



“Seeking Allataala in Everyday Life”:  
Understanding Queer Spiritual Space of Bissu Community in Indonesia

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**Abstract**

Bissu is one living piece of evidence on how adat negotiates with religion. However, the proliferation of Islamic fundamentalism that emerged after the collapse of the New Order promoted the category of ‘Pabissu’ as a way to delegitimize Bissu. Hence, this study aims to explore Bissu’s spirituality with decolonizing methodology. In order to construct a counternarrative of ‘Pabissu’, this study has carried three lines of inquiry. Firstly, the authors discuss how androgynous ancestors exist in Attoriolong as Bissu’s authority in Bugis culture. Secondly, the authors analyze the ‘Islam Bugis’ vernacular culture that changes due to homonationalism. Thirdly, the authors unravel Bissus’ spiritual quest in the search for Allah as an effort to understand the presence of the queer spiritual space within “Islam Bugis.” Data were collected from (offline and online) fieldwork, ranging from in-depth interviews to direct observation. The results of this study are: (1) The concept of “Islam Bugis” allowed for the possibility of ‘coming out,’ and ‘acceptance’ in the family and immediate environment; (2) Pangngaderreng does not eliminate conflict but prolongs a passive tolerance of queer individuals without of any protective mechanism from the government; (3) Queer spiritual space shows embodied resistance through individuals’ understanding and enacting the five pillars of Islam, six pillars of Islamic faith, and fitrah in everyday lives beyond the ‘disciplined body.’

**Keywords:** *Queer Space; Decolonizing Religion; Bissu; Islam*

**Introduction**

According to World Population Review (2021), Indonesia is one of the largest democratic countries in the world, with an enormous number of Muslims overall, followed by Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. As the most populous Muslim-majority country, 237,53 million people or 86,9% of the Indonesian population, identified themselves as Muslim on 31 December 2021. According to the Directorate General of Population and Civil Registration of the Ministry of Home Affairs, 8,26 of 9,22 million people or 89,64% of the population in South Sulawesi, are Muslims (*Kementerian Dalam Negeri*, 2021).

With Pancasila as a state ideology that respects differences, Indonesia has become a place for diversity to grow. In the religious context, the concept of '*Indonesian Islam*' develops. It is also known as '*Islam Nusantara*', which is more 'progressive', 'friendly', 'open to dialogue, and 'different' from Islam in the Middle East (Hefner, 2000 in Sofjan, 2016).

However, the conservative turn shifted the dynamic of socio-political settings in Indonesia, which move the right-wing majoritarian Islamist from the margins into its center After the fall of Soeharto (Van Bruinessen, 2013 in Schäfer, 2021). It was marked by increasing intolerance in Indonesia during the Reformation era, as seen from the evidence of difficulty accessing certain places of worship, the prohibition of worship, to the community's refusal to build houses of worship of religions other than Islam. Additionally, intolerance is increasing with the misuse of *Law No.1/PNPS/1965* on the "*Misuse Of Religion And Religious Blasphemy*" as a justification for abusing the law, which criminalizes marginal groups with the labelling of '*deviants*' (Sofjan, 2016), like what occurred to Bissu community in South Sulawesi in the 1960s (Lathief, 2004).

Persecution and discrimination occur against marginal religious groups and other identities, including marginalized groups of gender and sexuality. In the context of criminalizing gender minority groups, it is visible that in Indonesia, political discourse against gender minority groups is based on the argument that religion is the opposite of gender diversity and that non-normative gender has no place in religion. Thusly, communities and institutions based on religious traditions are mainly seen the society through the gender binary (Ismoyo, 2022).

For instance, in 2016, *The Indonesian Family Love Alliance* (AILA) filed a petition (judicial review) to the Constitutional Court (MK) regarding the expansion of the definition of adultery. The petition proposed that same-sex relations should be classified as a criminal act with legal consequences. This means that every non-normative gender person can be reported to the police because they are considered to have committed criminal acts. In 2020, the Family Resilience Bill (RUU-KK) was included in the National Legislation Program (*Prolegnas*) 2020. However, several gaps in the interpretation of the non-normative gender space lead to criminalizing individuals, even their families. It can make the initial community express attitudes and rejection of non-normative gender groups based on a misconception (Roni, 2019: 3-4 in Safri, 2020: 79-80).

As stated, taking Islam as the religion of majority in Indonesia, religious texts, doctrines, practices, institutions, and even the leaders interpreted as meaning that binary gender is a divinely determined aspect of humanity – the concept that humans are always, and only, male and female, as a fixed theological principle rather than a dynamic feature of human culture. According to Sa'dan, the majority of Muslim community views the reality of humanity limited from the perspective of *fiqh* law, *halal-haram*, reward-sin, heaven-hell, strict and rigid (Sa'dan, 2022: xxii). It happens because religious laws become an '*a priori view*' in interpreting gender and sexuality. It becomes 'the only reference for ideal normative values' and override societal religious and cultural diversity (Sofjan, 2012).

While recognition of genders outside male and female has only recently been discussed in Western societies, in South and Southeast Asia narratives, gender diversity can be found throughout its history – for instance, the *Hijras* in India, *Natkadaw* in Myanmar, *Kathoey* in Thailand, and Bissu in Indonesia. Particularly, Bugis people acknowledge five types of gender as follows, *oroané* (male), *makkunrai* (female), *calabai* (transgendering male), *calabai* (transgendering female), and *Bissu* (pan-gender ritual leader). In Bugis culture, people of non-binary gender expression have played influential roles for centuries. In the historical trajectory, the evidence of gender diversity can be found indigenous text in *I La Galigo*, where the *pan-gender* ritual leader holds a central role in each ritual. Accordingly, the non-normative gender and sexuality in South Sulawesi believe that religion and spirituality are a powerful source of support and community strength – but many of these spaces also have a long history of causing trauma and death for them (Gibson, 2009:122-126; Davies, 2012: 568; Snighda, 2020).

From gender not causing a problem, it is now at the centre of the debate within religious narratives. The most crucial thing is an attempt to eliminate the role of Bissu in rituals, as happened in sacred ritual *Mattompang Arajang* in *HARI JADI BONE KE-692* which removes the presence of Bissu from the important rituals in Bone Regency. Supposedly, the role of Bissu should not be eliminated, yet the ritual still underwent without their presence. On that account, the role of the sacred position of the Bissu is defined by its gender identity from a religious perspective. The emergence of Islamic fundamentalism has brought into question the position of Bissu in Bugis society because their gender identity violates Islam. Therefore, it is necessary to re-understand queer spiritual space to untangle how the intertwining of religion and culture moves in 'the ruling knowledge' to see and place Bissu in their everyday lives.

### **Bugis Context: Attoriolong and Androgynous Ancestors**

First, androgynous myths are a universal picture to reveal a whole and the coexistence of opposites or *coincidentia oppositorum* (*unity of opposites*). The divine androgynous myth exists in many religions and beliefs, such as the gods of Ancient Egypt, Greece, Scandinavia, Iran, and China. The hallmark of the androgynous god myth is closely related to the cosmic fertility god with a hermaphrodite nature; male and female traits complement each other. In Bugis culture, we see how the myth of divine androgyny (*mitos androgini ilahi*) is present in Bugis cosmology, or *Attoriolong*. As illustrated in the divine androgynous myth, the gods are depicted as having two sexes at once. Divinity is described in both attributes that exist together. In addition, divine androgynous myths also appear in gods who have single-sex but have androgynous traits. As a logical consequence, the myth of divine androgyny also includes *monogeny* and *autogeny*. In a sense, the existence of an androgynous ancestor is the coexistence of two divine sexes and a manifestation of absolute power, autonomy, whole and unlimited in the good/bad, male/female, right/wrong binary. In other words, the myth of divine androgyny puts aside masculinity and femininity but sees androgynous nature as a sexual complement (Susanto, 1987: 85).

