

Following the Path of the Prophet from Makka to Medina: Hijra and the Indonesian Death Metal Musicians

Kieran Edmond James*, Khrisnamurti Khrisnamurti

School of Business and Creative Industries, University of the West of Scotland, Paisley, UK

Email: *Kieran.James99@yahoo.co.uk, *Kieran.james@uws.ac.uk, Khrisnamurti@uws.ac.uk

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Abstract

This article uses Horkheimer and Adorno's dialectic of enlightenment and Adorno's negative dialectics to situate Indonesian Death Metal musicians' abandonment of the scene (subculture) so as to explore religion. The research method used is literature search, participant-observation, and semi-structured interviews with Indonesian Death Metal musicians conducted over the period 2018-2019 for this subproject. Adorno might have seen it as using religious faith to critique Western liberal-democracy and rationality but, if that is the case, it requires us to view Western decadence and rationality as opposite sides of the same coin, with both being integrated, not separate, aspects of the Western culture infusing the global metal scene. This is what the Islamic resistance project is all about for those who leave the scene and for the religious ones who remain. The latter seek meaning beyond or outside of conventional understandings of metal lyrics and discourses.

Keywords

Adorno, Death Metal music, dialectic of enlightenment, Frankfurt School, Hijra, Indonesian Islam, Islam and Popular Music, Negative Dialectics, Religious Turn

1. Introduction, Research Problem, and Research Objectives

This article uses Horkheimer and Adorno's dialectic of enlightenment and Adorno's negative dialectics to situate Indonesian Death Metal musicians' abandonment of the scene so as to explore religion. Adorno might have seen it as using religious faith to critique Western liberal-democracy and rationality but, if that is the case, it requires us to view Western decadence and rationality as opposite

sides of the same coin, with both being integrated, not separate, aspects of the Western culture infusing the global metal scene. This is what the Islamic resistance project is all about, for those who leave the scene and for the religious ones who remain. The latter seek meaning beyond or outside of conventional understandings of Death Metal lyrics and discourses.

Death Metal in the West took half a decade in the period 1984-1990 to fully emerge from Thrash Metal (Hjelm, Kahn-Harris, & LeVine, 2013: p. 6; Lee, 2018: p. 533) and, for several years, we could observe the existence of a hybrid form of Death/Thrash.¹ The first Death Metal band was Death (from Altamonte Springs, Florida, USA), which was formed as Mantas in 1983. This band released a demo under the Mantas name and then a demo under the Death name in 1984. The first Death Metal full-length album was probably either Possessed's *Seven Churches* (1985) or Death's *Scream Bloody Gore* (1987). Important Death Metal albums in the scene's peak years in the early 1990s were Cannibal Corpse's *Tomb of the Mutilated* (1992), Deicide's *Legion* (1992), Obituary's *Cause of Death* (1990), and Christian band Mortification's *Scrolls of the Megilloth* (1992). Baulch (2003, 2007) documents that the Balinese (Indonesian) Death/Thrash scene abandoned Thrash Metal at a particular juncture in the 1990s when it perceived that Death Metal was the most extreme subgenre lyrically, musically, and aesthetically. At that time, the scene experienced a collective hardening of attitudes and, almost overnight, a band such as Guns N' Roses was declared to be too weak and insipid to support.

The research problem is whether the Bandung Death Metal scene had declined and fragmented by 2018-2019 and, if so, what were the reasons for the decline? The main sources of evidence for this problem were interviews with leading scene musicians and participant-observation by visiting places associated with the scene and talking with people such as record and merchandise store owners, recording studio owners, and others such as friends and supporters in related genres including punk and hardcore.

The research objectives are as follows: 1) Explore whether the Bandung Death Metal scene had experienced decline and fragmentation by 2018-2019; 2) Explain the reasons behind the decline and fragmentation if it is documented that these things actually occurred; 3) Explore how the scene has begun to reproduce and reinvigorate itself at the level of the underground; and 4) Use Horkheimer and Adorno's dialectic of enlightenment and Adorno's negative dialectics to situate Indonesian Death Metal musicians' abandonment of the scene (subculture) so as to explore religion.

The last stated objective will be an interesting one as Adorno's original cri-

¹Black Metal, Death Metal, Thrash Metal, and Power Metal are all subgenres of Heavy Metal. Extreme Metal is an umbrella term that first appeared in the 1990s and includes (at minimum) Black Metal and Death Metal. Heavy Metal was arguably invented by Black Sabbath and Judas Priest in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Jasper & Oliver, 1986 [1983]: pp. 39-40, 168-169). Academic references on Death Metal include Baulch (2003, 2007), Berger (1999), James (2009), James and Walsh (2015, 2019), Kahn-Harris (2007), Lee (2018), Phillipov (2006, 2012), and Purcell (2003).

tique of popular culture, where he believed that mass culture dumbed down musical talent so as to produce it in easy-listening and non-challenging forms, and without any social critique, does not seem to ring true in relation to much of Death Metal, with its socially shocking lyrics of gore, murder, and critique of religion and its technical capabilities. We move away from this popular culture critique to consider the *independence-dependence* dialectic, which reflects Lenin's second law of dialectics that everything includes and morphs into its opposite. Metalheads want dependence upon society again, after recapturing their religion, while, paradoxically, they lose the original dependence they had within the metal community (e.g., band members always depend upon others in the band to perform their own parts well). In the spirit of Adorno's negative dialectics, religion can critique reason and rationality, just as reason can critique faith. The type of reason that is critiqued is that most popular in Western academic and popular circles, the idea that things are concrete and fixed essences, X is X and X cannot be not-X, whereas dialectical logic says that X can be not-X through a process of becoming. Hence, Indonesian religious metalheads can find meaning in what appears outwardly as simply direct and straightforward antireligion lyrics. Such interpretations might bemuse and annoy the lyrics' original creators. Here, we enact Adorno's bringing back of metaphysics after it was ousted by positivist philosophy.

