

Signs, Scripts, and Anthems: A Sociocultural Semiotic Analysis of the *Tirta Nirmaya* Anthemic Project

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Abstract: This paper examines the *Tirta Nirmaya* anthemic project a collection of ten original songs produced through generative AI under the specific intellectual and creative direction of Dr Noor Hasbi Yusoff as a site of sociocultural semiotic production. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Roland Barthes' mythological semiology [1], Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic sign model [2], Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding theory [3], and Philip Tagg's musicological semiotics [4], this paper argues that the project constitutes a form of *anthemic semiosis*: a deliberate, multimodal sign-making practice that encodes endangered cultural identity, Sufi spirituality, and the politics of heritage preservation into a hybridised sonic text. The Jawi script an Arabic-derived orthography used to write the Malay language, now critically endangered [5] functions as the project's central *mythological sign*, operating simultaneously as icon, index, and symbol across the lyrical, musical, and visual dimensions of the work. The paper further contends that the project's fusion of Malay traditional instrumentation, pop-punk energy, and orchestral grandeur constitutes a deliberate semiotic strategy of *cultural amalgamation* (*bersatu*), enacting the very aesthetic principles articulated in the originating PhD thesis. The analysis concludes by situating the project within broader debates on generative AI, cultural authenticity, and the ethics of machine-assisted heritage preservation.

Keywords: sociocultural semiotics, Jawi script, Malay cultural identity, anthemic music, generative AI, heritage preservation, Islamic aesthetics, *bersatu*, Tirta Nirmaya

1. Introduction

In 2016, Dr Noor Hasbi Yusoff submitted a doctoral thesis to RMIT University titled *Tirta Nirmaya: Designing a Malay User-Interface Using Indigenous Jawi Script*. The thesis was not merely an academic exercise in interface design; it was, in the words of its author, an act of cultural resistance a sustained argument that the ancient Jawi script, the intellectual and spiritual writing system of the Malay people for over six centuries, could and should be preserved through the affordances of the digital age. The title itself, *Tirta Nirmaya*, is drawn from the Javanese and Sanskrit lexicon, meaning "water without shadows" a metaphor for clarity, spiritual purity, and the unobstructed transmission of meaning across time.

A decade after that submission, the thesis became the generative seed for a different kind of cultural artefact: a ten-song concept album produced through generative AI, guided by the specific intellectual and creative directions of Dr Yusoff himself. The resulting project also titled *Tirta Nirmaya: The Anthems of the Jawi Script* fuses Malay traditional instrumentation, pop-punk energy, and orchestral grandeur into a suite of anthemic compositions, each song mapping onto a distinct thematic chapter of the original research. An accompanying website, built to host the album, incorporates authentic visual assets extracted from the thesis itself, visitor analytics, bilingual (English/Bahasa Melayu) navigation, and direct access to the PhD document.

This paper subjects the *Tirta Nirmaya* anthemic project to a sociocultural semiotic analysis. It asks: what signs are being produced, and through what codes? How does the project encode cultural identity, spiritual meaning, and political urgency into its sonic and lyrical texts? What does the project's hybrid aesthetic its deliberate collision of the ancient and the contemporary communicate about the condition of Malay cultural heritage in the globalised present? And what are the implications of using generative AI as the medium through which these signs are produced and circulated?

The paper proceeds in five sections. Section 2 establishes the theoretical framework, drawing on Barthes, Peirce, Hall, and Tagg. Section 3 analyses the Jawi script as a mythological sign and the central semiotic engine of the project. Section 4 examines the musical hybridisation strategy as a form of *bersatu* (amalgamation), reading the sonic text through Tagg's musicological semiotics. Section 5 addresses the project's digital and web dimensions as a site of semiotic circulation and audience encoding. Section 6 reflects on the generative AI dimension, engaging with questions of authenticity, authorship, and the ethics of machine-assisted cultural production.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Barthes and the Mythology of the Sign

Roland Barthes’ seminal work *Mythologies* [1] and his subsequent essay “Myth Today” provide the foundational semiotic lens for this analysis. For Barthes, myth is not a falsehood but a second-order semiological system: a sign that has been “stolen” from its first-order linguistic meaning and reinvested with a naturalised, ideological meaning. The process operates through *connotation*, whereby a denotative sign (a word, an image, a melody) becomes the signifier of a broader cultural myth.

“Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification.” [1]

In the context of the *Tirta Nirmaya* project, the Jawi script functions precisely as a Barthesian myth. At the denotative level, Jawi is simply an orthographic system a set of Arabic-derived letterforms used to transcribe the Malay language. At the connotative level, however, Jawi has been mythologised over centuries as the sign of Malay-Islamic civilisation, royal authority, scholarly legitimacy, and spiritual depth. The thesis, and by extension the anthemic project, consciously reactivates this mythological charge, deploying Jawi not merely as a writing system but as a *cultural myth* a sign that naturalises the claim that Malay identity is inseparable from its script.

2.2 Peirce and the Triadic Sign

Charles Sanders Peirce’s triadic model of the sign comprising the *representamen* (the sign vehicle), the *object* (what the sign refers to), and the *interpretant* (the meaning produced in the mind of the receiver) [2] provides a more granular analytical tool for examining how the project’s individual signs function. Peirce’s three sign types are particularly useful here:

Sign Type	Definition	Example in the Project
Icon	Resembles its object	The arabesque visual motifs in the website design resemble the geometric patterns of Islamic art
Index	Points to its object by causal or existential connection	The sound of the <i>rebana</i> (frame drum) indexes the presence of Malay traditional culture
Symbol	Relates to its object by convention	The word “Jawi” symbolises, by cultural convention, the entire civilisational heritage of the Malay people

Thomas Turino’s application of Peircean semiotics to music [6] is especially relevant here. Turino argues that music operates primarily through iconic and indexical signs it resembles emotional states (iconic) and points to social contexts through habitual association (indexical). The *Tirta Nirmaya* project exploits both: the soaring orchestral passages *iconically* resemble the emotional experience of cultural pride and spiritual longing, while the *rebana* percussion *indexically* points to the specific social world of Malay traditional ceremony and Islamic devotion.

2.3 Stuart Hall and Encoding/Decoding

Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding model [3] is indispensable for understanding how the project positions its audience. Hall argues that cultural texts are produced through a process of *encoding* the inscription of preferred meanings by producers and received through a process of *decoding* that may be dominant (accepting the preferred reading), negotiated (partially accepting it), or oppositional (rejecting it). Crucially, Hall insists that meaning is not inherent in the text but is produced at the intersection of text and social context.

The *Tirta Nirmaya* project encodes a clear preferred reading: that the Jawi script and Malay cultural heritage are precious, endangered, and worthy of urgent preservation. This preferred reading is reinforced through multiple semiotic channels simultaneously the lyrics, the musical style, the visual design of the website, the inclusion of the PhD thesis itself as a downloadable artefact, and the bilingual (English/Malay) interface. However, the project’s choice of pop-punk and orchestral hybridisation also opens a space for negotiated decoding: younger, globally oriented audiences may engage with the sonic energy of the music while remaining ambivalent about the specific cultural politics being encoded.

2.4 Tagg's Musicological Semiotics

Philip Tagg's work on the semiotics of popular music [4] provides the most direct framework for analysing the sonic text itself. Tagg argues that music communicates through *musemes* the smallest units of musical meaning which accumulate into larger *museme stacks* that carry specific cultural and emotional associations. He identifies three primary modes of musical signification: *interobjective comparison* (comparing a musical passage to other known musical passages), *extramusical association* (linking musical features to non-musical cultural phenomena), and *paramusical association* (linking music to its social context of production and reception).

Applying Tagg's framework to the *Tirta Nirmaya* project, the distorted electric guitar riffs carry an interobjective association with the global pop-punk tradition (Green Day, Blink-182, My Chemical Romance), signifying youthful energy, urgency, and resistance. The *serunai* (Malay oboe) and *gamelan* passages carry an extramusical association with Malay royal ceremony and Islamic devotion. The collision of these two museme stacks in a single sonic text produces a paramusical meaning that is specific to the project's cultural-political context: the assertion that Malay heritage is not a relic of the past but a living, urgent, and globally relevant cultural force.