In Bugis cosmology, the existence of the three worlds is the centre of Bugis life order. Significantly, the myth about the Sun, Moon, and androgynous ancestors. The myth of the androgynous ancestor exists because of the closeness to the universal religious system of the Austronesian people, who know three worlds – which are also present in *Attoriolong* as the Upper World (*Botting Langi'*), the Middle World (*Lino or Ale Kawa*), and the Underworld (*Peretiwi*). It has been emphasized by previous researchers about the belief system of the Bugis people. The following will explain the myth about the Sun and the Moon and the myth of *Tomanurung* in Bugis people. The myth of *the Attoriolong* began with the incident when the Sun and Moon erupted, and then giving birth to twins was present in Luwu. The Sun was created from the right thigh of the Gods as a male, and the Moon was created from the left thigh as a female concurrently. In the meantime, the stars spread out in their constellations. In its life, the Sun and Moon circled the universe and separated. The Moon rises, and the Sun goes down. Vice versa. However, they turned around at some point, and the Sun caught the last Moon, temporarily merging, and had to be separated again by lightning that presented the human figures of men and women. These two human beings are divided in their lives. The male is brought to the highest throne, while the female to the other end. After 12 years, they meet in the centre of the sky and get married. From that union came three sets of twins: iron twins, silver twins, golden twins (Earth, Moon, and Sun), and a boneless only child who was a silver and gold twin. This only child grew the first rice. This single ancestor is called androgynous because it has no twin and represents silver (the Moon) and gold (the Sun) – because of that difference, androgynous ancestors became sacred (Hamonic 1983: 50-54 in Gibson, 2009: 72-74).

Furthermore, as mentioned in *I La Galigo*, the origin of the Bugis people stems from the marriage between *La Toge Langi' Batara Guru* (*To Manurung*) from *Botting Langi'* or the Upper World and *We Nyili Timoq* from *Peretiwi* (the Underworld). In the Bugis language, *To Manurung* means one who comes from the sky. Then, their marriage occurred in the Lino, Ale Kawa, or the Middle earth. (Salim et al., 1995: 53; Nurhayati et al., 2003 424 in Machmud, 2013: 79). It happened as the *Dewatas* (gods)

intervened to regulate the middle world, making it fertile, spreading plants, and managing its inhabitants who previously did not have a king. Thereby, Bugis people believe every king and leader in Bugis lands have descendants from the gods through *To Manurung* or those considered worthy of regulating life on earth. From this started the first *Maddara' Takku'* (white-blooded) human dynasty (Andaya, 2000: 35; Errington 1989: 20-23 in Gibson, 2009: 72, Davies: 2010: 72).

As argued, Bugis cultural appreciation for diversity is rooted in the *Attoriolong*; therefore, the balance of cosmos (Bugis culture) is reflected in the presence of the androgynous ancestors, where Bissu plays a necessary role that still exists today. They become a ritual leader because of their ability to communicate with the gods through the *To'rilangi* language (the language of the *orang langit*). (Lathief, 2004:9 in Febriany, 2017: 17-18). The role of the androgynous ritual leader is to guard the heirlooms in the empire and still present in the religious and cultural practices of the Bugis people. They must carry out sacred ceremonies in the kingdom, from heirloom sanctification to *Tola' Bala'*, to births, marriages, to death (Hamonic, 1987 in Gibson, 2009: 79-80).

In the ritual they performed, Bissu had to accommodate two elements of the sexes, male and female characteristics, as their way to experience two realms: the realms of beings and the realms of the spirit. In order to achieve that, Bissu had to disguise themselves with female attributes in rituals and everyday living (Triadi, 2019: 80-82; Iman, 2021: 193-194). Bissu wears several pieces of equipments to combine masculine and feminine elements. For example, in some rituals, the Bissu in Soppeng and Bone wear *Baju Bodo* or *Baju Garusu* (*adat* clothes worn by Bugis women). Meanwhile, Bissu in Wajo and Pangkep wear several masculine properties such as *Tappi Olareng* (*Keris* or a *dagger*) and *Tali Bannang* (long belt) – as well as feminine properties such as *Oso-oso* (long shirt), *Silora* (trousers), *Passengke' Simpuru* (headband) along with *Maddampella* (artificial flowers), *Geno Mabule Tellu* (three-tiered necklace), and *Passapu Tappi* (a shawl decorated with *Unrai Macalla* or a series of beads) (Iman, 2021: 195).

Meanwhile, in everyday living, most Bissu choose to wear *sarongs* daily. In Bugis culture, *sarongs* are used by Bugis men and women as a symbol of prestige and sacredness. It represents an honourable position in the society. As a symbol, the difficulty level in weaving *sarongs* shows its higher values. The *sarongs* also embody the value of *malebbi* (graciousness) for Bugis noble women. Besides, Bissu also wears a head covering, be it a *songkok* (head covering as a symbol of identity as a Muslim Buginese man) or *cipo-cipo* (*head covering as a symbol of identity as a Buginese woman*), which symbolizes if they have performed the hajj pilgrimage. Some Bissu wear a robe and a *songkok* wrapped in a white turban (Iman, 2021: 196-197).

The disguise in ritual is known as a cross-dressing practice. Predominantly, the cross-dressing practice does not mean that the performer wants to change sex but emphasizes that the fluid androgynous nature is a primordial totality in which all forms merge into one, respect for the common opposite, a reflection of all kinds of attributes attached to values and norms, in the conflict of life. To balance the knowledge that chaos preceded creation (cosmos), the ritual requires the encounters of the two sexes to come together to comprehend the balance of the cosmos (Susanto, 1987: 86). In the divine androgynous myth, it is essential to see how cosmogony depicts the beginning of every new harvest, the beginning of a new year, the beginning of the growing season, and the beginning of cultural life marked by initiation (Susanto, 1987: 87). For instance *Mappalili* in Pangkep Regency, *Massapo Wanua* in Soppeng Regency, *Maccera' Tappareng* in Wajo Regency, *Mattompang Arajang* in Bone Regency.

### **Decolonizing Methodology**

In this chapter, I want to emphasize that gender diversity has been on the Indonesian trajectory, both in the religious and cultural spheres to build an argument that Bissu is in accordance as they



negotiate their religious identity through queer space, especially in this context is Bugis Islam. So, it is important to decolonize. Next, I argue that Bissu experience 'ambivalent' queer spaces due to *homonationalist* ideas that divide the world into 'liberal' and 'homophobic' (imagined) nations. Last, I attempt to decolonize the subjective experience of *Bissu* as the process of 'becoming' Bissu and how it is intertwined with the process of being '*waria*' and '*calabai*'; in which Bissu is made in everyday practices and in which body becomes marginalized.

Tuhiwai-Smith added that a genuine urgency of decolonial research is to disrupt the established norms and the status quo and realize that it is a field of study that belongs to people who have been marginalized. It is essential to understand binaries, in a way that is possible. Binary simplifies complex ideas and the extent to which a binary is used to place a moral judgement that is seen as good and how the association uses it to portray the Other (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2010: 101).

Jasbir K. Puar stated that *homonationalist* (imagined) nations construct a binary of 'democratic', 'modern', and 'secular' to those countries that is 'gay-friendly'; and define the Others as 'homophobic' countries that are 'despotic', 'traditional', and 'religious'. That is the reason the ambivalent space emerges followed by the binary of *North/South, Developed/Developing, and West/East*. In a process of decolonizing, we should not restrain our interpretation of 'LGBTIQ+ rights' to one singularity narrative. Between the binary, *the West* is mainly marked by 'liberal gay rights activists that fight for same-sex partnerships and adoption rights. Therefore, the 'campaign' for the rest of the world is characterized only by the absence of these rights and the criminalization of same-sex sexual activities (Puar, 2007).

In Indonesia, it should be remarked that the struggle of non-normative gender groups is not the same as *liberal gay rights*. Therefore, it is damaging that Bissu is equated with 'liberal gay rights' activism along with the 'Five Genders' narrative in Indonesia within these *homonationalist* imaginaries. In a view that they are overexposed as a symbol of gender diversity and sexuality, it has impacted the power imbalances in their gender, sexuality, and ritual roles (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999: 107-111 in Ismoyo 2020: 280; Tuhiwai, 2021).

The tendency to correlate Bissu with liberal gay rights arises because the colonial narrative that was intertwined with political homophobia. This seems to negate Islam in non-conformist gender groups. As shown during the colonial period, the Netherlands did not enact specific laws for homosexuality (unlike British colonies such as Malaysia and Singapore). However, sexual behaviour is considered an aberration and receives severe punishment. That has been said, the colonial government's homophobia was based on the Christian view, which saw homosexuality as 'abnormal', 'sin', and 'forbidden'. For example, several perpetrators of same-sex relationships were executed, as happened when an enslaved person was burned alive in Central Maluku in 1636. A few years later, the colonial government executed Ingel Harmensz and Bento de Sal for having same-sex relations in Batavia. The homophobic attitude of the colonial government was also evident from the massive moral inspections that took place in Makassar, Batavia, Yogyakarta, and other big cities. In the political homophobia that engraved in colonial time, the Netherlands even created a 'moral police' (*zedenpolitie*) to address the issue of immoral sexual orientation (Sa'dan, 2022: xvii).

