

The Genesis of a Dance-Genre: Walter Spies and the *Kecak*

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Strange Recordings

In 1931 a certain “Dr. Friedrich Dalsheim”¹ recorded three wax cylinders of Balinese music which, in 1932, were sent to the Berlin Phonogram Archive.² Erich Moritz von Hornbostel (1877-1935), at that time director of the archive, apparently found the recorded sounds of little interest and quality; all that he noted about these cylinders was “*Geschnatter*” (jabbering).³ Indeed, when first listening to the recordings, one would hardly consider it “music”. Without any sort of accompanying background information, it is difficult to value or recognize the recordings as significant. Normally in phonogram archives like Berlin’s there are additional sources available regarding the collector, for example, correspondence between the archive and the collector and/or documentation about the recordings containing place, date, people recorded, performed style and so forth. In the case of the Dalsheim collection, which comprises only three wax cylinders, no

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- 1 In some sources Dalsheim is spelled with an extra “h” (Dahlsheim); in the Berlin Phonogram Archive his name is written as above and will be further used this way.
 - 2 Together with the Phonogram Archive in Vienna, which first began to collect wax plates, Berlin was the first archive to host collections of wax cylinders recorded by researchers, missionaries, colonial employees etc. all over the world. For further information concerning the Berlin Phonogram Archive and its collections see Susanne Ziegler’s article in this publication; see also Simon/ed. (2000) and Ziegler (2006).
 - 3 Hornbostel made this comment for very similar *sanghyang* recordings made by Jaap Kunst in 1924. This collection and the even earlier *sanghyang* recordings are very interesting in and of themselves but will not be mentioned further in this short article.

corresponding information was found in the archive and it is highly probable that Hornbostel knew as little as we do, were we to depend solely on the information provided by the archive. Although no documentation exists regarding the circumstances under which the three cylinders were recorded, the collector and date appear obvious enough not to be questioned.

My interest in the Dalsheim recordings began upon hearing the name of the collector. Little is known of Dr. Friedrich Dalsheim, and some sources are even contradictory. There is no doubt that he was a German ethnographic filmmaker. During 1930-31 he was working as a cameraman – together with Hans Scheib – in Bali on a movie entitled “Insel der Dämonen” (Island of the Demons) with the German filmmaker Victor von Plessen (1900-1980) as director.⁴

The fourth person in the production team and the person responsible for the “künstlerischer Beirat, Choreographie der Tänze, [...] ethnografische Beratung” (artistic adviser, choreography of dances and ethnographical advice) (Eisner 1933) was the well-known German artist and scholar Walter Spies (1895-1942). Spies had lived in Bali since 1927 and is considered one of the most important and influential persons in Balinese artistic history of the early 20th century.⁵ As an article by Jaap Kunst points out, Spies was not only a painter, but also a gifted pianist and musician. Kunst writes that Spies' greatest achievements as a musician lie in his studies of Balinese music, which he unfortunately never published (Kunst 1946: 25-27). We know that Spies worked together with many other artists visiting or living on Bali and was influential for their work, not only in terms of his knowledge about Balinese music and dance, but also because of his close and intense contacts to the Balinese community and his insight into Balinese culture as a whole.⁶

For the film-team around von Plessen, Spies was not only the “artistic advisor”, as he was labeled afterwards. Spies provided the crew with contacts to the Balinese community and helped to find skilled Balinese actors and suitable locations. But above all, Spies

4 Lotte H. Eisner, in: *Film-Kurier*, Nr. 42, 17.2.1933.

5 On Spies and his time in Bali see for example Rhodius/Hg. (1964), especially the introduction, pp. 29-41.

6 Just to mention some prominent figures: Vicki Baum and her novel “Tale of Bali” (Vickers 1996:141-144), Beryl de Zoete, co-author of the book “Dance and Drama in Bali” (Kunst 1946: 27), or Miguel Covarrubias with his early book about Balinese culture “The Island of Bali” (Vickers 1996: 147-151).

opened his house and yard for von Plessen and Dalsheim to live for the whole duration of the filming on Bali.⁷

The plot of “Insel der Dämonen” centers on a story of good and evil forces in a Balinese village. In order to give the movie a more “authentic” character, only Balinese lay actors were recruited for the film, and scenes containing many different styles of Balinese music and drama were added. Spies, responsible for deciding which music and dances should be used, not only included already existing performances; he also re-arranged existing Balinese dances.

