism by an
American Baptist missionary Bagong started to paint Christian themes. As early as 1948 he had begun to study painting with leading artists like Affandi, Hendra Gunawan, Kusnadi and Sudiarja in the flourishing local art scene. He soon started to teach himself at the Indonesian Art Academy (ASRI). Before his conversion Bagong was experimenting with traditional styles and themes. Sometimes he got inspiration from his younger brother who was a man of letters (sastrawan). At the same time Bagong took lessons in traditional dance. Already in 1958 he established a Dance Training Center.

Bagong was not only painter and Batik artist—a technique he introduced in Yogyakarta in the 1970s—but became also a well-known choreographer. The artist himself once stated: “Art is part of my life. I feel that one needs art just as one needs food, clothing and shelter.” Many group and solo exhibitions, national and international, as well as a number of art awards testify to his high reputation as an artist. Christian motives only constitute a small part of his rich oeuvre. Around 2000 Bagong got remarried to a Muslim woman. He therefore had to formally reconvert to Islam. Even though it is said that he remained Christian in private, in his last years Bagong became estranged from Christianity. It was only on his death bed in Yogyakarta’s Bethesda Hospital intensive care section when the former rector of the Christian University
(UKDW) Dr. Judo Poerwowidagdo, President of the Asian Christian Art Association (ACAA) and his predecessor in this function Prof. Dr. Masao Takenaka from Japan, who both provided Bagong with spiritual guidance for many years, prayed with him, that he found peace again. Following the Javanese way he greeted his family and friends and asked them for forgiveness for his failures and shortcomings. He was buried according to the Christian rites. “Bagong’s legacy will be continued by his children, who have followed his steps to be dancer, musician and actor.”¹⁰

Born and raised as a Hindu (*1939) Nyoman Darsane¹¹ converted to Christianity at the age of 17. Like many Balinese rice farmers, his father was also a musician who played in the orchestra of the ruler of Gianyar. Nyoman was brought up together with one of the princes and educated in the palace. That provided him with a deep knowledge of Hindu-Balinese religion and culture. It paved the way for him to not only become a painter but also a musician, dancer and puppet player. An academic training at the college in Semarang, Java, finally made him familiar with the western tradition as well. His early paintings are reminiscent of Gauguin, van Gogh and Nolde. Darsane thus belongs to the heterogeneous group of the so-called academicians, those artists who have studied at one of the country’s art colleges. Although they are experimenting with western influence of style, they have continuously been searching for their own Balinese identity. In Darsane’s case a special emphasis adds to this: since he converted to Christianity, he has been trying to mold this religion into a Balinese-Christian form.

As a result of his conversion, Darsane had been excluded from his family and ostracized by the village community. The Hindu-Balinese religion originated from the encounter between Hinduism and Balinese tribal religions, and until today it has many features of this primal religion. Religion and community are closely intertwined; whoever turns away from the common religion also renounces the solidarity of the community. Instead of the customary prearranged marriage Darsane made his own choice by getting married to a Christian wife of Chinese descent. Their only child Yossy has become an artist himself. His constant effort to give Christianity a Balinese shape finally convinced Darsane’s family and the community that he still is one of them. Today he is again well respected and his advice even in religious matters is highly appreciated. Darsane and Bagong were befriended and certainly influenced each other. The latter even had a studio and gallery on Bali for some years.

In his early batik Creation of Sun and Moon (1979) Darsane portrays Christ as the mediator of creation, who dances in front of the Father. The artist draws iconographically on the world of Hindu images. Shiva, the cosmic dancer, is at the same time creator, sustainer and destroyer of the universe; he can keep people in ignorance or lead them to knowledge. Depictions of this dancing god are omnipresent in Hindu art. Darsane has been stimulated by the notion of danced creation. However, the ambivalence of the figure of Shiva, who is creator and destroyer in one, does not fit his image of Christ.

As if at play, the dancing Christ lets the bright ball of the sun glide from his left hand. Spellbound he looks directly into the source of life. In his right hand the sickle of the waxing moon is already extracting itself from a lump of earth. The dancing figure is swinging with his whole body, on the verge of throwing the moon up high. There is no gravity in this movement—it is of great vigor. His white garment of light, a simple loincloth, and his hair blow in the breath of the Spirit. Everything is bathed in the gliding ray of the sun, which makes God's light radiate over his creation. Bagong has produced a number of depictions of the cosmic Christ as well. The Crucified Lord is portrayed as a wayang figure with raised arms floating in an ocean of colorful cosmic bubbles.
The idea that Jesus could have danced the message of the gospel remains strange to the western mind set. For the Balinese however dance is the ideal form of worship. They believe that the dancer performs in front of the gods and entertains them, but at the same time the gods are taking possession of the dancer to become present in the world. In Darsane’s *Sermon at the Seaside* Christ dances in the center of the picture. All movements are directed towards him. Again he is only dressed with the white garment of light, a traditional sarong, as a sign of his divine descent. His right arm points toward the sky, the palm wide open. The left arm is bent, the open palm pointing toward the left foot raised upward. According to Balinese worldview the right hand belongs to the upper world and the left one to the underworld. In traditional Hindu-Balinese dance this gesture therefore signals redemption. Jesus has a lighter skin color that differentiates him from the people who flock towards him. As a stranger he has come to Bali beach. For preaching, however, he chose the traditional Balinese way, recognising the islanders in their cultural identity. The people who approach him in groups of two, three or four, join in his dance. Nobody dances alone, yet women and men are separate. The Balinese have firm family and village ties. Nobody is left on his or her own.
Christ and the Fishermen by Bagong marks a rupture with the classical accommodation and inculturation art. The traditional Indonesian fishing boats in the background are still reminiscent of it. They suggest that Jesus Christ has arrived at the beach of the Indonesian islands. Shadowy figures are on their way to go fishing like Jesus disciples did at the lake Genezareth 2000 years ago.