Patel (2021) argued that the only alternative is to break the binary of the colonial and indigenous. In doing so, this study uses in-depth, semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and field notes from fieldwork and virtual space to explore aspects of understanding queer spiritual space in Indonesia. The researcher selected 2 (two) cases for this analysis. This study also used the decolonization methodology to validate by bringing two narratives of how Islamic piety is present in the queer space through the two interlocutors in this research

In terms of data analysis, decolonizing means giving a voice to personal experience to advance socio-anthropological understanding. In considering the use of personal stories, the intersection of the personal and the societal is expected to offer a new vantage point from which to contribute to social

science. By way of explanation, personal narratives can link the theoretical debates between macro-micro linkages, agency and its intersection, and structure (Sparkes, 2000: 21 in Wall, 2008: 39, 392). Therefore, researcher needs to represent and retell their story (not about but with the subjects). It is also essential to comprehend intersectionality as a concept in the production of knowledge – as it explores the interaction of various marginal positions and dominations as a social process (and in so doing), revealing how these processes are present in reinforcing, contesting, or invoking the interconnection of colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism (Tuhiwai, 1999: 107-117; Bunjun, 2010: 116).

The interview guide focused on religion and gender, including discussions about coming out, their daily activities, and the relationship of queer identity to social and spiritual aspects. The data collection method was done through word of mouth and snowball sampling. Interlocutors had to identify as queer. Following informed consent, interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were coded thematically, comparing and contrasting, as well as looking closely at outlying cases. As in qualitative interviewing, researcher followed the lead from interlocutors when they showed interest in a topic – then exploring it more fully. For additional, data also obtained from social media by considering that these interlocutors were very active in uploading their daily activities in the virtual world. It can be seen as self-identification and self-representation, which are associated with their identity (Boyatzis, 1998: 50-55; Denzin & Lincoln, 1997: 266-270).

### **Bissu Piety, *Adat*, and Islam Bugis Vernacular Culture**

In order to examine Bissu piety and the concept of *adat* in Bugis culture, the contextualization of *Islam Nusantara* vernacular culture is required. The decolonization of Islamic identity and expression that rooted in Indonesian traditions can show that Islam is not singular in its actualization. The practice of 'Islam Bugis' by Bissu is one form of *Islam Nusantara* vernacular culture (Al Makin, 2016 in Jubbe, 2018).

In Bugis, *adat* and Islam is an integral part of their identity (Jubba, 2018). The thing that influences the characteristics of Bugis Islam is the Islamization in South Sulawesi. In the beginning, Islam entered South Sulawesi in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The *muballig* brought Islam from Minangkabau – West Sumatra, when it was still under the rule of the Sultanate of Aceh. The tradition of the Bugis society, which is structured in the royal system, facilitates the infiltration of Islamic values into Bugis values. Integration between *adat* and Islam transpires through the king's bureaucracy, so Islamization occurs accommodatively. Moreover, Islam was smoothly accepted in South Sulawesi due to the similarities with local culture, so the kings quickly accepted it without fear of losing their power (Sewang, 2005: 171-172 in Haryanto, 2014: 36-37).

The Islamization ensued through *da'wah*, *Datu Tellue* (three preachers) was appointed to each region by considering the character of the Bugis community in each region – as mention, *Datu ri Bandang* (Abdul Kadir Datu Tunggal), as a *fiqh* expert, who was assigned to spread Islam in Gowa-Tallo, who had a habit of drinking *ballo'* (arak) and gambling *Datu Patimang* (Sulung Sulaeman) preached through the aspect of *aqidah* (*tawhid*) aimed at the people in the Kingdom of Luwu who were thick with the belief in *Dewata SeuwaE* and *I La Galigo*; and *Datu ri Tiro* (Khatib Bungsu) as a Sufism expert (tasawuf) was sent to Tiro Bulukumba, who has faith in mysticism learned in *lontara'* from generation to generation. Following the successful Islamization, the first king to embrace Islam came from the Kingdom of Tallo, named *Mallinkang Daeng Mannyonri Karaeng Tumenanga ri Bontobiraeng* – who later replaced his name with the title 'Sultan Alauddin Awwalul Islam' in 1605 (Mattulada, 1983: 230; Pelras, 1985: 107, Noorduy, 1972: 27 in Nurfadilah: 2019: 17).

In consequence, their practices are changing to negotiate their existence. For instance, "*Mabbarzanji*" was shifted from the script of "*La Galigo*" and "*Meong Palo Karellae*" to the life history of Propet Muhammad (Kambe, 2003: 32-33 in Anzar, 2016: 91; Nurfadilah, 2019: 19), a ritual is also

known to be carried out according to five shalat prayers which called '*lima wettu oninna genrangnge* (the sound of the drum five times), and *Memmang* that inserts prayers in Arabic. It has shown a liminal space where *adat* and Islam encounter in a structured manner, spreading through the kingdoms of South Sulawesi (Syamsurijal, 2020: 56).

The encounter between Islam and *Attoriolong* impacted the society, and gave rise to the concept of '*Islam Bugis*', where *adat* and Islam were inseparable in the Bugis values of *panggaderreng*. Along with the adjustment of the *sara'* (*syariat*). There is a shift towards the colour of other Bugis values in *panggaderreng* (*ade'*, *wari*, *rapang*, *wicara*), to Islamic values (*sara'*). The 'Bugis Islam' emphasized the tolerance of *ade'* and *sara'*, which would accommodate each other (Nurfadilah, 2019: 18-20). Syamsurijal argued similarly that the intersection of *adat* and Islam did not show the dominance of Islam over *Adat* in the Islamization of South Sulawesi. The position of the two is allegedly equal. *Adat* negotiates several aspects of Islam and vice versa (Syamsurijal, 2020).

As opposed, Thamrin stated that the indigenous Muslim community is oppressed due to their hybrid practice, particularly *bissu*; as seen in the dichotomy of *Shariah* and *Sufism* in Islam. Sufism is considered more tolerant of *adat* because it concentrates on the 'soul', rather than religious texts and formalities. By stating that, sharia's position often regarded as intolerant of *adat* because of the restrictions on religious texts and ritual formalities. Thamrin pointed that the position of *adat* and Islam can coexist in the discursive realm. Nonetheless, the contradiction can be seen in the political vision. In that situation, Islamic piety became a condition for the continued existence of *adat* (Thamrin, 2016).

I agreed on both sides of explanations. Yet, I argue that the existence of *bissu* is at stake in the ongoing dialogue between *adat* and Islam. With the current situation, the liminal space for *bissu* is increasingly restricted. Therefore, it is necessary to revisit how the coloniality played a role in shifting the narratives of *adat* and Islam – even after the accomodative process of Islamization.

The colonial traces were strongly present in Dutch colonial intervention since the 1900s. The binary opposition exists between *adat* and Islam, as seen in the dichotomy of *animism* and *world religion*. Kruyt referred to Wilkins regarding the evolution of religion from pre-animism, animism, to world religion. By examining further, the term animism was popularized by Kruyt to identify those who are not Muslim. On this basis, the colonial government understood the 'traditional' practices in Indonesia and marginalized them. This idea spread in the eastern part of the Dutch East Indies, including South Sulawesi (Tuhri, 2020: 165).

In such a manner, conversion to world religion is considered an advancement compared to *animism*. As a result, *adat* has shifted to a secular level and lost its religious dimension. It strengthens how Bugis people perceive *sara'*, and diminishes *adat's* position (Tuhri, 2020: 170). Following the trail of a top-down strategy of Islamization, the Dutch did a similar thing to acquire people's attention. Pabbajah stated that the conflict between *adat* and Islam led to the exertions to 'sanctify' that was unlikely to Islam. It also happened to *Attoriolong* as part of pre-Islamic religion – to some extent, this purification continued until the independence era (Tuhri, 2020: 161-165; Pabbajah, 2021: 95).

Thamrin proposed a similar argument in his research. The encounter between *adat* and Islam directly impacts *bissu* in terms of social and discursive spaces for their survival. Besides that, it hinders *bissu* in gaining legitimacy when their sacredness depends on the 'religious' dimension of *adat*. It happens due to the attempt to validate the religious dimension of *adat*. It emerges from the Islamization and the urgency to institutionalize *adat*; whose members are of royal descent (*keturunan bangsawan*) and *Dewan Adat* (Thamrin, 2016). Consequently, it pointed to the absence of *bissu* in the *Adat* institution – even though they are present at the level of *Adat* practice.

Furthermore, other colonial traces were found in the *Dutch Ethical Policy*. The colonial government issued a policy of separating Islam and *Adat*. The colonial government issued the *Ethical*

*Policy* due to the emergence of various resistance from the society – which also gave rise to the Muslim Militant resistance carrying Islamic orthodoxy to fight the colonial government. For the Dutch, Islam was considered a threat as a political doctrine that could form agitation of local fanaticism in forming Pan-Islam on the local scale. This policy prompted the separation between the '*Islamic*' group and the '*adat*' group, followed by a different understanding of the discourse between Islam and *adat*. Hence, there was a polarization between Islam orthodox and Islam modern in religious communities (Benda, 1958 in Tuhri, 2020: 170; Imran, 2020: 100).

