# Ki Hajar Dewantara

Raden Mas Soewardi Soerjaningrat (EYD: Suwardi Suryaningrat); from 1922 also known as Ki Hadjar Dewantara (EYD: Ki Hajar Dewantara), which is also written as Ki Hajar Dewantoro to reflect its Javanese sounds (2 May 1889 in Pakualaman — 26 April 1959 in Yogyakarta), was a leading Indonesian independence movement activist, writer, columnist, politician, and pioneer of education for native Indonesians in Dutch colonial times. He founded the Taman Siswa school, an institution that provided education for indigenous commoners, which otherwise was limited to the Javanese aristocracy and the Dutch colonials.

He was honored as a <u>National Hero of Indonesia</u> by Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, on November 28, 1959. [1]

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# Early life

Soewardi was born into <u>Javanese</u> aristocracy, his family belonged to the royal house of <u>Pakualaman</u>. He was one of Prince <u>Paku Alam III</u>'s grandsons through his father, GPH Soerjaningrat. Thanks to his family's *priyayi* (Javanese nobility) background, he was able to access the colonial public education, a luxury that was unattainable by most of common population in the Indies. He

#### Ki Hajar Dewantara



Ki Hajar Dewantara in 1949

# 1st Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia

In office

2 September 1945 – 14 November

1945

President Sukarno

**Preceded by** Office created

Succeeded by Todung Sutan

Gunung Mulia

#### Personal details

	i cisonai actans
Born	Raden Mas
	Soewardi
	Soeryaningrat
	2 May 1889
	<u>Pakualaman, Dutch</u>
	East Indies
Died	26 April 1959
	(aged 69)
	Yogyakarta,
	Indonesia
Spouse	Nyi Sutartinah

graduated from <u>basic education</u> in ELS (Dutch Primary School). Then he continued his study at <u>STOVIA</u>, a medical school for native students. However, he failed to graduate because of illness.

Later he worked as a journalist and wrote for many newspapers, including *Sediotomo*, *Midden Java*, *De Expres*, *Oetoesan Indies*, *Kaoem Moeda*, *Tjahaja Timoer* and *Poesara*. He was also a contributor to *Kebangoenan*, a nationalist newspaper owned by the Dutch-educated jurist and politician Phoa Liong Gie. During Soewardi's career in printed media, he was considered a talented and accomplished writer. His style of writing is popular, communicative and yet imbued with idealism for freedom and anti-colonialist sentiment.

# Children Asti Wandansari Sudiro Alimurtolo Syailendra Wijaya Bambang Sokawati Dewantara Ratih Tarbiyah Signature

# **Activist movements**

Besides being a tenacious young reporter, Soewardi was also active in social and political organizations. Since the establishment of <u>Boedi Oetomo</u> in 1908, he was active in their propaganda service to socialize and promote public awareness of Indonesia as a national unity (especially in Java). He also organized Boedi Oetomo's first congress in Yogyakarta.

Young Soewardi was also a member of the *Insulinde*, a multi-ethnic organization that was dominated by <u>Indo</u> activists. This organization was advocating for self-rule in the Dutch East Indies. One of the prominent figures in this organization was <u>Ernest Douwes Dekker</u>. Later, Soewardi was invited to join the party, when Douwes Dekker established the *Indische Party*.



Statue of Ki Hadjar Dewantara in front of Sekolah Tamansiswa

# If I were a Dutchman

In 1913, the Dutch East Indies government sought to collect money to fund the centennial anniversary of <u>Dutch independence from France</u> in 1813. The donations were drawn from Dutch East Indies citizens, which also include <u>bumiputera</u> (indigenous people). This decision ignited critical opposition and negative reactions from pro-independence nationalists, including Soewardi. He wrote several critical columns, such as "*Een maar ook voor Allen Allen voor Een*" or "One for All, All for One". However, the most famous piece of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's column is "If I were a Dutchman" ("*Als ik eens Nederlander was*"), printed in <u>De Expres</u> newspaper on 13 July 1913. This article fiercely criticized the colonial government of the Dutch East Indies. The citation of his writing, as follows:

If I were a <u>Dutchman</u>, I would not celebrate an independence ceremony in the country where we ourselves, are denied their rights of freedom. Consistent with the way of the mind, it was not only unfair, but also inappropriate to ask the <u>Inlander</u> (native Indonesian) to provide funds for such festivities. The very idea of the independence festivities alone is quite insulting for them, and now we also scour their pockets. Come on, away with the physical and spiritual humiliation! Had I been a Dutchman, a particular case that offends our friends and countrymen, is the fact that the *inlanders* required to participate and bankrolled an activity that do not have the slightest importance for them.

Some Dutch officials doubted that this piece was actually written by Soewardi, because compared to his earlier writings, there are some differences in style and vocabulary. Even if it is true, that it was Soewardi's writing, they suspected that Douwes Dekker might have an actively influenced Soewardi to write in such a tone.

The colonial authorities considered Soewardi's writings that criticize the colonial government to be so subversive, sensitive and divisive that they feared they might incite a popular revolt and upset the delicate social order of the Dutch East Indies. As a consequence, Soewardi was arrested under the order of Governor General Idenburg, and sentenced to exile in Bangka Island. However, both his colleagues, Douwes Dekker and Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo, protested on his behalf, and eventually in 1913, the three of them were exiled to the Netherlands instead. These three pro-independence activist figures, Soewardi, Douwes Dekker and Tjipto, were later known as the *Tiga Serangkai* or the "triad". Soewardi at that time was only 24 years old.



Dewantara in his youth

#### **Exile**

During his exile in the Netherlands, Soewardi was active in the Indonesia students' organization, the *Indische Vereeniging* (Indies Association), where he contemplated the idea of advancing science education for natives, by obtaining the European certificate, an education diploma which later became the foundation for the educational institutions he would found. In this study, Soewardi was fascinated by the ideas of Western education figures, such as <u>Fröbel</u> and <u>Montessori</u>, as well as Indian education movement activist <u>Santiniketan</u> and the <u>Tagore</u> family. These underlying influences contributed to Soewardi's idea's for developing his own educational system.



Teachers at the Taman Siswa school in Jogjakarta.

# **Taman Siswa**

In September 1919, Soewardi returned home to <u>Java</u>, Dutch East Indies. Immediately, he joined his brother in establishing a school in his native hometown. His educational background and his teaching experiences then proved to be useful to develop his concept for teaching in school, as he founded the *Nationaal Onderwijs Instituut Ampel* or the national college. During the time of colonial social discrimination in the early 20th century, education was only made possible for the elites, the colonial Dutch people and a handful of Javanese noblemen families. Education at that time was not made available for native commoners. In July 1922, Soewardi established the <u>Taman Siswa</u> school in Yogyakarta, a Javanese educational movement that strove to provide education for the native population.

When he reached 40 years of age, according to the <u>Javanese beliefs</u> based upon Javanese calendar, he was required to change his name to ward of misfortunes that might befell upon him. Thus he choose "Ki Hadjar Dewantara" as his new name. He also scrapped the Javanese gentility title *Raden Mas* in front of his name.

It was a gesture to demonstrate his support for social equality and his disregard for rigid social stature of Javanese society. Ki Hadjar intended to freely interact with people of all social backgrounds, and to be close to them in both body and soul.

# Tut Wuri Handayani

Ki Hadjar Dewantara has coined a famous proverb to describe his educational ideals. Rendered in Javanese, the maxim reads: *Ing ngarso sung tulodo, ing madyo mangun karso, tut wuri handayani*. Which translates: "(for those) in front should set an example, (for those) in the middle should raise the spirit, and (for those) behind should give encouragement". The proverb is used as the principle of <u>Taman Siswa</u>. Today, part of this maxim, *Tut Wuri Handayani* is used as the motto of Indonesian Ministry of Education. It was meant to describe ideal teachers, who after transmitting knowledge to their students, would stand behind their students and give them encouragements in their quest for knowledge.