With this knowledge in the back of one's mind, the Dalsheim wax cylinders acquire an entirely new significance, especially to an ethnomusicologist interested in the genesis of the *kecak*.⁸

It is likely that the audio recordings were in some way linked to the filming process. “Insel der Dämonen” itself is a silent movie equipped with a post-production soundtrack composed by Wolfgang Zeller in Germany (Eisner 1933). The soundtrack is based on a composed orchestral score, as was common practice in 1930s film-productions. In addition, Balinese speech had been recorded on Bali and cut into the musical score to underline the “authenticity”, or possibly the documentary character of the filmed material. Most astoundingly, even Balinese music is used whenever a Balinese dance or music-scene is portrayed. An anecdote about this fact can be found in one of Walter Spies' letters to his mother, where he recounts his visit to a cinema on Java. There he was able to see “Insel der Dämonen” for the first time in its final version with the post-production soundtrack: “Insel der Dämonen’ habe ich nun endlich einmal gesehen: den Film selbst, bis auf einige Kleinigkeiten, finde ich sehr gut; die Musik ist aber abscheulich, und besonders ärgert einen, daß kein einziger von

7 See the letter from Walter Spies to his mother dated 11 July 1931 and letters from Conrad Spies to “aunt Martha” (Spies' mother) dated 19 July 1931 and 31 October 1931. Conrad Spies was Walter Spies' cousin, who lived with him on Bali from 1930 until his tragic death on Bali in 1932 (see the letter from Walter Spies to “uncle Rudolph”, Conrad's father, dated 8 March 1932). Copies of all these letters can be seen at the Leiden University Library, Southeast-Asian and Oceanian Collections; provided by the Stichting Walter Spies.

8 I have recently finished my Ph.D. thesis “The *kecak* – a Balinese Dance, its Genesis, Development and Manifestation Today”. In my work I focus on the music and dance of the *kecak*, especially in relation to the influence of Western artists in colonial times and modern day tourism on the Balinese arts. This article includes only a small part of my research.

den Tänzen auf die dazu passende Gamelanmusik getanzt wird, – gerade immer die verkehrte! Sehr bedauerlich, weil jeder natürlich von *mir* gerade das nicht erwartet hätte.” (I have finally seen the film; despite some trivial matters, I think the film is very good; but the music is horrible, and what makes me particularly angry is that not one of the dances is danced to the right gamelan music – the wrong music every time! Very unfortunate, because everyone naturally expects quite the opposite from me.)⁹

While studying the Spies’ correspondence and material published on him thus far, I was not able to find out more about the recordings made on Bali that were used for the soundtrack. Considering the relatively high sound quality of this material, especially in comparison to the Dalsheim collection, I can only guess that in the filming process, better recording equipment than the wax cylinder technology provided by the Berlin Phonogram Archive was used. This might well be the reason why the three cylinders ended up in the Archive and not as part of the soundtrack.

In 1998 “Insel der Dämonen” was restored at the Filmmuseum Amsterdam; the restored version being based on several different still existing copies.¹⁰ Thanks to this restoration, the film “Insel der Dämonen” is more easily accessible for both scholars and an interested public.

When in 2000 the Dalsheim collection of the Berlin Phonogram Archive was transferred to digital media and thereafter listened to for the first time after decades in paper boxes, I had the great opportunity to be present.¹¹ We listened to the wax cylinders with excitement, and although the quality of the cylinders is poor, it was clearly recognizable – Dalsheim had recorded several different elements of either a *kecak* or a *sanghang dedari* performance.