The group of people in the foreground evoke a quite different impression. Jesus with blue bathing suit and muscle shirt, shoulder long hair, full beard and hype metal-rimmed sunglasses has spread his arms to an all-encompassing gesture. He attracts the full attention of the fishermen standing and crouching around him. The contours of some of them remind the beholder of Indonesian shadow puppets (wayang). They are mainly dressed in shorts and T-shirts. The colour of their skin ranges from black, brown and red to the white of the person behind Jesus. Against the common habit to claim Jesus for the particular context the artist plays here with the universal dimension of Christianity. The leisure dress, signature of global youth culture, symbolizes at the same time the irruption of modernity into Indonesian society. There have already plural modernities developed, which integrated the western culture...
of consumer capitalism in a hybrid mix of different influences into their own culture. Jesus Christ is present amongst all this.

Darsane’s *Rain of Blood* is dominated by the presence of the crucified. The cross does not really look like a wooden torture instrument but is more a vague silhouette in the background. From the cross red blood is rinsing down in small streams that painted in red of changing intensity. The background colours are varying from dark blue on the top and in the bottom corners to light pink in the lower part of the picture. Jesus does not hang so much on the cross than dancing it. His legs are disproportional long. The feet are crossed, putting one in front of the other. His face expresses compassion with the suffering of the world. To his left, the contours of two *wayang* figures, traditional shadow puppets, are visible.

Until recently Darsane has very rarely depicted suffering or poverty in his pictures. He was the painter of the “beautiful gospel.” The experience of the
Bali bombings in the aftermath of 9/11 however made him change his mind. The balance between good and evil that is crucial in Balinese worldview seems to be distorted. Both Darsane and Bagong show a clear tendency to move away from the inculturation mode of Christian art in Indonesia to a more hybridized local-and-international style.


Christian art for public use is not only found in churches and chapels. As far as we know, there is not much that is specifically Christian in the architecture of the many schools, universities and hospitals built by the Christian communities. These functional buildings follow the general architectural developments of Indonesia. There are also no examples of burial places or cemeteries where Indonesian Christians have developed a distinct style. But architecture
for places of pilgrimage has been rather different. Quite important has been the work by the gifted architect, novelist and priest Yusuf B. Mangunwijaya who started the further development of the compound of Sendang Sono (Central Java, in the mountainous region west of the great Buddhist shrine of Borobudur) in the later 1960s. Instead of building a grand cathedral, Mangunwijaya designed a large number of small structures: chapels, tent-like buildings fit for eating, discussion or prayer or just being together with small groups. Traditional elements like the 14 chapels for the way of the cross and a copy of the Lourdes and Fatima statues of Mary are here standing side by side with buildings in the Javanese *pendopo* style: open buildings with large roofs, ending only about 1.50 m above surface, without walls. Above and in chapter fourteen we have already given an impression of the sanctuary of Pohsarang in East Java, also a mixture of traditional Javanese architecture with imitations of European Catholic devotion. Mangunwijaya has built some large churches in Javanese *Joglo* style in Klaten, Tambran-Ganjuran and Wonosobo, besides many smaller ones, often in a style closer to that of Balinese temples.

Although most Catholic and Protestant churches are still built in the tradition of the European neo-gothic places of worship, in all regions of Indonesia several newer churches were built in local or regional traditional architecture since the early 1970s (and in some cases even already in the 1930s). This practice came under severe criticism in the inter-religious debate of the 1980s and later. The government-initiated Council for Inter-religious Consultation (*Badan Musyawarah Antaragama*) in the province of Yogyakarta formulated in 1983 an Ethical Code for Inter-religious Harmony. One of its instructions was about the symbolism of religious architecture:

> The new houses of worship must be in accordance with the local situation and the numbers of adherents to a religion who will make effective use of the new building. Apart from this, the shape of the building should clearly express the identity of different religions so that these buildings will not resemble each other.\(^\text{12}\)

In practice this means that a Christian church should not imitate Indonesian architectural tradition, but European style. This is a strategy for inter-religious harmony that is first of all focused on a prevention of conflicts through a clear and unmistakable separation of the religions. Indonesia has not taken over the cultural policy of Malaysia where in Christian terminology all specific Islamic elements are forbidden (even the word Allah for God), but this ruling for places of worship looks like some kind of religious *apartheid* and could lead towards a stagnation of artistic creativity on the part of Christians.

Fortunately, like many government proposals and rulings, this Ethical Code was never implemented as to this aspect.

Volker Küster, Karel Steenbrink & Rai Sudhiarsa

Bibliography

L’artisan Liturgique. Revue trimestrielle d’art religieux appliquée

Koch, H.J.M. SJ

Küster, Volker

Küster, Volker & Theo Sundermeier

Pirovano, V.

Schmutzer, Josef, Jan J. ten Berge SJ & Willem Maas

Schüller, Sepp

Steenbrink, Karel