

## Decolonization in “Wild Schools”: Local Music Pedagogies in Indonesia’s *Taman Siswa* School System

Gillian Irwin

Volume 39, numéro 1, 2019

Decolonizing Music Pedagogies

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1075344ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1075344ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Canadian University Music Society / Société de musique des universités canadiennes

ISSN

1918-512X (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Irwin, G. (2019). Decolonization in “Wild Schools”: Local Music Pedagogies in Indonesia’s *Taman Siswa* School System. *Intersections*, 39(1), 93–104. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1075344ar>

Résumé de l'article

Dix ans après que les écoles *Taman Siswa* (Jardins d'étudiants) aient été fondées en 1922, le gouvernement colonial néerlandais les déclare *Wilde Scholen* (Écoles sauvages) pour opérer sans certification gouvernementale. Les éducateurs de *Taman Siswa* ont résisté à cette désignation, abrogeant finalement l'ordonnance, comme un acte de rébellion contre la colonisation. Des décennies après que l'Indonésie eut accédé à l'indépendance, *Taman Siswa* poursuit son œuvre vers la décolonisation en se concentrant sur l'autonomie des élèves et sur le savoir local, deux pédagogies fondamentales du fondateur de *Taman Siswa*, Ki Hadjar Dewantara, qui sont pratiquées quotidiennement dans les cours de musique. Finalement, je propose un examen plus approfondi de *Taman Siswa* en tant qu'institution éducative aspirant à la décolonisation de complexes systèmes régionaux, nationaux et internationaux.

---

## DECOLONIZATION IN “WILD SCHOOLS”: LOCAL MUSIC PEDAGOGIES IN INDONESIA’S TAMAN SISWA SCHOOL SYSTEM

---

*Gillian Irwin*

---

*Taman Siswa* (Garden of Students), a private school system in Java, Indonesia, that covers preschool through university, is well known today for its history as a training ground for Indonesian freedom-fighters in the decades leading up to independence in 1945. Ten years after the *Taman Siswa* schools were founded in 1922, the Dutch colonial government issued an ordinance that declared them *Wilde Scholen* (Wild Schools) for educating the native population without Dutch certification. In a surprising turn of events, the teachers and administrators at *Taman Siswa* successfully protested the ordinance, thereby preserving their right to educate their students according to the values and traditions of the local Javanese ethnic group. Today, *Taman Siswa* continues to develop regional and national pride by prioritizing traditional Javanese music, dance, and dramatic arts in its classrooms and public outreach programs, a pedagogy that I will present here as decolonizing.

In this article, based on over a year of fieldwork in Yogyakarta, Central Java, focused primarily on the *Taman Siswa* elementary school, I explore *Taman Siswa*'s role in resisting colonizing education systems, with particular attention to the part of arts education in that resistance. Decades after Indonesia's independence, *Taman Siswa* remains a “Wild School” working towards continued decolonization by focusing on self-governance and local wisdom. These two core pedagogies are practised daily in the music classrooms of *Taman Siswa* as a response to the after-effects of Dutch colonialism and to modern concerns about increasing globalization. However, these pedagogies can fall short of recognizing *Taman Siswa*'s role in reproducing Java-centric power structures in Indonesia today if followed without recognizing the Javanese ethnic group's dual position as both a formerly colonized people who have faced systemic disadvantages *and* as a majority who now hold substantial power in an independent Indonesia. Ultimately, I argue for a closer examination of *Taman Siswa* as an educational institution striving for decolonization in complex regional, national, and global systems and also recommend the adoption of some of its key pedagogical principles by other institutions with similar goals.

