



Music and Identity: *Immortal Rites'* Art as the Narrative of Contemporary *Kejawen* Identity

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Abstract

This study explores the context of identity in the musical arts echoed by a Black Metal band from Kediri, *Immortal Rites*. Aesthetically, *Immortal Rites* articulate Javanese locality using Black Metal, a sub-genre of *underground* music that emerged in Indonesia in the late 90s. Accordingly, the band lined up as one of the *Kejawen* Black Metal whose consistency and depth of understanding are well appreciated within the scene. The unification of two different cultures provokes a complex contemporary value of a cultural reflection concerning identity. This study uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. This study aims to discuss the narrative of identity that *Immortal Rites* wish to embody for its fans to understand. By focusing analysis on the main data of song lyrics with additional data in the form of interviews, we found that the echoed locality represents a notion of contemporary Javanese identity. Within the arts, there was a close relevance of the content with the identical Javaneseness in the era of the *Kadiri* kingdom. Thus, based on the engagement of the arts and the Kediri-based Javaneseness, it leads us to an understanding of the mediated cultural representation of contemporary Javanese identity, of a *Daha*-based Javanese identity.

Keywords: Black Metal, identity, Javaneseness, locality, representation

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INTRODUCTION

There are various types of 'influential music' in this world, especially in Indonesia, but specifically, this study specifically focuses on discussing one of the kinds of musical aesthetics, *Kejawen Black Metal*. As the name suggests, *Kejawen Black Metal* is a kind of music whose nature was born from a combination of two very different cultures (Akhtabi & Riyanto, 2022, pp. 2 & 3). Historically, *Kejawen Black Metal* is a musical aesthetic that developed in the late 90s in Indonesia when the *underground* music wave entered the country through the

MTV's global expansion to Asian countries (Baulch, 2003; Wallach, 2008). One of these waves was the European Black Metal that first founded by a late 70s British band called *Venom* and developed radically and more diabolically in early 90s in Norway, precisely in Oslo, with some seminal bands, such as: *Mayhem*, *Darkthrone*, *Emperor*, *Immortal*, etc. (Moynihan & Soderlind, 1998; Patterson, 2013; Spracklen, 2014). Since then, many Indonesians, especially the youth, are attracted to this 'horrific' musical-subcultural scene. Some infamous Indonesian bands are as follow: *Perish* (Malang), *Santet* (Purwokerto), *Makam*

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(Solo), *Immortal Rites* (Kediri), *Djiwo* (Solo), *Dry* (Surabaya), etc.

Kejawen Black Metal is a hybrid musical subculture that articulates typical Javanese values and concepts by using the Black Metal aesthetic. In addition, *Kejawen* basically refers to everything in the Javanese culture and custom (Ciptoprawiro, 1986; Geertz, 1976; Koentjaraningrat, 1994; Suseno, 1984). As we know, the main principle of *Kejawen* rests on nobility, refinement, 'whiteness', harmonious traits and attitudes (Endraswara, 2022; Geertz, 1976; Lombard, 2005). Even, Lombard argued that *Kejawen* guides Javanese to be always in a proper and well-dealt position to any problematic condition (Lombard, 2005, p. 96).

Meanwhile, the essence of the Black Metal itself is a resistance, a "child, conceived from the promiscuous intermingling of number evil seeds, with only the general of Heavy Metal as its fecund womb" (Hjelm et al., 2012; Moynihan & Soderlind, 1998, p. 23). In its aesthetics, Black Metal mostly heightens a greater sense of evil, hate, horror, darkness, violence, noise, misanthropy, and terror rather than Heavy Metal (Floekher, 2009; Hoffin, 2018; Kahn-Harris, 2007; Masciandaro & Connole, 2015; Moynihan & Soderlind, 1998; Patterson, 2013; Podoshen et al., 2018; Vrzal, 2017; Williams, 2012). Black Metal became the main and foremost medium for propagating "left-hand" sentiments, such as the discourse of paganism, occultism, satanism, anti-religion, fascism, radical environmentalism, atheism, and even monotheism (Cordero, 2009; Fischer, 2022; Granholm, 2013; Hagen, 2011; Irtenkauf, 2014; Manea, 2020; Moynihan & Soderlind, 1998; Noys, 2010; Wilson, 2010). Even the embraced radical ideology leads to the establishment and physical embodiment of transgressive activities, such as suicide, homicide, churches arson, self-torture, drug, and alcohol abuse, physical violence, etc. (Moynihan & Soderlind, 1998; Patterson, 2013; Richardson, 1991; Spracklen, 2014).

Therefore, there is a contrast to the very nature of the two streams. Even so,

the contrasting nature of the two streams is able to unify. This unification makes the *Kejawen Black Metal* becomes so unique since those 'blackness' and 'whiteness' incorporate, procreating a 'grayish' aesthetic state that blends tranquility and chaotic nuances into a synchronizing harmony (Wallach, 2005). Not only that, but it is also epic since it was created from the local struggle of emphasizing differences, aimed to elevate the hierarchy of local values in the more global cultural system (Martin-Iverson, 2012; Riyanto, 2017a; Wallach, 2005).

