

Epistemic Shifts and Ideological Persistence

Ethnographic, Archival, and Historiographical Practices in the Legacy of Jaap Kunst

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In his essay *Cultural Relations between the Balkans and Indonesia*, published in 1954, Jaap Kunst shared the following profound experience:

In September 1951 I had the privilege of attending the great National Yugoslav Folk-dance Festival at Opatija (previously Abbazia) as the representative of the Netherlands Government. During those unforgettable days we made the acquaintance of a flourishing folk-culture which was enchanting because of the wealth and variety of what was displayed before us, the great musical talent of which it bear [*sic*] witness of, the inborn feeling for rhythm, and the feast of colour presented by [*sic*] the beautiful regional costumes. Whatever the performance happened to be at the moment—whether it was the singing of weaving Serbian matrons. . . , or the *kolo* with its emotional scale of hardly restrained energy flaming up brightly into joy of life; the coquettish harem dances of the Bosnian women; the grand epic hymns of the *guslars*, the inspired performance of the Macedonian *tapan* and *zurla* players; the metallic-sounding two-part songs of the Dinaric mountain dwellers; the exciting and fascinating sound-complexes of the *sopele* duo from the island of Krk—the audience breathlessly gazed and listened without a moment's slackening of attention.

But this pleasure in what one heard and saw was not all that this experience held: a great and quite unexpected discovery awaited me and I think it is sufficiently important to deserve your attention for a few moments.

As I sat in the great hall at the Kvarner Hotel with all this beauty sweeping over me, I closed my eyes for an instant and suddenly I felt as if I were back in East Flores near the remote Bèlèng Lake, and some moments later I seemed to be in the land of the Nagé in West Flores. It was the same music to which I was listening here, in the most literal sense of the word: it seemed to me that in several cases it was not only a matter of a certain similarity or parallelism but now and then of complete identity.¹

Kunst's experience deserves to be quoted at length since it constitutes a powerful aural transportation to different times and places. This incites him to explore these musical resemblances in his ten-page essay. He outlines the aural resemblance he experiences between the Croatian *ojkanje* singing and the two-part singing in East Flores and between the Bosnian "gurgling laryngeal trills" and similar guttural trills in West Flores.² He notes that both the Albanian people in the Balkans and the Nageh people on West Flores happen to denote these trills with the guttural name "*grko*." He states unreservedly that on this basis, these musical expressions *must have* a common origin.³ The rest of the essay is devoted to proving this common origin.

Such a search was not out of place within the scholarly norms and practices of the mid-twentieth century. Kunst also published an article about the cultural relationship between Indonesia and Central Africa.⁴ Better known is his almost lifelong search—proceeding from Erich von Hornbostel's blown-fifth theory—for an all-encompassing Eastern music theory that was supposed to have originated in China as a counterpart to the Western Pythagorean tuning.⁵ In southern Africa, Kunst's contemporaries such as Percival Kirby (1887–1970), the first professor of music at the University of the Witwatersrand, and Hugh Tracey (1903–77), the English scholar of African music, made similarly sweeping claims with regard to "Bantu" music and musical instruments, even if they did not argue for a theoretical foundation of these alleged common origins.⁶

In this chapter, I engage myself with Kunst's 1954 essay about the alleged cultural relations between the Balkans and Indonesia to outline some of his scholarly practices that became normative when political decolonization and increased mobility of people and sounds reconfigured academic engagements with music. Being one of Kunst's successors at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands and the curator of his legacy that is held there, I scrutinize my own position vis-à-vis the grand narrative Kunst poses in his 1954 essay, contemplating whether and to what extent his historicist, ethnocentric, and comparative paradigms still shape my own historiographical and ethnographic practices, consciously as well as subconsciously.

Trained as a lawyer, Jaap Kunst (1891–1960) lived and worked in the Dutch East Indies between 1919 and 1934 as a colonial administrative officer. He worked in the office from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. and devoted all his spare time, including late evenings and early mornings, to his research of musics of the Indonesian archipelago that he regarded to be at the brink of extinction. In 1930 and 1931, he occupied the unique post of government musicologist, a job he had lobbied into existence by himself, with the help of historian Johan Huizinga.⁷ His many letters speak of his urge, obsession almost, to capture, collect, and safeguard as much music as he could before it would stop being practiced. To a large extent, he paid for his research—recording equipment, expeditions, musical instruments, archiving tools—from his own private resources.⁸

During his expeditions on the islands of Java, Bali, Sumatra, Celebes (Sulawesi), Nias, Sumba, Flores, Timor, the Kai Islands, Banda, and Waigeo, he and his wife, Katy Kunst-Van Wely (1897–1992), recorded music on wax cylinders, collected musical instruments, took photographs, and shot silent films. They also recorded music at events in Java with music from Kalimantan and the Moluccas. Missionaries and colleagues, such as Father Jan Verschueren and C. C. F. M. le Roux in West Papua and pastor Pieter Middelkoop in Timor, recorded material on Kunst's request or sent their recordings to him to be galvanized and copied.⁹ Kunst's wax cylinder collection encompasses more than three hundred indexed items recorded by Kunst and Kunst-Van Wely, about twenty-five indexed items from Father Verschueren, and around fifty indexed items recorded by le Roux.¹⁰ The continuous stream of publications, initially in Dutch and later also in English, that resulted from these recordings presented Indonesian music to a Northern Hemisphere readership—often based in colonial metropolises—and it established Kunst's reputation (his, not hers) as the foremost expert on Indonesian music and as one of the founding fathers of ethnomusicology, a term he has been credited with coining in the 1950s.¹¹

Kunst sent his sound recordings directly from Batavia to Berlin, where his friend and mentor Erich Moritz von Hornbostel (1877–1935) galvanized and copied them at the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv. The Phonogramm-Archiv sent copies to the Colonial Institute in Amsterdam (later, the Royal Tropical Institute), where Kunst worked as a curator from the late 1930s onward, after his return to the Netherlands. He was succeeded there by Felix van Lamsweerde, who made an inventory of Kunst's sound material in this Institute.¹² In the early 2000s, the Phonogramm-Archiv digitized and systematically described all wax cylinders.¹³ Not surprisingly, Van Lamsweerde's inventory and Ziegler's Berlin description of Kunst's sound recordings largely overlap.