## “DECOLONIZATION” IN INDONESIA

In literature on Indonesia, “decolonization” usually refers to the processes of the nation becoming politically and economically independent from Dutch and Japanese colonizers (see Sutter 1959). Gert Oostindie, Ireen Hoogenboom, and Jonathan Verwey name the conflict with the Dutch between 1945 and 1949 as a “decolonization war,” though they note that this term has come into use only recently as a replacement for earlier “euphemisms” that diminished the violence of the conflict, such as “excesses” standing for “war crimes” (2018, 276). Both Nicholas J. White and David Webster have written on the impact these years of conflict had on post-colonial economics in Indonesia, noting that the Indonesian government was more skeptical of foreign economic influence and aid in the post-independence years than the governments of other Southeast Asian countries. The Indonesian government’s skepticism was mainly because of the explicit approach the Dutch took in their attempts to preserve their cultural, economic, and military influence in their colonies relative to other geographically proximate nations such as Malaysia that were controlled by other European powers (White 2017, 218 and 236). The new Indonesian government did not wholly trust the motives of the Dutch or other Western countries offering aid. For example, in response to Canada’s Colombo Plan for economic aid to Asia in the decades following Indonesia’s 1945 declaration of independence, Sukarno stated that “Indonesia would rather subsist on cassava than accept aid with strings attached, even if that aid meant a daily meal of beef” (Webster 2009, 46). Thus decolonization to this day most often refers to the process of Indonesia becoming fully autonomous after achieving nominal independence.

Much of the discussion on decolonization in Indonesia centres on the pre-independence and early independence periods, but similar attitudes about foreign influence prevail and are especially evident in Taman Siswa’s ideologies and teaching methods. Although not usually discussed using the term “decolonization,” Taman Siswa’s pedagogies reflect an understanding of the colonial legacies that affect Indonesians far beyond the immediate post-colonial period. Numerous Indigenous studies scholars outside Indonesia have also iterated such expanded definitions. Kirisitina Sailiata, for example, describes decolonization as “an extractive process whereby we remove all the ‘colonial’ impulses that shape us today,” though she notes that this is an impossible goal (2015, 301). Angela Waziyatawin Wilson and Michael Yellow Bird link decolonization to resistance to “forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of your minds, bodies, and lands,” resulting in “overturning the colonial structure and realizing Indigenous liberation” (2005, 5). Linda Tuhiwai-Smith’s definition emphasizes education: decolonization “is about centering [Indigenous] concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes” (1999, 39).

The emphasis current Taman Siswa educators place on teaching students about the lingering effects of colonization and a consequently expanded definition of decolonization was made clear to me in a conversation I had with

an eleven-year-old boy at choir practice for an Independence Day event. During the break, I chatted idly with several students, providing English words such as “hair,” “bag,” and “nose” when prompted and asking simple questions about which songs students liked best and what their favourite types of music were. The boy, who often chatted with me in exceptionally good English compared to his peers, announced that he enjoyed playing gamelan most of all, and when I asked him why, he responded, “Ki Hadjar Dewantara [the founder of Taman Siswa] taught us that one of the ways of colonialism is to make cultures disappear and replace them with other cultures,” implying that it was important for him, as a Javanese person, to study gamelan in order to contribute to the preservation of a previously colonized culture. Stunned at his astute response, I told him that many adults do not understand this point, and that I was impressed. In acknowledgement of my compliment, he broke into a wide grin and threw his arms into an unmistakable “dab.”<sup>1</sup> This student’s education at Taman Siswa thus had successfully imparted several complex concepts. First, that Indonesia had been colonized and that Indonesians still feel the effects of that colonization. Second, that the destruction of local cultures is part of the colonial project to accrue power over a colonized nation. And third, that learning one’s local culture is a positive act of resistance against such power. Furthermore, the context of his comment—spoken in English and celebrated with a dab—highlights the difficulties of defining which sorts of outside cultures, influences, and pressures are to be resisted and which are to be embraced.

Although the primary mission of Taman Siswa schools in the pre-independence era was to educate students in their local traditions as an act of resistance against colonialism, in an independent Indonesia, the issue of foreign influence is arguably much more complicated. Many teachers appreciate the worlds of knowledge that fluency in English opens for students and celebrate the foreign popular musics that students sing along with in their spare time. Others, though, bemoan the foreign influences that would encourage a child to speak in English and to dab, recognizing that globalization can also lead to cultural homogenization. Taman Siswa’s history, ideology, and teaching methods provide complex approaches to the questions of what decolonization means in Indonesia today.

