JURNAL KAJIAN BALI
Journal of Bali Studies
p-ISSN 2088-4443 # e-ISSN 2580-0698 Volume 14, Number 02, October 2024

Reclaiming Klungkung's Cultural Heritage: Navigating the Complexities of Repatriation in Post-Colonial Bali

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.24843/JKB.2024.v14.i02.p01

Abstract: This article examines the complexities of repatriating objects from Bali's Klungkung Court seized by Dutch forces in 1908. It argues that repatriation, often conducted as restitution between nations, fails to fully consider local communities' needs. Through a case study of five artefacts, the article explores historical, cultural, and ethical dimensions, highlighting repatriation challenges. It emphasizes engaging local stakeholders for an equitable process. Returning these artefacts can rectify historical injustices, uphold cultural sovereignty, and foster reconciliation between the Netherlands and Indonesia, despite challenges like provenance research and ownership disputes. Repatriation remains vital for addressing colonial legacies and promoting cultural justice by acknowledging wrongs, aiding healing, empowering descendants, and sustaining cultural practices. The study concludes that repatriation is a continual, complex process requiring commitment to justice, reconciliation, and cultural autonomy, focusing on the perspectives of communities from which objects were taken.

Keywords: repatriation; cultural heritage; contemporary colonial legacy; Klungkung Court; Bali

1. Introduction

In recent years, the issue of repatriating cultural artefacts acquired during colonial times has gained significant attention, particularly as formerly colonised nations seek to reclaim their cultural heritage (van Beurden, 2017). For example, the debate surrounding the repatriation of the Benin Bronzes and the Elgin Marbles exemplifies this complex issue. The Benin Bronzes, a collection of over 3,000 brass plaques and sculptures, were looted by British forces during the punitive expedition of 1897 (Kim, 2024; Uzuegbu et al., 2024). Similarly, the

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Submitted: 18 April 2024; Accepted: 10 August 2024; Published: October 2024

Elgin Marbles, a set of classical Greek marble sculptures, were removed from the Parthenon by Lord Elgin in the early 19th century and have been housed in the British Museum since 1816 (Titi, 2023; Elizondo, 2023).

Repatriation is often carried out as part of restitution between nations, but without fully considering the needs and perspectives of the local communities or families from which the repatriated objects originated. Within this context, the Netherlands, with its historical ties to Indonesia, faces a pressing challenge. Recent advisory statements, policy discussions, and repatriation efforts highlight the complexity of this issue, as they must navigate the delicate balance between international relations and the specific needs of the communities from which the artefacts were taken.

Critiques have been raised regarding the adequacy of addressing specific injustices faced by communities affected by colonial appropriation. It is argued that the historical government of the Dutch East Indies and contemporary ties to the Republic of Indonesia did not simply acquire artefacts. However, objects were often seized as spoils of war or taken under coercive circumstances. Moreover, the focus on intergovernmental repatriation may overlook the unique circumstances of certain collections, where direct engagement with affected communities might be more appropriate. Challenging the classification of artefacts as mere museum pieces, this article suggests that these items hold deep significance within living cultures. Upon repatriation, they could potentially resume their integral roles in religious rituals and cultural practices.

Decisions regarding the cultural status and use of artefacts should involve consultation with the communities from which they were taken. This approach contrasts with viewing the matter of restitution solely as an issue between states concerned, especially considering that one of these states had not yet declared its independence at the time of the looting. Recent events, such as the formal return of 472 historical artefacts to Indonesia by the Dutch government in 2023 (Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan RI, 2023), including symbolic items seized during colonial interventions, mark significant steps toward addressing historical grievances. However, these developments underscore the multifaceted nature of the repatriation discourse, encompassing legal, ethical, and cultural considerations (UNESCO, 2009).

In summary, there is a growing recognition of the importance of contextualising colonial-era appropriations within historical and cultural frameworks. Advocates emphasise the need for direct community involvement in the restitution process to ensure a comprehensive, equitable, and culturally sensitive approach to the repatriation of colonial cultural heritage.

2. Literature Review

Klungkung's historical significance in Bali is rooted in its status as the heir to the powerful Gelgel kingdom, which dominated the island from the 15th to mid-17th centuries. The *Babad Dalem*, a chronicle of Klungkung, traces its royal lineage back to the Javanese kingdom of Majapahit, emphasising its claim to paramount status. After internal strife led to Gelgel's decline, Dewa Agung Jambe I established Klungkung in 1686, setting up his new court in Klungkung. Although Klungkung did not wield the same level of authority as Gelgel, it maintained significant prestige and symbolic precedence on the politically fragmented island. This unique position made Klungkung a focal point for Dutch diplomatic efforts in the 1840s, as the colonial power sought to extend its influence over Bali (Agung, 1991; Wiener, 1995; Robinson, 1995; Pringle, 2004).

The complexity of Klungkung's political landscape is evident in the events surrounding the Dutch military expeditions of 1846-1849. These campaigns, led by General Andreas Victor Michiels, initially focused on northern Bali but eventually extended to Klungkung. Michiels faced unexpected resistance in Klungkung. The expedition culminated in a night offensive led by Dewa Agung Istri Kanya at Kusamba, resulting in heavy Dutch casualties and the death of General Michiels himself. This remarkable resistance forced the Dutch to retreat, leading to a treaty that temporarily halted their expansion. Throughout the 19th century, Klungkung's rulers, particularly Dewa Agung Putra III (r. 1851-1903), continued to play an active and often interventionist role in South Balinese politics. This included imprisoning the Raja of Gianyar in 1885 and contributing to the destruction of the Mengwi kingdom in 1891, actions that demonstrated Klungkung's continued influence despite the growing Dutch presence (Agung, 1991; Wiener, 1995; Robinson, 1995; Pringle, 2004).

