



The New York Public Library  
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

**Claire Holt papers**

circa 1928-1970

(S) \*MGZMD 35

Processed by Nancy M. Shawcross.

## Summary

**Creator:** Holt, Claire

**Title:** Claire Holt papers

**Date:** circa 1928-1970

**Size:** 16 boxes 400 folders

**Source:** Gift. Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell University. Received: 1978.

**Abstract:** The Claire Holt Collection of Indonesian dance materials presents a rich and sensitive account of the cultural life of five islands of Indonesia. The islands, then part of the Dutch East Indies, include Java, Bali, Sulawesi (known in the 1930s as the Celebes), Nias, and Sumatra. Accumulated mostly during the 1930s, the collection comprises approximately 9,000 photographic prints; 3,500 photographic negatives; several reels of 16mm motion picture film; and a small but significant group of manuscripts. In addition to the pre-World War II material are photographic prints, negatives, and slides of artists working in Java and Bali in the mid-1950s.

**Access:** Some collections held by the Dance, Music, Recorded Sound, and Theatre Divisions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. For general guidance about requesting offsite materials, please consult:  
<https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials>

**Preferred citation:** Holt, Claire, 1901-1970. Papers, (S) \*MGZMD 35, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Processed by Nancy M. Shawcross.

## Creator History

Claire Holt was born in Riga, Latvia in 1901. Her family moved to Moscow in 1914; in 1920 she married, and shortly thereafter she and her husband emigrated from the Soviet Union. In 1921 they settled in

New York, where Holt attended Brooklyn Law School, the Cooper Union Art School, and Columbia University School of Journalism. From 1928-30, Holt was a reporter for the *New York World*. Her assignments there included dance reviews, which were published under the name Barbara Holveg. Holt made her first trip to Indonesia in 1930 and spent most of the decade there, studying dance, working for the anthropologist Willem Stutterheim, and then assisting the Swedish dance archivist and patron Rolf de Maré with his photo and film documentation of Indonesian dance. As the war loomed, Holt returned to the United States, where she worked in the 1940s and early 50s as a research assistant to Margaret Mead, as a research analyst for the Office of Strategic Services, and as a foreign affairs specialist for the State Department. She resigned from government service in 1953, protesting the security regulations spurred by McCarthyism. The rest of Holt's life was spent teaching at Cornell University, where in 1962 she helped found the Modern Indonesia Project. Her return to Indonesia in the mid-1950s and again in 1969 provided material for her book *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change*. Holt died in Ithaca, New York, in 1970.

## Scope and Content Note

The Claire Holt Collection of Indonesian dance materials presents a rich and sensitive account of the cultural life of five islands of Indonesia. The islands, then part of the Dutch East Indies, include Java, Bali, Sulawesi (known in the 1930s as the Celebes), Nias, and Sumatra. Accumulated mostly during the 1930s, the collection comprises approximately 9,000 photographic prints; 3,500 photographic negatives; several reels of 16mm motion picture film; and a small but significant group of manuscripts. In addition to the pre-World War II material are photographic prints, negatives, and slides of artists working in Java and Bali in the mid-1950s. Claire Holt's first exposure to Indonesia, in 1930, left her with an overwhelming and enduring impression of a complete integration of art in the spiritual and daily lives of its people. It was this pervasive interplay that held Holt there for ten years, brought her back twice, and kept her researching, advising, teaching, and writing about Indonesia for the remainder of her life. In the 1930s she formally studied Javanese dance at the Krida Beksa Wirama in Surakarta, and she also assisted Rolf de Maré in preserving on film the dance of Java, Bali, Sulawesi, Nias, and Sumatra. She was a devoted friend of Mankunagara VII of Surakarta and welcome at his court. The result was first-hand experience observing and considering Indonesian dance, the production of visual and written records of the dance, and the gathering of additional source materials from colleagues and the Mankunagaran archive. In 1978 the Modern Indonesia Project at Cornell University gave Claire Holt's collection to the Dance Collection of The New York Public Library. The department recognized its inability at that time to sort, care for, and provide access to the collection and welcomed the Dance Collection's commitment to do just that. The Dance Collection had been actively acquiring and cataloging Asian dance materials since the early 1970s, but nothing as extensive and visually rich as the Claire Holt Collection had surfaced for Indonesian dance. In 1982, after a few years of fund-raising through special events, work on the Claire Holt Collection began. At that time the nitrate negatives from the 1930s were given attention first. Joseph Reed Petticrew, a photographer trained in the archival care and production of photographic images, prepared duplicate negatives on safety film, and supervised the storage of the negatives into the appropriate archival sleeves and boxes. Because of the remarkable quality of the images on the negatives, and because not all negatives had a corresponding photographic print, Petticrew made a selection of exhibition prints, which were then mounted and matted and are currently available for exhibit. Through funding from the Ford Foundation, which began in 1983, the arrangement, description, and physical care of the entire collection have continued. Accessible at the Dance Collection are 16mm silent films of the dances of Java, Bali, Sulawesi, Nias, and Sumatra. Photographic albums have been compiled for those islands, as well as for Alor and many nearby countries. A photographic record of Holt's trip to Indonesia in 1955 and 1956, in which she sought out working artists, contains images of the artists and their work, with corresponding biographical information. Two additional aspects of the Claire Holt Collection should be noted. Several

