Christianity and Inculturated Music in Indonesia

MARZANNA POPLAWSKA
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

This essay discusses the contemporary musical practice of the Catholic Church in central Java, Indonesia, in relation to several factors: the history of the Christian presence in Indonesia, the theory and practice of inculturation, and the issues of Javanese/Indonesian Christian identity. As the Christian church in Indonesia has become an indigenous and autonomous church, so Christian music has become a form of indigenous artistic expression. The performance practice of central-Javanese gamelan within Catholic churches of central Java is an example of such localized artistic expression. This practice is a result of historical processes as well as naturally flowering human creativity and conscious effort to develop a distinct indigenous Christian identity.

This essay stems from my ongoing research on Christian music in Indonesia.¹ I have investigated the broad use of traditional music and dance in Christian milieus, both Catholic and Protestant, in central Java and Flores (an island in eastern Indonesia). This essay will concentrate on the contemporary musical practice of the Catholic Church in central Java, relating it to the history of Christianity in Indonesia and past efforts to incorporate indigenous cultural and musical practices into the Christian context. I will specifically discuss Javanese gamelan — an indigenous music performed by a large ensemble consisting of bronze gongs (including the kempul, kenong, and bonang), keyed instruments of various sizes (including the demung, saron, and gender), drums (kendhang), flutes (suling), stringed instruments (rebab, celempung), and xylophone (gambang).²

A Brief History of Christianity in Indonesia

The Indonesian Republic has been home to five state-recognized religions: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and – since 1998 – Confucianism. According to the census of 2000, almost 10 percent of the Indonesian population is Christian (3 percent Catholic and 6 percent Protestant), while Hindu believers comprise 2 percent, and Buddhists and oth-
ers 2 percent. Most Indonesians are practicing or nominal Muslims (87 percent). While the percentage of Christians may seem relatively insignificant, one needs to remember that it amounts to about twenty-five million people.

While Indonesia’s first contact with Christianity can be traced to the seventh century, substantial evidence of such encounters does not begin until the sixteenth century. In 1522, the Portuguese reached the eastern part of Indonesia. Twelve years later, the first Portuguese missionary to the Moluccas arrived, followed by other Jesuits and Dominicans. From 1556 onward, Dominicans from Goa built strong communities on the islands of Flores, Solor, and Adonara. Although permanent fighting and a lack of missionary personnel would later isolate them, these remote congregations kept their faith and formed the oldest wing of the Indonesian Catholic Church.

The Christian presence in Indonesia has been subject to political events from the beginning. The Dutch defeat of the Portuguese in 1605 resulted in the expulsion of Catholic missionaries, who were replaced by Dutch Reformed chaplains supported by the Dutch East India Company. The Dutch Reformed Church was virtually the only Christian influence on the islands for three hundred years. Both the Dutch East India Company and, later, the Netherlands East Indies colonial government maintained a policy of proscribing missionary activity in the areas where it threatened commercial interests. Thus, it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that Javanese Christian communities began to appear.

A brief period of English colonial influence (1811–16), accompanied by a Protestant awakening, brought evangelists of the Baptist Missionary Society and the London Missionary Society to Indonesia. Later, the Netherlands Missionary Society began work in Sulawesi (1827), and the Rhenish Mission began work among the Dayaks of Kalimantan. There followed many other missionary societies, most notably the German Lutherans who proselytized among Bataks of Sumatra, beginning in 1861. Around 1850, the Christian faith began to make inroads among the Javanese. In 1859, Dutch Jesuits appeared on the scene, inaugurating Catholic evangelizing on all the major islands.

Throughout the twentieth century, the Catholic Church and large regional Reformed and Lutheran churches continued to grow. In 1926, the
first Catholic priest of Javanese origin was ordained, and in 1940, a Javanese, Albertus Soegijapranata, received episcopal rank and was appointed apostolic vicar of Semarang (central Java). Twenty years later, Soegijapranata became the first archbishop of Semarang and established the indigenous Catholic hierarchy in Indonesia, which until then had been officially a mission field.