Traditional Marxist-Leninists have never been particularly happy or comfortable with the Frankfurt School Critical Theory of Adorno and Horkheimer, seeing their idealism as a retreat from scientific socialism, the error made by the Young Marx (1994a) [1932] in his *1844 Manuscripts*. The critical theorists were put under the heading of Western Marxism, with their main opposition being the French Communist Party theoretician, Louis Althusser, of the structuralist school. But, if Horkheimer and Adorno were idealists, they were idealists after Hegel, after Marx, after Lenin, when the world had irrevocably changed including every academic discipline that Marx set his great skills to dismantling and rebuilding. Marx's legacy always stands and the critical theorists only ever wanted to write in his shadow, in a world where the revolution was meant to have come to Western Europe but didn't, only to be replaced by consumerism, fascism, and Auschwitz.

2. Theory Framework

Marx's Formulation of the Dialectic of Capitalism

The idea of dialectic is crucial to Marx's philosophy, and was taken up by Engels, Lenin, and Mao. It means that society progresses and changes through the struggle between opposing tendencies. In his Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx (1994b) [1859] establishes that the forces of production and relations of production are originally at a similar standard or on a similar basis, they are in an agreement that Mao would see as temporary. Then, when the productive forces improve or develop beyond a certain

point, the old relations of production become as “fettters” (211) upon them, which leads the way to social revolution. But social revolution only occurs when the new, advanced relations of production are ready and waiting, already built up or held back in reserve in the old society. After the revolution, both aspects match or balance again. Thus, the new, fast-developing relations of production are held back in reserve, waiting to be fully unleashed via a social revolution when the productive forces demand and require them (as with the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Western Europe).

The development of the productive forces occurs first, in the lap of the old society, as humankind only sets itself such problems as it is able to solve (211).

Adorno On Society, Culture, Dialectics, and Music

During the Second World War, as the Institute of Social Research was forced to relocate from Frankfurt to Geneva and then New York, Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) [1947] set out their concept of the *dialectic of enlightenment*. In this view, reason took over from religious faith and tradition during the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century (Bernstein, 2004: p. 22). However, the dialectic progressed too far so that once reason was supposed to deliver people from fear and clerical authority, but now instrumental reason, that was meant to be just one part of reason, had become the whole, creating the iron cage of modernity (Bernstein, 2004: p. 21). Mao (1971 [1937]: p. 113) explains further as follows “When the principal [i.e., strongest] aspect which has gained predominance [in the struggle between opposites] changes, the nature of a thing changes accordingly”. The Frankfurt School critical theorists then make a moral judgement that the reign of instrumental reason is a negative thing for humanity, the iron cage of modernity. Horkheimer and Adorno themselves witnessed this reign of instrumental reason manifest in the specific stripes of German National Socialism Nazism.

Adorno on How Philosophy Lives On

For Adorno (1973) [1966], philosophy “lives on” (Adorno, 1973 [1966]: p. 1) because the moment when it was meant to have been rendered unnecessary by real-life had passed by with its potential unfulfilled. As Marx had written in the nineteenth century, all previous philosophy had just interpreted the world, but the point was to change it. With the worldwide defeat of the proletariat, most notably in Germany, by the end of 1920 (Held, 1980: p. 17), Marx’s requirement for philosophy and real-life both became unfulfilled as the moment passed by. Hence, Adorno was a type of German idealist philosopher (Bernstein, 2004; p. 19), but after Hegel, after Marx, after 1920 (Bernstein, 2004: p. 20), when philosophy had meant to have been rendered redundant to be replaced by changes in actual society. He is a philosopher raging into the storm because the moment has passed.

Adorno on Metaphysics

What Adorno wrote in *Negative Dialectics* (Adorno, 1973 [1966]) is that positivist philosophy had no time for metaphysical ideas such as God, truth, immor-