Specifically, we pay attention to *Immortal Rites*, a *Kejawen Black Metal* band founded in 1997 Kediri, East Java, with the initial name of *Demon Church* (Gerilya Magazine, 2020). While actively playing in the band, two of the personnel, Doni (vocal and rhythm guitar) and Winoto (lead guitar) are actively involved in a conservative movement of preserving antique objects and sites, especially in Kediri (Gerilya Magazine, 2020; Hariawan, 2020). Not only that, they often hold sharing sessions after the gigs devoted to talking about the Javanese-ness that inspires their creation of works (Saputro, 2018). With approximately 20 years of being active in the Indonesian Black Metal movement, this seminal *Kejawen Black Metal* band stays true to the motivation of keeping Javanese antiquity from being lost and forgotten (Gerilya Magazine, 2020). Further, what made them so recognizable in the Indonesian Black Metal scene is the use of ancient Javanese language in some of their songs, such as in *Serpihan Api* and *Legiun Api*, which are being discussed further in this study (Madyan, 2020; Saputro, 2018).

In the scientific realm, we are able to find several previous studies that specifically analyze the Indonesian *underground* subculture. One of which was carried out by Jeremy Wallach in 2003, entitled "*Goodbye My Blind Majesty: Music, Language, and Politics in the Indonesian Underground*" which generally discusses language choice and images in the Indonesian *underground* subculture. As it has been identified, Wal-

lach argued that the local language—the Javanese one in this case—is not really suitable to use in Indonesian *underground* aesthetics for several reasons, such as: too provincial, representing something ‘backward’, too old and/or inappropriate for the young, and more suitable for traditional music not the for the modern one (Riyanto, 2017a, p. 125; Wallach, 2003). Furthermore, Wallach stated that the *underground* scene of Indonesia is mostly ‘self-consciously national’; thus, local or regional convention does not really have a place in that subcultural community (Wallach, 2003, 2008).

Such a practice also appears in the global scene, which shows a lack of emphasis on the significance of regional cultural interests (Hoad, 2021; Noys, 2010; Thompson, 2012). In the context of identity, Black Metal musical practice mostly raises nationalism awareness. For example, in the Scandinavian Black Metal scene, the exploitation and exploration of Viking’s culture and traces foster an awareness of being Nordic, not Norwegian, Finnish, or Swede (Granholt, 2011; Olson, 2008; Thompson, 2012). Undeniably, this makes the Indonesian scene different from the global one. We argue that the Indonesian scene emphasizes the significance of regional culture, even on a smaller and more specific scale.

Further, Narendra in *Glokal Metal: Dari Black Metal menuju Jawa yang Baru* in 2017. He particularly discussed *Kejawen* Black Metal practice and aesthetics in post-modern era. Inside the writing, he gave general attention to some *Kejawen* Black Metal bands to see their distinctive strategy of imagining ‘Java’, especially in terms of its antiquity, in contemporary culture, including *Djiwo* (Solo), *Immortal Rites* (Kediri), and *Sacrifice* (Sidoarjo) (Narendra, 2017). He found the three bands used different approaches in their mindset, *Immortal Rites* with spiritual and daily life reflection, *Djiwo* is closer to literacy (literary art and scripture), while *Sacrifice* uses mysticism (Narendra, 2017). Those three approaches are also found in global practices, especially by those who propagate paganism and

occultism discourse (Fischer, 2022; Granholt, 2013).

Simply, we intend to answer a kind of ‘fundamental’ question attached by the existence of *Immortal Rites* as *Kejawen* Black Metal band. Firstly, what is the reason behind *Immortal Rites* status of *Kejawen* Black Metal? Secondly, what does the group try to narrate with the ‘Javaneseness’ they resonate in today’s contemporary socio-cultural space? By looking at those questions, the significance of the study is to comprehend *Immortal Rites*’ complex socio-cultural and artistic performance in their subcultural movement and to explain how their music represents a degree of being as the *Kejawen* one. The initial hypothesis that we provide is that what *Immortal Rites* did by the Black Metal they play strongly connects to the construction of the Javanese identity they wish to manifest. For that, we particularly apply the concept of music and identity in contemporary culture to uncover.

In the classical view, music is a medium that facilitates humans to communicate their verbally indescribable inner expression, emotion, and feelings (Scruton, 1999). Meanwhile, postmodernism develops a view that music is not just a medium but rather a form of ‘force’ that empowers humans to become fully ‘cultured’ creatures (DeNora, 2000). The contrasting arguments lead us to a thesis of how significant music is in the development of culture, especially in the world of aesthetics.

Based on the postmodernist perspective, we may think that music empowers humans with the framework of action (DeNora, 2000). Such an argument is very logical considering some current musical practices. We can see that American-hip hop encourages the Afro-American rapper to live in luxury, materialism, and glitter of jewelry (Podoshen et al., 2014). There is Reggae that allows Jamaican-Rastafarians to immerse in simplicity, easy-living life, and marijuana (Bedasse, 2017). The Punk also encourages the youth to rebel against the monarchy, capitalism, and any form of social inequality (Ambrosch, 2018; Moore

& Roberts, 2009; Wallach, 2014). Likewise, Black Metal stimulates the scenesters to embody a chaotic-demonic figure to fight against religious authority they consider full of intrigue, lies and hypocrisy (Masciandaro & Connole, 2015; Vrzal, 2017; Williams, 2012).