3. The Jawi Script as Mythological Sign

3.1 Historical Semiotic Weight

The Jawi script has served as the primary writing system of the Malay world since at least the fourteenth century, when Islam arrived in the Malay Archipelago and the Arabic script was adapted to transcribe the Malay language [5]. For over six hundred years, Jawi was the medium through which Malay political authority was inscribed (royal decrees, diplomatic correspondence), religious knowledge was transmitted (Quranic manuscripts, Sufi texts), and literary culture was sustained (poetry, epic narratives, court chronicles). The script thus carries an extraordinary density of historical semiotic weight: it is simultaneously a *political sign* (the script of sovereignty), a *religious sign* (the script of Islamic learning), and a *literary sign* (the script of poetic tradition).

The thesis documents the alarming erosion of this semiotic weight in the contemporary period. Since 2001, the use of Jawi has declined precipitously among Malaysian and Bruneian youth, who have been educated primarily in the Latin-derived *Rumi* script [7]. The only dedicated Jawi website (k-jawi.org.my) went offline in 2012. As the thesis notes with evident alarm, Chinese and Indian Malaysians maintain their own indigenous scripts in digital environments, while the Malay majority increasingly abandons theirs to the homogenising pressures of globalisation.

3.2 Jawi as Barthesian Myth in the Project

The *Tirta Nirmaya* anthemic project reactivates the mythological charge of the Jawi script through a deliberate strategy of *semiotic amplification*. Song 2, "The Forgotten Script (Jawi)," is the most explicit articulation of this strategy. Its lyrics encode the script's endangered status as an urgent political and cultural crisis:

"Lines fading on the page / An ancient voice trapped in a modern cage / The ink of our fathers, the seal of our faith / Jawi, don't let them erase."

Here, the Barthesian myth operates at full force. The Jawi script is not merely described as an endangered orthography; it is mythologised as "the ink of our fathers" and "the seal of our faith" naturalising the claim that the script's disappearance would constitute not merely a linguistic loss but a civilisational rupture. The phrase "modern cage" is particularly significant: it encodes globalisation and the Latin script as a form of cultural imprisonment, inverting the dominant narrative that modernisation is a form of liberation.

The visual dimension of the project reinforces this mythological encoding. The hero image of the website a photograph of the word *Zikrullah* (Remembrance of God) rendered in Jawi calligraphy on a weathered wooden surface functions as a powerful iconic sign. The weathered texture of the wood connotes age, durability, and the passage of time, while the calligraphic letterforms connote spiritual authority and aesthetic mastery. Together, they produce a mythological image of Jawi as ancient, sacred, and enduring precisely the preferred reading that the project seeks to encode.

3.3 The Poet as Semiotic Agent

Central to the project's semiotic architecture is the figure of Qais Al Muhib the pen name of Sheikh Anuar Al Qadri Al Khalidi, a prominent Sufi scholar, poet, and calligrapher from Southeast Asia, and the spiritual guide of Dr Yusoff throughout his doctoral journey. The Sheikh is described in the thesis as a direct descendant of the Sufi Master Sheikh Abdul Qadir Al Jailani, and as a practitioner of a form of calligraphic meditation in which complex designs are produced in a single continuous stroke, with eyes closed, following intense *zikrullah* (remembrance of God).

The Sheikh functions in the project as what Peirce would call a *symbolic* sign of the highest order: a human figure who, by cultural convention and spiritual authority, *stands for* the entire tradition of Malay-Islamic calligraphic art. Song 4, "The Master's Stroke (Zikrullah)," is devoted entirely to this figure:

"Eyes closed, the ink flows / One breath, one line, the spirit grows / Not the hand that moves, but the heart that knows / Zikrullah God's name in every stroke."

The lyrical encoding here is dense with semiotic significance. The closed eyes signify the transcendence of the visual (the rational, the calculated) in favour of the spiritual (the intuitive, the divinely guided). The "one breath, one line" motif encodes the calligraphic act as a form of *sama* the Sufi spiritual concert in which music and movement become vehicles for divine encounter. The final line, "God's name in every stroke," encodes the calligraphic letterform itself as a *theophanic sign* a sign in which the divine is made perceptible through material form.

4. Musical Hybridisation as *Bersatu*

4.1 The Aesthetic Theory of *Bersatu*

The PhD thesis articulates a theory of Malay aesthetics built around five cultural attributes: *berhalus* (exquisite), *berguna* (useful), *bersatu* (amalgamate), *berlawan* (contrast), and *berlambang* (symbolic). Of these, *bersatu* the principle of amalgamation, of bringing together disparate elements into a coherent and beautiful whole is the most directly relevant to the musical strategy of the anthemic project.