unpublished texts can be found, including one for a book on Javanese and Balinese dance. Holt's continuing attempt to complete a book in the dances of Sumatra and Nias is represented by a narrative and a mock-up for the illustrations. Also available are notes that Holt took while studying Javanese dance. The second item concerns the extensive, high-quality photographs of Indonesian antiquities — temple sites and sculptures. Because Indonesian art and life are so thoroughly intertwined. Claire Holt knew that just as important as observing dance and the formal study of dance was the understanding of the history and culture of Indonesia as a whole — its music, its religion, its literature, and its plastic arts.

**Arrangement:** I. Correspondence II. U.S. Department of State III. Cornell University IV. Trips to Indonesia V. Writings by Claire Holt VI. Writings by People Other Than Claire Holt VII. Miscellaneous

## **Key Terms**

### **Titles**

Claire Holt Collection

### **Subjects**

Dance -- Indonesia

Dance -- Indonesia -- Bali (Province)

Dance -- Java

Dance -- Nias (Island)

Dance -- Sumatra

Manuscripts -- Collections

### **Names**

Holt, Claire

## Container List

### I. Correspondence

- b. 1 f. 1 Adipati, Pangeran (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 2 Atwell, Allen (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 3 Bateson, Gregory (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 4 Belo, Jane (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 5 Bodde, Derk (10 Items)
- b. 1 f. 6-7 Brunel, Ariane (23 Items)
- b. 1 f. 8 Cense, A.A. (8 Items)
- b. 1 f. 9 Cornell University (10 Items)
- b. 1 f. 10-14 Crown, Bonnie R. (58 Items)
- b. 1 f. 15 Cunningham, Clark (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 16 Diah, H. (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 17 Doolittle, Bessie (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 18 Echols, John M. (4 Items)
- b. 1 f. 19 Elvader, W. (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 20 Fahs, Charles Burton (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 21 Fontein, Jan (17 Items)
- b. 1 f. 22 The Ford Foundation (13 Items)
- b. 1 f. 23 Franklin Publications, Inc. (11 Item)
- b. 1 f. 24-26 Galbraith, Francis J. (42 Items)
- b. 1 f. 27 Graves, Betsy (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 28 Grondahl, Teg C. (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 29-31 Häger, Bengt (23 Items)
- b. 1 f. 32 Hanna, Willard A. & Marybelle (7 Items)
- b. 1 f. 33 Hesik, Nancy (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 34 Hollinger, Flora (3 Items)
- b. 1 f. 35 Itagaki, Yoichi (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 36 Java Instituut (2 Items)
- b. 1 f. 37 Kats, Ivan (5 Items)
- b. 1 f. 38 Keech, Frances (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 39 Kerr, John Hoare (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 40 Kirtya Lieftrinck-Van Deer Tuuk (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 41 Koninklijke Paketvaart Matschappij (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 42 Kusumobroto, Sri (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 43-44 Libienthal, Philip E. (11 Item)
- b. 1 f. 45 Macdonald (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 46 Malaysian Society for Asian Studies (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 47 Maré, Rolf de (1 Item)
- b. 1 f. 48 "Merle" (1 Item)