Frith argued that music has a red thread of fate, considered to be the metaphor for identity (1996). If music was said to have the force to shape, music might influence the construction of the identity that humans wish to exhibit. Hence, music constructs humans' identity based on two premises; the first is that identity is moving. It is a process, not 'things', and entirely "a matter of becoming, not being" thus implying the works of experience within. The second one is that the experience of music—making music, listening to it, and everything that engages musical aspects—is a "self-in-process" experience (Frith, 1996, p. 109; Hall, 2018). It is indeed that music and identity are two different 'properties.' Still, both put forward a similar pattern of representation that highlights performance and narrative of how to understand social to self, as well as the self in social, soul to the body, and body to the soul, about how ethics reflect aesthetics and *vice versa* (Frith, 1996). Therefore, it leads to an argument that aesthetical music gradually becomes a reference in our contemporary discussion about identity, in addition to race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, religion, and sexes (Arivia, 2009; Frith, 1996).

Thus, music's nature has changed from merely a medium of mind and emotional representation to one that can construct humans themselves (DeNora, 2000; Frith, 1996). Through the musical and aesthetical experience, man is empowered to be able to embody their perceptions into attitudes of how to deal with realities one encounters, as they carried out extreme practices and embraced radical ideologies of the Scandinavian Black Metal scenesters (Frith, 1996; Moynihan & Soderlind, 1998; Patterson, 2013; Spracklen, 2014). In other words, music is not only something

that exists as a set of aesthetical substances; it also becomes a kind of element that is inherently attached to the structural development of cultural performance (Frith, 1996).

Furthermore, we hope this research can provide further insight into contemporary musical performance and aesthetics, especially in Black Metal practices, for both local and global ranges. The combination of locality in modern music may have been widely identified, but in this case, it is embodied in a convention that has long been extinct, making it unique and even strange in terms of modern musical aesthetics. Hence, this study will also reveal the underlying motives and threads behind the artistic process. Besides, we will also find out how music becomes a cultural medium that is able to transgress its principle nature and classical philosophical concept of music as aesthetics. In this study, music is explained as a medium and a "force" capable of empowering men to further understand their existential identity in an increasingly pluralistic cultural sphere. Thus, we expect this study to be a major contribution to cultural, art, and music studies, especially in a contemporary scope.

METHOD

This study uses the qualitative research method with a descriptive approach, aiming to describe an in-depth analysis of the cultural phenomenon of music and identity relevancy. Particularly, we focus on the locality that a Kediri-based *Kejawen* Black Metal band, *Immortal Rites*, articulates and its relationship to the personnel's construction of identity within the socio-cultural space. *The main data is Immortal Rites' song lyrics to answer the first question.* For that, we determined to take two *Immortal Rites'* songs as the data, which are *Serpihan Api* and *Legiun Api*, which belong to the album of *Bathara Api* in 2020. Furthermore, the original lyrics and the Indonesian translated one were already transcribed inside Youtube account called 'Doni Wicaksonojati', which turns out to

be the band's vocalist. After that, we begin to interpret by prioritizing the lyrical content, both on what is explicit and implicit. By the interpretation, we wish to discover the sense of 'Javaneseness' within, so that it can be useful to answer why the group bears the status as the *Kejawen* one.

For the more established answers, we think of another kind of data to strengthen further explanation about the Javanese identity the band wants to represent through their arts. For that, we determine to use another data in a form of interview. This kind of data supports to strengthen our answers', especially for both questions. Therefore, we use the interview results that another party successfully carried out. We determined that we will use some interview videos on *Youtube*, uploaded by *The Anarcho Brothers*, *Rotus Reveal TV*, and *JTV Biro Kediri*. Based on the in-

terview, we found some 'representative' utterances and signs refer to the "wished" purpose behind the narrative of the art.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Before going into the discussion of *Immortal Rites* and their narrative of identity in socio-cultural space, this part specifically contains the disclosure of the articulated locality inside the media of Black Metal. For this reason, we specifically reveal the full lyrics of *Serpihan Api* and *Legiun Api* with the translated version in tables 1 and 2. Extracting the Javanese elements inside the lyrics, we basically use the similar logic that Riyanto had done with the Jogja Hip Hop Foundation (Riyanto, 2017a), and simply, the extraction is done by interpreting both the explicit and implicit.