Kunst was a very active and successful networker and devoted special attention to maintaining his social and professional relations, to a large extent through written correspondence. Not only did he keep the letters he received; he also kept copies of the letters he sent out. Thus, the Jaap Kunst Collection holds some ten thousand letters, including scholarly correspondence, from the period 1920–60, encompassing forty thousand pages. These letters include scholarly correspondence to colleagues in the Dutch East Indies, Germany, the Netherlands, and Britain, and to members of the Javanese nobility, government officials, universities, museums, and professional societies, among others.

The collection also encompasses research reports; about 6,000 projection slides for teaching purposes with images of musicians, musical instruments, music transcriptions, and dance forms; 1,600 glass plates (copies of those held at the National Museum in Jakarta); 6,500 photographs of musical instruments, dance and theater performances, and numerous musical activities from the entire archipelago; travel

diaries from trips to Australia and the United States in the 1950s; a library; and around two meters of publication manuscripts.

When Kunst passed away from cancer in 1960, Katy Kunst-Van Wely sold the Collection to the University of Amsterdam (UvA), where Kunst had been teaching since 1942, on the condition that the material would be kept together. Kunst's assistants and successors Ernst Heins and Felix van Lamsweerde maintained and enlarged Kunst's collection with material from their own collections and those of their students and colleagues. Heins founded the Ethnomusicologisch Centrum Jaap Kunst (ECJK) at the UvA that was dismantled in the early 2000s. Thus, against Heins's wish, the university violated the agreement with Katy Kunst-Van Wely to keep the collection together. Kunst's written archive (correspondence, reports, photographs, teaching material, manuscripts) is currently stored at the UvA's Special Collections division at the university's Allard Pierson Museum. Kunst's library was usurped in the university library's general collection. The sound archive of the ECJK (with recordings from many parts of the world, recorded by Kunst's students and successors on a range of sound carriers) is still part of the musicology department and is currently in the process of being digitized. In 2021 and 2024, Kunst's granddaughter Clara Brinkgreve donated newly discovered letters and photographs by and of Jaap Kunst to the University of Amsterdam.

The diversity of information carriers (sound recordings, transcriptions, music analyses, silent film, photographs, written reports, annotated manuscripts and books, correspondence) with detailed accounts and reflections of Kunst's research practices makes the collection one of the foundational ethnomusicological collections of the world. The collection is well known among ethnomusicologists worldwide, but it is not particularly accessible, because it is being kept in multiple locations and has been digitized only to a limited extent. In May 2024, most of the sound files were made accessible online via the jaapkunst.org and the pratinada.net websites, initiated by the Decolonizing Southeast Asian Sound Archives consortium (DeCoSEAS). The written and visual material of the Jaap Kunst Collection remains to be digitized.

Kunst's collection is also an emblematic colonial collection. As a civil servant of the Dutch East Indies government, he adhered to the terms on which colonizer and colonized were supposed to encounter each other and interact. At the same time, he was an early fieldworker in direct contact with the people he recorded; this led him to acknowledge that music from outside Europe should be studied and judged on the basis of the aesthetic, technical, and formal starting points of those participating in the community or "ethnos" in which the music was created and enjoyed and not on the basis of European aesthetic premises.¹⁴ Thus, his approach interrogated the supremacist aesthetic values of comparative musicology that identified European music as the unquestioned pinnacle of human civilization. Nevertheless, Kunst's "salvage ethnology" (capturing the music before it becomes

extinct), his archiving practices, and his often racialist (if not racist) ethnographic and historiographical descriptions of the many musics of the Indonesian archipelago feature one of the most widespread paradoxes of colonial thought: Kunst explicitly vindicated the “civilizing” mission of colonial rule, but he also regretted and condemned the uprootedness and denouncement of allegedly precolonial music practices.¹⁵ The notion of “ethnos” and the practice of “ethnography” are crucial in allowing this paradox to exist. Kunst’s collection is meant to reflect the Dutch Empire in all its systematic colonial categorization and taxonomy. Through his sound recordings, film footage, photographs, and reports, he could conceive of distinct, homogeneous, and static cultures as abstracted entities (the “ethnos”) that were supposed to be intrinsically different from European cultural practices, the latter remaining unquestioned normativities. To such a distinct “ethnos,” singers and instrumentalists (who regularly remained nameless) contributed with their voices, their sounds, and their bodies as *specimens* of this ethnos in the empire. Kunst indeed used the word *specimens* to indicate the people and the practices he documented.¹⁶

As one of Kunst’s successors in his post at the University of Amsterdam, after Ernst Heins and Wim van der Meer, I am implicated in this legacy, not only in disciplinary respect (am I an ethnomusicologist?), but also in institutional, and even personal, respects. I was raised in an academic family with an expertise on Indonesia, where Jaap Kunst had always been a ringing name: a humanist, a man of reason, a scientist, and a protector of fragile Indigenous cultures against a voracious globalized mass culture. Large parts of my childhood in the 1970s and 1980s were spent in Yogyakarta, since my father was affiliated with the Universitas Gadjah Mada for three months each year. It was here that Kunst, after hearing Javanese gamelan played at Yogyakarta’s Paku Alaman court in 1919, decided to stay in Indonesia. When I was appointed as an associate professor at the University of Amsterdam in 2013, the curatorship of his legacy came with the job. This legacy encompasses not only his archived material but also the ideological stances, disciplinary constellations, and contributions and agencies of many actors that have remained subservient or nameless in his collection. Engaging with this legacy meant coming full circle for me, not in the least since I increasingly recognized that critical engagement with Kunst’s collection is long overdue, possibly because of his status as a founding father of ethnomusicology, a reputation based on the emblematic status of his collection during his lifetime and beyond.