tality, liberty, and beauty (Schiefelbein, 1992: p. 68), but the dialectical philosophy must hold on to and pursue these aspects as they are the suppressed or buried part of the dialectic. Now, to use the terms of the dialectic of enlightenment, reason can be used to critique faith, *while faith can also be used to critique reason*. The latter is what is happening in certain sections of the Indonesian Death Metal music scene. Notably, some participants perceive that, contrary to the undialectical logic of Western secular liberals, the promise of freedom inherent in the culture of metal music has gone unfulfilled or gone too far. They long again for a strong religious aspect to their lives (Held, 1980: p. 369), and so some make a decision to quit the metal music scene altogether to devote themselves to religion. They despise or dislike the alcohol, drugs, swearing, and immorality culture of decadence that they cannot identify with, feel that these things have ruined metal's potential, and feel that they want to connect or reconnect with the family, moral, and religious values of their childhood (Held, 1980: p. 369). As we will see soon, they want more dependency in their lives and want to feel less cut off from society. They perceive the metal scene to have cut itself adrift from the society's religious culture and foundation. Held (1980: p. 369) points to socialization influences being the family, schooling, and the culture industry. In most Indonesian contexts, the first and second give out totally different messages to the third one which is picked up usually only in high-school or university. So these people, especially if they are religious, but stay within the metal scene, perceive that the metaphysical truth in Texas band Pantera, for example, is not to be found in the sphere of alcohol, drugs, swearing, and immorality that outwardly characterizes the band's lyrics and culture. One look at the tough guy pictures of Pantera, after their glam era was indeed ended by a decision of the band members, might suggest to some that answers can be found there, in those *sober* pictures. And the ostensibly anti-Christian band Deicide can still retain some metaphysical meaning even after one keeps or revalidates one's own religious beliefs. Western metalheads, in general, refuse to live by or accept, either in theory or in practice, such dialectical logic, instead preferring the mainstream, traditional logic of X is X and X cannot be not-X.

Bernstein on Independence-Dependence

Bernstein (2004: pp. 25-28) suggests that the dialectic of enlightenment can be re-specified as the dialectic of *independence-dependence* and that makes perfect sense in this case. However, ironically and sadly, it often means that these exiting people cut off their pre-existing friends networks within the metal scene, which creates sadness and confusion on at least the metal side of the equation, and possibly on the religious side as well.

The critique of metal music by religion is the opposite of the long-standing, traditional, and now somewhat dated and boring critique of religion by metal music. Religion also critiques metal music's decadent liberalism. The liberalism is a product of modern Western society, and some metal musicians (especially Black Metal musicians) implicitly or even directly critique Western liberalism. It

is little wonder then that many Indonesians are attracted to Black Metal (another Heavy Metal subgenre)—it appeals directly (for sound and aesthetics) and for what it implicitly critiques (liberalism and Western decadence). However, the metal scene also, ironically, produces community and some aspects of dependence, such as the responsibilities of band membership. So, while aiming to increase dependency in their lives by getting back into mainstream currents, the people leaving the scene abandon the dependency that the scene offers.

Foucault on Truth and Rationality

Michel Foucault's (1977, 1979, 1980) critique of truth and rationality was similar, in some respects, but his critique does not redeem metaphysical concepts and is ambiguous in terms of its normative implications (Schweppenhauser, 2004: p. 330). He saw continual contestation between rival discourses and myths, but saw the dominant discourse as being that of modernity, and he specified few concrete ideas about when and how to challenge the dominant discourse, and its materialized practices. Those who lack power are largely limited to setting up a rival discourse, trying to gain adherents, and then basically hoping for the best. But Foucault focused on institutions, rather than subcultures, and it is much more likely that institutions have an established dominant discourse that is embedded in materialized practices that reinforce a particular precise notion of truth and values. *Obedient bodies* conform to the dominant discourse or challenge it only in ways that the system is easily able to accommodate (e.g., in the Western European context, a long-haired male professor or a doctor that tells countless silly jokes). Note that, as Kahn-Harris (2007: p. 161) explains, for Foucault (1977), power/knowledge is everywhere, including within alternative discourses, but this does not mean that every domain of power/knowledge is equally as powerful as any other.

The Frankfurt School as philosophers in Exile (In America)

Another aspect or focus of *Negative Dialectics* always has been that instrumental rationality, as manifested in the German fascists, had to remove non-identity or difference in order to produce sameness. Thus, Jewishness had to be eradicated from the social body. In dialectical terms, the one tries to crush the other, and this produces a totality of sameness (Willette, 2012). Hence, Adorno's philosophy can only be understood as a diasporic philosophy, a philosophy of exile (Gur-Ze'ev, 2005; Willette, 2012). The moment that passed can not only be seen in terms of the demise of the worldwide proletariat in 1920, impacting on the prospects for Marx's social utopia, but the moment of exile of the Institute of Social Research, first to Geneva and then to New York.

The Case of Norwegian Aryan Black Metal

If we look at metal worldwide, especially since the Norwegian second wave of Black Metal (1992-1995), there has been the attempt to crush the other in the form of the believers in the Abrahamic religions, including religious Israelis. Even left-wing metalheads on websites such as Metal Archives are desensitized to the continual efforts to lyrically and in other ways decimate Christendom. In

terms of Jews, we have leading band Darkthrone's album sleeve reference to Norwegian Aryan Black Metal (Kahn-Harris, 2007: pp. 152-153) and the whole National Socialist Black Metal (NSBM) subgenre with their various bands, record labels, festivals, and fans (Kahn-Harris, 2007: p. 41).