First Attempts at Indigenous Christianity

Having outlined the complexity and interdependence of the Catholic and Protestant presence in Indonesia, I now propose to highlight the Christian missionaries’ varying attitudes toward indigenous customs and arts and the crucial role of local evangelists. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the gradual implementation of efforts to contextualize Christianity and to express Christian faith through the “language” of local culture. These attempts, undertaken by both Catholics and Protestants, paved the way for efforts carried out in contemporary Indonesia, a fact that is often neglected or even omitted by Indonesian authors.7

Dutch missionaries in Indonesia tended to reject traditional customs, music, and dance and to exclude them from the liturgy (Sylado 2003, 11). These views were consistent with nineteenth-century pietism and puritanism. Pietists denounced singing (tembang) and music (gendhing) as sinful and believed that permitting tembang in church services would undermine the Christianization of indigenous people (Sylado 2003, 17). Very few missionaries supported Javanese culture. At the time, the indigenous Christians fell into two groups: Kristen Londo (Dutch Christian) and Kristen Jowo (Javanese Christians). The first group was most often supervised by Europeans and abandoned Javanese customs in exchange for European, while the latter – under the leadership of Javanese Evangelists – tried to integrate Javanese customs into the Christian faith.8

Several Eurasians and Asians played a crucial role in integrating Christianity and Javanese culture. The pioneer in these efforts was Coenrad L. Coolen,9 an expert on Javanese culture and an evangelist who presented the gospel in indigenous forms. He used macapat (traditional Javanese poetry) to restyle the Psalms and translated the Lord’s Prayer into Javanese, in the style of traditional suluk.10 In the late 1820s, Coolen formed the first community of Javanese Christians in Ngoro village in East Java, holding Christian services that resembled Javanese religious gatherings. He used Javanese vocal tunes featuring the heroes of traditional shadow plays as types of Christ, alluding to the Javanese messianic expectation of a Just King (Ratu Adil), and he put the Apostles’ Creed and the Confession of Faith in the form of the Muslim prayer (Kim 2004, 45). Kyai Ngabdullah (known later as Kyai Tunggul Wulung)11 and Kyai Sadrach extended Coolen’s ideas by
employing traditional *gendhing* or gamelan compositions in their church services.

Kyai Sadrach (1835–1924), a spiritual leader of Javanese Protestants in central Java, played a significant role in the creation of the Javanese Christian Churches (GKJ), which at present are especially keen on incorporating traditional music into their services. As Sunquist points out, Sadrach’s great achievement was “communicating the Gospel and developing a Christian community along the lines of the Javanese context of the 19th century” (2001, 720). In his community, which was based in Karangjasa, worship and liturgy were flexible, Javanese customs and rites (related to pregnancy, birth, marriage, and death) were preserved and selectively Christianized, making them appropriate for Javanese Christians. Sadrach used Javanese mysticism (*kebatinan*) as well as the tradition of *selamatan* (a ceremonial meal) as opportunities for Christian worship. He added Christian prayers to the *selamatan* ceremony to soften the insults of the Muslims who claimed that the Christians buried their dead like dogs, without a proper *selamatan*. He baptized infants with water from a spring nourishing sacred flowers and kept the tradition of burning incense. On the other hand, he strictly prohibited adultery and polygamy, as well as certain Javanese dances. Many of the Dutch Reformed missionaries rejected his independent attitude and his embrace of Javanese culture.

Among those who called for “a local, situational, or relevant theology” was Father Franz van Lith (1863–1926), a Dutch Jesuit who helped introduce Catholicism in central Java and advocated cultural evangelism. Drawing on his profound knowledge of Javanese customs and culture, he developed a successful school system and educated many influential Catholic public figures. The small town where he lived, Muntilan, is regarded as the “Bethlehem of Java,” and has become an important Catholic education center.

**Politics of Inculturation**

While *acculturation* is a sociological and anthropological term (also important in ethnomusicology), *inculturation* prevails in the fields of theology, liturgy, and missiology. Indeed, it has displaced and to some degree even replaced such terms as accommodation, assimilation, adaptation, acculturation, indigenization, and contextualization. The process of inculturation has been an important subject of postcolonial studies both as a term and as a phenomenon, and it has occasioned a large body of theological, cultural, and musical literature. It has been used not only in ecclesiastical circles but also among music educators, religious advocates, and activists. In order to analyze and interpret indigenous practices in Christian contexts, I propose to use this term as my main theoretical point of orientation.
Over the decades, inculturation has retained its primary theological meaning: “the incarnation of the message of Jesus Christ about the coming of the kingdom of God into a human culture” (Quack 1993, 4). Aylward Shorter defines inculturation as “the on-going dialogue between faith and culture or cultures,” and as “the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures” (1988, 11). As it cannot exist except in a cultural form, the Christian faith must be integrated with or “transposed” into the local culture, in time transforming it. This is, of course, a two-way process of mutual enrichment, in which Christianity is also formulated and interpreted anew by local culture. According to Shorter, there has to be a “shift away from acculturation (the insertion of indigenous elements into patterns that are basically Western) and toward inculturation (the creation of indigenous patterns themselves)” (1988, 266). This “creation of indigenous patterns” is key to understanding inculturational practices in contemporary Indonesia.

