



# notes from a rice field

the ramblings of Jon Goldman in Bali

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8

Lotunduh, Gianyar, Ubud, Bali

So today was one of those complex days. Nicole had us out at 10:30 or so for a long 3.8 mile hike in the noon day sun around the rice field above Jalan Kaseng. It first brought us along a deep deep ravine/jungle which was remarkable both because it sheltered us from the sun and then we walked out of it and onto a higher plane where rice fields had just been planted.

On the way back an Australian and her 9 or ten year old son (guess) slipped off the tiny path along the rice field following some locals who were going a bit faster. The mom had done a face plant came up a little bit bloody, and the son clearly shaken up wasn't saying much. Their guide came back for them on his scooter and helped them. But it was a powerful reminder to continue to be thankful that we had decided to keep walking as integral to our time here. Yes, our courteous driver, Wayan Dolar would still drive us when a long distance is required. But we have been using a 130cc scooter me at the helm, and she the chief navigator.

Wayan D had taken us with his wife Kadek and their daughter Putu to a holy water "cleansing" at a beautiful nighttime temple at the foot of the presidential palace.

The cool water WAS divine and they were very helpful showing us the proper way to be part of the offering that is constant here. As we were driving there, I mentioned one of my mentors, Lowry Burgess<sup>1</sup>, an artist, poet/priest/philosopher (and first to have an artwork in space), and I immediately started to think about his QUIET AXIS project where he traveled to the



On the walk up Jalan Kaseng women carrying offerings for Galangal



Nicole, Kadek and Putu at Titra Empul for the Sacred Water.

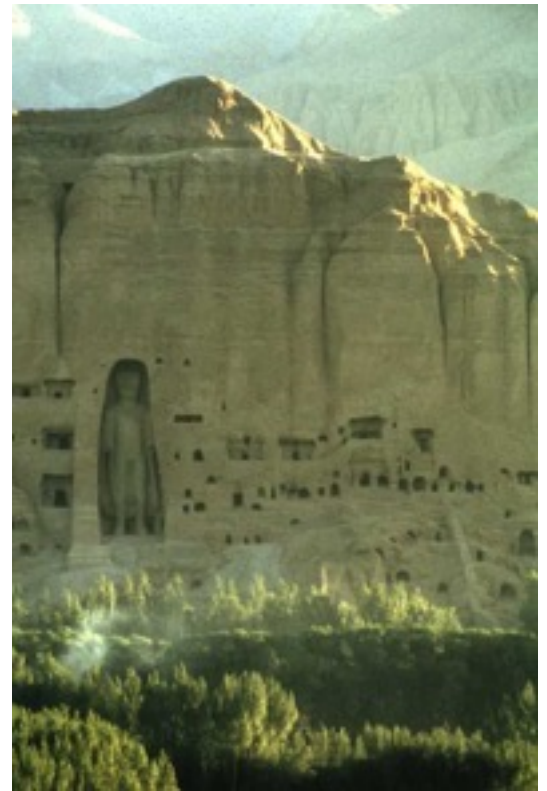


Wayan Dolar, our guide/driver



Putu Dolar, Wayan's daughter

sacred rivers of the world to collect the waters to be placed in the form of ice cubes for Ejection from a Space shuttle. "Up near the moon," Nicole corrected me, simplifying. "He [Wayan Dolar] doesn't know from space shuttle." I explained that on the moon there was no gravity; that if you threw a ball it would continue forever. It was a concept that he could not wrap his head around. I said that the world revolved around an axis, and it was because of that really fast movement we were grounded.



Buddha at Bamiyan, Afghanistan



Lowry Burgess

LOTUS/water lilly (oil on Canvas)

based on visionary and dreamlike imagery of holograms which he

I thought aloud about Lowry, about the QUIET AXIS, that pivotal rotation point around which our Big Blue Marble spins, once again proving my "space cadet" affiliation. I thought of Bamiyan, and how Lowry had been there, that place of the Great Buddhas now since decimated by the ignorance of the terrorists. How we, here are so surrounded by water, how aquifers (even Bali's apparently) are drying, how Water will be the foundation for the next global conflict (only after man's own religious idiocy) and how the ocean will overcome our coastal cities.



Lowry Burgess

This is a profound leap of understanding with this culture here in Bali. Wrote behaviour of creativity, a meticulous connection to the balance of the world seems so directly integrated into every one's social life. I write this as Super bowl 50, complete with it's televised self congratulatory slap on the back, entertains the media dominance in today's two dimensional world of US life. The commercial break is to laud the commercials of the last 50 years.

Meanwhile, snow falls, I am sure blanketing Woods Hole in seasonal quiet. Here I float in our shared "infinity" pool looking skyward at Orion confused because I am not sure of what direction he is pointing now that I am in the southern Hemisphere. It reminds me of my old friend and MIT classmate, Luc Courchesne, as I meet mostly French Canadians here from Quebec. Luc has recently posted on

Facebook something about the Invention of the Horizon, also reminding me of his card from decades ago reminding us of the shortest day ( least light) of the year.

All of this resonates with me on a cosmological level here that is remarkably constant. Perhaps it is the everpresence of the Temples at every turn in every house with every small offering, of living next to a constantly tilled, sewn and harvested rice field that has been this way for hundred of years and a multitude of generations.

At the same time fully embracing that the one constant is change, even from the distance of fourteen years since we were last here, commercialization has totally transformed this place. It brings me back to the questions I established for myself with OIL IN THE FAMILY about “progress”. It made me remember my friend Filipino Filmmaker Kidlat Tahimik whose TURUMBA (a beautiful cinematic look into how industrialisation dramatically changes a small Filipino village) as so prescient, made 35 years ago. It is, in

retrospect an act of being able to foretell the future as only someone very special can whose worldview transcends economic education ( Wharton) coming from a small village, and climbing to the top honours for his field.

Now he spends his time wearing his self-described Igurot “g-string” he the native returned to the roots, on *his* own rice terrace in the shadow of Banaue, in a small mountainous village called Hapau in Northern Luzon. Or at least that was his wish the last time I heard from him.



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That is me in traditional sarong and white shirt acclimating to the cool night water. The fountains behind me is where you do the “cleansing” saying a small (in my case wish) before dunking your head. My right shoulder had been hurting so I did my best to make sure it was soaked in the curative waters. You did kind of feel blissed out afterwards and then had a small piece of snake fruit...so sweet and delicious, like all we have eaten.

After being here for two and half weeks, today was the first time we ever actually got stuck, restricted in movement because of a sudden major downpour.

We were at the Coco market, the “western” style market place and had just finished shopping for the week food staples (wanna make gumbo, too). We waited out the storm, proud that we hadn’t had to hail a cab and come back later for the scooter. we donned our plastic ponchos and all the groceries, and made it home, newly emboldened conquerors of the rain.

Greeting us as the rain fizzled out, Ibu Wayan (the manager and now friend) said (and concretely believes)

This statue has my taste in chin fur.



the rain was for Chinese New Years.

Wednesday is a huge celebration here, Galangan a time to shoo out the Evil spirits of last year and welcome in the Good Spirits of the coming year. That it coincides with Mardi Gras, is one huge confab of belief systems. A Propitious day for the Year of the Monkey?



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1. The “Quiet Axis” is a visionary realignment of the earth and heavens so that new relationships may be ordered to establish a new framework for consciousness.<sup>[6]</sup> Each aspect of the “Quiet Axis” searches for the soul of the world wherein it is neither object nor belief — where darkness and light are one eternal presence.<sup>[6]</sup>