Klungkung's influence as the paramount Balinese kingdom ended in 1908 with the Dutch intervention, culminating in a *puputan* - a mass act of fearless steadfastness (*pageh*) in the face of inevitable defeat, carried out by the Balinese Royal Family of Klungkung (also see Figure 1) amidst the Dutch colonial incursion. While often characterised as a ritualistic mass suicide by Euro-American scholars, this interpretation obscures Balinese intentionalities. For the Balinese, *puputan* differed significantly from suicide in terms of the inner state it entailed and the afterlife consequences it promised. Rather than an act of despair or impotence, *puputan* was seen as a brave and resolute action undertaken by Balinese lords to demonstrate their unwavering power and courage. Those who participated in *puputan* believed they would ascend to the highest levels of the invisible world, living like gods and receiving offerings and homage from the living, in stark contrast to the fate of those who committed suicide. *Puputan*, as such, should be seen as 'finishing' or 'ending' (Ardhana, 2013; Wiener, 1995, p. 314; pp. 325-326).

According to Vickers (2013), an Australian scholar, a *puputan* is a traditional Balinese way to signal the ending of a kingdom and to achieve spiritual liberation through death in battle, serving as a sign to other kings that the realm has come to an end (p. 48). Geertz (1980, p. 112, 141) described the *puputan* ritual as a desperate act of symbolic kingship. The Klungkung *puputan*, as Wiener (1995) observed, should be understood within the context of national dominance and political marginalisation. This framework also applies to the recent ceremony elevating the Dewa Agung to national hero status.

The aftermath of the Klungkung *pupatan* included the Dutch plundering of numerous culturally significant artefacts, subsequently housed in the *Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* (Royal Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences) in Batavia (now Jakarta) and various museums in the Netherlands (Bloembergen & Eickhoff, 2020; Brinkgreve in Ter Keurs, 2006). Recent recommendations put forth by the Dutch Council for Culture delineate a structured framework for the restitution of such items procured during the colonial period (Gonçalves-Ho Kang You, 2021).

The Dutch annexation of Bali was a gradual process spanning from 1846 to 1908, with Klungkung being the last independent Balinese kingdom to fall under colonial rule (Wiener, 1995). A pivotal moment in this period was the fall of the Buleleng kingdom in 1849, which heralded significant changes in Balinese knowledge systems and power structures (Wijaya, 2023). The annexation process was marked by several violent confrontations, notably the Puputan Badung in 1906 and the Puputan Klungkung in 1908. These events, known as "Puputan" or "ending," represented the Balinese rulers' final stand against foreign powers (Ardhana, 2013). The Puputan Badung alone resulted in substantial loss of life, with casualty estimates ranging from 1000-1500 according to Van Kol, while local sources such as the *Gaguritan Bhuwana Winasa* suggest figures as high as 3600 (Parimartha, 2011).

The Dutch, motivated by ambitions to consolidate authority over the port in Klungkung to expand their opium trade monopoly, encountered intense opposition from the Balinese population, precipitating anti-Dutch uprisings (Agung, 1991; Wiener, 1995; Pringle, 2004). In April 1908, Dutch military forces, led by Assistant Resident Schwartz and Resident De Bruyn Kops, penetrated the royal precincts of Klungkung (Agung, 1991, pp. 255-260; Brinkgreve in Ter Keurs, 2006, pp. 134-141, Wiener, 1995). Confronted with inevitable defeat, Raja Dewa Agung Jambe, accompanied by hundreds of adherents and kin clad in white attire, orchestrated a *puputan*, signifying a resolute "fight to the death" against the Dutch, resulting in substantial casualties (Agung, 1991, pp. 255-260; Pringle, 2004; Wiener, 1995). The impacts of these events persist within Balinese and Indonesian collective consciousness, which is characteristic of intense anti-colonial defiance.

Figure 1. [from l. to r.]: The crown prince of Klungkung Dewa Agung Gede Agung adorned with the pendant (see case study 5), Cokorda Raka Jodog, Dewa Agung Jambé, the ruler of Klungkung; and Cokorda Putu Plodot holding a sirih set. *Source*: Puri Klungkung photo collection, *circa* 1908.

Subsequent to these events, the Dutch seized numerous culturally significant artefacts from the Court and dispatched them to Batavia. The artefacts underwent an inspection before a selection was shipped to the Netherlands

(Bloembergen & Eickhoff, 2020). The acquisitions comprised gold-hilted *keris* daggers, jewellery, musical instruments, and other valuables deemed as treasures by the Dutch (Bloembergen & Eickhoff, 2020). A correspondent for the daily newspaper *De Locomotief*, who visited the ruler's residence the day after the *puputan*, described the scene as "a miserable view of fallen greatness" with "everything lay tumbled together in chaotic disorder" (Brinkgreve in Ter Keurs, 2006, p. 137). The report detailed the destruction wrought by the Dutch removal of the outer wall and the disarray of the Court's contents, including "huge mirrors partly cracked, *wayang* puppets, etc. etc." and "piles of European-made perfumery, chests full of *kepengs*, *sarongs*, carpets, etc. etc." in the women's quarters (Brinkgreve in Ter Keurs, 2006, p. 146).

The Dutch-appointed Resident and Assistant Resident busied themselves with searching for valuable *kerisses* worn by the Dewa Agung and other chiefs during the *puputan* or found in the Court, some of which were worth up to 10,000 florins. The Balinese believed these *kerisses* to possess magical powers, such as the ability to cause earthquakes, kill someone immediately, or freeze people motionless. Wiener (1995) argues that objects were viewed not simply as physical items but as artefacts imbued with ideological significance related to warfare, prosperity, and societal gender roles (p. 14).