Inculturation encompasses many elements: liturgy, language, music, dance, clothing, architecture, and interior ornamentation. Of these elements, music has special and even primary importance. As stressed by my Indonesian interlocutors, music has been the chief facilitator of inculturation, making it possible for Christianity to enter and establish itself in Indonesia.

Inculturation & Its Understanding in Practice

It is especially interesting to compare the theoretical framework of inculturation to the practical understanding of inculturation as demonstrated by several Javanese – mostly artists – whom I interviewed and worked with during my research. I will examine how they perceive both their own role and the function of Javanese music in the process of inculturation in Indonesia.

According to Rm. Jono of Purbowardayan Church in Surakarta, inculturation has both a wide and narrow meaning. In the former sense, it is “a spiritual expression corresponding to the human situation, social situation at a given time,” while in the latter it is an expression channeled through a given culture. Rm. Jono agrees that inculturation in Java/Indonesia is somewhat accidental and not yet very intensive. He also notes that inculturation may become a spectacle or show rather than a true expression of spirituality. Inculturation should use methods that touch a person; one should praise the Lord with his or her own soul (Jono 2002). Thus, inculturation has to concur with the inner spirit of the living community. Overall, Rm. Jono conceives inculturation as a positive phenomenon.

Pak Subono, a Javanese musician, composer, and puppeteer, emphasizes the significance of traditional arts in the Church, pronouncing them crucial to the development of Catholicism in Java:
In fact, if we look [at this] since the very beginning, what is most important is to understand the teachings of Christ through gamelan, through Javanese culture . . . . And in my opinion, Catholicism can develop in Java properly, [only] through Javanese culture; without the customs of Javanese culture, it will not [be able to] develop well. (Subono 2002)

According to Subono, the development of traditional arts in the Church depends principally on the form of the performance. The form must speak to the interests of contemporary local people. He notes that the church itself has to support the arts; only then can the church community learn to appreciate them.

By incorporating native Javanese arts in the church, Ibu Siti Aminah, a puppeteer and employee of Radio Republic Indonesia (RRR), strives to show that the Javanese accept Christianity. She begins by generating interest. Through wayang wawyu – Catholic shadow theater – she proclaims God’s word to everybody, not just to the Catholic community. As she says, “Javanese arts have common features, they are not a property of one group, they belong to Javanese people” (Subanto 2002).

Gamelan & the Contemporary Catholic Church

As many of my interlocutors point out, the Catholic Church was the first to employ the full gamelan ensemble in church services. The first efforts were undertaken in 1925 by Cayetanus Hardjasonoerata (1905–86), a Yogyakarta-born composer who was educated at the Kweek School in Muntilan. Hardjasoebrata’s undeniable contribution to the development of indigenous Christian music in Indonesia were the many songs that he wrote for the church in the idiom of central-Javanese gamelan. In the beginning, Javanese Christian songs were performed outside of the ritual of the mass and without gamelan accompaniment. After Hardjasoebrata moved to Surakarta, experiments with gamelan church songs spread to Ganjuran, Wedi, and Kalasan (Prier 1999, 9). In 1956, after Bishop Sugiyopranoto obtained permission from Rome, musicians started to perform Christian songs with gamelan accompaniment during the mass. The success of the first Christian-gamelan songs by Atmodarsono and Hardjasoebrata encouraged the Bishop of Semarang to donate a gamelan to the Kumetiran Church in Yogyakarta (Susantina 2001, 9). At present, there are a few churches in the Yogyakarta and Surakarta areas that use gamelan on a fairly regular basis, while other churches use the organ.

Women are integral to the gamelan culture of the Indonesian Catholic Church. They are devoted to the music and they are eager to practice (Subanto 2002). Typically, there is only one gamelan group in a given parish. In Ganjuran, however, there are six gamelan ensembles, representing different precincts of the parish, one of which is an all-female group (Susantina 2001, 70).
Case Study: Christmas Mass, December 2001, Surakarta, Central Java

In order to exemplify the incorporation of traditional arts in the church, I would like to discuss a particular event: a mass conducted during Christmas celebrations in a Catholic church in Surakarta. This mass was typical of Catholic masses employing gamelan in central Java. A gamelan ensemble accompanied the entire ritual. The players were members of the San Inigo Dirjodipuran parish in Surakarta, and were aided by a few additional players from outside of the parish. The parish group consisted of female players who regularly practice at the church. The group was supervised by a parish priest, Rm. Wiyono, who himself is a puppeteer of Catholic shadow theater or wayang wahyu.