Application to Indonesian Metal Music Scenes

By detaching from the metal community (in some cases), the Indonesian religious metalheads can reconnect to, or feel reconnected to, the mainstream community of Indonesian society. ("To be religious is to be socially acceptable", as the first author wrote in his fieldwork notes in May 2019.) For those who stay within the scene, religious metalheads put boundaries on applying the tenets of metal or rock music to their lives or interpret subcultural norms or values of the subculture less literally, more benignly (as in rejecting behavioural extremes in practice), or more critically. So, religion and faith can be an angle from which to assess and critique metal culture, and to limit its intrusion into every single part of one's life without prior interrogation. And now there are Muslim and Arab spheres of endeavour within Critical Race Theory too (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017: p. 3) that subject the instrumental reason of Western society to religious critique.

While sometimes critiquing instrumental rationality, through the antinuclear lyrics of Thrash Metal or the nature-oriented paganism of Black Metal, the fundamental Western liberal-democratic or modernist values remain generally accepted in metal, especially at the subconscious level. People might want to write about Ancient Egypt or other pagan cultures, but no-one really wants to go back in time and live in them (see Kahn-Harris, 2007: p. 160 who argues that transgression allows modernity to be experienced as pleasurable, interesting, and safe within the safe confines of the Extreme Metal scene with its relatively fixed set of assumptions and behaviours). This fact is mirrored by how often the metal scene has rebellion or angst, but without a specific, known, or certain object of critique in view. This has been the case for Indonesia's metal music scene since the fall of Suharto's New Order in 1998. Indonesian bands want to enjoy mainstream success, and the trappings of the middle-class lifestyle that apparently go along with it. Hence, a critique in Indonesia based on religious faith may be more powerful than one based on anti-capitalism, liberal-democracy, or even straight-out moralism/censorship such as that once used in America by the PMRC (Parents Music Resource Center).

3. Research Method

This subproject is one part of a broader research project on Indonesian Death Metal music communities that began in 2011. The research method used for this subproject is literature search, participant-observation, and semi-structured interviews with Indonesian Death Metal musicians conducted over the period 2018-2019. I (the first author) was first interested in the topic of Indonesian Death Metal after visiting Bandung, Indonesia in 2004 and then, in 2005-06,

seeing advertisements in *Terrorizer* magazine for Jasad (band)'s CDs being sold by American Extreme Metal specialty label Sevared Records. In September 2010, Yogyakarta band Death Vomit aka Devo toured Australia and I saw the Brisbane show and talked to the tour promoter Jason Hutagalung. I had already begun conversing online with Jasad guitarist Ferly. Overall, I conducted 71 interviews with 51 Indonesian bands. The first band interview was with Jasad in Bandung in February 2011 and the last in Bandung in May 2019. Interviews took place in Bandung and Lembang in West Java; Surabaya, Sidoarjo, and Madura in East Java; and Yogyakarta. Interviews are all in English with interpretation to and from Indonesian provided by the late online music journalist John Yoedi; Demons Damn's female vocalist Popo Puji Apriantikasari (an English Literature graduate); and Teguh Prasetyo, the bassist of Bandung band Digging Up and Lembang band Interfectorment. All interview transcripts can be found on my website Busuk Chronicles, which has had over 146,000 page-views since 2015. Personal and band names were written down by the interviewees themselves. All interviewees have agreed to having their personal and band names cited, unless indicated otherwise in the text.

Sample interview questions are as follows: Note that interviews were semi-structured and not all questions were planned in advance or asked in more than one interview. Asked at Bleeding Corpse band interview, 13 May 2018: Researcher: "Butche [punk musician] says that Death Metal is dying now in Bandung; what do you think?" Asked at Mortality interview, 16 May 2018: Researcher: "What does your 12-year-old daughter think about Mother and Father playing in Heavy Metal band?" This question aims to pick up on any tension between scene involvement and lives lived within the broader society. Asked at Beside interview, 18 May 2018: Researcher: "What did your parents say about you going to play in *Wacken* [German festival]?" Asked at Dextrology interview, 17 May 2018: Researcher: "What do you think about Bandung Death Metal?"

4. Study Findings: The Religious Turn

Section Introduction: What Do We Mean by "the Religious Turn"?

The "turn to religion" refers to the situation in the Indonesian Death Metal scene where a number of individuals choose to lessen their involvement in or quit the scene so as to pursue Islamic religion more seriously. They begin to believe that metal and rock music are *haram* (forbidden) instead of *halal* (permitted). In a minority of cases, Christianity might be the preferred religion. This process or event is referred to as *hijra* in Indonesia. The person spiritually (not literally) follows the path of the Prophet Mohamed when he journeyed from Makka to Medina, which was a turning-point journey in his life.

General Discussion

Kelabora (1976: p. 230) writes that "[r]eligion permeates every section of life in Indonesia. It occupies an enormously important place in politics, economics, education, and the arts." Woodward (1996), in similar spirit, asserts that social

scientists, and presumably this means Westerners, have consistently neglected and/or downplayed the importance of Islam in Indonesia. We do not want to fall into this trap here and hence, in this section, we study and consider the impact of “the turn to religion” on Indonesian Death Metal.