Since my appointment as curator of the Jaap Kunst Collection, I have been trying out modes of engagement with Kunst’s work in oral presentations and publications, through meLê yamomo’s project *Sonic Entanglements: Listening to Modernities in Sound Recordings of Southeast Asia, 1890–1950*, and through the project *Decolonizing Southeast Asian Sound Archives (DeCoSEAS)* that I coordinated from 2021–24, together with meLê yamomo, and that remains to be active as a consortium.¹⁷ The publications (including the present one) display my search for

a mode of engagement with Kunst's legacy, which changes its tint all the time, since I continue to find new dimensions in my investment in this material that complicate my earlier stances. I cherish the unfinalized status of this search, which means that I recapitulate material from my earlier publications about Kunst mentioned above in order to demonstrate how my current thought builds on and diverges from my earlier findings. Thus, my engagement with Kunst's legacy is a work in progress with regard not only to research findings but also to research methods. Readers are invited to consult my earlier publications side by side with the present one to get an idea of the overlaps as well as the shifts in approach.

When I started reading Kunst's essay *Cultural Relations between the Balkans and Indonesia*, I was amused by the grand sweeping claim that the title page already conveys. However, I cannot deny that I gradually got hooked by Kunst's attempts to substantiate his rather implausible hypothesis. Each new argument to establish these relations made the hypothesis less unlikely in my eyes and ears. "What is going on here?" I wondered. It is in any case a powerful illustration of Ana María Ochoa's observation that "archives contribute to the reorganization of the senses and the redistribution of the sensitive."¹⁸ It also supports Foucault's dictum that scientific discourse is a locus where objects are recreated or even invented.¹⁹

Apparently, the historiographic and ethnographic techniques, as well as the archival material that Kunst employs to support his unlikely hypothesis, constitute a normativity for me that I seem to have internalized. Even if I distance myself consciously and unequivocally from the essentialism, positivism, and universalism that featured mid-twentieth-century scholarly *paradigms*, my willingness to become convinced by his argument suggests that his scholarly *practices* persist. What do we do with this persistence of practices in a scholarly environment that aims to distance itself from their positivist paradigms? I have no unequivocal answers to this question, but raising it might help us discuss critically the premises of historiography and ethnography as exertions of power on a global epistemic scale, practices that I think all of us engage in and—speaking for myself—not only with skepticism but also with passion.

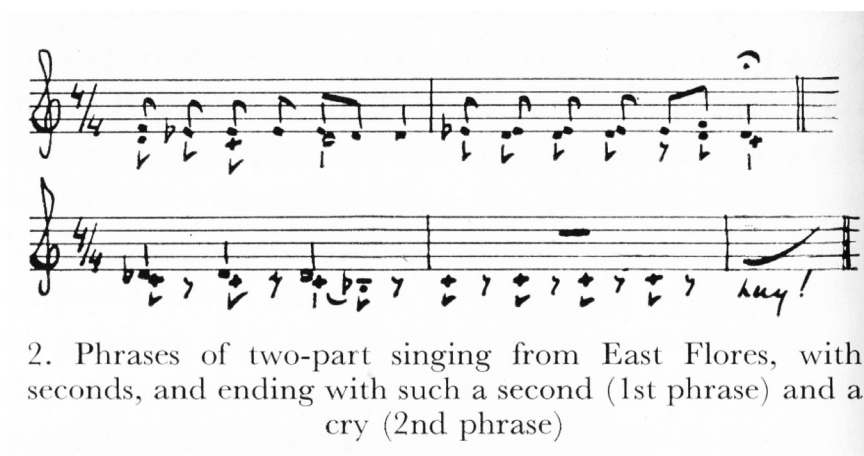
My autoethnographic study of my willingness to become convinced by Kunst's unlikely argument led me to observe three manifestations in Kunst's essay of an epistemic shift that continues to feature practices of ethnography, archiving, and historiography in equal degree. This shift is closely intertwined with the most widely used technology of knowledge formation in the humanities, namely the production of texts, which is one of the reasons I "shifted along" while reading. I argue here that it is this shift that enables the feasibility of the colonial paradox of Kunst's proudly presenting the Dutch Empire with its civilizing mission while regretting its uprooting consequences.

The first manifestation of this shift has been identified by Miguel García in his seminal article "Sound Archives under Suspicion" from 2017, a shift featuring ethnographic practices of archiving sound throughout the twentieth century



1. Yugoslav Folk-song. Note the two-part seconds and the end on such a second, the slow gurgling laryngeal trill and the final cry (After L. KUBA)

FIGURE 14-1. Yugoslav folk song (Kunst, *Cultural Relations between the Balkans and Indonesia*).