The earlier mentioned correspondent of *De Locomotief* noted that some of the *kerisses* were "still blood-stained" and destined for museums, with some having been "stolen by the Dewa Agung during the war with neighbouring small states". The Balinese belief in the magical powers of these *kerisses* was expected to have "suffered a blow" given the outcome of the *puputan* (Brinkgreve in Ter Keurs, 2006, pp. 134-141; Wiener, 1995).

After the looting, the objects were packed into nine crates and handed over to the National Treasury in Batavia for safekeeping, along with two crates containing Balinese manuscripts (Brinkgreve in Ter Keurs, 2006). The 1908 minutes of the Bataviaasch Genootschap document a total of 71 groups of objects. This collection included pairs of items, diverse objects such as holy water containers, plates, musical instruments and a gun, and two chests containing *lontars* (palm leaf manuscripts). Notably, the inventory lists 16 *krisses*, some of which were described as particularly valuable (Bataviaasch Genootschap, 1908). This detailed record provides insight into the range and significance of the artefacts looted during this period.

In a letter from the Resident to Governor General Van Heutsz dated 19 May 1908, the approximately five hundred objects were valued at sixty thousand guilders (Brinkgreve in Ter Keurs, 2006). The Resident argued that no distinction was made between the personal possessions of the ruler and those of the state, and thus, the plunder was considered legal (Brinkgreve in Ter Keurs,

2006). Despite the exile of all the ruler's heirs to Lombok, which prompted the sale of items lacking ethnographic, antiquarian, or artistic significance to support maintenance, efforts were still made to repatriate heirloom *kerisses* to Klungkung. These attempts occurred in 1908 under Resident de Bruyn Kops and again in 1938 under Resident Moll, highlighting the enduring cultural importance of these artefacts (Wiener, 1995).

The division of the objects was handled by the *Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*, with four crates holding approximately 225 objects shipped to the Netherlands and registered under series number 1684. The ethnological museum in Leiden shared some of these objects with museums in Rotterdam and Breda, and the latter's share returned to Leiden in 1959. The *Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* took 157 objects into storage, largely of the same kind as those sent to Leiden, but also including unique items such as gilded instruments and an unusual tobacco box.

One particularly notable item was a gold, heart-shaped pectoral jewel inlaid with rubies and diamonds, which was worn by the young crown prince, Dewa Agung Gedé Agung, shortly before his death in the *puputan* (see Brinkgreve in Ter Keurs, 2006; Wiener, 1995 and also case study 5 in this article). According to anthropologist Margaret Wiener, who interviewed Balinese in the 1980s who were eyewitnesses to the 1908 *puputan*, this twelve-year-old boy was one of the most courageous fighters against Dutch power. A third group of 123 less valuable objects, largely silver instead of gold, were sold publicly in Batavia, with the proceeds going to the Dutch treasury (Brinkgreve in Ter Keurs, 2006, pp. 134-141).

Wiener (1995 p. 325) presents a compelling anthropological analysis of the *puputan*, unveiling the disparate cultural interpretations of the event between the Dutch and the Balinese. Whereas the Dutch construed the *puputan* as an act of fanatical mass suicide, the Balinese perceived it as an acknowledgement that their tangible realm (*sekala*) had reached its terminus, with the underlying source of royal authority and the catalyst of defeat rooted in the intangible realm (*niskala*). Wiener (1995, p. 58) interprets the Balinese conceptualisation of power (*kesaktian*) as intrinsically linked to one's communion with unseen forces and deities, with monarchs entrusted with the mediation of these forces on behalf of their subjects. The *puputan*, from this perspective, represented a ritualistic transition from the visible to the invisible realm, a cosmological event rather than a mere military defeat (Wiener, 1995).

Research conducted by Antara et al. (2019) on the 1906 *puputan* of Badung, two years preceding the events in Klungkung, similarly identifies pivotal ideological motifs, encompassing heroism, honour, and self-respect, framing the battlefield as a realm of ritualistic self-sacrifice (*rana yadnya*), underpinned

by conservatism in the face of colonial invasion. These ideological precepts were disseminated through mediums such as wayang puppetry, literary compositions, familial ties, and governmental edicts (Antara et al., 2019, p. 28). The study highlights the role of the Badung Royal Family in instilling these values, particularly through the figure of Gusti Ngurah Denpasar, who led his troops in a defiant march against the Dutch while dressed in white as a symbol of purity and readiness for death (Antara et al., 2019, p.29). The parallels with the *puputan* Klungkung are evident, suggesting a shared cultural ethos of resistance and sacrifice in the face of colonial aggression.

Thirty years after the military campaigns, the question of possibly returning several of the looted *kerisses* was raised in 1938 (Brinkgreve in Ter Keurs, 2006, pp. 134-141; Wiener, 1995) during preparations for the institution of the small Balinese states. Resident Moll considered whether it would be desirable to loan several *kerisses* to the new administrators, heirs to the former rulers, as a symbol of their greater independence (Brinkgreve in Ter Keurs, 2006; Wiener, 1995). Bali-based anthropologist and archaeologist Roelof Goris was consulted for advice, and prominent Balinese from the Royal Families of Badung, Klungkung, Tabanan, and Gianyar were invited to the museum in Batavia to identify their ancestors' heirlooms, convey their origins, describe associated rituals, and discuss the legendary powers of the objects (Brinkgreve in Ter Keurs, 2006, pp. 134-141; Wiener, 1995, p. 345).

An emissary (Cokorda Anom) from Klungkung recognised an important *keris* called Durga Dingkul. The Dewa Agung requested the return of the Durga Dingkul, but with the sheat and hilt of the Ardawalika, as well as two *tombak* (*Si Baru Ngit* (*Gnat*) and *Si Baru Gudug*). However, none of the *kerisses* was ultimately returned. Goris argued that while they were sacred heirlooms (*pusaka*) of the relevant families, they were not genuine state jewels or objects without which a prince would have been unable to rule (Brinkgreve in Ter Keurs, 2006, pp. 134-141, Wiener 1995, p. 345-346). Wiener (1995, p. 348) is of the opinion that the Durga Dingkul was chosen rather than Bangawan Canggu because it was a gift from Bali's conqueror Gajah Mada, making it fitting for the new conquerors in whose name the Dewa Agung reigned, and it was closer to ancestral origins.