Table 1. *Serpihan Api* original and translated lyric

Original	Translated
<p><i>Ring Samangkana; Hana Tatunggulning Catru; Layu2 Katon Wetani Haniru; Bang Lawan Putih Warnnana; Cakatonikang Tunggul Ika; Irika Tay-anpangdawut;</i></p> <p><i>Sanjata Sang Arddharaja Lumakwaknan say-aprawi; Niskarananujwi Kapulungan; Purwakani Sanjata Cri Maharaja Rusak; Kusapu Gelombang Kejayaan; Menerjang Bara Pawaka Ujung Negeri; Dharma Memanggil Nurani;</i></p> <p><i>Kejayaan DAHA Nagara; Dan Akulah Serpihan Api</i></p>	<p>There was flags; Belong to the enemy; Waving at the east of Haniru; Red and white (are) the colors; (after) seeing the flags;</p> <p>Then back off; Arddharaja's army did a bad deed; Escaping to Kapulungan; That was the beginning of Sri Maharaja's forces devastation; I wipe the wave of glory; Crashing the Bara Pawaka at the end of country; Dharma summons the conscience;</p> <p>The triumph of DAHA Nagara; And I am the Serpihan Api</p>

Table 2. *Legiun Api* original and translated lyric

Original	Translated
<p><i>Ya tēka kajamasakna kang rudira dya Sang Calwan Arang; Magimbal pwa kesanira dening marus; Usus nya makasawitira; Mwang kinakalungakenya;</i></p> <p><i>Lagawanya ingolah kinabasang kabeh; Makacarung eng butâ tah;</i></p> <p><i>Sahana nikanang sema ngkana; Makanguni Paduka Batari Bagawati;</i></p> <p><i>Adinika inaturanya; Saksana mijil ta sira pada Batari; Sakêng kahyanganira; Neher mojar ta sirêng Calwan Arang; Uduh atmajamami kita Calwan Arang; Apa kalinganta mangaturi tadah tumekêng hulun; Bakti mangarcamana? Atarima nghulun ri pangastutinta'</i></p>	<p>The blood (was) used to wash the hair of Calon Arang; Her hair was tangled by the blood;</p> <p>Intestine became a necklace; And (she) put in around; All roasted, quickly processed; Used for the victim of blind beings; (and) everything that lives in the tomb; especially for the majesty, Batari Bagawati; The main <i>sacrifice</i> was made;</p> <p>Immediately, she appears, the lord Batari; From (her) palace; Then, she said to Calon Arang;</p> <p>'my daughter, Calon Arang; What do you mean to offer me food?; Worship? I accept your <i>sacrifice</i>'.</p>

The Existence of Javaneseeness

The most visible and literal element of 'Javaneseeness' of both songs is language since both use the ancient Javanese one. Historically, the ancient Javanese language replaced the role of Sanskrit in Javanese literary affairs at that time. The language's existence was first realized through the *Sukabumi* inscription written in *Kawi* script, dated 804 AD, in Kediri, East Java (Zoetmulder, 1983). Two other older inscriptions were found later, which are *Plumpungan* inscription (750 AD) in *Salatiga* and the *Sri Ranapati* inscription (787 AD) in *Temanggung* (Nikolic, 2008; Sambodo, 2018) an ancient stone inscription found in the *Salatiga* area. The manuscript dates back to the 8th century and is one of the main historical sources of the *Salatiga* municipality. There is a tight connection involving the above mentioned inscription with the legitimacy of the Javanese court at that time, as well as with the monarch, who was seen as half-man, half-deity. The monarch drew on the labor of his subjects in maintaining religious sites to ensure his place on earth, and in heaven. The *Plumpungan* manuscript was a 'legal document' used to reassure inhabitants of the area that the monarch is the legitimate ruler, and to prevent further revolt. The monarch's subjects in the *Salatiga* area at the time were farmers disheartened with high taxes and the fear of volcanic eruptions, which later caused great migrations to East Java. Consequently, the monarch, using the *Plumpungan* manuscript as a medium, decreed that the *Hampran* village (present-day *Salatiga*). So, it can be predicted that the old Javanese language was first used around the 6th or 7th centuries since the oldest inscription dated back to 750 AD. The Javanese language has at least three developmental periods before the medieval model in the 16th century, which is still frequently used today (de Casparis, 2022). The three periods are the ancient one that is still borrowing a lot of Sanskrit and is written in *Pallava*, the 8th-century language that started to portray something more 'indigenous,' and the 13th century in *Majapahit* era (de Casparis, 2022;

Zoetmulder, 1983; Zuburchen, 1976).

Explicitly, it is very clear that language is the first element that represents Javaneseeness. The aesthetical process can be understood under the concept of mixing, combining elements that do not exist within the initial establishment of one musical type aesthetic (Riyanto, 2017b). The mixing is not to undermine what has been established, but it tends to maintain the musical 'tradition' that continues today (Riyanto, 2017b). Further, given that *Immortal Rites* used the extinct local dialect, Wallach's argument in 2003 becomes less valid. Clearly, what *Immortal Rites* did in their artistic manner contrasts Wallach's argument if such regional language is unlikely to be a candidate for *underground* songs (Wallach, 2003). What *Immortal Rites* did feel like it was a "punch" since they epically used the "associated backward village" language in their arts, and they managed to do that (Wallach, 2003). Even they got great appreciation in the global metal scene, such as being invited to play and promote their album in 2017 in Malaysia and being released by an independent European label, *Satanarsa Record* (Madyan, 2020; Saputro, 2018).