2. Phrases of two-part singing from East Flores, with seconds, and ending with such a second (1st phrase) and a cry (2nd phrase)

FIGURE 14-2. Phrases of two-part singing from East Flores (Kunst, *Cultural Relations between the Balkans and Indonesia*).

while often remaining unacknowledged and even unnoticed by those who did the archiving. Sound that is being collected, García points out, can be removed from its context, alienated from its creator, and lodged in containers such as files, discs, wax cylinders, diaries, shelves, and cases, and yet despite all these interventions by a range of people, these sounds-that-turned-into-things are supposed to be free of the collector's influence, and they can keep the qualities they had before the collector's intervention: "the recording of the song" becomes "the song."²⁰

While listening to the Croatian *ojkanje* singing in the Kvarner Hotel's great hall, Kunst memorized the recordings he had made in East Flores some twenty-

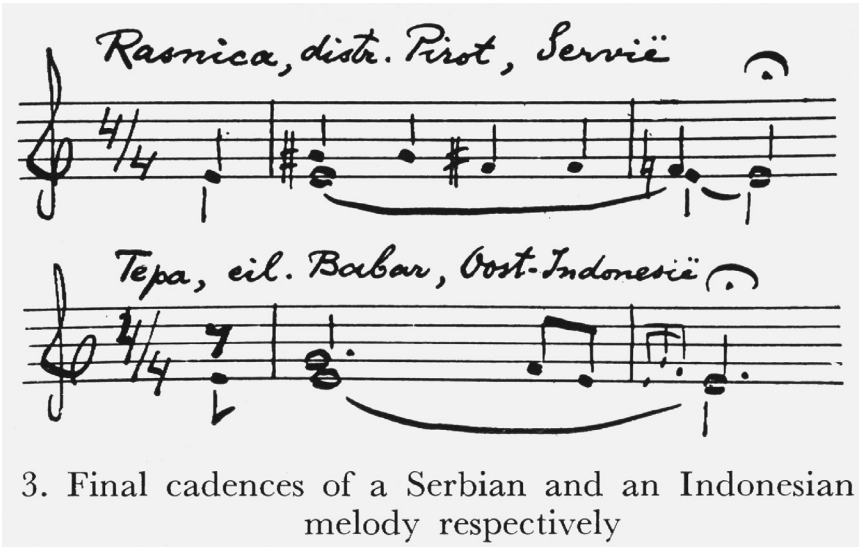


FIGURE 14-3. Final cadences of a Serbian and an Indonesian melody, respectively (Kunst, *Cultural Relations between the Balkans and Indonesia*).

five years earlier. The subsequent substantiation of his experience of resemblance revolves around “the recorded thing” he had repeatedly played back for the sake of transcription and comparison.²¹ He presents notated samples of “Yugoslav Folk-song” and “two-part singing from East Flores,” pointing at the harmonies in seconds and the “slow gurgling laryngeal trill and final cry” in both samples (figures 14-1 and 14-2).²² He continues to compare final cadences of melodies from Serbia and Eastern Indonesia (the island of Babar; figure 14-3). He directly projects the analytical descriptions of the Yugoslav musicologist Vinko Žganeč about Croatian people’s songs and dances (*Hrvatske narodne pjesme i plesovi*) to recorded songs of East Flores, pointing out organ points, singing registers, and prominent intervals in the music.²³ His aural and conceptual establishment of resemblance is based on his archived recordings of songs as repeatable and material objects.

A second manifestation of a similar epistemic shift occurs in Kunst’s attempts to historicize the resemblances he heard by securing possible cultural relations through a timeline. Leo Treitler’s critique of this historicist method, reaching back to the 1960s, is directed at the same kind of shift that is subject to Garcíá’s critique of archiving practices: in the act of history writing “what might have happened in the past” shifts into “what happened in the past,” just like in the act of sound archiving “the recording of the song” shifts into “the song.”²⁴

In proper historicist fashion, Kunst assembles data as “historical evidence” to prove “what happened in the past.” In addition to the visual representation of music-structural resemblances on the basis of his archival recordings, Kunst points

out organological and choreographical similarities between the musical instruments and dances, not only of various Yugoslav and Indonesian peoples but also of musical practices in southern Russia, "Asia Minor," and the "Far East," including South China and "Further India." He bolsters these observations with excursions into resemblances in weaving, sculpture, and metal forging in all these regions.²⁵

All these data serve his aim to raise two hypotheses that should clarify these resemblances, relying on work by musicologists, archaeologists, and "Balkanologists." His first hypothesis is his own, claiming that an "ancient Neolithic-megalithic culture" with its cradle in the eastern Mediterranean spread eastward over thousands of years. This huge (pre)historical category of the New Stone Age lies 12,000 to 6,500 years behind us. The second hypothesis has been offered to him by the Austrian ethnologist Robert von Heine-Geldern (1885–1968), who assumes a "Pontian Migration" around 800 BCE, when "nomadic Scythians" settled in south Russian plains and pressed out other peoples farther eastward, including "perhaps Germanic elements." Kunst continues to argue that "an offshoot of this movement reached East Indonesia."²⁶ Please note that both hypotheses (the Stone-Age migration 10,000 years BCE and the "Pontian Migration" 800 years BCE) proceed from a migration from West to East. No mention is made of a possible migration from East to West, or of more messy multiple migrations in both directions. I will further unpack this assumption below.

Surely, in the early twenty-first century, we have amply theorized the dangers of historicism conflating messy multiple pasts into neat and linear historiographies. However, the strength of Treitler's critique of historicism is that he also outlines the narrative plot structure of histories that remain tempting to use as a mode of argumentation, even if historicism is debunked. Treitler points at what I count as a third manifestation of the same epistemic shift that remains mostly unnoticed and unacknowledged, also in our own work: an implicit intersection of the plausible and the inevitable.