Recent investigations by Mooren et al. (2022) are important for the future of cultural artefacts seized from Klungkung in 1908. They spotlighted a ceremonial *keris* (dagger) catalogued in the National Museum of World Cultures collection as RV-3600-193. The provenance detailing the specific Balinese individual to whom it pertained prior to confiscation remains absent. Conversely, the *Keris* Ardawalika, acknowledged as the personal possession of Klungkung's monarch, was granted separate treatment, remaining in Batavia by virtue of its association with its esteemed owner (Mooren et al., 2022). In

2008, the *keris* were temporarily repatriated to Klungkung for the anniversary commemoration of the *puputan* (Mooren et al., 2022).

The fate of these artefacts raises pertinent questions about the ethical dimensions of colonial collections and the ongoing impact of historical injustices. The violent circumstances of the heirlooms' acquisition, the cultural and spiritual significance the heirlooms held for the Balinese people, and the symbolic role the heirlooms played in the *puputan* all point to the complex entanglements of power, resistance, and identity that characterise the colonial encounter. The fact that many of these objects remain in Dutch museums and in Jakarta, far from their original context, is a testament to the enduring legacies of colonialism and the challenges of reconciling the past with the present.

Van Beurden, a Dutch researcher and activist in favour of repatriation, describes an increasing global discourse advocating for the repatriation of colonial-era acquisitions in his book "Treasures in Trusted Hands: Negotiating the Future of Colonial Cultural Objects" (2017). He argues that objects stored in foreign museums and private collections should be returned to their respective countries of origin. This discourse is rooted in a growing recognition of the ethical and moral implications of holding onto objects that were often acquired through dubious or outright violent means and the need to redress historical wrongs and promote cultural sovereignty. The debate around repatriation is complex, involving issues of legal ownership, cultural heritage, national identity, and the role of museums in a postcolonial world (van Beurden, 2017).

In the Dutch context, the issue of repatriation has gained significant traction in recent years. In 2020, the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture, and Science solicited guidance from the Council for Culture to formulate a national policy framework (see Gonçalves-Ho Kang You, 2021, pp. 1-138). The Dutch advisory committee report in October 2021 delineates directives for addressing repatriation appeals, encompassing the recognition of historical injustices stemming from colonial looting, the unconditional return of objects demonstrably acquired involuntarily from former colonies upon request, consideration of requests for culturally significant objects despite ambiguous provenance of theft, engagement of an independent advisory commission, facilitation of provenance research, and promotion of collaboration with source nations (Gonçalves-Ho Kang You, 2021, pp. 1-138). This framework, which the Dutch government has adopted, advances a viable avenue for the repatriation of artefacts from Klungkung and comparable places.

The implementation of a framework, however, is not without its challenges. Provenance research, the process of tracing an object's country or area of origin and ownership history, is often complicated by incomplete or missing documentation (Mooren et al., 2022). The passage of time, the destruction of

records, and the complex trajectories of objects through different institutions and collections can make it difficult to establish clear lines of provenance (Mooren et al., 2022). Moreover, the question of who has the authority to claim ownership and initiate repatriation requests is not always straightforward, particularly in cases where the original owners or their descendants are not easily identifiable (van Beurden, 2017).

Despite these challenges, the importance of repatriation to address colonial legacies and promote cultural justice cannot be overstated. By returning artefacts to their communities of origin, museums and governments can acknowledge the historical wrongs that led to their acquisition and contribute to the healing of colonial trauma (van Beurden, 2017). Repatriation can also serve to empower source communities, restore cultural pride, and promote the continuity of cultural practices and knowledge systems that were disrupted by colonialism (see van Beurden, 2017; Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan RI, 2023).

In the case of the *puputan* Klungkung artefacts, repatriation would hold particular significance given the context of their acquisition and the role the heirlooms played in the Balinese resistance against Dutch colonialism. The *kerisses*, jewellery, and other objects looted from the Court were not mere spoils of war but embodiments of Balinese cultural identity, spiritual power, and political authority (Brinkgreve in Ter Keurs, 2006; Wiener, 1995). Their return would not only restore a measure of cultural sovereignty to the Balinese people but also serve as a powerful symbol of reconciliation and respect for the sacrifices made by those who fought and died in the *puputan*.

By revealing the cultural and ideological discourse underpinning events like the *puputan* Klungkung, works by scholars such as Wiener (1995), Ter Keurs (2006), Antara et al. (2019), and Mooren et al. (2022) provide indispensable context for deliberations concerning repatriation. These and other scholars underscore the permanent significance of the appropriated artefacts to Balinese identity, history, and collective memory and the ways in which the absence of these objects continues to resonate in the present. Sustained scholarly inquiry, conversation, and collaboration among Dutch and Indonesian stakeholders, inclusive of Balinese community perspectives, constitute imperative fundamentals as the repatriation endeavour progresses.

While the Dutch Council for Culture's framework constitutes a pivotal stride, substantial endeavours are needed to address this multifaceted colonial legacy judiciously. The process of repatriation is not merely a bureaucratic or legal matter but a deeply human one, involving the recognition of past injustices, the healing of intergenerational trauma, and the restoration of cultural dignity. It requires a willingness to confront uncomfortable truths, engage in difficult conversations, and imagine new forms of relationship and solidarity across borders and histories.