The San Inigo church began as a nobleman’s residence, so it has the configuration of a traditional Javanese house (rumah joglo) with both east and west sides open. Inside, there are two additional indications of the building’s domestic origin: a small wooden roof in the style of the rumah joglo placed over the tabernacle located behind the altar, and a sliding door of gunungan/kayon form that is a part of the tabernacle itself (see figs. 1–2). This gunungan is painted in the style of the gunungan used in wayang wahyu performances: both integrate Christian motifs. On the right-hand side, there is also a medium-sized bronze gong.

The mass was celebrated entirely in Javanese. All three concelebrating priests wore traditional Javanese attire: a sarong and a white jacket or surjan (traditionally it would have been dark). Participants in the mass – ministers, those who performed readings, those who brought offerings to the altar, the gamelan players and choir members – wore traditional Javanese attire as well.
Musical & Textual Components

During the mass, the choir took its place in front of the gamelan players. Most of the vocal program came from Kidung Adi — a Catholic praise and song book written in Javanese but using a Roman alphabet. The melodies of the songs were written in cipher notation. This notation represents the diatonic seven-tone scale. Sharps or flats are indicated by a line drawn diagonally across the number; octave-higher notes have a dot above them and octave-lower notes have a dot below them, as in gamelan notation. The key and meter are usually specified at the top of the piece. Most Indonesian people are acquainted with this cipher system (unlike European staff notation). The traditional gamelan notation is similarly based on a numeric system, but the seven numbers representing the notes of the pelog scale do not usually indicate the same pitches as those of the diatonic scale. During rehearsal, these two systems of notation, and two realms of experience, have to be adjusted and translated between gamelan players and choir singers. According to Ibu Siti Aminah, who is active in the Purbowardayan Church, Javanese choirs have little difficulty adjusting to the gamelan because the pelog scale is very like the seven-tone diatonic scale. Moreover, most choir members are already familiar with the pelog scale.

Gamelan pieces for the mass often begin with the priest’s invocation. The drum then enters, providing a rhythmic structure, and the rest of the gamelan and the choir join at the stroke of a gong. Some pieces start with an instrumental introduction from the bonang (a bronze instrument composed of ten to fourteen small horizontal gongs), which is typical practice for traditional compositions in the soran or “loud style.” Pieces adapted or composed for a mass typically feature vocal introductions (usually the priest’s invocation), which is not the case in the traditional repertoire. In Western musical terminology, these pieces are of responsorial form: a solo call and a choir response.

The ensemble performed twelve songs during the mass. Some (like “Rama Kawula” or “The Lord’s Prayer”) were sung to the accompaniment of only gender (a bronze keyed instrument of fourteen metal bars) and suling (a flute). This arrangement evokes the aesthetics of traditional pathetan. The mass concluded with a piece titled “Udan Mas,” a composition in the lancaran bubaran form, which usually concludes traditional performances as a recessional. This detail indicates the mutual exchange between Javanese and Christian traditions. Sometimes gender and suling accompanied the priest while he recited the words of the mass. This practice recalls the shadow theater, in which a gender player accompanies the puppeteers throughout his narration.

As shown in the Christmas mass at Dirjodipuran church, the gamelan mass seems to be rather uniform. Of course, different songs are used at dif-
fertent services and churches, depending on the repertoire of the choirs and the liturgical seasons. Masses with gamelan accompaniment are usually celebrated on special occasions, such as important Christian holidays. One exception is the Catholic Church in Pugeran, Yogyakarta, which conducts masses with gamelan every Sunday morning. Such masses are always conducted in Javanese.

In Christian songs, the *balungan* line (a basic melody played by the instruments of the *saron* family – bronze instruments typically of seven keys) may vary. This variability is also evident in traditional gamelan pieces. *Balungan* melodies are often composed to the “Kidung Adi” songs by leaders of a particular gamelan group. The Center for Liturgical Music (PML) also publishes books with *balungan* notation for “Kidung Adi” songs. The fact that *balungan* melodies are published has led to a certain unification of the repertoire.