We seek explanations when we are puzzled about things, and we feel we have got them when our minds are more or less at rest about them. Having reached that stage, we say that we *understand*. Note that nothing has been said about how we shall know when we have reached that stage, or about the form that satisfactory explanations must take under this criterion.

[. . .]

It is left in the end for the questioner to judge whether a sufficient explanation has been given. And he will judge on this basis: whether the explanation makes the outcome appear, not *inevitable*, but *plausible* in the light of the circumstances. Now it must be the case that only one explanation for any event can satisfy the inevitability criterion, whereas several explanations may be tenable from the viewpoint of plausibility.²⁷

Whereas Treitler consciously distinguishes between the inevitable and the plausible, in Kunst's argument we see how the plausible gradually shifts into the

inevitable, not only argumentatively, but also experientially, because without this inevitability, the implausible cannot be made plausible. Both ethnography and historiography rely on the tight intersection of the plausible and the inevitable to manage and control the implausible. James Clifford and Tim Rice have outlined how ethnographers extract experiences from their environment (like archivists extract sounds) and turn them into texts.²⁸ In a similar vein, historiographers, also the anti-historicist ones like me, in Treitler's words, "isolate a central thread of events and . . . separate off from this those details that are . . . not essentially contributory to the *final outcome*."²⁹

While reading Kunst's essay, I was shifting along in these three epistemic shifts: from the sound archived thing to the sound itself, from messy pasts to linear history and from the plausible to the inevitable.³⁰ All these epistemic shifts have been exposed by my peers, some more than fifty years ago, but apparently they have not been dispelled, even if Treitler's critique has received powerful postcolonial updates in the work of, for instance, Dipesh Chakrabarty and Olivia Bloechl.³¹ Apparently, these shifts are functional to what historians, ethnographers, and archivists do in fundamental ways. Such shifts enable the sharing of experiences with those who were not necessarily physically present at the experienced event, which is an extremely effective mode of knowledge dissemination and formation. Sometimes consciously and at other times unnoticed, account and event become interchangeable through a manipulation of the ontological status of what is experienced. In shifting from event to enunciation (and back), we objectify.

In Kunst's narrative, the functionality of these epistemic shifts is relatively easy to point out. Kunst's profound and mind-blowing experience of aural resemblance between sonic expressions in the Balkans and Indonesia is both problem and proof for the existence of their common origin. The circular argumentation is closed; the narrative is nevertheless directional toward a goal (or as Treitler says, a *final outcome*). The goal is so obvious that it does not need articulation, and, moreover, should not be articulated, because it is not supposed to become subject to interrogation. This is the lure of narrative plots: what keeps us engaged as readers is the road toward a goal that we have known all along and hence does not need to be explicated.

In fact, Kunst's essay bolsters *two* larger narrative goals that are not explicated and should not become subject to interrogation, since they provide the intellectual, ideological, and experiential foundation and legitimization for infrastructures and distributions of power that were under intense critical scrutiny after the political independence of Indonesia from the Netherlands with a devastating War of Independence between 1945 and 1949. As we have seen in the description of Kunst's foundational ethnomusicological collection, these infrastructures and distributions of power were preconditions for the existence of such a collection in the first place.

In the Netherlands, this Indonesian War of Independence has only in the last few years become denoted as such. Until very recently, the Indonesian War of

Independence was euphemistically referred to, in both Dutch journalistic and academic discourses, as “police actions” to restore order after the Japanese occupation (1942–45). The results of the first thorough investigation into this war were presented by the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV), the Netherlands Institute for Military History (NIMH), and the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies on February 17, 2022. From this investigation, it emerged that “the Dutch government and military leadership deliberately condoned the systematic and widespread use of extreme violence by the Dutch armed forces in the war against the Republic of Indonesia.”³²

Dutch engagement with the colonial pasts of the Netherlands, not only in Indonesia but also in Sri Lanka, South Africa, the Caribbean, and Suriname, is only now gaining momentum. Gradually, a generation of Dutch and Indonesian journalists, scholars, opinionators, and policy makers who have not personally experienced and shaped the politics and policies of Dutch colonial rule find themselves in a position to speak. Moreover, many of the veterans who fought in this war—often badly trained and with limited means, barely recovered from five years of German occupation during World War II—have passed on. The Dutch King Willem-Alexander apologized in March 2020 for the “excessive violence” inflicted on Indonesia during his country’s colonial rule. Nevertheless, the Dutch government still to this day refuses to acknowledge the founding of the Republic of Indonesia on August 17, 1945, when Sukarno declared independence, sticking instead to the Dutch transfer of sovereignty on December 27, 1949, after at least forty-six thousand and possibly one hundred thousand Indonesians and six thousand “Europeans, Indo-Europeans, Moluccans, Minahasans, Timorese and other Indonesians on the Dutch side” had been killed.³³

I dwell on these geopolitical facts because they were very much part of Indonesian and Dutch lives in the mid-twentieth century, even if many dimensions of them remained unarticulated up to 2022. Thus, I am also interested in what is not said in Kunst’s essay but is nevertheless presupposed. Like many of his Dutch contemporaries, Kunst was plainly unable to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia. He consistently portrayed Indonesia’s first President Sukarno (1901–70) and his administration as “a bunch of thugs.”³⁴ Kunst’s son, Jaap Jr., had fought on the Dutch side in the Indonesian War of Independence and never physically and mentally recovered from this experience.³⁵ Only months after the publication of Kunst’s essay, the Asian–African Conference in the West Javanese city of Bandung was held in April 1955. This was Sukarno’s successful attempt at initiating a South-to-South dialogue, establishing an international political economic network without the involvement of former colonizing powers from the North Atlantic. The knee-jerk reactions of these (former) colonizing powers, imposing bans and preventing representatives of liberation movements and civil rights movements from attending, indicate the importance of this Bandung Conference

with demonstrable impact on liberation movements in various colonized African countries and on the civil rights movement in the United States.³⁶