In this light, the repatriation of the *puputan* Klungkung artefacts represents not only an opportunity to redress a specific historical wrong but also a chance to set a precedent for a more equitable and ethical approach to cultural heritage in the postcolonial era. By returning these objects to their rightful owners, the Netherlands and Indonesia can demonstrate a commitment to justice, reconciliation, and mutual respect and pave the way for a new chapter in their shared history. The challenges are significant, but so too are the potential rewards - not only for the Balinese people but for all those who believe in the power of cultural heritage to unite, heal, and transform.

The current state of Klungkung reflects a complex negotiation between historical legacy and modern realities. Since 2011, the Royal Family's position has been marked by a significant stance regarding their historical lineage. Ida Dalem Semara Putra, the current *Panglingsir* of Puri Klungkung, has emphasised that all courts throughout Bali have rejected and do not recognise any claims of direct Majapahit royal descent (pers. comm., 2021). This position underscores a more nuanced understanding of Balinese royal history, with the Klungkung royalty tracing their lineage to Dalem Sri Aji Kresna Kepakisan, who ruled Bali under Majapahit influence rather than claiming direct Majapahit ancestry.

Klungkung maintains a solid connection to its royal past by preserving symbolic titles and traditions. The 'Dalem' title, which signifies "the most respected and glorified insider" (Laksemi, 2009, p. 46), is an essential marker of royal lineage. This title carries deep cultural and religious significance, symbolising the divine nature of royal authority in Balinese Hindu tradition. The persistence of these titles and associated symbols in modern Klungkung suggests a more conservative approach to cultural heritage than in other parts of Bali and a pragmatic approach to historical interpretation in the modern era, highlighting Klungkung's distinct identity within Balinese royal history. However, as Laksemi notes, the meaning and function of these royal symbols are continuously reinterpreted in contemporary Balinese society, balancing traditional reverence with the realities of a democratic Indonesia (Laksemi, 2009, pp. 55-56).

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design, utilising a case study approach to investigate the complexities surrounding the repatriation of cultural artefacts from Klungkung. The case study method allows for an in-depth exploration of the historical, cultural, and ethical dimensions (Yin, 2018). Five specific artefacts were selected, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and considerations involved in the repatriation process. The five artefacts—a golden *bokor*, a ceremonial *keris*, an ivory offering box,

a dance bodice, and a pendant belonging to the Crown Prince Dewa Agung Gede Agung—were selected based on their cultural significance, their current storage in Dutch and Indonesian museums, and their relevance to the broader discourse on repatriation and contemporary colonial legacy. These artefacts serve as representative cases, illuminating the diverse issues and perspectives that shape the repatriation debate.

Data collection for this study involved a combination of ongoing archival research, literature review, and ongoing stakeholder dialogues regarding repatriation. Archival sources, including historical documents and governmental reports, were consulted to establish the provenance and contextual background of the selected artefacts. A literature review was conducted to situate the study within the existing scholarship on colonial history, cultural heritage, and repatriation ethics.

Data analysis followed an iterative, thematic approach, allowing for the identification of key patterns, themes, and relationships within the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis was guided by the research objectives and theoretical framework, which emphasise the importance of cultural heritage preservation, restitution ethics, and stakeholder engagement. Comparative analysis was employed to examine the similarities and differences across the five case studies, contributing to a holistic understanding of the repatriation landscape.

The methodology adopted in this study aligns with the principles of decolonial and participatory research, which prioritise the voices, knowledge, and agency of communities affected by colonial legacies (Smith, 2012). By centring the perspectives of Balinese stakeholders and engaging in collaborative knowledge production, this research aimed to contribute to a more equitable and culturally sensitive approach to repatriation.

4. Case Studies

This chapter presents five cultural artefacts originating from Klungkung Court that are currently held in, or until recently were part of, museum collections in the Netherlands and Indonesia. The historical and cultural significance of these objects - a golden *bokor* (offering bowl), a ceremonial *keris* (dagger), an ivory offering box, a dance bodice, and a piece of royal chest jewellery - are described using information sourced from the online catalogues of the respective museums. By relying on the museums' own descriptions and further context, the chapter aims to provide insight into how these institutions understand and present the provenance, craftsmanship, and meaning of these Klungkung artefacts to the public.

Artefact 1: *Bokor* RV-1684-1

Figure. 2. Bokor RV-1684-1. *Source:* Stichting Nationaal Museum voor Wereld Culturen, (n.d.).

This *bokor* originates from Klungkung and is in the collection of *Stichting Nationaal Museum voor Wereld Culturen*. It dates back to the period between 1850 and 1900 and measures 4.5 x 22 cm (Figure 2). Traditionally, *bokors* were made of silver, although golden examples were not uncommon in royal courts. Nowadays, they are mostly made of cheaper aluminium. *Bokors* serve various purposes within religious and cultural practices. They often function as presentation platforms for towers of fruit and pastries called *banten gebogan*, which are offered to the gods and deified ancestors at temples. Additionally, they are used to transport smaller offerings and gifts to ritual sites. Sometimes, they serve as trays for *betel* or *sirih* sets.

The *bokor* in question is made of gold and features decorative borders. It was part of the inventory of the Klungkung Court until Dutch troops seized it after the *puputan* Klungkung on April 28, 1908 (Stichting Nationaal Museum voor Wereld Culturen, 2024). It is classified as an offering vessel and belongs to the offering bowls subcategory within the object collection. In total, twenty-three silver and golden *bokors* (RV1684 1,3,64-76, RV3600-91-95, 98, and TM-H-38, 41 (Stichting Nationaal Museum voor Wereld Culturen, 2024) originate from the *puputan* Klungkung collection.

Artefact 2: *Keris* RV-1684-193

Figure 3. *Keris* RV-3600-193. *Source:* Stichting Nationaal Museum voor Wereld Culturen, (n.d.).