The next process is to dig into something implied within the lyrics comprehensively. Therefore, the interpretation now focuses on exploring what content actually inspires the formation of lyrics. Generally, both of the songs are the narrative of retelling historical pieces of ancient Javanese civilization, more precisely the history of Java that closely relates to the capital city of *Daha* whose existence becomes the forerunner of Kediri's present city. *Serpihan Api* is a piece of a historical story that is specifically written in an inscription. Meanwhile, *Legiun Api* is much relevant to the ancient Javanese religious-historical story written in the form of *babad*, one of Javanese's literary work types that contains religious myth and history (Prabowo et al., 2015). Our argument was proven as Winoto emphasized in the interview with *Anarcho Brothers* in 2021.

"Kalau dulu, Api dari Timur itu mencerita-

kan spiritualnya orang-orang Kediri, kalau ini (Bathara Api) lebih condong terhadap sejarahnya” (The Anarco Brothers, 2021) “For the past, *Api dari Timur* told about the spirituality of Kediri people, but for this time, it is more inclined to the history”

Api dari Timur refers to their previous album, that was released in 2007. The two songs, *Serpihan Api* and *Legiun Api*, that are being discussed here belong to their second full-length album, *Bathara Api* in 2020. Directly, Winoto stated that each song inside *Bathara Api* leans towards the historical side of Java, especially those related to the land and the society of Kediri.

Serpihan Api lyric retells a historical event of revenge, the re-establishment of the ancestor's legitimacy, and betrayal that we can comprehend by reading what has been written in the *Kudadu* inscription dated to 1216 Saka or 1294 AD. The inscription contains the village of *Kudadu* mandate as *sima* or free-tax area as the order of Raden Wijaya, the first *Majapahit* king, for the help of *Kudadu*'s people to hide him from *Jayakatwang*'s troops (Hardjowardo, 1965, p. 37; Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 2019; Yamin, 1962, p. 221). The main actor is *Jayakatwang* or *Aji Katong* or *Jayaktyeng*, the king of *Gelang-Gelang* that turns out to be the great-grandson of *Kertajaya* (the last king of *Kadiri*) who lost to *Ken Arok* (the founder of *Singhasari* empire) (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 2019). Apart from the *Kudadu* inscription, this story was also written inside *Pararaton* or the 'Book of Kings', *Kidung Harsa-Wijaya*, and *Kidung Panji Wiyakrama* (Hardjowardo, 1965; Pigeaud, 1967; Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 2019; Zuburchen, 1976). Based on the translated version above, the implied context is about *Jayakatwang*'s victory in coupling the *Singhasari* empire.

Contextually, the defeat cannot be separated from *Arddharaja*'s betrayal to his own father-in-law, *Kertanegara* (the last king of *Singhasari*). *Arddharaja* saw *Gelang-Gelang*'s red-white flying flags at the east of *Haniru*, and so he immediately fled to *Kapulungan*, causing a great devastation

to the *Singhasari* empire (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 2019; Yamin, 1962). *Arddharaja*'s betrayal was not without a reason because in fact, he is the biological son of *Jayakatwang*, so we can say that this 'betrayal' is a manifestation of devotion to his own father. Furthermore, the fighting *Singhasari*'s troops were actually led by two person, the first one is *Arddharaja* himself and *Raden Wijaya*, a prince who later became the first 'Cri Maharaja' of the *Majapahit* empire (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 2019; Yamin, 1962).

Apart from *Arddharaja*'s betrayal to *Singhasari*, *Jayakatwang*'s coup success was inevitable to the clever strategy he used. When *Singhasari* attacked and put all the strength in the west, *Jayakatwang*'s 'red-white' army seemed to have kept an enormous force on the east side. When *Singhasari*'s troops were exhausted and reduced in number because of *Arddharaja*'s escape and died of war, *Raden Wijaya* and his 600 troops continued to fight in nomadic, by moving from place to place, from one village to the other, including *Pamwatan Apajeg*, *Kulawan*, *Kembang Sri*, and finally *Kudadu* with only 12 soldiers remaining (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 2019). By the end of the escape, *Jayakatwang* himself managed to be in charge of *Singhasari*, and at the same time, it became the point of the kingdom's destruction. From the coup's success, he re-established legitimacy, a right that belongs to his ancestral lineage, the *Kadiri* empire or, as it is called inside the lyrics, the 'DAHA nagara.'

Furthermore, *Legiun Api* is basically a piece of an ancient Javanese legend narrative inside *babad Calon Arang* or *Calwan Arang*. Generally, the narrative implied a historical tale of power, revenge, parental love, the height of supernatural knowledge, ancient paganism, and exorcism. The details told the intricacy of king *Airlangga* or *Resi Gentayu* or *Resi Erlangga Jatiningrat*'s, the founder of *Kahuripan* kingdom, life, power and priesthood (Ardhana et al., 2015; Olthof, 2019). King *Airlangga* was a Javanese king whose noble parent is *Udayana* (king of *Bedahulu* in Bali) and *Mahendra-*

datta (the princess of *Medang* or *Mataram Kuno*) (Ardhana et al., 2015; Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 2019). In this regard, this *babad* became the primary source to the history of 'Daha' Kadiri empire, including the kingdoms of *Kahuripan*, *Janggala*, and *Panjalu* "the Kadiri," in addition to *Negara-kertagama*.