Bersatu is not merely a formal aesthetic principle; it is a sociocultural one. It encodes the historical reality of Malay culture as a civilisation built through the creative synthesis of indigenous Austronesian traditions, Hindu-Buddhist influences, and Islamic civilisation. The Malay world has always been a world of productive cultural encounter, and *bersatu* names the aesthetic sensibility that has emerged from this history: a preference for synthesis over purity, for integration over exclusion, for the beauty that arises from the meeting of difference.

4.2 The Sonic Text as Semiotic Hybrid

The musical hybridisation strategy of the *Tirta Nirmaya* project is a direct sonic enactment of *bersatu*. The project brings together three distinct musical traditions Malay traditional music, Western pop-punk, and Western orchestral music each of which carries its own semiotic charge, and each of which is transformed by its encounter with the others.

Malay traditional music carries a rich semiotic charge in the Malaysian cultural context. Instruments such as the *rebana* (frame drum), *gamelan* (metallophone ensemble), *serunai* (oboe), and *gambus* (lute) are indexical signs of Malay cultural identity, Islamic ceremonial practice, and royal tradition. Their presence in the sonic text immediately encodes the project as a Malay cultural artefact, activating the mythological associations of heritage, authenticity, and civilisational depth.

Pop-punk carries an entirely different semiotic charge. As a global musical genre that emerged from the Anglo-American punk tradition of the 1970s and was subsequently commercialised and globalised in the 1990s and 2000s, pop-punk is an indexical sign of youth culture, urgency, resistance, and global connectivity. Its distorted guitars, driving drum patterns, and anthemic choruses encode energy, defiance, and the desire to be heard precisely the emotional register that the project's cultural-political message requires.

Orchestral music carries yet another semiotic charge: grandeur, emotional depth, historical weight, and the capacity for transcendence. In the Western tradition, the symphony orchestra has been the primary vehicle for the expression of national and civilisational identity from Beethoven's *Eroica* to Sibelius's *Finlandia* to Elgar's *Enigma Variations*. The project appropriates this semiotic charge and redirects it toward the expression of Malay civilisational pride.

The collision and synthesis of these three semiotic registers in a single sonic text produces a meaning that none of them could produce alone. The *rebana* drum pattern, heard against a backdrop of distorted electric guitars and sweeping strings, does not simply “add” Malay cultural content to a Western musical form; it transforms the Western form, asserting the equal validity and vitality of the Malay musical tradition. This is *bersatu* as semiotic practice: the creation of a new sign that is greater than the sum of its parts.

4.3 Song-by-Song Semiotic Analysis

The following table summarises the primary semiotic strategy of each of the ten songs, identifying the dominant sign type (Peircean), the mythological charge (Barthesian), and the primary museme stack (Tagg):

Song	Dominant Sign Type	Mythological Charge	Primary Museme Stack
1. Water Without Shadows	Symbol	Clarity, spiritual purity, the doctoral journey	Atmospheric Malay intro → explosive punk-orchestral anthem
2. The Forgotten Script	Index	Jawi as endangered civilisational heritage	Urgent, aggressive punk + melancholic strings
3. The Meaning of Love	Icon	Divine creation, Sufi spirituality, <i>hakikat</i>	Orchestral rock ballad, building to emotional crescendo
4. The Master’s Stroke	Index	Calligraphic meditation as theophanic act	Rhythmic <i>zikir</i> -influenced punk riff + pounding drums
5. Cultural Markers	Icon	Arabesque and geometric motifs as civilisational signs	Syncopated <i>rebana</i> + fast punk drumming, triumphant
6. The Screen and the Soul	Symbol	Technology as both threat and vehicle for heritage	Electronic intro → heavy anthemic rock
7. Shadows on the Wall	Index	Shadow play (<i>wayang</i>) as moral and spiritual pedagogy	Dark, theatrical punk-symphony (dramatic dynamics)
8. The Seven Rules	Symbol	Design principles as cultural framework	Upbeat, catchy pop-punk, sing-along chorus
9. Amalgamate (<i>Bersatu</i>)	Icon	Malay aesthetic theory as lived cultural practice	Epic multi-part: heavy punk riffs + sweeping traditional orchestral
10. The Eternal Echo	Symbol	Hope for cultural survival in the globalised future	Grand finale: acoustic → full stadium anthem with choir