Also after the Independence, the contestation of these two Islamic narratives evolved to 'the purifying' of Islam. The understanding of 'pure' Islam brings several cases of purification of *adat*, which are considered incompatible with Islam. It causes several changes in some *adat* rituals as a sign of their '*syncretism*' with Islam (Feillard, 2011 in Tuhri, 2020: 171). Albeit, the dimension of rituals (*adat*) considered 'un-Islamic' must be 'erased' entirely. These two polarizations have expanded dynamically and impacted the aspect of socio-religious in South Sulawesi. It can be seen in the DI/TII rebellion by Qahar Muzakkar from 1950 to 1957 (Ismoyo, 2020: 277-230). The primary purpose of the DI/TII rebellion was to cleanse Islam – by eradicating the part of the *I La Galigo* that was not following *sharia*, both in the oral tradition and sacred texts. Therefore, the mass killings of bissu was carried out, and *lontara*' manuscripts related to pre-Islamic beliefs were burned (Robinson, 2011: 232 in Haryanto, 2014: 37). As stated, the colonial traces had influenced the contestation of *adat* dan Islam that made *Attoriolong* out of the 'religious' frameworks. For Bissu, their existence no longer had space. The contestation of socio-religious life had put bissu in a prolonged trauma due to the massacre (Pabbajah 2021: 96-98).

On the top of that, the polarization had continued to the *mappatoba*'. The accusation to the 'religion' outside the concept of 'world religion', including *Attoriolong*, caused the bissu massacre (*mappatoba*') in the New Order Era. Following the case, it existed due to the political sentiment against the Communist Party (PKI) that emerged in the 1960s. One of the incidents that made '*indigenous religion*' identified with 'atheism' was the performance of the *ludruk* titled "*Matiné Gusti Allah*" by Lekra in East Java. This performance gave rise to the 'atheist' stigma of the PKI. In addition, it was believed to be one of the factors that drove the heated relationship between the PKI group and Islamic groups because the play offended Islamic groups (TEMPO, 2013; Riyanto, 2020: 135). After the G30S/PKI in 1965, anti-PKI sentiment escalated into mass violence against *indigenous religions* adherents. For instance, many bissu was associated with 'atheists', *syirik*', and 'animists' because of the *Attoriolong* practices (Imran, 2020: 101-102).

In the current context of Bugis, the conservative turn gave rise to various Islamic movements. Islamization dispersed through *da'wah*, education, and politics. The emerging organizations appeared including *Hidayatullah*, *KPPSI (Committee on Preparation and Enforcement of Islamic Sharia)*, *Wahdah Islamiyah*, *Tablighi Jamaat*, and *Ikhwanul Muslimin* (Haryanto, 2014: 70). From which, the radical ones have marked a series of attacks targeting gender and sexual minorities (Robinson, 2015: 219-222). Even more, Davies argued, active stigmatization was not only fostered by radical Muslim organizations, but also other conservative individuals, politicians, and bodies (Davies, 2007; Hegarty, 2018: 23-25); Boellstroff, 2005; Toomitsu, 2022: 5-7).

For instance, the *Forum Umat Islam Soppeng (FUIS)* reported the activities of the *Pekan Olah Raga dan Seni (PORSENI) Waria* in Soppeng to the local police, which led to the disbandment of the event in 2017 (YLBHI, 2017). It was banned due to religious activities in the event but had no approval from the Soppeng Regency Ministry of Religion. This event was considered insulting to Islam because there is an *adzan* competition, *Tilawatil Qur'an*, but the participants are transgender women who are not dressed as men. Meanwhile, the statement from the waria that this event was prohibited because there was a veiled bridal makeup contest. As quoted, "*About the disbandment ceremony five years ago, they thought it was us, the waria who was dressed in hijab. It was clearly inaccurate. At that time, there were not many makeup artists who could make up veiled brides (MUA Pengantin Hijab). So, we had this initiative to*



*make a contest so that the waria could be smarter in beautifying Bugis brides who wear the hijab. Sadly, the event was even disbanded"* (Interview with KWRB, December 3, 2021).

Another event is the absence of *bissu* at the annual traditional ritual event in the *Hari Jadi Bone ke-692* in April 2022. *Mattompang Arajang* is a sacred ritual held annually by the Bone Regency government to clean up heirlooms inherited from the Bone Kingdom. Supposedly, the role of *bissu* in this ritual should not be eliminated, yet the ritual still underwent without the presence of *bissu*. Based on an interview with the *bissu* in Bone, they had negotiated with the government three times, but no win-win solution was offered. As quoted from Puang Matoa in Bone, *"From three meetings with the government, we had negotiated so that bissu could continue to play their role in Mattompang Arajang. We had agreed not to perform maggiri', although it was with a heavy heart that we omitted one of the stages in the procession. In fact, we offered an option if women's clothing was deemed inappropriate; we would replace baju bodo with baju kurung if we had to. We had made every effort to remain responsible to Dewata SeuwaE for performing rituals, but what could we do? We were still not allowed to appear"* (Jessy Ismoyo in Harian Fajar, 2022).

In an interview with an *adat* figure, he conveyed that *bissu* is presently just a performance or entertainment – unlike the 'real' *bissu*. He said that *bissu* used to understand the *adat* still. Meanwhile, now, *bissu* does not understand it well. He told the story when Puang Lolo asked him for permission to devote himself as Puang Matoa. However, he said that Puang Lolo did not understand the duties of *bissu* – he was worried that his understanding would not only be about art (*seni*) but must be thorough in traditions, customs, and culture. Otherwise, the *bissu* may become extinct. He also expressed his concern if *bissu* was associated with LGBT. According to him, *bissu* is not part of the LGBT community. If Puang Lolo thinks so, then it is tantamount to assuming the ancestors were *kafir*. Therefore, it can be seen how the understanding of *adat* and Islam is an essential element in the *bissu* structure. In fact, according to religious teachings, the *Adat* figure firmly separated the classification of *bissu* from LGBT – because of *bid'ah* (personal interview with PO, 11/11/21).

Other than that, interviews with other *adat* figure and government representative articulated a similar thing – *bissu* is not as sacred as it used to be. Its sacredness can be measured by the lack of knowledge of customs, traditions, and culture. Thereof, *bissu* is now just a *pabissu'* or an actor who plays a *bissu* in rituals. As quoted: *"We have to differentiate bissu and pabissu'. Bissu is sacred; pabissu' are not. Nowadays, there only pabissu' that exists. They are no longer sacred, but only profane"* (personal interview with PY, 7/2/22) From these interviews, it should be noted that there is a tendency to compare past *bissu* with today's *bissu*. This understanding also affects the marginalization of the role and position of *bissu*, which are separate from the *Dewan Adat* and *Dinas Kebudayaan* in their respective regions. As a result, *Bissu* did not gain the legitimacy to be in the structure. This interpretation cannot be separated from the socio-political-religious context, which places a rigid distinction between 'culture' and *adat*, 'sacred' or 'profane' (personal interview with IC, 7/2/22). Therefore, it is necessary to examine *Bissu*'s piety in practice as a 'Islam Bugis', so it can give a pattern in practicing Islam. Through the queer spiritual space, *Pangaderrang* can be seen in *Bissu*'s life where *adat* is rooted in their religious practice, which I try to explain further in the following chapters.

## Queer Spiritual Space as an Alternative Understanding

Understanding queer spiritual space must begin with an attempt to define it and see where the *Bissu* stands in the effort to apprehend queer spirituality and its spiritual space. Where is the place for queer people in the spiritual space? Starting from that question, the definition of queer spiritual space will lead us to understand what space means for queer people within the boundaries of religion and culture. Is it reconcilable to be both queer and believer? What are the implications of being queer and spiritual for constructing a sense of identity?

Petersen and Donnerwerth (1998) stated, sexuality has historically been one of the most important sites of religious influence. In this sense, religious doctrines have primarily constructed socially accepted norms and patterns of sexual intimacy, often informed based on a heteronormative conceptualization of the world sanctioned and legitimated by the divine. On the one hand, religious communities have usually been malicious and contradicting towards queer people; on the other hand, the integration of religion, spirituality and sexuality is believed to be incongruent due to a conservative point of view. Spirituality implies prescribed moral conduct and the practice of being that cannot be violated. These arguments have been used to justify why being queer is immoral (Beagan & Hattie, 2015 in Campos, 2018: 2).