The legend of *Calon Arang* is generally narrated by the figures of king *Airlangga*, *Mpu Baradah* and his son *Mpu Bahula* (bhikkhu), and *Ki Rangda* or the *Calon Arang* herself and her daughter *Ratnamanggali* (Mu'jizah, 1995; Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 2019; Prabowo et al., 2015). The story mostly describes mystical tradition, history, and religious-relationship of the Hindu-Buddha era (Ardhana et al., 2015). The story itself closely relates to the people of East Java and Bali. Even so, the difference lies within distinct 'dimensions' that they each believe. Balinese reflection on the legend is more of an "imaginary sense" as it relates to the horror of mythological creatures of *Leak* or *Rangda*, while the Javanese people, especially the people of Kediri, tend to see that the story is not just fiction and was believed through the discovery of *Petilasan Calon Arang* ancient site (Ardhana et al., 2015). Thus, this legend lied in an in-between state of myth and historical reality, making it to be an appropriate reference in understanding ancient civilization and antiquity.

The story itself was found in various sources with different years, but the most famous, impressive, and widely used reference is Prof. Dr. Poerbatjaraka in Dutch in 1926, entitled *De Calon Arang*. In addition, within the context of *Legiun Api* itself, the lyric text has similarities to what has been copied by I Made Suastika in his dissertation in 1995. The lyrics, both the original and translated, of *Legiun Api* are exactly the same as I Made Suastika's version. as he wrote in stanzas 10b: 13-15 up to 11a: 1-10 (Suastika in Ardhana et al., 2015, p. 27). Here, we actually can find the match between *Immortal Rites* and the global Black Metal's practice whose aesthetical exploration revolves around a dark and

mystical ambient. It is such as pagan offerings ritual, glorification of ancient wrathful gods or goddesses, black magic, as well as numinous and physical realms intermingling (Moynihan & Soderlind, 1998; Patterson, 2013). Within its lyrics, *Immortal Rites'* combines Black Metal and Javanese aesthetics as they particularly use passages that convey the degree of the 'dark side of ancient Java and pagan rituals. This includes the worship of certain goddesses with human-based *sacrifices* with blood used to wash the hair, necklaces made of intestines, and whole bodies being roasted.

The ritual that *Ki Rangda* carried out with a fairly sadistic description was meant to offer 'food' for the inhabitants of the graves, the subordinate of the main 'cursed' goddess she worshipped, *Paduka Batari Bagawati* or commonly known as the goddess *Durga* (Santiko, 1997). Through the offering, the goddess *Durga* herself finally descended from the *setra loka* or her dark palace, depicting an event of *theophany*, a situation that represents how real (seen, touched, interacted) deity manifestation in the human physical realm (Armstrong, 1994).

Events of this kind are found in many ancient texts, such as Kresna (representation of Vishnu), who gives teachings to Arjuna in the Mahabharata; YHWH, who performed the Ten Commandments miracle on Mount Sinai; the prophet Muhammad S.A.W who travels and 'talks' to Allah SWT in the afterlife as in the event of the Isra' Mi'raj (Armstrong, 1994).

The *Batari Bagawati* herself is actually a demystified version of goddess *Durga*, who is well-known as the consort and the embodiment of *Shakti* of Lord *Shiva* (Amazonne, 2010; Kramrisch, 1981). In *Shakti*, she represents *Shiva's* primordial active force aspect of procreating realities (Woodroffe, 2007). In worldly human affairs, she turned out to symbolize protection and motherhood, as she is often referred to as *Prithvi* or the mother-earth (Amazonne, 2010). The form of *Shakti* itself is divided into 2, *Saumya* (calm) and *Krodha* (terrible), and in the case of *Calon*

Arang, she worshipped *Batari Bagavati* in her *Krodha* form as *Durga* (the excommunicated), not the *Saumya* one as the *Parvati* (the mountain spring) who gave birth to *Ganesha* (Amazonne, 2010; Santiko, 1997). Therefore, it is not so surprising that inside *Calon Arang*, *Durga* is associated to the source of curses and witchcraft that cause plague outbreaks, drought, and unnatural deaths.

Based on the explanation above, it appears that *Immortal Rites* did explore ancient Javanese legend and history chanted by using Black Metal's aesthetic. What is unique about them is that it is not only the context that inspires the lyrics but also the use of the nonmainstream medium—the language, as well as the Black Metal itself—that mediates the Javaneseness the group intends to chant. Thus, we conclude that *Immortal Rites* specifically articulate Javanese localities, including (1) the ancient Javanese language, (2) the history of the land of Java's based on the *Daha* figures or chronicles, and (3) the religious-historical legend that appeared in the setting of the capital city of *Daha* during the reign of the Javanese king *Airlangga*. Hence, we can see that the arts have the same pattern, which is a consistent context to the discourse of *Daha*. *Immortal Rites* imagined their discourse of identity based on their insight to the history of the capital city of *Daha*, the city where they 'live' in now as Kediri. Hence, we assume that they try to manifest the identity of *Daha*-based Javanese through the music they play.