What then is this genre, developed in the 1930s, called *kecak*, or simply *cak*, today?¹² And how is it related to the *sanghyang dedari*?

9 Letter Walter Spies to his mother, dated 4 October 1934.

10 Personal correspondence with Mark-Paul Meyer, curator at the Filmmuseum Amsterdam, e-mail dated 1 September 2004.

11 For further information about the digitalization project see Wiedmann (2000) and Ziegler (2000).

12 If not indicated otherwise, all information provided in the following chapter is based on personal communication with two Balinese masters in *kecak*: Ida Bagus Nyoman Mas, teacher at the ISI Denpasar and leader of the *kecak* group *Sekaha Cak Puspita Jaya* from Blahkiu and I Wayan Dibia, former head of the ISI Denpasar, well-known choreographer and author of the only book published about the *kecak* to date.



Kecak Performance by Seka Cak Puspita Jaya of the village Blahkiu at Uma Dewi, Denpasar (5.2.2001), first scene with the entire cak chorus

Cak

The name *kecak* is onomatopoeic, taken from the simple syllable *cak*, the basis for a complex, interlocking¹³ vocal pattern resulting in a mainly percussive vocal music. A *kecak* is performed by an all-male chorus of up to 100 men sitting in concentric circles around a kind of candelabra lit with fire called *damar kecak*. The male voices are the entire music; there are no other instruments.

The chorus of *cak* singers, called *pengecak*, is divided into groups of two or three men singing together. According to Ida Bagus Nyoman Mas, leader of the *Seka Cak Puspita Jaya*, they sit in close proximity to one another in order to hear each other optimally and develop a perfect interlocking pattern. Within each of these groups, each man sings one of three parts called *polos*, *sangsih* and *sanglot*. When sung together, these three lines result

13 Interlocking, in Balinese referred to as *kotekan*, is a compositional technique of combining several instrumental or vocal patterns into one melody or rhythm. For further explanations of Balinese interlocking see Tenzer (1998: 46).

in a pattern in which all four pulses within one beat are filled with *cak* calls (see transcription at the bottom of this page).

There are up to seven different styles for *polos*, *sangsih* and *sanglot*; the more talented the group, the more styles are used. The most common pattern is the one notated, the *cak telu*. *Telu* is Balinese for three, the three standing for the three *cak* calls that form the constantly repeated pattern over two beats. The beat, in turn, is given by the beat-keeper, the *juru klempung*. The word he shouts is *pung*, mimicking the sound of a *kajar*, the beat-keeping instrument used in a Balinese *gamelan* ensemble. The *juru klempung* is one of three leaders who provide the *cak* chorus with time orientation during the performance. The most important person is the *juru tarek* (*tarek* means “to pull” in Balinese) who performs his calls louder than the rest in order to give the tempo and signals when to switch to another part of the performance or when to stop.¹⁴ His voice can be heard, for example, each time the choir starts a new “round” of *cak*, shouting two loud “cak cak” or one long “caaaaak” in the tempo to be followed. Sitting next to the *juru klempung* and *juru tarek* is the *juru gending*. He sings the ostinato-like basic melody and plays the vocal replacement for the *gong*, singing a vibrating “sirrr” at every eighth *pung* of the *juru klempung*. The way in which *juru gending*, *juru klempung* and the *pengecak* work together is more clearly presented in the following notation, the bordered part presenting one cycle of *cak telu*.

Cak Telu

The notation consists of five staves. The top staff, labeled 'juru klempung', has a series of dots representing 'pung' calls, numbered 1 through 7. The second staff, labeled 'cak polos', 'cak sanglot', and 'cak sangsih', shows a rhythmic pattern of 'cak' calls. The third staff, labeled 'juru gending', shows a sequence of 'sirr' calls. The bottom staff shows a sequence of 'yang' calls. The notation is enclosed in a large bracket on the left side.