Teguh Prasetyo (Interfectorment/Digging Up bassist) claims that one-half of the original Bandung Death Metal audience has devoted itself more fully to religion in recent years, mirroring wider developments in Indonesian society, a society where to be religious is to be socially acceptable² (the opposite of the situation in the West). Furthermore, Teguh says that one-quarter (i.e., one-half of this one-half) no longer listen to any Death Metal music in their personal lives. By contrast, Koko of Black Mass (Bandung City’s Black Metal community organization) says that only five or ten people left Black Mass for religious reasons, out of a group which once numbered 135 and now numbers over 50. (One of these was Adi who joined Tablighi Jamaat, a group which has a significant presence in Antapani, East Bandung, where it has built its own mosque.³) Perhaps Black Metal people committed enough to join this community are less likely to leave the scene for religious reasons compared to Death Metal fans. The term for the decision to devote oneself to Islam is referred to within the music scene by the Arabic word *hijrah* (source: online conversation with Teguh Prasetyo, 31 May 2019), meaning the “route of the Prophet Muhammad” (source: online conversation with Inna Savova, 7 June 2019). In fact, *hijrah* is a modern transliteration of the Arab noun for “departure” derived from the Arab verb for “emigrate”. The same issue also raised its head in the Pakistani rock scene when Junaid Jamshed (1964-2016), the ex-Vital Signs vocalist, created controversy when he announced, circa 1999, that non-religious music was *haram* (forbidden) (LeVine, 2008: pp. 246-250). His position was strongly opposed by his former bandmate, Junoon’s Salman Ahmad, in his book *Rock & Roll Jihad* (Ahmad, 2010: pp. 171-175).

In February 2003, major controversy broke out about sexy dance moves seen on national TV featuring the 24-year-old East Javanese pop-singer Inul Daratista. This paragraph draws on the coverage of the case featured in a 2008 academic article by Weintraub (Weintraub, 2008). The sexy dance moves saw critics and commentators split into two camps—the radical Islamists, on the one hand, and the moderate Islamic people and women’s rights advocates, on the other. Groups and individuals in the first camp included Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), which issues *fatwa* or authoritative opinions, which legitimized government policy in the Suharto era; the anti-pornography group Forum Komunikasi Masyarakat Antipornografi dan Pornoaksi (FKMAPP); the “King of Dangdut”, and “dangdut’s most important artist” (Weintraub, 2006: p. 414), Rhoma Irama; and the Association of Melayu Musicians of Indonesia (PAMMI) which had Irama as its then president. Groups and individuals in the second camp included

²Source for the phrase “to be religious is to be socially acceptable”: Author’s field notes, May 2019.

³Source for the information about the mosque in Antapani: Indra HS, Murdoch University PhD student, personal online communication, 11 October 2019.

Abdurrahman Wahid [Gus Dur], former president of Indonesia and former president of Indonesia's largest Muslim political organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU); the National Commission against Violence to Women (Komnas Perempuan); women's rights activist and author Ratna Sarumpaet; revered religious teacher Guru Ijai; Taufiq Kiemas, husband of then-president Megawati; the "Queen of Dangdut," Elvy Sukaesih (who disagreed with the "Dangdut King"); and even 78 percent of the mostly middle-class readers of news magazine *Tempo*. Most of these groups and people had been repressed during the Suharto-New Order era (Weintraub, 2006: p. 426) and Weintraub (2006, 2008) views the conversations and debate in the public realm over the Inul-sexy-dance as representing people learning or trying out the concept of participatory democracy in practical terms.

Consistent with Tariq Ramadan's (1999) writings, Weintraub (2008: pp. 378-379) explains that the "Civil Islam" or "Cultural Islam" proponents (within the second camp mentioned above) spoke out in favour of a liberal version of Islam which not only tolerates, but encourages, democratization, freedom of expression, freedom of speech, social justice, human rights, and women's rights. Both types of Islam are represented in the Death Metal scene although it is more likely that a radical Islamist would leave the scene than a person of more moderate beliefs. In Indonesia, all possible combinations of religious practice and underground scene involvement can, and sometimes do, occur.

PhD scholar Wahid (2014) notes the remarkable growth of Indonesian Salafi *pesantren* (Islamic boarding-schools), since the 1990s, which teach the Salafi path. They base their teachings on Yemeni and Saudi sources and rely on Kuwaiti and Qatari funding (Wahid, 2014: pp. 373-374). The Salafi path follows the companions of the Prophet, and the first three generations of Muslims, and avoids the interpretations of eighth, ninth and tenth century scholars (Ramadan, 2004: pp. 25-26; Khan, 2016: pp. 51-54). Ahmad Bunyan Wahib (2017: p. 1) argues that the rise of Salafism, through Saudi-funded institutes since the 1980s, plus the role of returning Indonesian graduates from the Middle East, and actual *jihad* in Ambon, has led to the "Arabization" of Indonesian Salafis. They take up Arab dress and language and regard these as symbols of piety. They are also boundary-forming markers for the Salafis. Frequent use of Arabic names and words also distinguish Salafis from "traditional" Muslims such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) members. Specific practices rejected by Salafis include folk customs, such as *tahilan*, *yasinan* (reciting *sura yasin*) and celebration of the Prophet's birthday. In fact, Salafis fight on two fronts—against Indonesian folk Islam and against Westernization. Their only bases for faith are the Al-Qur'an, Sunna, and the first three generations of pious Muslims. They believe in a transnational Islamic caliphate, and they emulate the lifestyle of the Prophet, without regard for modern social conditions. And "traditionalist" NU members have subjected them to verbal attacks and violence (Wahid, 2014: pp. 374-375). Of course, not all metalheads who leave the scene become Salafis, although it is an

attractive proposition for some. Significantly, Tablighi Jamaat is not generally supported by Salafis, at least not in England (see, for example, Alam, n.d.), although it too rejects modern compromises.