The *Staatsiekeris*, or Ceremonial *keris*, with inventory number RV-3600-193 (Stichting Nationaal Museum voor Wereld Culturen, 2024), has a rich and contentious history originating from the *puputan* in Klungkung (Figure 3). The *Staatsiekeris* is a ceremonial weapon characterised by distinctive features, including a wavy blade with *pamor* patterns, a gold ring adorned with precious stones connecting the blade to the hilt, and an intricately carved hilt depicting a malignant demon. Crafted from ivory and speckled wood, the sheath further emphasises its Balinese provenance. Recent provenance investigation traces the journey of the *Staatsiekeris* from its acquisition by the KNIL during the *puputan* in Klungkung to its possession by the Dutch State.

The *keris* was among the spoils of war transported to the Netherlands in 1908, where it was allocated to various museums, eventually becoming part of the collection of Museum Volkenkunde in 1956 (Quist, 2022). Despite confirming the *Staatsiekeris's* connection to the *puputan* in Klungkung, several uncertainties remain regarding its specific origin and ownership (Quist, 2022). This ceremonial *keris*, along with other cultural artefacts, was repatriated to Indonesia in July 2023 after years of diplomatic negotiations. Its return symbolised the restoration of Indonesia's cultural heritage and sovereignty, celebrated through public exhibition and recognition. Wiener (1995) highlights, based on the *babad dalam,* how royal authority is symbolised through the ownership of powerful keris, which play a crucial role in Klungkung royal traditions.

The *babad ksatria* mentions the regalia *kerisses* as a major token of power. This insight raises questions about the current status of returned keris and heirloom keris in the Museum Nasional's collection. In total, six other *kerisses*

(RV1684 56, 58a, 59-62) from the *puputan* Klungkung are in the collection of the *Stichting Nationaal Museum voor Wereld Culturen.* RV-3600-193 was permanently displayed in the *Stichting Nationaal Museum voor Wereld Culturen* in Leiden. After repatriation in 2023, this *keris* was displayed at the *Galeri Nasional* in Jakarta in the *Repatriasi: Kembalinya Saksi Bisu Peradaban Nusantara* exhibition (Historia.id. 2023).

The exact identity of the *keris* repatriated to Indonesia remains uncertain. It is likely not the Bangawan Canggu, as no *nagapasa* (a distinctive symbol associated with that particular keris, as described by Wiener, 1995, p. 120) can be observed. Quist (2022) notes that the Ministry of Colonies archives consulted during his investigation provided no further details regarding the specific keris that came into the possession of the KNIL (Royal Netherlands East Indies Army) during the *puputan* in Klungkung. While newspapers in the Dutch East Indies reported on the expedition and mentioned some looted krisses with gold figurative hilts set with precious stones, these descriptions lack sufficient detail to identify the keris catalogued as RV-3600-193 conclusively. This ambiguity surrounding the keris's provenance and identity underscores the complexities involved in tracing and authenticating historical artefacts, particularly those acquired during colonial conflicts.

Artefact 3: Offering Box AK-MAK-280

Figure 4. Offering Box AK-MAK-280. *Source:* Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst, (n.d.).

The Asian Art collection of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam holdings includes an offering box in the form of a winged lion on loan from the Society

of Friends of Asian Art (*Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst*) (Figure 4). The box, measuring 12 cm high, 17.5 cm wide and 7.3 cm deep, is carved from a single piece of hollowed-out ivory and exquisitely decorated. It stands on a wooden base. A small square lid is cut out on the back amidst the lion's flowing manes. The craftsmanship is of the highest quality, likely dating the piece to the 19th century (Rijksmuseum, n.d.).

This rare offering box was collected in Bali in 1925 by the renowned Dutch artist and art collector W.O.J. Nieuwenkamp. According to the seller, it belonged to the former ruler of Klungkung, the Dewa Agung, who used it to carry golden coins as offerings to the main temple (Brinkgreve, 2006). While this provenance is difficult to confirm, the precious ivory material and refined carving certainly make it a worthy possession for a Court. Nieuwenkamp kept the lion box in his private collection for almost a decade before selling it to the Society of Friends of Asian Art in November 1934 for 300 guilders. In the intervening years, he published about the box and exhibited it as part of displays of Indonesian art (Brinkgreve, 2006). As such, Nieuwenkamp played an important role in bringing this exquisite example of Balinese ritual art to the attention of art lovers and scholars. AK-MAK-280 was recently showcased at the Grote Indonesië Tentoonstelling (Grand Indonesia Exhibition) in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam (2023/24).

Artefact 4: Dance Bodice RV-1684-30

Figure 5. Dance Bodice RV-1684-30. *Source:* Stichting Nationaal Museum voor Wereld Culturen, (n.d.).

The *Stichting Nationaal Museum voor Wereld Culturen* in the Netherlands holds a bodice, or *sesimping*, from Klungkung in Bali (Figure 5). Measuring 16.8 cm high, 39 cm wide, and 3 cm deep, this sleeveless garment is made of velvet and adorned with intricate floral and leaf motifs embroidered in gold thread. It showcases the exceptional skill of the decorative artists employed at the Klungkung court (National Museum of World Cultures, 2024). Young female dancers wore such bodices over a long-sleeved blouse as part of the costume for the classical Balinese *legong* dance (National Museum of World Cultures, n.d.).

The Klungkung *sesimping* in the museum's collection is a spoil of war from the Dutch conquest of the kingdom in 1908. This remaining *sesimping* is regarded as an irreplaceable testament to the rich dance tradition and craftsmanship of the Klungkung court. RV-1684-30 was recently showcased at the Grote Indonesië Tentoonstelling (Grand Indonesia Exhibition) in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam (2023/24) and on the Bali, Welcome to Paradise exhibition in 2019/20 in Leiden and Amsterdam. The Klungkung collection includes four *suling*, a *rebab*, and *gelungan* for *gambuh*.