Transcription of Cak Telu and a gending melody typically used for the kecak

¹⁴ For some additional information on the different *juru* and their role during a *kecak* performance see also Dibia (2000: 18-20).

The notes used by the *juru gending* are taken from the Balinese pentatonic *saih lima* scale, a scale with no fixed pitches or intervals; the approximate tuning is nevertheless always recognizable. The signs used in the notation above are taken from the Balinese notation called *grantangan*.¹⁵

In addition to the *juru terek*, *juru klempung* and *juru gending*, two more men have solo parts: the storyteller *dalang* and the *juru tembang*, a singer of special melodies not directly related to the *cak* chorus. The chorus, the three leaders and two soloists form the full music for a *cak* performance. But it would be far from complete without the dramatic dance performed by six to twelve female and male dancers playing scenes from the Indian epic Ramayana in the midst of the *cak* singers. The dancers are dressed in elaborate costumes, each character with his or her own recognizable outfit and makeup, as opposed to the chorus, whose members wear simple black and white-checked clothing and are bare-chested. The characters may also be differentiated by their movements, positioning and gestures. The most commonly staged performance of the Ramayana today is “The Abduction of Sita“. The story focuses on the kidnapping of the princess Sita by Rahwana, king of the demons. She is eventually rescued by her husband, Rama, his brother, Laksmana, and their allies, who then destroy Rahwana and his kingdom. The standard performance is choreographed in great detail; there are just a few sections that may be varied during the piece.

The two earlier mentioned solo parts, *juru tembang* and *dalang*, are directly linked to the dancers. The role of the solo singer or *juru tembang* (*tembang* could be translated as “song”), is to communicate to the audience what the characters are saying. Because the dancers do not talk, their pantomimic gestures and dialogs are either verbalized by the *dalang* or synchronically transferred to sung poems. Both the singing and the dancing are set forms, though the dancers must listen to the singers, in order to be correctly synchronized. The *juru tembang* sings the parts of some of the more significant characters in the old Javanese language *kawi*¹⁶, originally derived from the Indian Sanskrit. Since this language is only spoken by a few elite, a translator is needed. This part is performed by the earlier mentioned storyteller or nar-

15 During my one year stay in Bali I became familiar with Balinese notation and learned transcription in this style. For a short explanation see Tenzer (2000: xxiv) or McPhee (1966: 56ff).

16 For further information on *kawi* see Zurbuchen (1987).

rator, the *dalang*, who uses high standard Balinese and acts as the mediator between the stage and the audience. It is the *dalang's* task to describe the scene and transport moods and content while explaining and/or commenting on the events.

An entire performance of *cak* lasts one hour and is usually performed around sunset on an open-air stage or covered pavilion. This is done in order to integrate the changing light of dusk into the rising tension of the performance.

Examining the Dalsheim Recordings

After their transfer from wax cylinder to digital media, the recordings of the Dalsheim collection were taken back to where they were made. I was able, thanks to the Berlin Phonogram Archive, to undertake a six-week restudy of the three cylinders together with Balinese artists and university teachers in Bali in 2002.

In a closer examination of the recordings together with Balinese colleagues¹⁷ we discovered that cylinder “Dalsheim 1” contained the *pengalang*, an introductory section during which the *dalang* sings verses from the Ramayana, as used in *kecak* performances today. At a certain point the chorus takes over and continues the verses. The lyrics sung by the *dalang* are recognizable as: „awun-awun, sang dasa uana, ngemban si [...] a raden dewi“ (in the clouds the mighty [Rahwana] abducts the goddess [Sita]). The choir takes over on the second syllable of *dewi*, prolonging it over several notes. This chant continues, but due to the slow tempo, no lyrics can be understood. This typical *cak* introduction is still one of the standards in today's performances. At the end of the recording the *cak* chorus enters after being called in by the *juru tarek*.