## COLONIAL EDUCATION AND “WILD SCHOOLS”

Under the Dutch, there were few educational opportunities for locals living in the archipelago that would become Indonesia. Prior to the arrival of the Dutch at the end of the sixteenth century, some children were educated in Islamic boarding schools called *pesantren*<sup>2</sup> or Catholic schools founded by Portuguese

---

<sup>1</sup> The “dab” dance move originated in the Atlanta, Georgia, rap scene around 2015, and the word is also used to connote self-assurance or a method of inhaling cannabis, depending on context (although it is unlikely that the boy I spoke to had any familiarity with the latter connotation!).

<sup>2</sup> Islamic institutions including *pesantren* also had an important role in developing the Indonesian independence movement (see, for example, Ismail 2011).

missionaries. These schools continued to operate when the Dutch arrived, but many young people did not have access to formalized education (Bjork 2005, 41). Starting in 1816, the Dutch established limited school systems for children of the *priyayi* elite class of natives working in the Dutch government. Lower-class youth could study in separate schools with hopes of earning a job as a clerk or administrator starting in 1848, and vocational schools for future teachers, agricultural workers, and nurses followed shortly after in 1851 (Bjork 2005, 42).

Independent schools flourished during the late colonial period (1900–45) in response to the exclusionary nature of Dutch schools and the increased desire of Indonesian educators and intellectuals to prepare for independence by setting up school systems run by locals. The most influential of these private schools was the Taman Siswa school system. Founder Ki Hadjar Dewantara, who went on to become the first minister of education and culture in Indonesia upon independence in 1945, served as the leader of Taman Siswa until his death in 1959. Dewantara's writings and the Taman Siswa school system had a considerable influence on the sense of national unity developing in the early 1900s.<sup>3</sup> During the Indonesian national awakening (which started in earnest in the 1920s), Taman Siswa was seen as a centre of resistance to the colonial school system and the birthplace of a nationalist movement, partially due to the leadership Taman Siswa teachers had shown in opposing the "Wild Schools" Ordinance.

In 1932, the Dutch government issued the "Wild Schools" Ordinance to keep schools in colonized Indonesia under Dutch control. The ordinance, which was purportedly issued to "protect the quality of the private schools ... and maintain a standardized school system" mandated that teachers in independent, non-subsidized private schools needed to obtain written permission from district offices, and teachers needed to have been educated at a government school (Abdullah 1971, 246). Taman Siswa, supported by Islamic and nationalist organizations and numerous political parties, led a protest against the ordinance soon after it was declared. Eventually the pushback was so strong that in an extraordinary move the Dutch government repealed their ordinance before it was enacted, and Taman Siswa leaders declared the first day the ordinance had been scheduled to be enforced as "the day true freedom was born." (Shiraishi 1997, 90). Taman Siswa's founders had an indispensable role in the first major rebellions against Dutch authority, and teachers and administrators in the schools today have maintained a similar attitude that has resulted in a decolonizing pedagogical approach that values the conservation and cultivation of Indonesian arts through self-governance and an emphasis on regional culture.

---

<sup>3</sup> Although Indonesian independence was not declared until 1945, the term "Indonesia" was used by nationalist leaders starting in the 1920s. A famous example is the 1928 "Youth Pledge," which declared that the undersigned "acknowledge one motherland, Indonesia ... acknowledge one nation, the nation of Indonesia, [and] respect the language of unity, Indonesian." M. C. Ricklefs uses the phrase "national awakening" (1993).

