

Volker Küster

Zwischen Pancasila und Fundamentalismus—Christliche Kunst in Indonesien
 [Between Pancasila and Fundamentalism. Christian Art in Indonesia] (Leipzig:
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Volker Küster is a German theologian, who is the professor for comparative religion and missiology at the University of Mainz in Germany since 2012. Before this assignment, he was the professor for cross-cultural theology in Kampen, the Netherlands. With this new publication, he is reconnecting with his theological roots which have nourished him. He did his doctorate and habilitation at Heidelberg University under Theo Sundermeier, who is well known for his publications in African and Asian Christian art. Sundermeier's research shows that many indigenous theologies already existed in art before they became written words. As his assistant, Küster wrote with him a booklet about the Balinese painter Nyomen Darsane: *Das schöne Evangelium. Christliche Kunst im balinesischen Kontext*, 1991. Since then he has been taking a continuous interest in Christian art in Indonesia, and what we see now is the result of around thirty years of research.

Küster has achieved in bringing out the first handbook of Christian art in Indonesia, concentrating mainly on painting, carving, and architecture but mentioning other forms like dance and masks also. This is a pioneering work because so far Indonesian Christian art has only appeared in collective volumes of the Christian Conference of Asia or in collections of other authors or as few monographs sponsored by various mission agencies. As much as his efforts have to be appreciated, this would have been even better if all the 189 plates had been printed in colour and the size of the pictures had been bigger. An English translation of the book in larger size in full-colour print would help the Indonesian people very much to learn about their rich heritage.

The book is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter, the author sets the scene by giving a short, excellent introduction to the Buddhist, Hindu, and Islamic past and the history of the state till date. He also mentions the primaeval religious traditions which are particularly of importance for Papua. He includes the beginning of the mission history in Indonesia and especially in Bali, where mission was strictly forbidden by the Dutch till the 1930s. Bali, with its rich artistic heritage has brought out Christian architecture and paintings in distinct Balinese style.

The second chapter concentrates on Bali and the Christian art which emerged there in the Hindu context. Küster portrays the still active and most important Nyomen Darsane, a Hindu convert, who was deeply connected to

his Hindu heritage as he was educated along with one of the Balinese princesses. Though converted to Protestantism, he did not give up his art tradition but filled it with new content and created work for the growing small church buildings and did paintings. Recently I visited the chapel near his house and saw behind the altar his painting of typical rice terraces. Darsane explained, "This is God's creation." So also, a profane-looking painting can become a religious one through the eye of the viewer. Küster continues with Ketut Lasia, who is known for his Gospel painting in the traditional, very detailed Balinese style.

The third chapter is devoted to the Christian art scene in Yogyakarta, where in addition to Bali, a Christian art scene is flourishing. Today Yogya is dominated by Islam, but the multireligious past is still visible in the monuments and ruins of Borobudur and Prambanan. Bagong Kussudiardja, who died in 2004 was a dancer and painter. He started with inculturation in his work and moved towards a more global approach. He did not shy away from ugliness in his art and shows a Jesus dancing. Other artists include Hendarto, Hari Santosa, A.B. Dwiantoro, Dopo Yeihan (known for his feminist theology paintings), and Wisnu Sasongko.

The fourth chapter is about Christian Papua art. The Asmat are world famous for their carvings. Therefore, it does not surprise that the Catholic Church has encouraged them also to make carvings with Christian themes for the churches. Küster reports that although he could find many churches with Christian carvings, it was extremely difficult to find individual carvers. They are mostly unknown like the carvers in the Middle Ages; only their art speaks. There is a competition among the parishes to have a 'beautiful' church that includes wall paintings, or reliefs, in concrete and wood inside and outside. Also, the pillars are often carved, and angels in Papua style are omnipresent.

The fifth chapter deals with architecture. Right from the beginning, Christianity in Indonesia adopted a lot from the Hindu temples for building the churches. This trend continues, and Küster gives examples from Bali. He also depicts the two Catholic pilgrimage centres: Candi and Pendopo.

His last chapter is called 'A Dialogue in pictures—An Interreligious Dimension'. Here Küster classifies Christian art in Indonesia into three groups. The first is the accommodation art, which is still alive in Papua art, Ketut Lasia, Hari Santosa, and so on. The second is inculturation or contextualization as seen in Nyoman Darsane and Bagong Kussudiardja. Both artists, later in their lives, showed tendencies of transgression into the third group which Küster calls hybridity and globalization ('Glokalisierung'), which can be found especially among younger artists such as Wisnu Sasongko. All these theologies coexist, and it is the big achievement of Küster that his researches and publications

such as this one let us enter into the Indonesian *Biblia pauperum*. The book is also highly recommended for those who cannot read German, but have an interest in art because of the illustrations which are not available elsewhere.

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