Cylinder “Dalsheim 2” is a direct continuation of the *pengalang*, with the *cak* chorus being led by the *juru gending* in the first half and later by the *juru tarek*. The melody line by the *juru gending* is more elaborate than the standard today, although melodies like this may be used during *pengalang* or certain intermezzos without dancers. The third cylinder however contains the women's unison choir for a *sanghyang dedari*.

17 The scholars contributing to the restudy were: I Ketut Gde Asnawa MA, Ni Ketut Suryatini SSKar, I Kadek Widnyana SST, I Gusti Lanang Ardika SST and I Gusti Ngurah Padang SSKar.

From *Sanghyang* to *Kecak*

Watching a *kecak* live performance today is an extraordinarily exciting event, and many tourists consider it a most impressive portrayal of Balinese tradition. For many years the *kecak* was promoted as *the* traditional Balinese art form, though tourists today watching a performance and reading the accompanying program are directly confronted with the relatively short history and development of the *cak*: “Contrary to popular belief the *Kecak* dance is not particularly old. It was probably first performed in 1930, although the chorus had its origins in a very ancient ritual of the *Sanghyang* (trance) Dance, which is still performed sometimes in the village.”¹⁸

The roots of *kecak* can indeed be found in the above mentioned *sanghyang*. The *sanghyang* is a purification ritual performed in order to free a village from illnesses or plagues. If necessary a *sanghyang* ritual is held in the inner courts (*jeroan*), the holiest part of a Balinese temple. During a *sanghyang*, a medium falls into trance and is entered by gods or god-like supernatural beings who then express their will through the medium. In a common form, the *sanghyang dedari*, one or two girls dance while in trance. The young girls dancing must be pre-menstrual virgins and must not necessarily be educated in classical Balinese dancing. Priests watch over the performance and especially the dancing girls in order to waken them with holy water and special chants if the trance becomes too extreme or the ritual ends.¹⁹

Walter Spies was deeply impressed and moved by the *sanghyang dedari* performances he witnessed. In a letter to Jaap Kunst he wrote: “Was ich vorläufig in Ihrem Buch noch gar nicht erwähnt fand, ist der Gesang auf Bali ohne Gamelan, besonders die merkwürdigen Chöre beim Sanghiang Dedari. Das scheint mir absolut etwas aus einer anderen Sphäre zu sein [...]. Diese heiligen Tänze mit [...] der ganzen Atmosphäre und diesem Gebärden-gesang [...] war der größte Eindruck, den ich auf Bali hatte [...]” (What I did not find mentioned in your book thus far is the Balinese singing without Gamelan, especially the strange choirs in the sanghyang dedari. [...] These holy dances, with [...] the whole

18 Cited from the standard English leaflet text used by many groups all over Bali.

19 For more detailed information on the *sanghyang dedari* see Bandem/deBoer (1981: 11-17).

atmosphere and this gesture-dance [...] was the greatest impression I had on Bali.)²⁰

When asked by Victor von Plessen to help with the movie “Insel der Dämonen”²¹, Walter Spies decided to include several types of Balinese music and dance, among them the dance *legong* and some fragments of *baris* and *barong*. In the final scene, when a great temple festival with an exorcist rite is portrayed, Spies decided to display a complete *sanghyang dedari* rite, with two female dancers dancing in trance and both a women's choir for the dancers' preparation as well as the previously described male *cak* chorus accompanying the two dancers in their trance dancing.



Still from the film “Insel der Dämonen” by Victor von Plessen 1932. In this scene, the two trance-dancers dance in front; in the back a small circle of pengecak can be seen.

20 Walter Spies to Jaap Kunst about *sanghyang dedari* in a letter from the end of April 1925; see Rhodius (1964:209f.).

21 As can be seen in several different letters Walter Spies and Conrad Spies wrote to their friends and family, they were much involved in the whole filming process, starting from the development of the script (Conrad did the typing) up to choosing locations and actors and helping with the final filming, e.g. letter Walter Spies to his mother dated 11 July 1931, letter Conrad Spies to his aunt Martha dated 19 July 1931 and 27 October 1931.