Hence, I argue that in Kunst's essay, many of the colonial orderings that had shaped his world and that of his associates as not-to-be-questioned realities are implicitly bolstered, because they became increasingly questionable through the Indonesian War of Independence and the Bandung Conference, among many other geopolitical events. These not-to-be-questioned realities constitute the essay's two narrative plots. One of these narrative plots is the suggestion that mankind's cultures have a common origin, from which they developed into the distinct purities of their own ethnos(es). Such a suggestion requires a hard cut between the past (the common origin) and the present (the distinct purity). The second of these implicit narrative plots is the cultural self-containment and self-sufficiency of Europe. World civilization emerged in the cradle of European civilization (namely ancient Greece) and spread from there over the rest of the world. At no point in his narrative does Kunst allow for the option that cultural influences from elsewhere may have impacted Europe; surely the Balkans cannot be an offshoot from East Flores. This assumption requires another hard cut, namely between here (Europe) and there (the rest of the world). Kunst's collection, like many archives and museums of the time, has been set up to secure these borders between then and now and between here and there and to present each ethnos from the Indonesian archipelago in its distinctiveness and uniqueness, untouched by the current "Western contaminations" (*Westersche smetten*) of European missionization and burgeoning global mass culture.³⁷

The deconstruction of what Dipesh Chakrabarty calls such "master narratives" is in full swing, suggesting historiographical modes of diversification and decentering. I mention Julia Byl's book *Antiphonal Histories* and David Irving's work *How the World Made European Music*.³⁸ History itself is increasingly acknowledged as, in Chakrabarty's words, an "imperious code that accompanied the civilizing process that the European Enlightenment inaugurated in the eighteenth century as a world-historical task."³⁹ Olivia Bloechl calls this "the disingenuousness of historicism's continuous times and spaces." She also notes, however, that "the ideological preference of one origin story over another always leaves traces." Acknowledging and following these traces, according to Bloechl, requires "a tolerance for the 'uncanny,' [out-of-joint], haunted time of diachrony, because only this allows an experiment of the subaltern as subject of her own history." "Subaltern signification" she continues in the footsteps of Chakrabarty, "indicates cultural memory that is barred from being plausible knowledge," but that, precisely thanks to this exclusion, "also ensures the impossibility of secure memory." Subaltern signification, "in short, [is] any aspect of . . . histories or other forms of memory that makes it impossible to really know who we are and where we come from, because we have always already come from somewhere else in a time other than now."⁴⁰

Bloechl's observation compels me to look for the subaltern traces left by Kunst's origin story. Kunst's powerful experience in the Grand Hall of the Kvarner Hotel in 1951 Opatija, Yugoslavia (now Croatia), is an outright uncanny one. It transports him back to 1930s East Flores, more than 10,000 km down the road, within a matter of seconds. The experience is so powerful because it is so out of joint; it messes with his and our historicized memory and our cartographic notions of space. Kunst manages to control and integrate this uncanniness through a re-historicizing of this experience, and visual and cartographical representations of this history. He is making the implausible plausible within the existing intellectual, ideological, and experiential infrastructures and distributions of power.

The result is a coherent narrative with plot structure. The unsettling experience of diachronous time is made consecutive and linear through such historical narratization. It is up to us, as peer readers, whether, in Treitler's words, "sufficient explanation has been given" to clarify this uncanny experience, whether "the outcome appear[s] . . . plausible in the light of the circumstances." We like to assume that these circumstances have changed since 1954. While Kunst is trying to make the implausible plausible, Bloechl and Chakrabarty, by contrast, invite us to reach beyond the realm of the plausible. They urge us to "learn to practice history in ways that disturb the operation of a universalizing translation by which history forgets what is subaltern as the basis for its own memory."⁴¹

Although I find illustrious examples of such disturbances in the work of my colleagues, I also think the disturbance of history's imperious code is easier said than done.⁴² The fact that I felt so attracted by Kunst's narrative, despite my obvious skepticism, may have been fostered by my wish to forget the essentialist, purist, universalist, and even racist aspects of his thought. It may also have been sparked by my own historicized memory being so securely embedded in notions of a "civilizing process that the European Enlightenment inaugurated in the eighteenth century as a world-historical task."⁴³ This is the teaching I was brought up in; I have internalized it. This eighteenth-century civilizing process is also what the archive under my curation has been assembled for.

Such internalization is particularly prominent in aural experiences and acts of hearing. Wax cylinder nr. 185 from Kunst's collection contains the peculiar two-part singing from East Flores that Kunst was reminded of in the Kvarner Hotel. Readers can listen to this recording by visiting the UC Press website and the companion SoundCloud website: <https://soundcloud.com/uc-press/sets/missionaries-anthropologists-and-music>. Two male singers, Merien and Raja, sing the Lamaholot walking songs "Be'odong" and "Barassi hama" that Kunst recorded in July or August 1930 in the village Riangkroko in northeastern Flores. The sustained second intervals between the voices (see figure 14-2), at times in even tighter distance than one would aurally expect from a second interval within European tuning systems, was a sonic marker of difference from internalized European musical norms that caught Kunst's ear.⁴⁴ For me, it remains a sonic marker of difference in

this respect. Moreover, I am also able to hear the resemblance of this vocal practice with records of a Croatian “Gigetanje” responsorial song recorded in the late 1960s (an odd fifteen years after Kunst heard Croatian *ojkanje* in the Kravner Hotel) that can be found in the ECJK Archive at the University of Amsterdam.⁴⁵ Readers can listen to this recording by visiting the UC Press website / the companion SoundCloud website: <https://soundcloud.com/uc-press/sets/missionaries-anthropologists-and-music>. The sustained vocal seconds, the vocal glides and the glottal stops that feature both the Croatian “Gigetanje” song and the Florinesian “Barassi hama” song can easily be aurally related to each other.