#### **Government offices**

During the <u>Japanese occupation</u>, Ki Hajar's activities in the field of politics and education still continued. When the Japanese government established the People Power Center (*Pusat Tenaga Rakyat* or Putera) in 1943, Ki Hajar was appointed as one of its leaders, in addition to <u>Sukarno</u>, <u>Muhammad Hatta</u> and K.H. Mas Mansur. That same year, on 4 October, he was appointed to the Javanese <u>Central Advisory Council</u>, also set up the occupation government. [3]

In the first cabinet of the Republic of Indonesia in the 1950s, Ki Hajar Dewantara was appointed Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture. In 1957 he received an honorary doctorate <u>honoris causa</u> from Indonesia's oldest university, Gadjah Mada University.

He died in Yogyakarta on 26 April 1959 and was buried in Taman Wijaya Brata cemetery.

# **Recognition and honours**

In recognition for his dedication and accomplishments in pioneering public education in Indonesia, he was declared as the Father of Indonesian National Education, a <u>national hero</u>, and his birthday is appointed as the National Education Day, through Presidential Decree no. 305 of 1959, dated 28 November 1959.

Taman Siswa has established Dewantara Kirti Griya Museum in Yogyakarta. The museum was built to commemorate, preserve and promote the thought, values and ideals of Ki Hajar Dewantara, the founder of Taman Siswa. In this museum, there



Ki Hajar Dewantara featured on the 20,000-rupiah banknote.

are objects and works of Ki Hajar Dewantara. Museum collections includes his works, papers, concepts, important documents and correspondence of Ki Hajar during his lifetime as a journalist, educator, humanist and as an artist. These documents has been recorded on microfilms and some are laminated with the help the National Archives of Indonesia.

# Legacy

Ki Hajar Dewantara advocates that education should be made possible and available for all people, regardless of their sex, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, economic and social status, etc. He argued that education should be based on the values of common humanity, human freedom and the rights to seek

knowledge.

Ki Hajar Dewantara's birthday is now celebrated as Indonesian National Education Day. He is also credited for having coined the motto; *Tut Wuri Handayani*, today used by the ministry of education. An Indonesian navy training ship, KRI Ki Hajar Dewantara, bears his name in honor. His portrait immortalizes him in the 20,000 rupiah banknote denomination in 1998.

#### **Tribute**

On 2 May 2015, Google celebrated Ki Hajar Dewantara's 126th birthday with a Google Doodle. [4]

## References

- 1. Decree of the President of the Republic of Indonesia No. 305 of 1959, dated November 28, 1959.
- 2. Samuel, Jérôme (2005). <u>Modernisation lexicale et politique terminologique: le cas de l'indonésien</u> (https://books.google.com/books?id=8E49KNvRkB4C&q=%22kebangoenan% 22&pg=PA183) (in French). Peeters Publishers. ISBN 9789042913776.
- 3. Arniati Prasedyawati Herkusumo (1982). Chuo Sangi-in: Dewan Pertimbang Pusat Pada Masa Pendudukan Jepang [Chuo Sangi-in: The Central Advisory Council during the Japanese Occupation] (in Indonesian). Jakarta, Indonesia: PT. Rosda Jayaputra. pp. 35–36.
- 4. "Ki Hajar Dewantara's 126th Birthday" (https://www.google.com/doodles/ki-hajar-dewantara s-126th-birthday). www.google.com. Retrieved September 2, 2020.

#### **External links**

- Media related to Ki Hajar Dewantara at Wikimedia Commons
- • Quotations related to Ki Hajar Dewantara at Wikiguote
- Profile in Tokohlndonesia.com (https://web.archive.org/web/20100528133529/http://www.tokohlndonesia.com/ensiklopedi/k/ki-hajar-dewantara/index.shtml)
- Taman Siswa (https://www.tamansiswa.id)
- (in Indonesian) Biography of Ki Hajar Dewantara (https://web.archive.org/web/20120623100 259/http://biografi.rumus.web.id/2010/10/biografi-ki-hajar-dewantara.html)

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