Still from the film “Insel der Dämonen” by Victor von Plessen 1932. Same scene as in the still above; from this angle we see a group of pengecak seated around the damar kecak.

Although the film shows an original *sanghyang dedari* rite, there are significant differences between this *sanghyang* and a *sanghyang* as executed in Balinese villages. For “Insel der Dämonen” a *sanghyang* was performed out of context for the first time, not as an exorcism but for aesthetic reasons. But how can we know if the *sanghyang dedari* in “Insel der Dämonen” really displays a *sanghyang dedari* as it was in the 1930s?

We are fortunate enough to have a film document of a *sanghyang dedari* in its original context, filmed in 1926, only five years before “Insel der Dämonen”. This film document has been re-published as a part of the DVD “Van De Kolonie Niets Dan Goeds” by the Filmmuseum Amsterdam. The part “De Sanghyangs” shows a *sanghyang dedari* on two different occasions.

When comparing this material with “Insel der Dämonen” we can see that only some minor parts of the choreography have been changed. The first step of the *sanghyang's* visual transformation into *kecak* was the changing of the male choir's seating formation from tight, closed circles, as can be seen in the 1926 material, to one wider and more structured circle in “Insel der Dämonen”. Further on, a lamp was placed in the middle of the

cak group and we can assume that a reason for this was the better illumination of the faces for the film. This lamp was clearly a new invention, and until today this *damar kecak*, placed in the middle of the *pengecak*, is an essential part of every *kecak* performance. All the other parts – the female singing, the process of putting the two young dancers into trance and their dancing to the *cak* chorus – is exactly the same both in the documentary and in “Insel der Dämonen”.



Still from the documentary “De Sanghyangs” from 1926. In the back we see a large group of pengecak, in the left corner in front the two trance-dancers.

Contrary to what many sources convey, “Insel der Dämonen” does not contain the first *kecak* performance. Instead Spies organized the performance of a *sanghyang* ritual with only some minor changes. Nevertheless, the film is an important document showing the slow transformation of the genre into a new one. It was at this time that Balinese artists and Western expatriates increasingly began to show an interest in the *cak* chorus as an art form and no longer just as part of a ritual. This fact becomes apparent in the collaboration between Spies, the villagers of Bedulu and the Balinese dancer Wayan Limbak. A choreography for the *cak* cho-

rus was invented.²² This new *cak*, which was again filmed in great detail for a silent documentary by Vicki Baum (1888-1960) in 1935, is different in many ways. First and most importantly, no trance is invoked. In addition, the female chorus has been abandoned while the male group of *pengecak* was much enlarged. For the first time the chorus began acting, transforming into “demons” or “monkeys” that fought in groups. However, the most important addition was the solo-dancers. Contrary to performances today, the solo-dancers in the early *kecak* were all male members of the chorus with no elaborate costumes, stepping out from the choir when it was their turn to perform and joining the group again afterwards. The choreographic arrangement of space changed again, now that the solo-dancers no longer took their place outside, but for the first time inside the circle of *pengecak*, as it still is the case today. With the abandoning of all ritualistic elements, the addition of dramatic scenes taken from the Ramayana and the introduction of the role of the *dalang*, the *kecak* became what it is today: a dramatic dance performance.

Shortly after the *kecak*'s first few performances, the art form began to spread, and Walter Spies played a significant role in the process. In a letter to Jane Belo and Colin McPhee dated 10 May 1935 he writes: “You can't imagine Jane, what Bali looked like on those days the GG [General Governor of the Netherlands Indies] was here! [...] I had to arrange the Ketjaks of course. The whole Samoetiga temple in Bedoeloe was illuminated; gates, walls etc. with 5,000 [...] lamps. The Ketjaks were sitting under a specially built bale surrounded by concentric rows of damars – beginning very low and getting higher and higher towards the back – amphitheatrically. It looked absolutely the most incredible thing you ever saw, and not at all too light or too dark, just right.”²³

22 Opinions differ in regards to whether Walter Spies or Limbak, together with inhabitants of the village Bedulu, played the most important part in creating the new form. Some even consider the American dancer Katharine Mershon to have played a major role, although no written or historical sources mention her explicitly. A review of historical material has shown that Mershon and the village of Bona played minor roles in the further development of the *kecak* as tourist performance. The two key figures, both equally important, indeed were Spies and I Wayan Limbak.