Yet what do these experiences of aural relation mean? Rather than ascertaining whether Jaap Kunst’s establishment of cultural relations between the Balkans and Indonesia is plausible or implausible, I am interested in how Kunst and his consociates (including myself) attribute meaning to hearing such resemblance, for instance by writing historiographies as origin stories that leave subaltern traces. Bloechl and Chakrabarty note that “subaltern pasts represent moments or points at which the archive that the historian mines develops a degree of intractability with respect to the aims of professional history” exactly because, in García’s words, the archive is discursive, based on specific ideological, aesthetic and scientific paradigms.⁴⁶

As project leaders and principal investigators of the project Decolonizing Southeast Asian Sound Archives (DeCoSEAS), meLê yamomo and I intend to disclose the Jaap Kunst Collection (among others) to inheritors of the communities from whom Kunst recorded, collected, and moved the music. Such disclosure is not an aim in itself but rather a means to rethink practices of (sound) archive curation. The archive’s (historiographical) intractability is important to consider in such rethinking, since it points us at the implications of historiographical “mining” of resources per se. There is a tension within the DeCoSEAS project between the need for archive’s disclosure on the one hand and respect for its intractability on the other. Our own historicized and cartographed memories are cases in point to deal with this tension.

One way of dealing with this tension is to build a network of archive users with divergent sensory and discursive historicized memories (as archives in themselves). This allows for the manifestation of various forms and instances of intractability and accessibility or compatibility; what is implausible or unthinkable for one user might be obvious for another, and what is easily mined for historiographical, linguistic, or political aims according to one user should be left in peace according to another. Realizing such diversification of experience and use of the archive is one of the main aims of the DeCoSEAS consortium. I would like to illustrate this with another item from the Jaap Kunst Collection that DeCoSEAS has digitally disclosed.

Wax cylinder nr. 83 of the Jaap Kunst Collection contains the invocation of an *éré* (sorcerer-priest) from the village Balôdano in the region of Ma’u on the

island of Nias. He is accompanied in all likelihood by *koko-koko* (or *kato-kato*) wooden percussion, indicated by Kunst as “kôlekôle.” This recording cannot be consulted on the UC Press website / the companion SoundCloud website, since we are unsure if it is supposed to be heard by those it does not concern. Kunst notes that the invocation is meant to reanimate dying individuals (“*om stervende menschen tot het leven terug te roepen*”).⁴⁷ This record begs all kinds of questions: In what circumstances was it recorded? Was it staged or was Kunst actually present at a session retrieving a dying person from the dead? What would the *éré* have thought about his invocation being captured, moved, stored, replicated, and repeated? How is this record a remnant of a scholarly culture (*Wissenschaftskultur*) rather than of a distinct ethnos on Nias?

Apart from these historiographical questions, there are more uncanny questions pointing at the archival record’s intractability from a historiographical perspective, questions that touch on “cultural memory that is barred from being plausible knowledge” and hence, thanks to this exclusion “ensures the impossibility of secure memory.”⁴⁸ That makes these questions inescapable: Does the invocation keep or lose its power once it has been recorded? Can “the recording of the invocation” ever become “the invocation,” or do they both have the agency and the power to disrupt such an epistemic shift? Can they prevent, reverse, or undo acts of objectification? Thus, can this record be played at all, and if so, under what conditions? Whose conditions?

Raising and attending to such questions unsettles notions of plausibility and inevitability that constitute aural, sensory, and discursive hegemonies comparable to the unthinkability of Indonesian people ruling themselves, as expressed by those in the mid-twentieth century who previously benefited from Dutch colonial rule in the Dutch East Indies. Within the DeCoSEAS consortium, we demonstrate that many such epistemic hegemonies remain to be unsettled by considering plausibilities that were previously unthinkable. We see this unsettling taking place in various branches of scholarship, such as the acknowledgment in zoomusicology of the presence of animal languages and musics and the acknowledgment in anthropology of the sociability and consciousness of plants.⁴⁹

Moreover, attending to such questions might uncover subaltern traces and voices in the archive. In that way, developing a tolerance for the uncanny and training a susceptibility to forms of cultural memory that do not find themselves immediately in the realm of humanities scholarship might be employed as a viable method for scholarly investigation. A number of (music) anthropologists already turn to such methods. Think, for instance, of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro’s engagement with Amerindian notions of perspectivism and the multiverse, David Graeber’s proposal of radical alterity, and Bernd Brabec de Mori’s conceptualization of the “sonicoid.”⁵⁰ All these engagements carry the risk of epistemic appropriation but also the potential for becoming susceptible to hitherto unheard voices. It is important to note that despite the universalism and essentialism of his master

narratives, Jaap Kunst consciously developed a similar susceptibility, even in quite different circumstances.

Kunst's execution of "a universalizing translation" in his 1954 essay, "by which history forgets what is subaltern as the basis for its own memory" leaves subaltern traces in his origin story.⁵¹ They concern the absence of the possibility of an East to West migration (with Europe having been formed and influenced by Asia) and the absence of the notion that hearing and listening are culturally situated. This latter absence is temporary, since Kunst acknowledged on other occasions that his European ear was culturally situated. Here, however, his experience of resemblance is so powerful that universalist truth claims need to be employed for the sake of plausibility as inevitability. These absences allow for the belief in and (re)installment of a way of hearing and analyzing sound, European in origin but now universal, that was so typical of twentieth-century modernism but that has not become any less tempting for the skilled listeners that we are.