## DECOLONIZING PEDAGOGIES: SELF-GOVERNANCE AND LOCAL WISDOM

In the founding principles of Taman Siswa, Dewantara states that all persons have the right to “govern” themselves,<sup>4</sup> and that the purpose of education is to create freedom for humanity by empowering the citizens of Indonesia to “work with their own abilities” by “resting on their own strength” (Dewantara 1964).<sup>5</sup> The emphasis on freedom and independence in these founding statements was partly a result of the burgeoning nationalist spirit in the 1920s and partly a result of Dewantara’s fascination with other pedagogical strategies that stressed the value of children’s self-activity and the importance of children’s growth as individuals. His models included the Montessori method (which Dewantara said “is very much in accordance with our own approach,” according to a display at the Ki Hadjar Dewantara Museum at the Yogyakarta Taman Siswa school) and Indian educator Rabindranath Tagore’s Santineketan school, which integrated arts directly into the curriculum to help students achieve “a vibrant and full life” (Verma 2005–6, 1286). Key to this latter method for Dewantara was the emphasis on self-governance as an alternative to imitation of the Europeans, and the cultivation of a truly Indonesian spirit. Dewantara quotes Tagore in his lament over colonized nations’ imitation of the West: “Our life is a quotation from that of the Westerner; our voice an echo of that of Europe; instead of intellectuals we are nothing but a bag full of information; there exists such an emptiness in our mind that we are not in a position to absorb what is beautiful and worthy” (Dewantara 1967b, 152). Taman Siswa was Dewantara’s solution.

Complicating this mission was the fact that Dewantara was himself drawing from a European model to create a school system based on Javanese principles that was meant to contribute to the birth of the Indonesian nation—intended to break from its European colonizers and include citizens far removed from Java. Dewantara sought to reconcile these contradictions by defining Indonesian national culture as an amalgamation of all the regional cultures included in Indonesia.<sup>6</sup> In order to free Indonesians from the power of the Western educator as “dictator of our mind,” Dewantara implored Indonesians to “return to the national” (1967b, 152–3). Dewantara attempted to mould a national culture out of many regional cultures in his writings, arguing that “Indonesian culture already exists, if we accept as the culture of the Indonesian nation all the cultures that now are found in the regions of all the islands of Indonesia” (1967a, 87). This statement found legitimacy in the official Clarification of the

4 In Indonesian, “Setiap orang berhak mengatur dirinya sendiri dengan mengingat tertibe persatuan dalam kehidupan umum.” *Mengatur*, which I have translated as “govern,” can also be translated as “manage,” “oversee,” or “control.” I chose this translation to reflect the parallels I see between children’s self-management at Taman Siswa and national sovereignty.

5 In Indonesian, “Untuk mencapai azas kemerdekaan maka kita harus bekerja sesuai kemampuan diri sendiri ... oleh karena itu kita harus bersandar pada kekuatan diri sendiri.”

6 Indonesia currently recognizes 633 ethnic groups within its borders, according to the 2010 census recorded by the Badan Pusat Statistik (Statistics Bureau). These include the largest ethnic group, the Javanese. For an idea of the profound diversity amongst ethnic groups, one could look at the Minahasan people of North Sulawesi, the Acheneese at the western tip of Sumatra, many sub-groups of Dayak people in Kalimantan, and the Sasak of Lombok.

Constitution's clause 32: "Old and authentic culture is found in peaks of culture in regions throughout Indonesia [and is] considered the culture of the nation" (Yampolsky 1995, 702). Clearly, what qualifies as "authentic" or as a "peak of culture" is not clear-cut. Dewantara nevertheless expressed an affinity for his own Javanese culture when developing the Taman Siswa philosophy, a preference that is carried out in the Yogyakarta schools today. Although a rigidly Javanese curriculum would not be appropriate for all students in a diverse Indonesia, in a classroom where many or all students identified as Javanese, such a curriculum can be affirming and enriching. In other geographic contexts, the tenets of Dewantara's philosophy could be appropriately applied to suit the identities and needs of students in the classroom.

Taman Siswa's educational philosophy emphasizes self-governance and independence as well as the importance of education of the "soul." In Dewantara's words, Taman Siswa "supports the child's natural learning processes, in order to develop their inner and outer life according to their own characteristics. Knowledge and intelligence must not be a goal, but simply just a tool ... the fruit of education is the ripening of the soul, which can realize lives that are orderly, pure, and of benefit to others" (1961, 276). At Taman Siswa, arts education that "ripens the soul" allows students to learn in ways that are "natural" to them by not forcing them into behaviour patterns but instead, inviting them gently to join class activities. This method is the means to improve students' character—here defined as "lives that are orderly, pure, and of benefit to others" (276). The cultivation of students' "natural" character is intended to lead them to cultivate their own spirits, freeing them from harmful foreign influence in the form of European colonial thought patterns or the pressures of a globalized world.