Some scholars have suggested that the *sesimping* in this collection was used for gambuh rather than legong. This interpretation is reflected in the Juynboll catalogue of 1912, which also identifies the object as a *sesimping* for *gambuh*. However, Balinese scholar Ni Made Ruastiti, in personal communication (2024), confirms that this is indeed a *sesimping* for legong. This view is corroborated by Reichle (2010), who also identifies the *sesimping* as being used for legong performances.

Artefact 5: Chest Jewellery 14891 (E.821)

Figure 6. Pendant 14891 (E.821), *Source:* Museum Nasional Indonesia, (n.d.).

The National Museum of Indonesia (former *Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*, Batavia) in Jakarta holds a piece of chest jewellery that once belonged to Crown Prince Dewa Agung Gede Agung,

one of the most brave warriors in the battle of Klungkung in 1908 (National Museum of Indonesia, n.d.) (Fig. 6). The pendant, with a length of 12.8 cm, is decorated with floral and leaf patterns, inset with diamonds and rubies (Brinkgreve in Ter Keurs, 2006). Belonging to Crown Prince Dewa Agung Gede Agung, it stands as a silent testament to his courage and the heroic resolve of the Klungkung Royal Family and their people in the face of insurmountable odds. The pendant serves as a tangible reminder of the Balinese people's rich cultural heritage and indomitable spirit, as they would sacrifice everything to defend their honour and way of life. The pendant is on permanent display in Museum Nasional, Jakarta (also see Figure 1).

5. Results and Discussion

The five case studies presented in this article provide valuable insights into the complexities surrounding the repatriation of cultural artefacts acquired by Dutch forces in Klungkung in 1908. Each case study raises unique questions and considerations that contribute to the broader discourse on decolonisation, cultural heritage, and restitution ethics.

Case Study 1: *Bokor* RV-1684-1

The golden *bokor*, currently held by the *Stichting Nationaal Museum voor Wereld Culturen*, prompts a re-evaluation of its classification as a museum object. With 23 silver and golden *bokor* noted in the collection catalogue, it is essential to consider the cultural significance of these objects beyond their display value. Balinese culture is rooted in living traditions, and *bokor* continues to play a vital role in religious and cultural practices, serving as a presentation platform for offerings and gifts to deities and ancestors.

The sheer number of *bokor* in the collection raises questions about the appropriateness of retaining such a large quantity of these culturally significant objects in a museum setting, especially when some, if not all, of these *bokor* could be reintegrated into the daily ceremonies and rituals of the Balinese people.

Case Study 2: *Keris* RV-1684-193

The repatriation of the ceremonial *keris* to Indonesia in July 2023 highlights the complexities of national-level restitution efforts. While the return of Keris to Indonesia is a significant step towards reconciliation, it is crucial to consider whether this action truly serves justice for the local stakeholders in Klungkung. Wiener (1995) repeatedly states that without the regalia, the heirloom *keris* is incapacitated to act as a 'protector of the realm' (p. 344). As Gonçalves (pers. comm., 2023.) conveyed to this author, "Law does not always bring justice."

The Dutch advisory committee must grapple with this reality when making decisions about repatriation. The fact that the Dutch fought against the sovereign Kingdom of Klungkung in 1908, before the Indonesian Declaration of Independence in 1945, underscores the importance of considering the voices of the original possessors in the restitution process. Engaging directly with the Royal Family of Klungkung and the local community would ensure a more equitable and culturally sensitive approach to repatriation.

Ida Dalem Semeraputra, the current King of Klungkung, believes the keris should be returned to Klungkung rather than remain in Jakarta's museums (pers. comm., 2021). This position contrasts with historical events: in 1908, the Dewa Agung's brothers, exiled in Lombok, refused to accept a keris that had belonged to the Dewa Agung when offered by Resident de Bruyn Kops (Wiener, 1995, p. 345). Paradoxically, in a letter to the Governor General on 29 June 1908, the same Resident de Bruyn Kops argued that many Klungkung keris were sacred and that returning them to Balinese lords would be indefensible.

Case Study 3: Offering Box AK-MAK-280

The ivory offering box, collected by W.O.J. Nieuwenkamp in 1925 and currently held by the Society of Friends of Asian Art in Amsterdam, presents a unique opportunity for the direct return of heritage. As the object is not part of the Dutch state collection, the earlier mentioned Dutch advisory committee lacks the authority to make decisions regarding its repatriation.

A request for its return to Klungkung was made in 2023 by the Westerlaken foundation [not publicly published]. Case study 3 highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach to restitution that extends beyond state-level collections and engages with a broader range of individuals who are involved, including private collectors and cultural institutions.

Case Study 4: Dance Bodice RV-1684-30

The dance bodice, or *sesimping*, from Klungkung demonstrates the value of certain objects for display and study in a museum context. While the bodice holds significant ethnological, antiquarian, and artistic value, it may no longer hold special cultural or ancestral meaning to the Royal Family of Klungkung. Moreover, its fragility may preclude its use in contemporary ceremonies. In such cases, should a positive response emerge from local community-based negotiations, retaining the object in a Dutch museum setting could serve to preserve and showcase the rich craftsmanship and cultural heritage of the Klungkung court, providing opportunities for transnational education and appreciation of Balinese art and dance traditions.

Case Study 5: Chest Jewellery 14891 (E.821)

The pendant of Crown Prince Dewa Agung Gede Agung, currently held by the National Museum of Indonesia in Jakarta, underscores the need for a more comprehensive approach to decolonisation and restitution. While much attention has been focused on the return of objects from Dutch collections to Indonesia, it is equally important to consider the redistribution of culturally significant artefacts within Indonesia itself. The case of the *keris* Ardawalika, the Durga Dingkul *keris*, this pendant, and other valuable objects from the Klungkung Court highlights the potential for these items to be returned to their original context in Klungkung, where these heirlooms can be reintegrated into ceremonial customs and serve as powerful symbols of cultural identity and resilience.