5. Digital Circulation and Semiotic Reach

5.1 The Website as Semiotic Environment

The *Tirta Nirmaya* website constitutes a semiotic environment in its own right a carefully designed space in which the signs produced by the music, the lyrics, the thesis, and the visual assets are brought into productive relation with one another. The website’s design philosophy, described internally as a “Sacred Manuscript” aesthetic, draws on the visual language of Islamic illuminated manuscripts: deep midnight navy backgrounds, burnished gold typography, arabesque geometric patterns, and ornate decorative borders. This visual language is itself a semiotic system, encoding the project as a sacred, scholarly, and aesthetically refined cultural artefact a digital manuscript rather than a commercial music platform.

The website’s bilingual functionality offering a complete Bahasa Melayu translation of all interface text is a significant semiotic gesture. It encodes the project as belonging equally to the Malay-speaking world and to the global English-speaking audience, refusing the implicit hierarchy that positions English as the default language of digital culture. This refusal is itself a form of cultural politics, enacting at the level of interface design the same argument that the thesis makes at the level of scholarship: that Malay language and culture deserve equal presence in the digital environment.

5.2 Visitor Tracking as Semiotic Cartography

The website's visitor analytics system which tracks unique visitors by geographic location and records play counts for each individual song constitutes a form of *semiotic cartography*: a mapping of the project's cultural reach across the global digital landscape. By making this data visible to users (displaying live visitor counts and per-song play statistics on the interface), the project transforms the act of listening into a form of collective cultural participation. Each play count is not merely a metric; it is a sign of cultural engagement, a data point in the ongoing semiosis of Malay heritage preservation.

This dimension of the project resonates with Hall's encoding/decoding model in a particularly interesting way. The analytics system makes the *decoding* process partially visible: it allows the project's creators to see not only how many people are engaging with the work, but which songs are generating the most engagement, and from which parts of the world. This feedback loop between encoding and decoding is a distinctive feature of digital cultural production that has no equivalent in the traditional music industry, and it opens new possibilities for understanding how cultural signs travel and are received across different social contexts.

5.3 Social Sharing as Semiotic Amplification

The project's social sharing functionality which allows users to share individual songs to Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, X, and Facebook constitutes a mechanism for *semiotic amplification*: the multiplication and circulation of the project's signs through social networks. This is particularly significant in the context of the project's cultural-political goals. The thesis identifies the internet and mobile devices as both the primary threat to Jawi (through the dominance of Latin-script digital platforms) and the primary opportunity for its revival (through the creation of Jawi-language digital content). The social sharing functionality enacts this opportunity: it uses the very infrastructure of global digital culture to circulate signs of Malay cultural heritage.

6. Generative AI, Authorship, and Cultural Authenticity

6.1 The Question of Authenticity

The *Tirta Nirmaya* anthemic project raises important questions about cultural authenticity in the age of generative AI. The music, lyrics, and website were produced through AI systems operating under the specific intellectual and creative direction of Dr Yusoff a mode of production that the project itself acknowledges in its disclaimer:

"This website, the music, and the song lyrics are the results of generative AI design, produced with specific creative directions, intellectual content, and scholarly guidance provided by Dr Noor Hasbi Yusoff."

This acknowledgement is significant. It positions the project not as a deceptive simulation of human cultural production but as a new form of *directed* or *guided* cultural production one in which human intellectual and creative agency remains central, but is mediated through a machine system. The question of whether this mode of production can produce culturally authentic signs is one of the most pressing questions in contemporary cultural theory.

Recent scholarship on AI and cultural production has identified what might be called the "floating signifier" problem [8]: the tendency of AI-generated cultural artefacts to produce signs that are technically competent but culturally hollow signs that resemble the surface features of a cultural tradition without being grounded in the lived experience, social relationships, and historical memory that give those signs their meaning. This is a genuine risk for the *Tirta Nirmaya* project: a generative AI system trained on global music data might produce something that sounds vaguely "Malay" without capturing the specific semiotic density of Malay traditional music.

6.2 Direction as Authorship

However, the project's specific mode of production in which the AI operates under the detailed intellectual and creative direction of a scholar who has spent decades immersed in the cultural tradition being represented offers a partial response to this concern. The signs produced by the project are not arbitrary; they are the product of a sustained act of cultural translation, in which the specific themes, concepts, and emotional registers of the PhD thesis have been encoded into the AI's generative prompts with considerable precision.