However, religion and spirituality lie based on people's subjectivities – the beliefs, assumptions, and practices that construct their identity and guide their behaviour within the private sphere of life. Furthermore, it leads us to get an illustration of the form of spirituality that is present for queer people, whether it be in the form of identity, practice, or space in individuals, communities, religious texts, specific or mobile places of worship, in cyberspace, even in their visibility and invisibility. The search to define queer spiritual space leads to the journey of queer people in finding meaning and value in these spaces, as well as showing how the 'boundaries' exist to protect these inclusive spaces (Browne et al., 2010: 3-5).

According to Campos, the only clear thing about spirituality is that different from religion – which is more related to institutional setting, theology and rituals (Zinnbauer et al., 1997). The positivist point of view argued that spirituality could not be measured or operationalized due to its personal character. However, Heelas and Woodhead (2005) explained that *the subjectivization* referred to a shift from religion as a ritualistic and dogmatic realm toward spirituality. It is a turn to an autonomous self that is used to understand other alternative spiritualities, including queer spirituality. In so doing, spirituality can be illustrated through three parameters:

1. As the intrinsic meaning, spirituality could be conceptualized as a strong feeling of innermost connection and interaction with something superior or sacred, which is meaningful in pursuing transcendental purposes.
2. Spirituality in its nature is dynamic, not static, since it grows, diminishes, or changes throughout time.
3. Despite its personal character, spirituality can also represent a cultural and shared journey involving interweaving different encounters that lead to various experiences and ways of living the same faith (Campos, 2018: 3).

Browne argued similarly, spirituality often associated with a journey, a pilgrimage, or a movement. It is like the current approaches to understand space. It is seen as dynamic, interactive, and perceived as an ultimate venerated by 'a seeker' but also organic as it can grow. Meanwhile, religion is understood as the outward, organized expression of an inner spirituality, but it can also read as opposed to spirituality, and criticized for being 'uncompromising', institutionalized, and archived in ritual custom preserved in designated patriarchal sacred space (Browne et al., 2010: 8-9).

It is important to describe queer (in)visibility taken from personal narrative as it will emphasize 'a trajectory' of realization and acceptance concerning their sexual/gender identities. In a panel discussion on *Queer Spiritual Spaces: An Exploration of the Intersection of Spirituality and Queerness with Faith Leaders and Other Experts*, in New Haven Pride Center, on January 29, 2022, Edwin Perez explained that spirituality is the key of identity. It has been handed down through in accompaniment with his other identity – which is and always has been a *latino*. He found religion and spirituality is extremely important in both ways, the communal component as well as the individual search. The inner search and encounter with others considered as most profound and meaningful part of the spiritual journey. As a queer and a religious leader, he stated the conflict he had with his sexuality. However, through his struggle, his

spirituality grew on the way of focusing to a higher power. As quoted: “*I would not allow nothing or no one in life to separate me from the love of my higher power*” (Perez, 2022).

Queer has an agency of its own, a reproductivity to be engaged and to perform their identity through it. Browne concluded it briefly that to be queer is to act like a verb. Therefore, queer spiritual space are transitory, liminal, provisional, fragile, strategic mutable, contested, negotiable, and multifarious. The question that arises then is where we will find queer spiritual space? As explained above, queer spiritual space is not only matter of ‘space’, because sacred place is everywhere, from buildings, mountains, trees, stones, woods, cemetery, or even in each cultural practices one does, for instance, participating in community’s events, walking in the road, singing, cooking, and living everyday life (Browne, 2010: 21).

### **The Spiritual Quest of Bissu: “*I found Allah in being a Muslim and a Bissu*”<sup>1</sup>**

In this chapter, I now demonstrate how Bissu experience encounters with *adat* and Islam as part of their spiritual journey. From the two interviews and the virtual data found, the interlocutors displayed the same pattern; namely, they found the existence of *Allah* in their spiritual journey to become a Muslim and a Bissu. This spiritual journey leads them to understand that their 'different' gender identity is a *fitriah* they must live with. Some choose the Bissu role. Some choose another role – both choices do not lessen the queer spiritual space present in each individual. Instead, it shows how queer spiritual space extends in liminal spaces that grow along with understanding the contestation of *adat* and religion.

#### **• The Story of Puang Aji Didi**

'*Puang Aji*' is a designation for those who have made the hajj pilgrimage in the Bugis community. In the Bugis language, there is no specific mention indicating whether *Aji* is male or female – all are called the same as *Puang Aji*. Likewise, when I called *Puang Aji Didi* – he was a Bissu who performed *hajj* in 2003. After his pilgrimage, he decided to focus on his role as a teacher in one of the Islamic high schools in his city (Personal interview with PAD, 4/2/22). Based on information obtained on his social media, he was born in 1965 – now, he is 57 years old.

*"It is uncomfortable. It is not easy to be a Bissu. If I could shed tears of blood, I would be grimacing at Allah. Oh Allah, why I was born like this? However, I realized that it was my kodrat. Allah alone determines my life like that - I am the one who must be held accountable for it. That is about it, Dek."*

*(Pun tidak enak, tidak gampang jadi Bissu. Saya itu tadinya kalau bisa meneteskan air mata darah, mungkin saya meneteskan air mata darah, meringis pada Allah. Ya Allah mengapa aku diberikan seperti ini? Akan tetapi saya kembalikan pada kodratku, Allah sendiri yang menentukan kodratku seperti itu... yang harus ada mempertanggungjawabkannya. Itulah, Dek)*

He realized that he was different from most men. This realization comes when he realizes that his soul likes to preen. When asked about his *fitriah* – he sheds tears when he tells about himself. Puang Aji Didi's spiritual journey is filled with fear and anxiety about his past sins. He only told how he felt for men, acted as a *waria*<sup>2</sup>, his association when he was young, and how his calling to become a Bissu was hindered because of his sinful feelings. He felt he could not find peace of mind. Throughout the story, he sobbed and even considered himself a 'lesser human'. His efforts to understand *fitriah* are filled with his communication with Allah described as full of efforts to ask for forgiveness. In the context of queer spiritual space, the intense encounters in life that grow the innermost connection with Allah make queer

<sup>1</sup> For the security and privacy issues of the interlocutors, this study uses a pseudonym.

<sup>2</sup> In the presentation of this chapter, I chose the use of *waria* because both interlocutors prefer to do so. They identify themselves as transgender sometimes, but feel uncomfortable associated with LGBTIQ+.

spirituality strong. In his feelings of alienation, his different feelings, he feels that the harshness of life has led him to discover who he is and to understand the meaning of Allah more deeply – be it as a *waria*, becoming a Bissu, or becoming a teacher as he is today (Personal interview with PAD, 4/2/22).

*"I fell in there and did it. Even at that time, I felt like I was in turmoil. I asked, "Why am I like this?" Where did all my parent's teaching go? Although not extensively, they taught me about Islam. How could I end up here even though I went to school and I made it to graduate?" My head was filled with questions. I was crying - laughing at myself and my life. I keep asking why? I even used to think of myself as an animal [...] Nevertheless, thank Allah, gradually, I found my way back. First, I used to be disappointed in myself, and then I reflected that my philosophy of life is strong [...] I could do nothing but be strong. If not, my two legs could not support my past sins, which had already punctured my soul, in my body [...] it is hard to tell... what kind of person I am. How could I say it - a man who falls in love with a man instead a woman. Allah made me fall in love with a man."*

*(Saya jatuh ke situ dan melakoninya. Pun, pada saat itu, ada masih bergejolak... "Loh kok saya seperti ini?" Bagaimanaki' pandangan orangtuaku yang dulunya ya mengajarkan aku tentang agama? Walaupun tidak banyak. Mengajarkan aku tentang sekolah, sampai aku berhasil jadi sarjana? Loh kok akhirnya ke sini?" Penuh juga pertanyaan, Ade... Itu dulu... Menangislah saya... Ketawalah saya... mengapa? Pergaulanku seperti apa... Dulu bisa aku menggantung diriku adalah hewan [...] Tapi, alhamdulillah, lambat laun, aku menemukan jalanku kembali. Yang pertama, dulu aku kecewa pada diriku sendiri. Namun filosofi hidup saya adalah kuat [...] Karena kapan tidak, kedua kakiku tidak dapat menopang dosa-dosaku yang dulu, yang memang sudah merasuk di jiwaku, di tubuhku [...] susah buat mengungkapkan... orang yang seperti saya, seperti apa. Yang tidak jatuh cinta pada perempuan. Malah Tuhan memberiku jatuh cinta pada laki-laki)*

According to *Puang Aji Didi*, *adat* and Islam complement each other. When asked to explain what Islam means to him – he replied that it is a measure of comfort for the soul. Islam should soften behaviour. He refers to the story of the Prophet Muhammad SAW when he was pelted with dirt – instead, he responded by throwing sugar; Prophet Muhammad helped his fallen enemy when he was being chased. Islam should be like that. It strengthens *adat* and culture without eliminating it. That is the challenge as a human being – whether to be able to maintain principles and soften such behaviour, not the other way around. In addition, Islam is a guide for life. Like a map, Islam directs humans to keep trying to achieve their goals. He stressed the individual's importance to continue seeking because spirituality is present in the search, not just a *mukjizat*. When humans seek, we believe through doing the *Rukun Islam* and *Rukun Iman* - for instance, through prayer (Personal interview with PAD, 4/2/22).