Van Bruinessen (2002) traces the rise and fall of various Islamic groupings, tendencies, and ideologies from the time of the Japanese Occupation (1942-1945) up until about 2001. The author notes that, from about 1978 through to 1989, “campus Islam” discussion groups were a dominant force, as informed by the ideals of the Muslim Brotherhood (Egypt). The Salman Mosque at Bandung Institute of Technology played an important role here (132-133). Saudi-funded Salafis became significant too, from about 1990, but originally, they were non-political and focused primarily on personal piety (134, 144). An important Salafi institution was Jakarta’s Saudi-funded Institute for Islamic and Arabic Studies (LIPLA). The energies of Salafi youth then were diverted towards actual *jihad* in the Moluccas from around the year 2000 (145), as Wahib (2017) explains too. The rise of Salafism, van Bruinessen (2002: p. 149) hypothesizes, is largely due to the “changing political environment”, plus Saudi-funding, rather than “some inherent internal dynamic” within Indonesia. It is hard to know what to make of this statement, as surely any “internal dynamic” worth its salt is not devoid of political aspects. Only recently, suggested van Bruinessen (2002: p. 150), writing in 2001-2002, have traditionalist Muslims begun to grow resentful towards Salafis, as Din Wahid (2014) also pointed out in a previously-cited Ph.D. thesis summary. It is not pleasant to have one’s folk-Islam practices labelled as *bid’a* (religious innovation/heretical).

Interview results

Interview results presented here relate to discussion by study participants about the issue of religious turn in the Bandung Death Metal community. The three other reasons for scene decline are explored in other journal articles by the same authors. The other three reasons are: 1) Relocation of the Serak merchandise store at Jalan Cihampelas and decline of community *nongkrong* (hang-ing-out); 2) The disappointment of older bands at not being able to tour Europe in the footsteps of pioneer bands Jasad, Beside, and Burgerkill; and 3) The new generation’s attitude where they require money for playing gigs and use social media to find romantic partners instead of to promote their bands.

Inna Savova, the Bulgarian ex-wife of Forgotten (Bandung) vocalist Addy Gembel, who now lives in Falkirk, Scotland, says she observed the process of hard-line and austere Muslim influence gaining a foothold in Bandung during her last year living there (2016); she attributes it to Arab sponsorship of schools. To quote Inna: “I was told it’s because Arabs sponsor a lot of schools on the condition that the kids will study a more extreme Islam” (source: online conversation with Inna Savova, 7 June 2019). She says that the increasing religiosity of the Death Metal scene’s current and ex-members reflects broader processes in Bandung society where, more and more, to be religious means to be socially acceptable. Popo, female vocalist of Demons Damn, echoes Inna’s comments and

says that Indonesians often depart from the metal scene, and become more religious, “in order to get married, ... in order to get a job”,⁴ which shows the religious ideologies regrouping and targeting people in underground scenes, and passing them off as more and more deviant, a situation which the Heavy Metal community in America faced in the 1980s (Clinton & Wallach, 2016: p. 43; Hjelm, Kahn-Harris, & LeVine, 2013: p. 7), culminating in the 1990 lawsuit against English band Judas Priest. As Hjelm, Kahn-Harris, and LeVine (2013: p. 10) write, although Indonesia had bucked this trend for a number of years, “[t]oday it is the Muslim world where heavy metal faces the most persistent... societal stigmatization”.

Malicious Intent is a second-tier, well-established Death Metal band from Bandung. (The band name has been changed at Aditya’s request.) Aditya (name changed) asked the authors to remove interviews with him from our music website (and we did this). He was in the process of serving a prison term in Bandung at this time (he has since been released) and he was eager to gain the support and respect of his fiancée’s family. As such, he did not want his name to be publicly associated with the Death Metal scene. Westerners might find Aditya’s position difficult to comprehend. We do not know why he was in prison to begin with (although Popo would probably know). It is probably not suitable to use the word “convert” here, as Aditya is an Indonesian and not a white foreigner from a non-Islamic nation. There is no equivalent concept to being “born again” in Islam and, if you are born in an Islamic country, you are perceived to be either a committed Muslim or an uncommitted Muslim. The person is a Muslim unless they officially choose to renounce the religion and take up another religion as an adult. As mentioned, to be religious is to be socially acceptable, in Indonesia, so a religious person has more cultural capital than a non-religious one, on average, unless the person is perceived to be hypocritical. Aditya simply decided to shift from being a less committed Muslim to being a more committed Muslim while in prison. To quote Popo, who was speaking in general terms and not about Aditya’s case, Aditya became more religious “in order to get married”, which is not to question the sincerity of his religious convictions, but just to imply that a decision can be influenced by many diverse factors. **Figure 1** depicts Popo outside the Bandung prison after our 2014 visit to see Aditya.