In addition to allowing students to govern themselves by attending to "their own characteristics," Dewantara stressed the importance of teaching students about their local traditional arts with his signature *Sariswara* Method. *Sariswara* is a method of studying Javanese arts that includes songs, literature, and stories taught simultaneously. When taught properly, according to Dewantara, the *Sariswara* Method ensures that students will receive education of "feeling, thought, and behavior"—the cultivation of the Javanese spirit that Taman Siswa schools prized. Dewantara's educational method seeks to teach students to love beauty—a beauty that is specifically rooted in Javanese language, aesthetic values, and storytelling traditions. For Javanese students, seeing their culture's traditions as valuable and beautiful can be powerful in developing their sense of self-worth.

Dewantara describes the *Sariswara* Method as "not only about studying how to sing Javanese songs with pitch numbers [instead of in the high Javanese language], but is a way of giving students something to study which can be called '*sastera gending*' [philosophical/spiritual literature]; this is related to ... the strength of the relationship between language and art. To give a lesson on language without using art can strengthen thought or intellect, but when it takes the form of music, the lesson can also open our hearts" (1961, 355).

Dewantara further describes Sariswara as the combination of intellectual and emotional education, which, when combined properly, produce education of *budipekerti*, sound and moral character. Dewantara often linked ethics and aesthetic values in his writings: “The values of humanity regarding aesthetics are in agreement with the values of humanity regarding ethics, because both of them are from the same soul” (1961, 308).

Although Dewantara’s ideas are followed most closely in the Taman Siswa schools, the national government also draws on his philosophy in creating educational policies and curricular content. In the current national curriculum (which is followed to some extent by all schools, regardless of whether they are public or private), these regional aspects of national culture are part of what is known as *kearifan lokal*, or “local wisdom.” *Kearifan lokal* is usually defined as training in regionally specific languages, cultures, or trades. Various iterations of the subject have been included in the national curriculum in theory since the 1980s (Bjork 2005) and in wider practice since the early 2000s (Widyastono 2014), though my field research indicates that many schools and teachers are only starting to include *kearifan lokal* in earnest now. Taman Siswa schools in Yogyakarta practice *kearifan lokal* by including the Javanese regional language in the curriculum and replacing Dutch children’s games and songs with Javanese *dolanan anak* (children’s songs). While other public and private schools recognize Dewantara’s pedagogies and try to include study of the arts or *kearifan lokal* where they can, I have yet to see another school that implements these strategies to the extent that Taman Siswa does, or that teaches children about the effects of colonialism on local cultures as clearly as Taman Siswa schools do. Teachers make a point not only to teach students using these types of decolonizing pedagogies, but to make the principles behind the pedagogies transparent to their students by regularly speaking to students about Dewantara and the Sariswara Method during lessons.

## DECOLONIZING PEDAGOGIES IN ACTION

True to the founding principles of the school, teachers today at the Yogyakarta Taman Siswa elementary school allow students significant freedom to govern themselves. In an interview following a gamelan class for fourth graders, their teacher, Pak Wito, explained that he does not force the children to play with the group, but merely “invites” them. A student who is sleepy, he told me, should sleep. If students are being naughty, he allows them to go outside and play for a while and then come back when they are ready. The reason for this attitude towards teaching, he told me, is so that in this way students do not become emotional and upset their *jiwa* (spirit or soul). All children must act in accordance to their *jiwa*, even if that does not mean playing with the class the entire time.