*"I, myself, I would never know until later. All I know is that we have to keep trying as human beings. We can not live by waiting for a mukjizat to happen. We should understand that if we do not work, do not pray, we will not get what we wish for. We could not get the wisdom if we only worked without praying. It will apply another way around. It indeed must go hand in hand. If it is time for the Fajr prayer, wake up for the Fajr prayer. While waiting for the Dzhuhr Prayer, we work. Rice does not serve itself on the table, right? We have to work in order to cultivate it. [...] "Well, regarding shalat, we are Muslims. Of course, it is compulsory to perform shalat. For instance, if Allah wants to give us a pahala, we only get 50 for not praying. Shalat fardhu is five times a day, two rakaat of dawn, four rakaat of dhuhur, four cycles of Asr, three rakaat of Maghrib, and four rakaat of Isha'. How could we claim ourselves as Muslims but leave shalat?"*

*(Namanya manusia harus berusaha terus. Karena sekarang bukan mukjizat, apa namanya jamannya mukjizat, sekarang kalau tidak bekerja, tidak berdoa, tidak datang. Berdoa, tidak bekerja, tidak datang. Bekerja, tidak berdoa, tidak datang. Jadi, harus seiring. Ya, toh? Coba? Tinggallah di*



*rumah. Tiba saatnya Shalat Subuh, bangun Shalat Subuh. Menunggu Shalat Dzohor. Antara Shalat Subuh ke Shalat Dzohor, times nya sangat panjang – kalau kita tidak bekerja dari subuh sampai Dzohor, ada nggak yang datang sendiri? Yang tadinya kita minta pada Shalat subuh, menunggu di antaranya Dzohor, ada nggak yang datang? Nasi sepiring tidak pernah datang sendiri kalau tidak berusaha... Ya kan? Jadi, begitulah [...] “Nah, mendirikan shalat. Kalau kita tidak mendirikan shalat, ya, kemudian diri kita ini adalah orang Islam – tapi kita meninggalkan shalat. Seandainya Allah mau memberikan nilai, nilainya itu 50 karena tidak melaksanakan ibadah shalat. Shalat fardhu adalah lima waktu, subuh dua rakaat, dzohor empat rakaat, ashar empat rakaat, maghrib ya kemudian tiga rakaat, dan isya’ empat rakaat. Apakah kita bisa mengatakan diri kita adalah orang Islam, bisa tidak kita mendirikan shalat?”*

Puang Aji Didi said that it was difficult to be a Bissu. He sometimes felt constantly being tested by this ordeal. However, he always surrendered things to Allah. The struggle for his conscience continues – to be able to carry out the Bissu role, Puang Aji Didi must be able to get through this struggle. He told me that being a Bissu is not perfunctory. If there is a little doubt in a Bissu's heart, then he might get hurt when doing *maggiri'* in rituals. Bissu must have 100% faith, but he admits that his doubts keep coming back, which causes his belief to be incomplete. Therefore, he decided to take a hiatus from Bissu for an unknown amount of time (Personal interview with PAD, 4/2/22).

*“When I ask for permission, it does not mean leaving. I just want to take a hiatus, of course, with permission. I am now a civil servant. If I was loaded with work and the schedule was collided with rituals, I had to pick one. Living like that would be a fault. It means that I have sinned because I could not commit fully to both parts, meaning if I leave one side, the other would also be in dire need. They would be wistful, and vice versa.”*

*(Saya izin, bukan artinya keluar, hanya mau istirahat dengan izin yang artinya tepat. Saya kan sekarang sudah jadi PNS. Kalau seandainya tugas saya di sini padat, bertepatan dengan di sekolah, ada anak-anakku di sana mau menerima ilmu dari saya. Maka, kalau diri saya, artinya diri saya sudah ada dosa, artinya jika saya meninggalkan satu sisi. Sisi itu sangat membutuhkan. Ya, kemudian, saya pergi ke sisi lain, ini menangis, jika saya tidak ke sana, yang dia menangis)*

Puang Aji Didi explained that he did not stop being a Bissu. According to him, one could not stop being a Bissu. However, he asked permission to have a hiatus. After being appointed as a Civil Servant, he decided to focus on just one role. His choice fell on teaching. He felt guilty if he chose the two roles but did not do it optimally. Puang Aji Didi's role as a Bissu has been around since the 2000s. He and Mami Fitri Pabentengi<sup>3</sup> were under the care of Bissu Keni and other Bissu. When I asked regarding *waria*, he argued that there was no need to differentiate between 'normal' men, 'normal' women, and *waria* – all should have the same rights. Gender identity should not make a person looked down upon (Personal interview with PAD, 4/2/22).

*“We are the same as 'normal women', as well as 'normal men'. We are not looked down upon. As human beings, we could not denigrate each other despite our genders. So, when I was giving supervision to waria, while I was chairperson for six years, I was responsible for piety (ketakwaan) in the province. [...] I invite them to study Islam. I do not forbid them to have fun but shall not make it a religion. If it is time for shalat, do it. I require them to perform shalat*

<sup>3</sup> Mami Fitri was a prominent figure among *waria* and Bissu communities. He was known as the general chairman of LSB Arung Palakka, the head of the provincial in Kerukunan Waria, and also a teacher of Bugis arts and culture. His vast knowledge was part of his *dharma bakti*. Also, he is also one of the Bissu and has contributed a lot to exploring and developing the customs and traditions of Bone. He passed away in 2018.



*Jum'at, and they should write down the absence list with the description in which mosque they pray and whose imam preaches and what sermon they read."*

*(Kita sama dengan wanita normal, sama-sama laki-laki normal. Kita tidak dipandang sebelah mata. Siapapun. Tidak memandang sebelah mata. Jadi, saya itu kalau berikan arahan kepada waria, pada waktu saya jadi ketua enam tahun, dan pernah menjabat bidang ketakwaan di propinsi. [...] saya ajak belajar ilmu agama, ya, saya tidak larang berhura-hura, tetapi jangan jadikan hura-hura itu agama. Tiba saatnya sholat, harus sholat Jum'at. Tulis absen, di masjid mana, siapa imamnya pada saat itu, siapa yang membacakan khotbah)*

Queer spiritual space is depicted in Puang Aji Didi's life journey during his 6 (six) years as a *waria* leader from 2000 to 2006. He and other *waria* saw the importance of establishing an organization that could accommodate *waria*. Puang Aji Didi said that the negative stigma against *waria* creates discrimination. For example, people who come into contact with *waria* will be harmed for 40 days. Those are the stigmas that he and his friends in the *Kerukunan Waria* are trying to get rid of. *Waria* is, by nature, human. Accordingly, the current challenge is how to actively build positive stigmas in Bugis society (Personal interview with PAD, 4/2/22).