The case of Islamic band Saffar (Bandung) was originally documented in the Western literature by James and Walsh (2019). The young and upcoming (and well-connected) Saffar released its debut full-length studio album, *Mandatory El Arshy*, on 9 September 2013 through the Ujung Berung (Bandung) record label Extreme Souls Production (ESP). The *Mandatory El Arshy* or ‘classic’ Saffar line-up was: Parjo (vocals), Acil (guitar), Ramon (bass), and Iyenk (drums). Saffar was, and continues to be, known primarily for its Islamic lyrics and imagery of valiant Islamic warriors (often appearing in historical but identifiably Middle Eastern contexts) on T-shirts, hoodies, and video-clips. Saffar might be contro-

⁴Source: Author’s conversation with Popo, 13 May 2019.

versial in a small town in the American South but not in Bandung. Furthermore, as Berger (1999: p. 174) says, "...perception is not capricious, personal or idiosyncratic, but is deeply informed by the perceiver's social context". Islamic sounds are *perceived within* the social and religious context of Bandung as an Islamic and Muslim-majority city. Hence, Saffar is viewed as non-problematic as long as Saffar's band members are seen to be humble and live genuinely religious lives. "Perception is not the mechanical reaction of the culturally trained nervous system" though, says Berger (1999: p. 172), in a vitally important caveat; instead it is "informed but not determined by social context."

After the release of the debut album, Parjo left the band, and, as he was also a talented lyricist, the band was in turmoil and semi-inactive for the period 2014 to 2017. Parjo, who left the band primarily because he no longer perceived it to be acceptable to play Heavy Metal, had still not been replaced four years after his departure. **Figure 2** and **Figure 3** depict the classic line-up of Saffar in Ujung Berung, East Bandung, April 2012. From left to right, we have: Parjo (vocals), Iyenk (drums), Acil (guitar), and Ramon (bass).



Figure 1. Popo outside the Bandung prison after our 2014 visit to see Aditya.



Figure 2. Saffar, 2012: Parjo (vocals), Iyenk (drums), Acil (guitar), Ramon (bass).



Figure 3. Saffar, 2012: Parjo (vocals), Iyenk (drums), Acil (guitar), Ramon (bass).

The spokesperson for Saffar is the humble and mild-mannered guitarist Acil (pronounced “Ah-chill”). He has been serving in the dual role of vocalist and guitarist in recent times, and Andri Gila (ex-Bleeding Corpse/ex-Turbidity) has also been used as vocalist on occasion for live gigs. Another serious loss for the band was talented bassist Ramon’s departure.⁵ In interview, Acil says that Ramon did not leave the band for religious reasons, unlike Parjo (but Popo does not appear to believe this assertion.)

RESEARCHER: Does Parjo believe it is wrong to play metal?

ACIL (SAFFAR GUITARIST/VOCALIST): Yes, he believes that playing Heavy Metal is not allowed (not *halāl*) in his beliefs but the rest of us still think it’s OK to play music.

RESEARCHER: Is Parjo still proud of the first album or does he try to forget about it?

ACIL: I don’t know what his feelings are but Parjo believes it is forbidden (*harām*) to play the Heavy Metal music again. Maybe he is still proud of the first album inside himself but we never know.⁶

Based on the time when the Prophet sent out nine delegates, over a five-year period, to surrounding peoples who knew nothing about Islam, scholars divided the world into two areas: *Dar al-Islam* (Abode of Islam) and *Dar al-Harb* (Abode of War) (Ramadan, 1999: pp. 124-126). Later on, two other areas were added: *Dar al-'Ahd* (Abode of Treaty) and Abode of Security. Ramadan (1999) agrees with the view of a group of modern Muslim scholars that today’s “Global Village” cannot be understood by the use of the traditional binaries. Instead, he writes that *spaces* are a better term than *land*, and that we are in a situation where Westernization is the dominant global force. A model of the centre-and-periphery, with Western influence spreading out from the centre, best seems to explain the modern reality. Ramadan (1999: p. 143) argues that we are in a similar situation to when the Prophet and the Muslims were in Makka prior

⁵Ramon was replaced by Evan in 2016.

⁶Interview with Acil, 16 May 2018.

to the *Hijra*. The surrounding peoples were mostly disinterested, but there was peace. As a minority back then, the responsibility was upon the Muslims not only to believe but also to present and explain the Islamic message to the tribal peoples. The correct response, then and now, is *Space of Testimony* (149, 150), where Muslims must confess and live out their beliefs in the Oneness of God and Mohamed as His Prophet and also reveal an Islamic spirituality. This also involves participation in social activities so as to improve ordinary living conditions and institutions. The whole world is a mosque (144), and so the distinction between Islamic and European countries becomes less important. What is most important is the security and freedom to worship and practice one's religion. With this in mind, are Acil and Iyenk wrong for living spiritual lives, representing their faith in the community, where they are known as humble people, and also playing in the Saffar band?