23 In the same letter Walter Spies mentions Vicki Baum's visit to Bali, during which she filmed the above mentioned documentary film (letter from Walter Spies to Colin McPhee and Jane Belo dated 10 May 1935, hosted at the Leiden University Library, Southeast-Asian and Oceanian Collections, provided by the Stichting Walter Spies).

This letter clarifies two important facts. First, in 1935 the new genre has already been given its new name – the *kecak*. And second, Spies obviously was in charge of organizing and arranging the *kecak* group for an important visitor to the island, the General Governor of the Netherlands Indies.

Starting in the mid 1930s, new groups in other villages were founded, new elements included and very quickly the *kecak* became part of the tourism machinery. The 1930s witnessed the first boom of tourism in Bali (Vickers 1996: 121ff.). Hotels and shops were built all over the island, and for the first time Balinese dances were performed exclusively for tourists on a regular basis.



*Video-still from the documentary by Vicki Baum in 1935.
The characters Subali and Sugriwa are dancing in the midst of the
other pengecak.*

As for the artistic quality of the *cak* (both of the music and the dancing), since the 1930s, *cak* performances have consistently become more elaborate, inspiring many Balinese and foreign artists to creatively use this flexible art medium as well as to eventually include elements of other Balinese or foreign art forms. In one final step towards the form of the contemporary *cak*, in the early 1960s the *sendratari*, an Indonesian acronymic term for “art of dramatic dance” became popular in Bali (Bandem 1983: 131f.). By combining the *sendratari* with the *kecak*, new standards for

the dancers were developed, for example their costumes and styles of dancing.

The *kecak* today

One result of the above mentioned restudy of *sanghyang dedari* and *kecak* material from 1926 to 1935 was the discovery that *sanghyang dedari* and today's *cak* remain amazingly related, primarily in terms of musical structure and basic *cak* patterns. A most astonishing fact is that some fundamental musical elements, generally attributed to be part of the *kecak*, had already been included in the *sanghyang dedari* musical accompaniment. One prominent example for this are the Dalsheim recordings 1 and 2, which show that the *pengalang* is a basic musical element of both *sanghyang dedari* and *kecak*.

Nevertheless the difference in performance practices between the *sanghyang dedari* and the *kecak* could not be greater. In 1971, Balinese scholars, in order to avoid the uncontrolled exploitation of Balinese culture²⁴, held a meeting and agreed on classifying Balinese dances into three categories called *tari wali* (sacred dances), *tari bebali* (ceremonial or ritual dances) and *tari balihahan* (secular dances). Interestingly enough, as basis for the classification, members of the 1971 meeting used a sacral vs. secular opposition despite the fact that this differentiation does not exist in Balinese terms (Rein 1994: 40ff.). This well-known classification system is now commonly used by both international and Balinese scholars and dancers. Taking it into consideration, *cak* and *sanghyang* actually belong to opposite categories.

The *sanghyang* was classified as *tari wali*, or the most sacred of traditional dances. Dances of this group may not be danced outside their ritual contexts. As mentioned above, the *sanghyang* may only be performed in the inner courtyards of a temple, their sole function being to mediate between gods and humans. The dancers and musicians are not considered good or bad; they are never judged in aesthetic terms. They take part in the ritual not as professionals but as members of the community fulfilling their duty to their village.²⁵

24 Tourism, as an important source of income for the entire country, was already favored and promoted by the Indonesian government under President Suharto (Picard 1996: 45-56).