The Arts as the Narrative of Contemporary Kejawen Identity

In this present contemporary world, identity is wholly a matter of 'becoming' not 'being'. Rather than be something inherently 'self-imposed' in nature, humans realize that their state of identity is constructed along with the experiences they passed so that it is not naturally embedded but artificially existed. Identity will never be performed as something permanent and stable, so it does not signify a solid and concrete core over time (Hall,

1996, 2018). *Immortal Rites*' musical aesthetics seems to emphasize that such a concept of identity is plausible. Preaching an understanding about the state of being a Javanese, they hinted—by their arts—that it is not only because a man was born biologically from Javanese parents, but man also needs to be sensitive to any other qualities that mark it up, especially what close with the everyday process.

Furthermore, beholding both of the songs, we need to realize that the lyrical correlation to the history of Kediri is not a coincidence. The first fact, it is clear that both songs were created to implicitly communicate the current region of Kediri was chosen by the Javanese king to be the center of civilization in the past. Secondly, both songs have the 'property' of fire or *api* that refer to the Kediri's old name, *Dahanapura*, which means the 'City of Fire' (Mardiwarsito et al., 1992, pp. 6 & 78). Thus, *Immortal Rites*' choice to articulate Kediri history is kind of epic because they are likely to emphasize an alternative way of understanding the notion of being Javanese. To understand and be worthy of being called Javanese, man does not have to put or fixate themselves on the 'middle'. Through the art, *Immortal Rites* specifically emphasized '*Daha*' as a sign that connotes the notion of identity of Kediri-based Javanese they wish to manifest. The consistency in realizing Kediri as an integral part of the whole of Java indicates that their art is nothing more than to create a narrative of contemporary Javanese identity. Their speech during the interview with *Rotus Reveal TV* in 2020 emphasized the sense.

"Orang kalau nanti membeli Bathara Api itu, dia tahu, terjadi dialog-dialog dengan kita, dia akan tahu sejarah Kediri...Ayolah Kediri ini dipelajari, Kediri ini adalah kota kuno yang banyak meninggalkan ajaran-ajaran leluhur yang sangat arif dan sebagainya" (Rotus Reveal TV, 2020)

"People, when they buy Bathara Api, they know there will be dialogue with us, they will know the history of Kediri...come on, let's us study about Kediri; Kediri is an ancient city that has left behind many wise ancestral teachings and

so on."

They expected that *Bathara Api* could mediate their wish to create dialogue about the topic and the embodiment of Kediri-based Javanese identity. They expected their listeners to gradually understand that the city is a kind of 'relic' left by the ancient *Daha*-Javanese ancestors. They hoped that the current people now, especially the youth in the scene, realize that the city's modernity and development is an inevitable heritage, a treasure left by the *Daha* ancestors' wisdom and glory. They wished to provoke people to realize that those who live now are inevitable to the ancient Javanese civilization of victorious *Daha*. Even they stated that the Javanese cultural wisdom and nobility were not necessarily centered in the 'middle' because such ethics can be found throughout the city of Kediri. Further, in an interview with one of JTV (*Jawa Timur Televisi*) bureaus in Kediri, Doni (vocalist) confirmed that Kediri was 'him'; he conveyed that Kediri was who he really is. He consciously admitted that the true form of his 'self' is the Kediri itself.

"Jadi orang kalau belajar, istilaha sebelum belajar kesana-sana, kudune belajar ke kotanya sendiri, ke Kediri lah, awake dewe" (JTV Biro Kediri, 2021)

"So, when people study, before they study about anything, they should study about their own city, the Kediri, the self."

Contemplating the statements, we may realize that Kediri means something beyond just a city in East Java. Kediri becomes a sign that signifies the existence of man and the awareness of the embodiment of the self. Thus, Kediri is way beyond itself since it is a fact that its existence becomes a starting point for man to understand and imagine the existential nature of themselves. In addition, it is common that we find Javanese have an 'inner' special comprehension for land as they appreciate its existence in various meanings, including land as it is, residence, prosperity, welfare, honor, ancestral attachment, heritage, and even identity (Pujiriyani, 2020). Not only that, but it is also common that

we find Javanese often reflect their' state of identity through the perspective of historical tread between themselves and the former pioneers of the land (Adji, 2017). Both beliefs are merely context, leading to the truth that the music they play has encouraged and represented their philosophical grasp of recognizing self-identity in a contemporary way.