This mode of production has precedents in the history of cultural production more broadly. The relationship between Dr Yusoff and the AI system is not entirely unlike the relationship between a composer and an orchestrator, or between a poet and a

translator: in each case, the primary creative and intellectual vision belongs to one party, while the technical execution is carried out by another. The question of authorship in such collaborative arrangements is always complex, but it does not necessarily undermine the cultural authenticity of the resulting work.

Moreover, the project's use of authentic visual assets extracted directly from the PhD thesis including photographs of the actual Jawi calligraphy produced by Qais Al Muhib, screenshots of the actual *Tirta Nirmaya* mobile application, and hand-drawn design sketches by Dr Yusoff himself grounds the project in material cultural reality in a way that purely AI-generated imagery could not. These images function as *indexical signs* of the actual cultural practice being celebrated: they point to real objects, real people, and real acts of cultural creation.

6.3 AI as a Tool of Heritage Preservation

Perhaps the most productive way to understand the *Tirta Nirmaya* anthemic project in relation to generative AI is to see it as a demonstration of AI's potential as a *tool of heritage preservation*. The thesis argues that digital technology specifically the mobile internet represents the primary opportunity for the revival of Jawi in the contemporary period. The anthemic project extends this argument: it demonstrates that generative AI, directed by a scholar with deep cultural knowledge, can produce cultural artefacts that carry genuine semiotic weight and serve genuine cultural-political purposes.

This is not to suggest that AI-generated cultural production is equivalent to human cultural production in all respects. The *Tirta Nirmaya* project is not a substitute for the living practice of Jawi calligraphy, Malay traditional music, or Sufi poetry; it is a *supplement* to these practices a new semiotic vehicle through which the signs of Malay cultural heritage can be circulated to audiences who might not otherwise encounter them. In this sense, the project is consistent with the thesis's own argument: that technology, properly directed, can serve as a vehicle for cultural preservation rather than cultural destruction.

7. Conclusion

The *Tirta Nirmaya* anthemic project is a rich and complex semiotic artefact. It operates simultaneously as a work of popular music, a digital heritage platform, an academic extension of a PhD thesis, and a political statement about the rights of a cultural minority to maintain its identity in the face of globalising pressures. Its semiotic architecture is dense and deliberate: the Jawi script functions as a Barthesian myth, naturalising the claim that Malay identity is inseparable from its ancient writing system; the musical hybridisation strategy enacts the aesthetic principle of *bersatu*, producing a sonic text that is greater than the sum of its parts; and the digital platform extends the project's semiotic reach across the global digital landscape, transforming individual acts of listening into collective acts of cultural participation.

The project also raises important questions about the role of generative AI in cultural production and heritage preservation. It suggests that AI, when directed by a scholar with deep cultural knowledge and a clear intellectual vision, can produce culturally meaningful signs that carry genuine semiotic weight and serve genuine cultural-political purposes. This is not a trivial claim. In a world in which the homogenising pressures of globalisation threaten to erase the semiotic diversity of human culture, the capacity of AI to serve as a tool of cultural amplification and preservation is of considerable importance.

The *Tirta Nirmaya* project does not resolve the tensions it engages. The question of whether AI-generated music can truly carry the cultural weight of Malay traditional music remains open. The question of whether a digital platform can substitute for the living practice of Jawi calligraphy remains open. But the project's ambition to use every available semiotic resource, including the most contemporary tools of generative AI, in the service of an ancient and endangered cultural tradition is both admirable and instructive. It suggests that the preservation of cultural heritage in the digital age requires not a retreat from technology but a creative and critical engagement with it: a *bersatu* of the ancient and the contemporary, the sacred and the digital, the endangered and the emergent.

As the final song of the album, "The Eternal Echo," declares:

“We won't be erased by the turning of time / We are the echo, the eternal rhyme.”

In semiotic terms, this is a declaration of *semiotic persistence*: the insistence that the signs of a culture, once produced, cannot simply be erased that they continue to resonate, to be decoded, to generate new meanings, across time and across the digital landscape. The *Tirta Nirmaya* anthemic project is itself an act of semiotic persistence: a deliberate, creative, and politically committed effort to ensure that the signs of Malay cultural heritage continue to echo into the future.

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