**Conclusion: Indonesian Christian Identity**

The music employed in Christian churches in Indonesia is a product of historical processes, beginning with nineteenth-century efforts to incorporate Javanese customs in Christian services and continuing with a larger process of inculturation. It is also a product of human creativity and desire to localize the music, thus making it comprehensible and closer to people’s hearts. As the Christian church in Indonesia has been transformed into an indigenous church, so Christian music has become infused with indigenous artistic expressions.

In some Muslim circles, Christianity, especially before Indonesian independence from Dutch colonial authority (and in some instances also later), was considered *agama Belanda* — the religion of the Dutch, a foreign religion – and Indonesian Christians were accused of adopting a colonial religion and spirit. After independence, several Catholic leaders made a conscious effort to integrate the Catholic community into the new Republic of Indonesia. The first Indonesian bishop and archbishop, Albertus Soegijapranata, was known for his motto on national matters: “A hundred percent Catholic, and a hundred percent Indonesian!” (Sunquist 2001, 786).

The incorporation of traditional arts in the Church, although not directly associated with sociopolitical activities, may be considered in a broader context of nationwide relations. Perhaps the creation of Christian genres was not initially a “political” or “ideological” act, but it became one in the context of the relationship between Christianity and Islam, often involving minority–majority tensions, and in the context of the history of Christianity, with its colonial associations.

As Sutarman Partonadi states, the “discovery that Christianity and ‘Javanese-ness’ are not mutually exclusive has opened the door for con-
scious efforts to contextualize the church in Indonesia” (Partonadi 1990, 235). It might be said that in the process of inculturation, indigenous Christians are in some ways “re-Javanized”: they learn what it means to be simultaneously Javanese and Christian in a contemporary environment. In short, they preserve and develop their own identity.

Integration into the cultural and social environment has been a goal of the Christian community in Indonesia. Its members aspire to be an integral part of Javanese society and strive to make a place for themselves within the Indonesian nation. The website of the Forum of the Christian Community of Indonesia, Archdiocese of Jakarta, gives voice to this contemporary desire for a distinct identity: “We are fully Indonesian, fully Catholic and we will stand up for our rights!”

The Indonesian Church is at present fully autonomous; it is not a locus for missionary activities of European churches any longer. Though there is discussion as to what kind of “face” the Indonesian Church (or Asian Church) should have, it already has a distinctive face. Indigenous priests and nuns spread the Christian faith themselves; they even carry it outside of Indonesia, traveling to places that have long been Christian but where there are not many local priests. Some may claim that Christianity, though dispersed throughout the developing world, is not fully integrated or internalized by the local people, but it seems that in Indonesia the Christian faith has been actively integrated into the lives of the people and internalized. In the minds and hearts of many indigenous Christians, the Christian religion has become deeply theirs.32

**FIGURE 3** Javanese gong in a chapel in western Flores (note the Christian carvings on the stand). Photo by the author.

**FIGURE 4** Priest and procession participants wearing traditional Javanese attire, Ganjuran, Yogyakarta. Photo by the author.
Notes