- I. Correspondence (cont.)
  - b. 1 f. 49 Mizuno, Merle & Matsuko (1 Item)
  - b. 1 f. 50 Moetono, Soemarsaid (2 Items)
  - b. 1 f. 51 Muchtar, But (5 Items)
  - b. 1 f. 52 Reijers, Miss (1 Item)
  - b. 1 f. 53 Siregor, Hasan (1 Item)
  - b. 1 f. 54 Soedarsono, Saudara (3 Items)
  - b. 1 f. 55 Sorensen, Abel (2 Items)
  - b. 1 f. 56 Sugiri (1 Item)
  - b. 1 f. 57 Sumardjo, Trisno (3 Items)
  - b. 1 f. 58 Underwood (1 Item)
  - b. 1 f. 59 Van der Plas, Mr. (2 Items)
  - b. 1 f. 60 Van Minos, Max (1 Item)
  - b. 1 f. 61 Voorhoeve, Dr. (1 Item)
  - b. 1 f. 62 Witton, Elizabeth (11 Item)
  - b. 1 f. 63 Miscellaneous (6 Items)
- II. U.S. Department of State
  - b. 2 f. 64-65 A. Correspondence 1949-1954 (26 Items)
  - b. 2 f. 66 B. Materials (6 Items)
  - b. 2 f. 67-68 C. Notes by Claire Holt
- III. Cornell University
  - b. 2 f. 69-70 "Far Eastern Studies 975: Art and Society in Modern Indonesia" Spring 1962
- IV. Trips to Indonesia
  - b. 2 f. 71 A. 1955-1956
  - b. 2 f. 72-73 B. 1969
- V. Writings by Claire Holt
  - b. 3 f. 74-78 A. Clipping Notebooks 1928-1938
  - B. Articles, Essays, Lectures
    - b. 3 f. 79 "Batak Dances: Notes by Claire Holt" (draft & notes) [Indonesia. No. 12 pp. 65-84] 1971, Oct.)
    - b. 3 f. 80 "Communicating with Peoples of Non-Industrialized Societies" [luncheon talk, ] 1952 Oct. 3
    - b. 3 f. 81 "Culture-Contact Mediation in American-Southeast Asian Relations"
    - b. 3 f. 82 "*Dances of Indonesia*" [*Richards Topical Encyclopedia. Vol XVII: Drama and the Performing Arts*]
    - b. 3 f. 83 "Empathy and Self-Knowledge in Foreign Affairs"
    - b. 3 f. 84 "Empathy in Foreign Affairs"
    - b. 3 f. 85 "Form and Function of Dance in Bali" (by Claire Holt & Gregory Bateson) [Illustrated lecture, ] 1941 Nov. 10
    - b. 3 f. 86 "Integration of Language and Culture Study" 1944 Mar. 1
  - C. *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change* [Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, ] 1967
    - b. 3 f. 87 "II. Living Traditions 4. The Dance" [pp. 97-122]