Through their arts, they instilled that people need to realize if every region in Java is historic and inherently belongs to the noble Javanese culture and wisdom as a whole. They implied that rather than focusing the mind on appreciating the existence of *kraton* as the axis of Javanese culture, as the center of the most' refined' form of the Javanese culture (Florida, 1987), they reminded people to remember that Javanese is not fully alive and developing just in there. It is a fact that Kediri is a region that is not really taking place in the center of Java; it is a fact that it once belonged to a specific Javanese king that may be a non-native to Kediri, but living the Javanese way of life and identity with a deeper tendency to a particular 'Kediri' conveys further complexity of man's reflection toward his land where they live in, maybe, for the rest of their life. Therefore, to say that *Immortal Rites'* represented a Kediri-based Javanese identity that comes from the daily lives-based sensibility is a proper logic.

Narendra (2017) was also aware that *Immortal Rites* did explore 'Javaneseness' close to their daily lives for their basic inspiration of the music they love. For that, we then comprehend that Narendra's argument is well reasoned since *Immortal Rites*, in the context of *Api Dari Timur* album, explores the daily reflections of beliefs and spirituality of ancient Kediri. From here, it should be noted that it is indeed relevant if we assume that what *Immortal Rites* had done 'by' and 'with' the Black Metal aesthetic aims to manifest something that they constantly live by. Something that constantly exists as an active micro-cosmical awareness in realizing their daily encounter with the macro-cosmical realities. The manifestation of the people of *Daha*-Kediri

ri; a Kediri-based Javanese identity. The only distinction between this study and Narendra's is the difference of data source, since the two songs have not been released in 2017 yet. However, we both agree that *Immortal Rites* did explore 'Javaneseness' in the context of their daily lives as the people of nowadays Kediri; as the people that inherited the blood, the legacy, and the wisdom of the old *Daha*. All in all, we both agree that their arts contain a narrative of how they imagine 'Java' with a Kediri-centered insight.

If so, what prompts them to comprehend as such? Of course, it is because the Black Metal they played. It is very likely that they would not have become what they are today if they were not immersed in the Black Metal culture renowned for its tradition of antiquity and yesteryear exaltation (Masciandro & Connole, 2015). Thus, it is true that through and by music, humans – both them and who listen – are fully aware of themselves. The Black Metal leads them to be conscious of their existential nature of themselves. The Black Metal provokes them to explore further knowledge and comprehension of their land's historical background. Again, the Black Metal encourages them to communicate what they believe in as what is inherently embedded into their lives so far. Through the musical experiences, they went through, they were constructed to manifest their notion of a state of being in the socio-cultural activities they passed. The inner force of Black Metal has pushed *Immortal Rites* to reflect and chant their 'wished' and 'believed' Javanese identity based on the contemplation of the historical dimension of land and its former people; based on regional antiquity.

Therefore, we assume that *Immortal Rites*' art is the structured narrative of identity. We conclude that *Immortal Rites* try to narrate their reflective idea of the contemporary Javanese identity, a Kediri-based Javanese identity whose part of the Javanese discourse as a whole. The degree of contemporary Kediri-based Javanese caught from the contents that inspire the

creation of arts, including the story of *Jayakatwang* and *Calon Arang*, the setting of the city of *Daha*, and the characteristic of fire in both songs' titles that refers to the *Dahanapura* or old Kediri's name. Not only that, it was caught, too, through the language they use and the pattern of self-philosophical reflection to the understanding of Kediri land and pioneer.

CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above, we conclude that *Immortal Rites* really articulate Javanese local features and values through their art. It is why they bear the title the *Kejawen* Black Metal. The first Javaneseness inside their art is the obvious usage of the ancient Javanese language for the lyrical convention. Then, the second is the lyrical content of *Serpihan Api* which turned out to be a piece of Javanese history about the success of *Jayakatwang*'s coup to the *Singhasari* empire and the re-establishment of the *Kadiri* kingdom. Last but not least, we found that *Legiun Api* related to the ancient mystical legend of *Calon Arang* whose contextual setting refers to the era of the Javanese king of *Daha*, *Airlangga*. Given that, we ascertain that *Immortal Rites* specifically imagines Java through an insight that is massively formed toward exploring ancient Javanese history and legend in the era of *Kadiri* kingdom.

For this reason, we believe that *Immortal Rites*' arts signify a specific contemporary identity they want to manifest in today sociocultural space. Here, we conclude that *Immortal Rites*' arts are structured narratives, representing a particular contemporary Javanese identity of Kediri-based. *Immortal Rites* show us that identity is unstable in nature. They showed us that identity is fluid and does not imply a stable core within itself. The represented Javanese identity turned out to have a degree of instability, in the sense that its existence does not mean to refer as the one the global world mostly knows. They showed that becoming a Javanese is not to focus on contemplating the existence of *kraton*,

but rather to deepen sensitivity to every 'Javanese properties' close to daily lives. And, so yes, *Immortal Rites* did contemplate and represent a state of being Javanese based on the 'Javaneseness' that is close to the history of Kediri, the place they live in. The degree of being Kediri-based can be caught from the contexts that inspire the contents of their arts, including the story of *Jayakatwang*, the legend of *Calon Arang* and the elements of 'fire' in both songs. Then, the state of being not-so-really-different Javanese is represented by the ancient language they use and the philosophical pattern of self-consciousness to the understanding of *Daha* land and pioneer.

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