25 Nevertheless performances of *sanghyang* occur, in combination with *kecak*. Groups I interviewed regarding the question whether it is prohib-

In contrast, the *cak* is a dance belonging to *tari bali-balihan*, secular dances for pure entertainment, without any ritual or religious context. A *cak* tells a story in order to entertain the audience; therefore, a *cak* group, usually organized in a community called *seka*, is judged by its skills and paid for its performance. In order to keep the audience interested, groups must consider their musical standards. The quality of the performance is strictly regulated – normally not only by the group leader but also by the owner of the stage or hotel. Now and then new elements are included to keep up with trends, to remain competitive and to ensure an aesthetically elaborate performance.

All this considered, skeptics could conclude that the *cak* lost its sacred character with the shift to a tourist performance, yet another example of the loss of tradition due to Western influences.²⁶ But looking closer, it is clear that this view is inaccurate. First, the *sanghyang dedari* still exists in its original form and was not superseded by the *kecak*, as described by McKean (1979: 295-299). Secondly, as mentioned earlier, the *kecak* was created as an art form, only some musical and dance elements, namely the male chant and some *pengecak* movements, were adopted from the *sanghyang*.

As for the whole *kecak* performance with all its dramatic elements, standards for *cak* performances differ from year to year. New styles and interpretations for music and performance are soon adapted by neighboring groups and thus quickly spread over the island. Yet, one element never changes: the basic *cak* chorus pattern.

In the 21st century the promotion of Balinese culture for tourists is still an enormous factor in Bali's economy, and the *kecak* has been established as one of the must-see performances for tourists on Bali. In 2001 approximately 25 *cak* groups, located throughout Bali with a concentration in the Gianyar region, performed regularly in hotels or on specially built stages.

On 12 October 2002 a bomb exploded in the Balinese town of Kuta, killing almost 200 people, mostly foreign tourists. The tourism economy collapsed as a consequence, directly affecting artists and groups who produce and perform for national and international tourists. In 2005 the figures for international tourism have

ited to perform a *sanghyang* or not generally stated that they were performing just a "copy" of *sanghyang*, not a real one, e.g. without real offerings and the dancers only pretended to enter trance.

26 See for example Mc Kean (1979) and Siregar/Fajar/Wirata (1993), a very critical article from the Balinese point of view.

stabilized, a trend that has continued into 2007. The result for Balinese *kecak* groups has been twofold: First, some often quite well known groups considered to be outstanding in their performance do not perform any more; other groups still perform but have lost all their energy and artistic ambition. On the other hand, new groups have emerged and existing groups have worked out new choreographies, both setting new and higher standards for *kecak* performances.²⁷



Kecak performance by Sekaha Cak Puspita Jaya of the village Blahkiu at Uma Dewi, Denpasar (5.2.2001); close-up of Sita (left) and Rama.

Conclusion

Very few music scholars working historically are so fortunate as to have the music they study documented from its very emergence, not only in descriptions but as audio and film recordings. In the case of *cak*, a tradition that is now almost 80 years old, sources such as photographs, ethnographic films and several written sources are available. Therefore it is possible to reconstruct the exact date of the *cak*'s genesis and development out of

²⁷ For more detailed data about the influence of the bombings on the Balinese arts, especially *kecak* groups, see Steputat (2007).

the *sanghyang dedari*, its dancing style and context. But only with the additional, early audio sources of the *cak*, as included in the film “Insel der Dämonen” and the Dalsheim recordings, has it been possible to study the musical style in itself, its development until today and to verify the written sources.

Under the influence of European scholars and artists, mainly Walter Spies, working closely with Balinese artists in the 1930s, a new and highly creative, lively art form was established in Bali. It is still existent today as a flexible and strong part of the Balinese culture.²⁸ The *kecak* has become a typically and traditionally Balinese icon, inspired ironically enough, by a German.

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