1The research I conducted between December 2001 and June 2003 resulted in a dissertation titled “Christian Music and Inculturation in Indonesia.”
2For discussion of gamelan instruments, see Lindsay 1992 or Sorrell 1990.
3Most likely these contacts occurred through Christian merchants from Persia and India. They belonged to the Church of the East — the Syriac-speaking church, commonly known as the Nestorian Church, present in the Persian and Parthian Empires from the first century. As Kim (2004, 40) and Yoder (1985, 275) suggest, there was a significant Christian presence in the archipelago long before the arrival of the Europeans.
4Among the Jesuits was Francis Xavier (1506–52), one of the most famous missionaries of his time. He spent nearly a year in the Moluccas in 1546.
5It was renamed the Archdiocese of Jakarta in 1961.
6This term refers to priests who are usually not members of religious orders.
7Catholic writings on inculturation, including many B.A. theses written by students of the Academy of Catholic Philosophy in Ledalero, Flores, consider the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) instrumental to inculturational efforts. While the role of Vatican II in modernizing Catholic tradition and opening up the liturgy cannot be understated, earlier efforts in contextualization of Christian message are largely overlooked.
9Coolen was active in East Java with the Dutch Reformed Mission Society. He was of mixed heritage. His Javanese cultural background was acquired through his mother, who came from Surakarta nobility. Coolen learned the art of puppetetry, becoming a dhalang (puppeteer). He was also skilled at tuning gamelan instruments.
10Suluk or sulukan are the songs sung by the dhalang (puppet master) in the wayang kulit shadow-play. They are metrically free and usually convey a specific mood or emotion appropriate to particular scenes of the play.
11Both the North Central Java Christian Church and the Java Evangelical Church owe a great debt to Kyai Ibrahim Tunggul Wulung. (The adjective Christian in the names of both churches refers to Protestant denomination of the Java Evangelical Church). At first, he was associated with the Doopsgezinde or Dutch Mennonite Mission. Later, he established a Christian village in Muria. A follower of the mystic tradition of Java, he had, like C. Coolen, a noble background. He was the son of a concubine and a Mangkunegaran nobleman.
12Sadrach was associated at first with the Reformed Dutch Mission, which began its work in Java in the 1860s. After his death, most of his followers joined the missionaries and formed the Javanese Christian (Protestant) Churches (Gereja Kristen Jawa). As Kim suggests, by the time Indonesia declared its independence in 1945, all Protestant denominations had become truly Javanese (Kim 2004, 53).
13Sadrach often debated with kebatinan leaders. As a result, many converted to Christianity.
14See Sutarman Soediman Partonadi (1990, 2).
15Anton Quack notes that inculturation has become a theological buzz word. It was first used by French missiologist Pierre Charles in 1953. It re-appeared in 1962 in the work of Joseph Masson, who called for “inculturated Catholicism” — an opening of the Church towards all cultures” (Quack 1993, 3). In the 1970s, the word found its way into official papal documents.
16For the discussion and critique of different theoretical terms related to cultural contact, including acculturation, see Kartomi 1981 and 1994.
Although this term originated in the Catholic Church, it was later taken up by Protestant churches, which sometimes prefer to call this phenomenon “contextualization.” The two terms are largely synonymous. Dieter Mack notes that Hardjasoebrata was the author of the first church vocal composition based on Javanese music (pelog scale). See Mack 2004.

In Yogyakarta, the legacy of Hardjasoebrata was continued by J.B. Sukodi and M. Siswanto, who had accompanied Hardjasoebrata in Yogyakarta since the 1960s (Mack 2004, 545). One way their works circulated was through the songbook “Madah Bakti,” published by Pusat Musik Liturgi Yogyakarta in 1980. Susantina (2001, 30) notes that gamelan masses were also composed by Pastor H.V. Deinse, SJ, and V. Marsudi.

Similar attempts were made outside of Java by J. Tinggogoy (b. 1938) in the 1960s with Minahasa music in Pineleng, Sulawesi Utara; Linus Aryesam from the 1980s in Saumlaki, Maluku Selatan (Tanimbar); Alo Neno from the 1970s in Lalian, Timor; and Friets Tabunan (b. 1957) from 1989 in Sumut, Sumatera Utara.

In Yogyakarta, it is mainly the Pugeran Church (built in 1934) and the Ganjuran Church (founded in 1924) that hold weekly Javanese masses with gamelan. In Surakarta, it is the churches of Purbowardayan and San Inigo Dirjodipuran. At Purbowardayan, a mass with gamelan is held every fifth Sunday of the month. Every odd-numbered Sunday there is a mass in Javanese, but without gamelan accompaniment. Sometimes, the gamelan group of Purbowardayan participates in the weddings of congregation members. In Sragen, near Surakarta, gamelan is often used in the church.

This is the case in the Catholic churches of Purbowardayan and Dirjodipuran in Surakarta, and in the Protestant church of Gondokusuman in Yogyakarta.

The gamelan at Dirjodipuran is on loan from Bapak Subono, a teacher at STSI (the Indonesian Academy of Arts) and a puppeteer, who is also engaged in church activities. It is a half-set, including only instruments that utilize the pelog scale.

After playing at a major holiday, there is usually a break, which sometimes lasts for several months.

This is a leather puppet in the shape of a mountain, used in the traditional shadow theater performance.

See fig. 3 for another example of Javanese motifs in a Christian context.

In Yogyakarta, priests often wear traditional Javanese attire for the mass during important celebrations (especially in the Ganjuran church). See fig. 4.

Ibu Siti stresses that the choir must adapt to the gamelan, not the other way around, because gamelan has a fixed key.

In traditional gamelan music, the practice of opening with a solo vocal introduction (buka celuk) is less common than beginning with an instrumental introduction.

“The Lord’s Prayer” is usually performed without gamelan accompaniment.

“Pathetan” is synonymous with “sulukan” or “lagon.” All these terms indicate a piece played by only a few gamelan instruments (usually gender, rebab, gambang, and suling).

See a similar observation in Aragon (2000, 8–9).

References