- V. Writings by Claire Holt (cont.)
- C. Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, ] (cont.)
- b. 3 f. 88 "II. Living Traditions 5. The Wayang World" [pp. 123-150]
  - b. 3 f. 89 "II. Living Traditions 6. Dance Drama" [pp. 151-167]
  - b. 3 f. 90 "II. Living Traditions 7. Bali's Plastic Arts: Traditions in Flux" [pp. 168-188]
  - b. 3 f. 91 "III. Modern Art 8. The Setting" [pp. 191-210]
  - b. 3 f. 92 "III. Modern Art 9. The Great Debate" [pp. 211-254]
  - b. 3 f. 93 "Conclusion" [pp. 257-263]
  - b. 3 f. 94 "I. The Heritage" (tentative layout of plates, with captions & quotations)
  - b. 3 f. 95 "II. Living Traditions" (list of plates and tentative layout with captions & quotations)
  - b. 3 f. 96 "III. Modern Art" (list of plates and tentative layout with captions & quotations)
  - b. 3 f. 97 Figures 2 & 7; Maps 1 & 2
  - b. 4 f. 98-118 *D. The Dance in Java and The Dances of Bali (unpublished book manuscript; alternative title: Dancers and Danced Stories of Java and Bali)*
  - E. Dances of Sumatra and Nias (unpublished book manuscript)*
  - b. 5 f. 119-130 Introductory Material
  - Chapters
    - b. 5 f. 131 "The Islands"
    - b. 5 f. 132-133 "Sumatra: Some Dances in the Bengkulu Area"
    - b. 5 f. 134-142 "Sumatra: Some Dances of Minangkabau"
    - b. 5 f. 143 ["Sumatra: Some Dances Among the Bataks"]
    - b. 5 f. 144-149 "The Dances of South Nias"
  - b. 5 f. 150 Maps
  - b. 5 f. 151-152 Bibliography
  - b. 5 f. 153-154 Index
  - b. 5 f. 155-159 List of Plates/Illustrations
  - b. 6 Mock-up of Plates/Illustrations
  - F. Notes and Notebooks
  - b. 7 f. 161-172 Asian History
  - b. 7 f. 173-178 Bali
    - b. 7 f. 179 Borneo
  - b. 7 f. 180-188 Celebes
  - b. 7 f. 189 India
  - b. 7 f. 190-202 Indonesia
  - b. 8 f. 203-219 Java
    - b. 9 f. 220 Judo, Karate, Pentjak
    - b. 9 f. 221 New Guinea
  - b. 9 f. 222-224 Nias
    - b. 9 f. 225 Nias and Sumatra
  - b. 9 f. 226-239 Sumatra
  - b. 10 f. 240-256 G. Notebooks 1955-1958

V. Writings by Claire Holt (cont.)

- b. 11-12 f. 257-319 H. Notes on Modern Indonesian Artists and Artists' Organizations

VI. Writings by People Other Than Claire Holt

A. Articles, Essays, Reports

- b. 13 f. 320 Bachtiar, Harsja. "The Social History of Indonesian Painting"
- b. 13 f. 321 Coral-Rémusat, Comtesse de. "Exhibition; The Theatre and Dances in the Netherlands Indies"
- b. 13 f. 322 Heine-Geldern, Robert. "Le Pays de P'I-K'ien, Le Roi au Grand Cou et le Singa Mangaradja"
- b. 13 f. 323 \_\_\_\_\_. "Survivance de motifs de l'ancien art Bouddhique de l'Inde dans l'île de Nias"
- b. 13 f. 324 Krida Beksa Wirama. Pitedah Papatokaning Piwoelang Djogèd Bedaja-Srimpi
- b. 13 f. 325 Kunst, J. The Cultural Background of Indonesian Music
- b. 13 f. 326 Leo, Philip. [untitled typescript]
- b. 13 f. 327 A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965, Coup in Indonesia
- b. 13 f. 328 Siegal, James. *Religion, Trade and Family Life in Atjeh*
- b. 13 f. 329 Soekmono (?). "Borobudur to be Restored for the Second Time"
- b. 13 Soekmono. "New Light on Some Borobudur Problems" (330 Items)
- b. 13 "The Village as a Point of Departure in Technical Assistance Programmes" (331 Item)
- b. 13 B. Catalogs and Brochures (332 Items)
- b. 13 C. Music (333 Items)
- b. 13 D. Programs (334-335 Items)
- b. 14 E. Proceedings at the Seminar on Traditional Cultures and Arts Organized by Universitas Gadjah Mada in Jogjakarta (336-349 Items)
- b. 15 F. Cartoons and Clippings 1955-1956 & 1969 (350-362 Items)

VII. Miscellaneous

- b. 16 A. Address Books and Address Cards (363-390 Items)
- b. 16 B. Calling Cards (391-393 Items)
- b. 16 C. Daily Calendars
- b. 16 1939 (394 Items)
- b. 16 1940 (395 Items)
- b. 16 1942 (396 Items)
- b. 16 1944 (397 Items)
- b. 16 1945 (398 Items)
- b. 16 1947 (399 Items)
- b. 16 D. Claire Holt - Personal Data (400 Items)