In Javanese gamelan classes at Taman Siswa, the young students play all the instruments of the ensemble: the simple single pot *kethuk*, the sets of horizontal tuned pots (*bonang*, which can be used to play complex ornamentation, and *kenong*, which is played less frequently and is simpler), the bronze-keyed

saron, peking, demung, and slenthem, which are used to play variations on the main melody, the *kendhang* drums that are used to lead the ensemble, and the all-important large *gong*, which hangs beside the smaller and more frequent *kempul* gongs that help define the formal structure of a piece. In the class I observed, students played a *lancaran*, a simple piece that beginners and young students can handle. Since the students didn't have the piece memorized yet, Pak Wito wrote the melody in cipher notation on the board:

• 5 • 3 • 5 • 3 • 6 • 5 • 6 • 5

Melodies of *lancaran* pieces are usually simple, consisting of a few notes that move in repetitive, stepwise motion and are separated by rests (represented above by •). Each instrument has a slightly different interpretation of this melody, which all students must learn in order to play with the class—and, for the most part in the classes I observed, they succeeded.

After class, Pak Wito explained how he dealt with the uneven skill levels of the students in the class. More advanced students play *bonang*. Students who are less skilled or have learning disabilities play simpler instruments, such as the *kempul* or *kenong*, and are sometimes assisted by aides. The stratified nature of gamelan helps students of all levels participate in the class, regardless of their ability: the ensemble cannot function without each instrument, so students must learn to have patience with their peers as the struggling students catch up to others, or as newcomers learn to play. Students' musical practice does not need to contradict their personal nature if students are assigned to instruments that match their skill levels, Pak Wito explained. This method is derived from Dewantara's educational philosophies and their focus on children learning according to their own characteristics: children can find a place that suits them in the gamelan and thus will be able to "ripen their soul" and be of benefit to the ensemble and to society. Pak Wito's teaching methods attend to the students' "natural" learning processes and do not force them into one way of behaviour, in hopes that exposure to the refined nature of the gamelan will make them feel "invited" to join in and, in so doing, develop a relationship to their local culture.

Practising gamelan music under these principles reflects Taman Siswa's principle of self-governance: if students play instruments according to their own ability and choose when and how to join the ensemble in accordance with their own *jiwa*, they are essentially practising governing themselves, on a small scale, while still respecting the collective group. Understood as a metaphor for larger community projects (or even national or international relations), practising self-governance in the gamelan rehearsal can give students the tools they need to trust themselves and "center [their] concerns and world views," a step towards the decolonization of education (Tuhiwai-Smith 1999, 39). Additionally, prioritizing local cultural values when developing pedagogy helps decentre the methods inherited from colonizing cultures, which are so often maintained as the norm.

Taman Siswa uses the Sariswara Method to help students develop a solid understanding of their regional artistic traditions and moral and aesthetic values, as defined by the writings of Ki Hadjar Dewantara. In kindergarten classes,

students as young as three years old perform Javanese dances, already demonstrating differentiation between genders in the style of their hand movements, impressive rhythm-keeping abilities, familiarity with the Javanese *salendro* tuning system, and memorization of songs in Javanese. Jui-Ching Wang notes that Taman Siswa stresses “tactile and kinesthetic training” in order to encourage students to “explore and make sense of their world physically” rather than digitally (2015, 5). And it seems to be working—the students with whom I spoke and played at Taman Siswa were much more interested in teaching me traditional Javanese games and dances (at which they were adept) than engaging in mobile phone games or Western pop culture.

## CONCLUSIONS

Recently, Taman Siswa’s relevance for modern Indonesian education has come into question. The demands of a global education, including substantial language skills in English or Mandarin, computer literacy, and travel experience, have made it difficult for Taman Siswa to maintain the enrolment and prestige that it had in its early years, since it focuses so heavily on local, rather than global, pedagogies. Graduates of Taman Siswa have had substantial exposure to their regional traditions and learned to respect and cultivate Javanese moral and aesthetic values, but that experience does not help them get into high-ranking colleges. When I asked current students at the Taman Siswa-affiliated university about their reasons for choosing to study there, most of them answered, “Because we didn’t get into [a more prestigious university].” Although Ki Hadjar Dewantara’s methods are paid lip service in higher education and the government in Indonesia, the students who carry on Dewantara’s legacy are not achieving the reputation (and, in turn, professional and financial success) to which they aspire. If this trend continues, Taman Siswa enrolments may continue to fall, despite the laudable efforts of current teachers and staff, and Dewantara’s pedagogies may fall out of practice.