Taken together, these case studies demonstrate the multifaceted nature of the repatriation process and the need for a nuanced, culturally sensitive, and inclusive approach to addressing colonial legacies. By engaging with local stakeholders, considering the cultural significance of objects beyond their museum value, and recognising the importance of intergovernmental restitution efforts, all parties involved can work towards a more equitable and just resolution to the complex issue of cultural heritage repatriation.

The research also highlights the importance of ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and research in navigating the challenges of restitution. By bringing together diverse perspectives from scholars, cultural institutions, government bodies, and local communities, a more comprehensive understanding of the historical, cultural, and ethical dimensions of these artefacts can be developed. This approach will enable stakeholders to find solutions that prioritise the needs, rights, and aspirations of the communities from which these objects originated.

Ultimately, the repatriation of cultural artefacts to the Klungkung represents an opportunity to acknowledge and address historical injustices, promote cultural sovereignty, and foster a spirit of reconciliation and mutual respect between the Netherlands and Indonesia. By engaging in this process with sensitivity, transparency, and a commitment to justice, a foundation can be laid for a more equitable and collaborative approach to cultural heritage management in the postcolonial era.

6. Conclusion

The repatriation of cultural artefacts obtained during the colonial era is a complex and multifaceted issue that demands careful consideration and a commitment to justice, reconciliation, and cultural sovereignty. The case studies of objects from the Klungkung Court, seized by Dutch forces during the *puputan* Klungkung in 1908, provide valuable insights into the historical, cultural, and ethical dimensions of this issue. These case studies highlight the

argument that repatriation is often carried out as part of restitution between nations but without fully taking into account the needs and perspectives of the local communities or families from which the repatriated objects originated. Engaging with the specific communities affected by the colonial acquisition of these artefacts is crucial to ensure that the repatriation process addresses their concerns and contributes to a genuine sense of justice and reconciliation.

The examination of the golden *bokor*, ceremonial *keris*, ivory offering box, dance bodice, and pendant of Crown Prince Dewa Agung Gede Agung reveals the diverse challenges and considerations involved in the repatriation process. These include the need to re-evaluate the classification of culturally significant objects as museum pieces, the complexities of national-level restitution efforts, the role of foreign and local private collectors and cultural institutions, the value of certain objects for display and study, and the importance of intra-national restitution.

The findings underscore the necessity of engaging with local stakeholders, such as the Royal Family of Klungkung and the Balinese community, to ensure a more equitable and culturally sensitive approach to repatriation. It also highlights the importance of ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and research among scholars, cultural institutions, government bodies, and local communities to navigate the challenges of restitution and develop solutions that prioritise the needs and aspirations of the communities from which the artefacts originated.

The repatriation of the Klungkung artefacts represents an opportunity to address historical injustices, promote cultural sovereignty, and foster a spirit of reconciliation and mutual respect between the Netherlands and Indonesia. By engaging in this process with sensitivity, transparency, and a commitment to justice, an appropriate foundation can be laid for a more equitable and collaborative approach to cultural heritage management in the postcolonial era.

However, the repatriation process is not without its challenges. Provenance research can be complicated by incomplete or missing documentation, and the question of who has the authority to claim ownership and initiate repatriation requests is not always straightforward. Moreover, the repatriation of objects to national institutions, such as the *keris* to the National Museum of Indonesia in Jakarta, may not always serve the interests of local stakeholders, such as the Royal Family of Klungkung and the Balinese community. Despite these challenges, the importance of repatriation to address colonial legacies and promote cultural justice cannot be overstated.

By returning artefacts to their communities of origin, museums and governments can acknowledge the historical wrongs that led to their acquisition and contribute to healing colonial trauma. Repatriation can also empower source communities, restore cultural pride, and promote the continuity of cultural practices and knowledge systems disrupted by colonialism.

Repatriation processes have revealed a broader community interest in Klungkung's royal cultural artefacts, extending beyond the Royal Family itself. This was particularly evident in successfully repatriating objects from private collections originating from Klungkung, now displayed in the Semarajaya Museum. The comprehensive media coverage and substantial public attendance at the ceremonies in which ownership was transferred to the Royal Family underscore the community's engagement with their cultural heritage. Notably, the Royal Family's interest (pers. comm. 2022) encompasses not only heirloom artefacts (*pusaka*) but also objects that play roles in daily court life, reflecting a holistic approach to cultural reclamation. The Royal Family focuses primarily on artefacts remaining in Dutch collections, indicating ongoing challenges and opportunities in repatriation. This multifaceted interest from both the Royal Family and the wider Klungkung community highlights the complex interplay between historical legacy, cultural identity, and contemporary relevance in the context of repatriation efforts.

This study is limited by its focus on a specific set of artefacts originating from the Klungkung Court, and the findings may not be generalisable to other contexts or repatriation efforts. Additionally, while the stakeholder dialogues provide valuable insights, the perspectives of some key persons may not be fully represented. Future research should explore the repatriation of artefacts to other Indonesian regions or colonial contexts, employ a more extensive range of data collection methods, such as surveys or focus groups, and investigate the long-term impacts and outcomes of repatriation efforts on source communities and cultural heritage preservation.

In conclusion, the repatriation of cultural artefacts from the Klungkung Court is a complex process that requires a commitment to justice, reconciliation, and cultural sovereignty. By engaging with local stakeholders, considering the cultural significance of objects beyond their museum value, and recognising the importance of intergovernmental restitution efforts, progress can be made towards a more equitable and just resolution to the complex issue of cultural heritage repatriation. The case studies presented in this article provide valuable insights and lessons for navigating this process and serve as a call to action for all those committed to addressing the legacies of contemporary colonialism and promoting a more just and equitable future.

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