*"In the past, waria used to known as thieves, drunkards, yes, a lot of their lives were on the side of the road, disturbing people passing by... I see. Well, when the waria organization was founded, there was a slight incline. Finally, waria was noticed by the wider community and by the government. I could say now, even though it is not 100% accepted, 99.9% of waria are accepted by society [...] What is always a problem that invites doubt, waria are considered 40-days of haram and bring bad luck; therefore, people distance themselves from waria. But now, those stigmas disappeared. None. Because there are waria like me, who perform hajj, and I always say to them Allah did not torment me in the holy land, why would you?"*

*"Waria dulu banyak pencuri, waria dulu banyak pemabuk, ya banyak hidupnya di pinggir jalan, mengganggu orang yang lalu-lalang... Begitu. Nah, di saat berdirinya organisasi waria, sedikit ada bangkit, bangkit, bangkit, akhirnya diperhatikan oleh masyarakat luas dan oleh pemerintah, dan sekarang... bukan 100% diterima akan tetapi sudah bisa saya katakan 99,9% waria itu diterima oleh banyak masyarakat [...] Yang selalu diragukan jangan bersentuhan dengan waria karena akan celaka 40 hari. Tidak. Tidak ada. Karena ada waria yang ke tanah suci dan Allah tidak memberi saya siksaan, kenapa anda merasa berhak. Contohnya adalah saya..."*

Puang Aji Didi explained that *adat* and Islam in *panganderreng* make the lives of the Bugis people harmonious. When he served as the administrator of a *waria* organization, he actively discussed it with non-transgender organizations. He tried to explain that his *waria-ness* does not make him less a human in the eyes of religion. He gave a great example of a *waria* who performed a hajj. His life story is an evidence how *Allah* have love and mercy against his life. He was not tortured in the holy land (*Tanah Suci*). Instead, he returned home with a new spiritual experience that brought him closer to *Allah* and contributed to society. Therefore, he said that it is important for the *waria* to get an education or at least knowledge – so that the attached stigma could fade. This small organization later became the forerunner of the *Kerukunan Waria* in the area. Since the organization's presence, Bissu has invited *waria* to be active in positive activities that are acceptable in society. In addition, during his leadership, Puang Aji Didi was also active in the development of the field of piety at the *waria* organization at the provincial level – the program he launched was Friday prayers together with *Kerukunan Waria* in his area (Personal interview with PAD, 4/2/22).

### • The Journey of Bissu Yuni

Bissu Yuni was born in 1988. After graduating from high school in 2009, he continued her education in State Administration. Currently, he works at the Youth and Sports Office (*Dinas Pemuda dan*

*Olahraga*) and is also in charge of the *Arung Palakka* Cultural Arts Institute (*Lembaga Seni Budaya Arung Palakka*). After continuing his studies at the Master's level, he also taught courses on Bugis Arts and Culture at a private university. Bissu Yuni is the youngest Bissu. At the age of 21, he met Bissu Saidi, who came to Bone. The first time Bissu Saidi saw him dancing, he told Mami Fitri that Bissu Yuni would one day become Bissu. That was the beginning of the story of his soul calling to become one (personal interview with AY, 14/4/22).

*"Bissu Saidi came to Bone, happened to see me, he asked, who is the child, the child who dances, Mami Fitri said - still anak-anak sanggar at that time. Puang Saidi later said that I would be Bissu one day - after that, I decided to join Kerukunan Waria, and I was always to the rituals, also given the Bissu knowledge. I was 'filled' in Bola Soba'."*

*(Bissu Saidi datang ki' ke Bone, kebetulan lihat saya, dia bilang, siapaki' anak itu, anak sanggarki' Mami Fitri bilang - masih anak sanggar ji' statusku waktu itu. Dia bilang, oh jadi Bissu itu ki' nanti'. Begitu. Ditunjukkan itu, jadi Bissu itu nanti itu' - setelah saya gabung jadi waria, jadi saya diajak terus ke ritual, diberikan ki' pengetahuan, diisi di Bola Soba')*

Bissu Yuni admitted that he got a soul calling from a dream. Not long after his encounter with Puang Saidi, he said that the calls kept coming to him. So, when Mami Fitri asked about his volition to become a Bissu, he prepared herself physically and mentally. For that, he equipped himself to become a Bissu. Regarding *adat*, the beginning of his fondness for Bugis *adat*, led him to join the *Saoraja* Cultural Arts Institute. He is actively studying under the guidance of Mami Fitri. After exploring Bugis culture through dance, he became interested in learning about Bissu history. He told how he was curious about ancestral knowledge, so he often asked Mami Fitri and *Puang Matoa*<sup>4</sup>. Bissu Yuni said that his curiosity was endured because of his understanding of his identity as a calabai, a *waria*. His desire to be more useful to society led him to become a Bissu. According to his understanding, the thing that distinguishes calabai and Bissu is a desire and impulse. In relationship category, Bissu does not have a wife and does not menstruate. So to speak, it means that Bissu have to detached themselves from a place of need to try satisfy themselves impulsively; to avoid the *limerence*<sup>5</sup> that can lead to strong need to keep seeking pleasure. The Bissu does not have it, while the calabai does (personal interview with AY, 14/4/22).

*"The identity of Bissu in the past is different from now. Yet, from history alone, only calalai or calabai would be appointed as Bissu. Not oroané or makkunrai. As my understanding, Bissu is those calabai or calalai who devote themselves to the people - not for themselves."*

*(Identitas Bissu itu kalau kayak di kerajaan beda, tapi di sini kan kita, dari sejarahnya saja ada Bissu itu, yang diangkat sebagai Bissu itu Calalai atau ki' calabai, bukan ji' dari perempuan, bukan juga dari laki-laki, calalai atau calabai - Bissu itu ki', Dek, calabai yang pilih hidupnya untukki' masyarakat - tidakji' untuk dirinya)*

Even now, he is still in the process of learning to be a Bissu - he is aware of all his shortcomings. However, he always emphasized his longing to learn better. He is diligent in following Mami Fitri in all Bissu activities. He learned from Puang Youshan about the exquisiteness of Bugis customs and traditions. He also told his incident of the process when he did not have the courage to do *maggiri'*. According to him, Bissu is the calling of the soul - one cannot equate one Bissu with another. In his case, the courage to *maggiri'* came years after he became a Bissu *passere'*. His courage to do *maggiri'* also came from a

<sup>4</sup> *Puang Matoa* is a title given to a Bissu leader.

<sup>5</sup> Limerance describes an obsessive state of mind in which individual experiences intense desire, whether it romantic or non-romantic for another thing or person. It can lead to the dependance of the presence, affection, validation, on a thing or person that might lead to addiction, which does not match the Bugis value of *Assimellereng* in *Pangngaderreng*.

dream. He felt convinced to do *maggiri*'. He felt that *Dewata SeuwaE* had led him to do this (personal interview with AY, 14/4/22).

*"When I became a Bissu, I had not the courage yet to do maggiri'. So, I just danced sere alusu'. I only had the bravery after having a dream to do it. It was like a sign for me – telling me that I was ready – so I dared myself to do maggiri'."*

*(Saya jadi Bissu ki', Dek, belum maggiri' awalnya, hanya menari saja, menari alusu. Nanti terakhir baru maggiri', baru beranian diri. Dari waktu belum gabung, kalau lihat orang maggiri' takut ka'. Berani maggiri' itu dari badan ji', tauku bisa maggiri' seperti tandaji' sudah waktunya. Keberanianku itu waktu pas mimpi maggiri' – jadi ku beranian maggiri')*

Bissu Yuni said that he was the fifth of seven children. He realized that he was 'different' since elementary school. He preferred to play with dolls, house, and cook. As a child, he had long hair until he graduated from elementary school. One time, he was mistaken for a girl when he was entrusted to a relative in the village. He increasingly learned that he was not attracted to women but to men. His coming out process actually happened when he asked his parents' permission to take part in the *qasidah' rebana* competition. At that time, the competition was only participated by women. He was just tagging along with his sister to practice – but when he heard the beat of the *rebana*, he was interested in trying it because no one else could imitate the beat - surprisingly, he did succeedingly well. Since then, the *qasidah* coach had invited him to join. It was the time when he asked his parents, and they gave permission. Considering the situation, they were also given a normal response. He shared that in his family, being calabai or calalai is a common thing – not something new (personal interview with AY, 14/4/22).

*"My parents stayed silent, which meant I could participate. Never thought it would go like that. Nonetheless, my behaviour had always been feminine that I did not like to play with kites or toy cars – rather, I played with dolls, houses, cook. Once I was in Bone, I was entrusted to one of the relatives from the village, and he thought that I was a girl all the way home. My sister laughed and said that I was a boy. It was common to mistake me for a girl because I had long hair. I would cry back then if they tried to cut it. I did cut my hair only because it was required for a school picture [...]. I had one who looked like a calabai in my family - he was a jenang (chef). He usually helped with the cooking. It was what I explained to my family; that Bissu task is for helping people, that it was a good thing."*

*(Orang tua diam-diam saja, boleh ikut. Tidakji sangka akan berkelanjutan begitu. Tapi, tingkah lakuku dari dulu ndakji suka main layang-layang, ndak suka main mobil-mobilan – mainku boneka, rumah-rumahan, masak-masak. Pernah saya di Bone, dititip sama yang punya mobil, saya dari kampung, dititip sama kakakku – ditanya mi' sama kakakku bagaimana sampai ki' di' di rumah? Sepanjang jalan itu supir kira mi' saya perempuan sepanjang jalan. Kakakku' bilang laki-laki ji itu, tertawa itu di mobil; karena memang rambutku panjang, menangiski' kalau rambutku pendek. Jadi, bob begitu rambutku. Karena om dan tante guru mengajar, mereka bilangki' – Baru ta' mau ujian, baru kasih pendek rambut ta'; Jadi, EBANAS itu foto ijazah, baru ki' ku potong rambutku [...] Ada ji' juga keluargaku penampilannya calabai jadi Bissu – tapi jenang ji' dari keluarga Bapak, bantu memasak. Ku jelaskan' Bissu itu kan' memang membantu warga juga, bukan hal buruk)*

Growing up in a family that respects gender differences, he learned that he was no different from other kids in school. Even so, the school environment also supports him. Bissu Yuni admitted that he never experienced bullying – no one had ever been mean to him. Nonetheless, he considers bullying a normal phase experienced by other teenagers - he had some moments, but none of it was significant. Rather than focusing on his differences, he concentrates on being engaged in school activities, so he actually made many friends who, in the end, safeguard him if someone calls him a *bencong* (personal interview with AY, 14/4/22).