What, then, are the lessons North American educators can take from Taman Siswa’s history, philosophies, and teaching methods? I suggest four points that are particularly relevant for educators seeking to decolonize their pedagogy at all levels of education. First, to examine cases such as Taman Siswa closely for decolonizing strategies developed alongside, and in resistance to, both settler and extractive colonial systems. Much of Dewantara’s writing has not yet been translated into English, for example, and could provide a valuable resource for North American educators looking to expand their pedagogical toolkit beyond the Eurocentric models that define most of the Canadian and American educational system’s methods. Second, to acknowledge the powerful emotional and cultural roles that music plays in education, and to continue to fight for the inclusion of the arts, particularly those that are important to our students’ identities and cultural backgrounds, in our schools and universities. University music programs can make an effort to connect with local Indigenous groups to include their local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) in the curricula, and individual instructors should work to educate themselves about the

history and culture of the land their university stands on as well as the cultural backgrounds and interests of their students. Third, to teach decolonizing pedagogies transparently, so that students may understand the history of their educational system and why teachers make the choices they do. Studies have shown that transparent teaching and assignments can increase student success, particularly for those students who are a part of traditionally underserved groups (Mary-Ann Winkelmes et al. 2016 make a case for transparent teaching). And fourth, perhaps most importantly, to constantly frame our work, for ourselves and our students, within its complex contexts rather than accept the Eurocentric model as universal. As Taman Siswa educators maintain their decolonizing approaches, they must recognize Indonesia's position in a globalized world that holds new challenges for their students, as well as the Javanese ethnic group's place of power relative to others in Indonesia. North American educators must do the same in their own contexts. Of course, these steps are not easy—decolonization requires systematic change as well as the effort of instructors to move music curricula from the Western art music-centred curricula so many instructors in North America grew up learning and practising. With a critical eye, educators can find a place for Dewantara's pedagogies in a decolonizing world.

#### REFERENCES

- Abdullah, Taufik. 1971. *Schools and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra (1927–1933)*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications.
- Azhari, Aidul Fitriadi. 2013. "Ideologi dan Konstitusi dalam Perkembangan Negara-Bangsa Indonesia: Rekonstruksi Tradisi, Dekolonisasi, dan Demokratisasi." *Jurnal Media Hukum* 20 (1): 99–117.
- Bjork, Christopher. 2005. *Indonesian Education: Teachers, Schools, and Central Bureaucracy*. New York: Routledge.
- Dewantara, Ki Hadjar. 1961. *Pemikiran, Konsepsi, Keteladanan, Sikap Merdeka I: Pendidikan*. Yogyakarta: Majelis Luhur Persatuan Tamansiswa.
- . 1964. *Asas-asas dan Dasar-dasar Taman Siswa*. 3rd ed. Yogyakarta: Madjelis Luhur Taman Siswa.
- . 1967a. "Kebudayaan." In *Karya Ki Hadjar Dewantara, Bagian Ila: Kebudayaan*, 82–7. Yogyakarta: Madjelis-Luhur Persatuan Taman-Siswa.
- . 1967b. "Some Aspects of National Education and the Taman Siswa Institute of Jogjakarta." Translator unknown. *Indonesia* 4:150–68.
- Ismail, Faisal. 2011. "The Nahdlatul Ulama: Its Early History and Contribution to the Establishment of Indonesian State." *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 5 (2): 247–82.
- Oostindie, Gert, Ireen Hoogenboom, and Jonathan Verwey. 2018. "The Decolonization War in Indonesia, 1945–1949: War Crimes in Dutch Veterans' Egodocuments." *War in History* 25 (2): 254–76.
- Ricklefs, M. C. 1993. *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1300*. 2nd ed. Houndmills: Macmillan.