5. Conclusion

The study results reinforce our understanding that the Bandung Death Metal scene has fragmented and declined since its peak years of 2009-2013. One highlight was *Bandung Death Fest #6* (2012), which attracted 20,000 fans to the inner-city red-light area of Jalan Braga during daylight hours. The reasons for decline, according to leading scene musicians, interviewed by the first author in Bandung in 2018-2019, are 1) Relocation of the Serak merchandise store at Jalan Cihampelas and decline of community *nongkrong* (hanging-out); 2) The disappointment of older bands at not being able to tour Europe in the footsteps of pioneer bands Jasad, Beside, and Burgerkill; 3) The new generation's attitude where they require money for playing gigs and use social media to find romantic partners instead of to promote their bands; and 4) The religious turn. The first three reasons are explored by the same author team in another article, while this article studies the religious turn. We find that one-half of the scene has left to pursue *hijra* (following the route of the Prophet Mohamed, a spiritual allegory) and one-half of this one-half no longer listens to metal music even at home. Out of the Black Mass community organization for Bandung Black Metal (another subgenre of Heavy Metal), the decline is smaller—five or ten people left out of a group that once numbered 135 and now numbers 50.

We use a couple of short case study examples. The guitarist of Malicious Intent went on *hijra* during a prison term and left his band and the scene completely. The reason, according to our translator/facilitator, Popo, was to gain the support of his fiancé's family who did not agree with the culture of heavy metal music. Our translator said that *hijra* is often so that people can get a job or a wife/husband as well as for the simple desire to pursue religion with a committed heart. We do not say that these people are insincere, but just that multiple factors led to their decisions. In the other case, the Bandung scene's most Islamic band, Saffar, after a promising debut album, *Mandatory El Arshy* (2013), saw vocalist and lyricist Parjo leave for *hijra*. He now sees metal music as *haram*

(forbidden). His two remaining band members, Acil and Iyenk, disagree. They are not in contact with old friend and bandmate, Parjo, but suspect that deep inside he may still be proud of his work on the band's debut album. This suggests that they suspect he was somewhat tormented inside and may quietly if not regret his decision but be somewhat double-minded, officially renouncing his past efforts but secretly being still proud of them.

We use Adorno's *negative dialectics* to inform our understanding of how, in the Indonesian context, faith can be used to critique the Western liberal decadence and rationality that some in the Indonesian scene see and want to oppose within global metal music culture. This requires us to see decadence and rationality as two sides of the same coin and submerged within liberal-democratic theory and practice. That might be another dialectic informing the principal (Mao, 1971 [1937]: pp. 109-117) one of reason-and-faith. Other non-principal contradictions may be between myth and Christian religion; between Christianity and Islam; between Jakarta and Bandung; between West Java and East Java; and between society and Islam. The last one is prescient, given that Islam came originally from the Arabs, not the Indonesians. It might be possible to argue that, within Indonesia, the principal contradiction is between society and Islam, but we have presented it differently because the theme of the article is the use of religion to critique the metal scene, which has absorbed many Western practices and influences, including the reign of reason. Fantasy, myth and religion only exist in lyrics and performance; once the show is over you go back to the real world of capitalist modernity which is highly rational, according to at least its own internal logic (which returns us again to the problem we have identified, i.e., the reign of instrumental reason, which does not rule out decadence as an aspect within it).

6. Afterword: About the Norwegians

Euronymous and the Helvete shop in Oslo (Norwegian Black Metal) works as a powerful myth because of its ordinariness and remoteness, but also the freezing conditions and harsh, tragic beauty of Norway's forests, which provide an intriguing and fitting backdrop to such hostile, nihilistic, and depressing music and the recreation by scenesters of ancient warrior myths while protesting against Western liberalism (and enjoying the freedom for self-expression that it allows).⁷ The Norwegian landscape was a suitable backdrop to the mentally-challenged teenaged musicians of Helvete, and their criminal inclinations, and both aspects were vital for the myth to gain numerous spellbound (pun intended) adherents overseas. A series of related questions emerge: 1) What was it exactly that the Norwegians were critiquing, including those aspects that they may have found hard to reach, including subconscious perceptions about life, society, or history? 2) Were these critiques largely submerged below conven-

⁷For more on Norwegian Black Metal, see Granholm (2011), Kahn-Harris (2007), Mørk (2011), Moynihan and Söderlind (2003), Olson (2008), Phillipov (2011), *Terrorizer's Secret History of Black Metal*, *Terrorizer* magazine, September 2009 (special issue).

tional, surface understandings revolving around Satanism and Christianity? 3) Can the first set of critiques be observed, recalled, accessed, understood even by those not really interested in the second set? 4) Can a group of wild teenagers tap into deeper types of critiques, as many may perceive that the Sex Pistols and Clash did? 5) Can a religious believer enjoy or appropriate deeper understandings that the Norwegians arguably managed to tap into? This might be seen as a similar process, but reversed or inverted, to rightwing or conservative fans of the Clash that appear in Facebook groups and the meanings that they might allegedly see or take from that band's apparently quasi-Marxist or socialist observations. Perhaps, in that case, that process is easier to understand as the end of the Cold War between the US and Soviet Union took away the literal political backdrop that inspired The Clash in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Did the moment of punk's potential pass us by, so, as Martin Popoff says, the voice of Johnny Rotten sounds today like the snarling of empty threats, threats that went ultimately unfulfilled? But, with Norway, religious people in Indonesia and elsewhere might extract a beating heart of meaning, but one which would have bewildered Euronymous had he heard of it.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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