Seen from this perspective, Kunst's origin story can be compared with the *éré's* chanting from Nias that Kunst recorded on cylinder 83. Both are epistemic practices, different in aim and content but comparable in structure and operation. Kunst's origin story functions within normative and globally hegemonic practices of knowledge formation, the anonymous *éré's* recitation represents cultural memory that is barred from being plausible knowledge in mid-twentieth-century and current constellations of epistemic practice. Yet both are invocations. Through regular, repetitive, and formulaic utterances, they invoke a soothing predictability that manages the uncanny, signifies what is out of joint, and distracts from what is unthinkable. What is thinkable and unthinkable for the *éré* remains intractable for me so far, even if the aim of the DeCoSEAS consortium is to include actors like him. However, being part of Jaap Kunst's *Wissenschaftskultur*, I am able to observe that his search for cultural relations between the Balkans and Indonesia was also an attempt at dispelling what could no longer be denied: past and present cannot easily be separated and Europe is not culturally and epistemically self-sufficient but dependent on the rest of the world, just like humans turn out to be dependent on forests and fungi.⁵²

As indicated earlier, what is being dispelled in Kunst's origin story—implicitly or explicitly—is not only what is unthinkable (such as Indonesians running their own sovereign state) but also what is part of everyone's lives, yet unspeakable (such as the atrocities committed by the Dutch army in the Indonesian War of Independence). Hearing takes place on a crossroads of invocation, conceptualization, objectification, and narrativization. Hearing facilitates epistemic shifts from recorded sound to sound, from experience to text, from past to history, and from the plausible to the inevitable: "I hear it, so it must be true!" Hearing also facilitates the disruption of such practices of objectification and textualization in allowing for the existence of experiences that are audible yet unspeakable and unconceptualized. What we cannot or do not dare to think can be heard nevertheless, enabling us to transgress

borders between here and there, then and now, self and other, scholarship and art. However, the options to transgress are no guarantee for a more inclusive, democratic, and less extractivist scholarly practice. Not only do the grand narratives that clearly feature Kunst's thinking and his archive still linger in my own scholarly mind, but also the unsettling and dispelling of existing grand narratives might lead to the erection of new grand narratives with concomitant regimes of inclusion and exclusion.

It is this insight that features Caroline Bithell's praise song to our ancestors in ethnomusicology and anthropology.⁵³ She adopts a broad and inclusive notion of exorcization that I have adopted in earlier publications to indicate my relationship with Jaap Kunst.⁵⁴ This adds a third layer of invocation to my argument here: my own dispelling of Jaap Kunst's legacy that exists side by side with the recorded invocation from the *éré* from Nias and with Jaap Kunst's invocation in revitalizing the fading societal and epistemic structures of the Dutch East Indies in the 1950s through his origin story about the Balkans and Indonesia. To exorcize someone, Bithell argues, is not only and not primarily to drive someone out; it also means to communicate with someone, make peace with someone and set them free.⁵⁵ There is no point in "throw[ing] out the grandfathers with the bathwater"; they are part of the family tree, so we always communicate with them, whether we want to or not.⁵⁶ Since my appointment as curator of the Jaap Kunst Collection, I have been engaged with exorcizing Kunst in this inclusive manner; he is an ancestor I communicate with. The spell of the grandness and emblematic stature of his legacy needs to be broken, but his legacy remains in need of being valued, scrutinized, and studied. Kunst was musically, conceptually, and socially entangled with those who worked with him. They might remain invisible and inaudible as equally important predecessors if we throw Kunst out with the bathwater. My work and that of my colleagues is entangled with all these actors, and seats need to be reserved at the table for them all in case they pop by. Preparing those seats is one of the tasks that the DeCoSEAS consortium has set itself, with full awareness that this task might imply giving up our own seats at some point.

This has made me think about the ethnographies and historiographies I have practiced and produced over the last twenty years. The premises I have distanced myself from rhetorically—essentialism, racism, nature-culture divides, colonialism, and anthropocentrism—continue to underlie the practices I cherish. The fact that Kunst's narrative appealed to me so much may have pointed me at this insight, which makes me feel uncomfortable and excited at the same time, all the more so since my life and work are so entangled with Kunst's on so many levels. I feel boosted, supported, and uncomfortable being part of this lineage. I feel excited about the possibilities of disentangling myself from this lineage, even if this necessitates my transferring agency over the kind and speed of such disentanglement to other parties such as the inheritors of the invocation of the *éré* from Nias. What is important to explore is whether and how such disentanglement disturbs the

operation of a universalizing historiography, not only rhetorically but also practically, and what epistemic reinventions beyond objectification it facilitates in the worldwide production and dissemination of knowledge.

NOTES

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6. Percival Kirby, *The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Press, 1968 [1934]); Hugh Tracey, *The Evolution of African Music and Its Function in the Present Day* (Johannesburg: Institute for the Study of Man in Africa, 1961).
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15. Jaap Kunst, *De inheemsche muziek en de zending: Voordracht op 1 Mei 1946 gehouden voor de Zendingsschool te Oegstegeest* (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1947).
16. Kunst, *Musicologica*, 20.
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24. Leo Treitler, “The Present as History,” *Perspectives of New Music* 7 (1969): 1–58, at 2; García, “Sound Archives under Suspicion,” 14.

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