- Sailiata, Kirisitina. 2015. "Decolonization." In *Native Studies Keywords*, edited by Stephanie N. Teves, Andrea Smith, and Michelle Raheja, 301–8. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.
- Shiraishi, Saya S. 1997. *Young Heroes: The Indonesian Family in Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Publications.
- Sutter, John O. 1959. "Indonesianisasi: A Historical Survey of the Role of Politics in the Institutions of a Changing Economy from the Second World War to the Eve of the General Election, 1940–1955." PhD diss., Cornell University.
- Tuhiwai Smith, Linda. 1999. *Decolonizing Methodologies*. London: Zed.
- Verma, Rupalee. 2005–6. "Rabindranath Tagore's Influence on the Indonesian Nationalist Educational Movements of the 1920s and 1930s: Ki Hadjar Dewantara and the Taman Siswa." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 66:1283–9.
- Wang, Jui-Ching. 2015. "Games Unplugged! *Dolanan Anak*, Traditional Javanese Children's Singing Games in the 21st-Century General Music Classroom." *General Music Today* 28 (2): 5–12.
- Waziyatawin Wilson, Angela, and Michael Yellow Bird. 2005. *For Indigenous Eyes Only*. Santa Fe, NM: SAR.
- Webster, David. 2009. *Fire and the Full Moon: Canada and Indonesia in a Decolonizing World*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- White, Nicholas J. 2017. "The Settlement of Decolonization and Post-Colonial Economic Development." *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 173: 208–41.
- Widyastono, Herry. 2014. *Pengembangan Kurikulum di Era Otonomi Daerah*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.
- Winkelmess, Mary-Ann, Matthew Bernacki, Jeffrey Butler, Michelle Zochowski, Jennifer Golanics, and Kathryn Harriss Weavil. 2016. "A Teaching Intervention That Increases Underserved College Students' Success." *Peer Review* 18 (1/2): 31–6.
- Yampolsky, Philip. 1995. "Forces for Change in the Regional Performing Arts of Indonesia." *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde* 151 (4): 700–25.

## ABSTRACT

Ten years after the *Taman Siswa* (Garden of Students) schools were founded in 1922, the Dutch colonial government declared them *Wilde Scholen* (Wild Schools) for operating without government certification. Taman Siswa educators resisted the designation, eventually repealing the ordinance, as an act of rebellion against colonization. Decades after Indonesia achieved independence, Taman Siswa continues to work towards decolonization by focusing on student self-governance and local wisdom, two core pedagogies of Taman Siswa founder Ki Hadjar Dewantara that are practised daily in music classrooms. Ultimately, I argue for a closer examination of Taman Siswa as an educational institution striving for decolonization in complex regional, national, and global systems.

## RÉSUMÉ

Dix ans après que les écoles *Taman Siswa* (Jardins d'étudiants) aient été fondées en 1922, le gouvernement colonial néerlandais les déclare *Wilde Scholen* (Écoles sauvages) pour opérer sans certification gouvernementale. Les éducateurs de Taman Siswa ont résisté à cette désignation, abrogeant finalement l'ordonnance, comme un acte de rébellion contre la colonisation. Des décennies après que l'Indonésie eut accédé à l'indépendance, Taman Siswa poursuit son œuvre vers la décolonisation en se concentrant sur l'autonomie des élèves et sur le savoir local, deux pédagogies fondamentales du fondateur de Taman Siswa, Ki Hadjar Dewantara, qui sont pratiquées quotidiennement dans les cours de musique. Finalement, je propose un examen plus approfondi de Taman Siswa en tant qu'institution éducative aspirant à la décolonisation de complexes systèmes régionaux, nationaux et internationaux.

## BIOGRAPHY

Gillian Irwin is a doctoral candidate in ethnomusicology at the University of California, Davis. Her current work follows the implementation of the newest national curriculum in Indonesia and its impact on music classrooms in high schools in Yogyakarta, Central Java, taking particular interest in local definitions of right morality, traditional music practice, regional meaning-making, and the pressures of globalization. She is the recipient of two Fulbright grants to Indonesia and a Bilinski Dissertation Writing Fellowship.