*"I never experienced bullying in school, yet indeed I had long hair. My friends would just joke and laugh but never be rude. If someone said bencong-bencong, I would not take it to heart. I did not care. Usually, I would stand up for myself and not often, my friend would do the same. In school, I was an active kid, from Pramuka, OSIS, to ROHIS. I engaged in many student organizations, so I had many friends that would defend me."*

*"Kalau saya tidak pernah ji' saya dijahati waktu sekolah – tapi memang rambutku panjang, teman-teman bercanda saja, tertawa-tawa, tidak pernah ji' yang kasar begitu. Kalau ada ji' yang bilang bencong-bencong, maksudnya saya tidak peduli, tapi kalau ada yang ejek, pasti ada lawan ka', pasti ada teman bantu' – saya sekolah aktif ki' di organisasi Pramuka, organisasi OSIS, ROHIS, semua saya ikuti kegiatan seperti itu – banyak ki' temanku bela."*

In the point of fact, his status as a civil servant and lecturer is also not hindered because of his gender identity. Indeed, he said that he had the 'autonomy' to wear heels (such as policewomen's shoes) when at the office. He told how his work environment was very supportive, and he actually felt grateful for the 'dual' role as a man and a woman he carried (personal interview with AY, 14/4/22).

"My chief at the office also accepted. For instance, there was a meeting yesterday – he felt thankful because I could give a hand with the welcoming event (*penjemputan*) ceremony. He would throw a joke like he was grateful as I could take a role as 'woman' and 'man'. Not only him, other chiefs said alike. They once pointed out that they were appreciative that I was unlike other waria who was displaying too much femininity. In spite of that, I was comfortable with my way of dressing. My femininity is expressed through my shoes, not wearing revealing women's clothes. I never get a warning for wearing heels like the policewomen used to wear. They would flatter instead. I would reply by joking that it was my way of expressing my disappointment that I could not be a policewoman, so I wear the shoes."

*"Bosku di kantor, juga menerima, kemarin ada pertemuan – malah bersyukur karena saya itu bantu-bantu kalau harus ada penjemputan begitu. Waktu itu bercanda, bersyukur ki' dengan keberadaanku, bisa berperan perempuan, bisa berperan laki-laki. Begitu katanya semua, sampai bos-bos kepala bidangku bilang seperti itu di seringnya rapat. Bagus karena ndak' menonjolkan dirimu sebagai waria – tapi ku bilang di', aku nyamannya ka' begini, ekspresiku itu pakai sepatu hak ka' saja, bukan pakai pakaian-pakaian perempuan terbuka. Kadang pakai sepatu heels begitu, tidakki' dapat tegur – justru kadang bilang ih cantik ka' na' pakai sepatu begitu, seperti polwan. Ku bercandakan sajaki', tidak bisaji jadi polwan, jadi sepatunya saya pakai."*

Meanwhile, his encounter with Islam began at a young age – he grew up in a family that adheres to Islam. During the interview, he asked me a question: *"Why do certain groups always alienating us, saying that we cannot be a Muslim and Bissu? Why do not those groups sitting, discussing, and learning with us about Bugis adat and Islam as a Bugis people would do in Tudang Sipulung when it comes to a dissent?"* That question lead to his story on how he has been practicing and studying Islam since elementary school. He explained how he rehearsed the *Rukun Islam* and the *Rukun Iman* in his daily life. Bissu Yuni never misses *shalat*; during the interview process – he asks permission to go to the prayer room for *maghrib* and *Isha'* prayers. His understanding of Islam can be seen in his daily life (personal interview with AY, 14/4/22).

*"I learned the basics teachings of Islam such as Rukun Islam and Rukun Iman from my parents, also from Islam subject at school [...] apart from shahadat, and there are also shalat, fasting, zakat, and haji. I perform shalat because I am a Muslim. Not only that, but I also do shalat tahajud every time I feel upset or confused because of a problem. Nonetheless, I still perform shalat even though I feel at ease. Shalat five times in a day is our obligation as Muslims; I could also pray at night if I really need to. Friday prayers must also be carried out. If I have an intention to shalat, regardless of the possibility I could perform it, I could still get pahala [...], but I realize I would*



*not bid time with Allah. When it comes to shalat, I will find time to do shalat even though I am tired."*

*"Dasar-dasar Islam seperti rukun Islam, dari syahadat, maksudnya walaupun kita ikut dari orang tua, di sekolah juga dapat belajar agama Islam, tentang Rukun Islam, Rukun Iman [...] selain syahadat, ada juga shalat, puasa, zakat, dan haji. Saya shalat karena saya menjalankan ibadah saya sebagai orang Islam. Tapi, saya juga shalat kalau ada masalah, kayak kadang kacau pikirannya, saya shalat tahajud – kita kan shalat lima waktu kan sudah kewajibannya; ya bisa juga shalat malam kalau saya perlu betul-betul. Shalat Jum'at juga harus betul-betul dilaksanakan. Niatku shalat juga, kulaksanakan shalatku, sudah ada pahala – sudah ada niat pun itu ada pahalanya, tapi kalau bisa tidakki' ku lewatkan shalat [...] tapi sadarki' masa shalat saja tidakki' kulaksanakan – sekarang, mau letih, capek atau apa itu, tetap kulakukanji' shalat itu."*

When asked about his *fitrah*, Bissu Yuni explained that his inner struggles were always brought into his worship. According to him, his existence as a *waria* should not be a barrier to worshipping Allah. There was pain and fear, but he believed that Allah created a people according to His will. He is principled in living according to the teachings of adat and Islam – in a sense, he suppresses his *hawa nafsu*, not only sexually but also in other aspects of life through its strength that lies in prayer (personal interview with AY, 14/4/22).

*"In that case, to be honest, I experienced many inner struggles. I could not deny who I am. I know who I am, what I am. I could not fight it. It is my identity. The more I deny it, the more misery and dread I would feel. I can not choose what I am now. It is not according to my will. As far as my understanding, there are no human beings destined without Allah's will. It is what I believe, so what I could do is suppress my desire (hawa nafsu). It is the action and manners that are prohibited, not being the way I am now. I envision myself as a casing (the outer side) that I am able to change, like when I want to perform shalat. But, other than that, I could not propel myself to be a man because it is not who I am. It would be stressful if I tried."*

*(Kalau itumi', banyaki' di' pergulatan batin, sebenarnya, Dek, dalam diriku, dulu itu pernah, kita tidak bisa menampik, jujurki', Dek – saya tauji' diriku sekarang ini, tidak bisa dilawan, kalau dilawan, semakin kita merasa sakit, merasa takut, dan kalau saya begini juga bukanki' mauku, Dek, tapi kupahami' kalau tidak ada satu kaum yang ada tanpa kehendak-Nya. Jadi, prinsipku, bagaimana saya bisa menekan hawa nafsuku – kan yang dibenci bukan ini, tapi perbuatannya, tapi casingku ini bisa saya ubah kapan saja. Kalau untuk sembahyang begitu aman, Dek, kalau di sisi lain, kalau kupikir, stress na' – karena kupaksaki mi' diriku jadi laki-laki, stress ki')*

He also added that his family once had put pressure on him to get married because they were worried about what people thought about his 'queer' identity. However, Bissu Yuni explained that his life choice was living celibately - which is in line with his choice to become a Bissu. However, the reasons he imposed clearly the values of his *Bugisness*. He explained that forcing marriage on him would only lead to a divorce. By doing so, he would put the 'wife' he would marry as a widow, which would place her in prejudice. It would certainly bring a detachment, which of course, would damage *siri'* and *pesse'* between the two families. He conceded that he was not able to provide spiritual support (*nafkah bathin*) – which is evidently noted to disregard religious teachings (if the husband is not able to provide physical and spiritual support for his wife) (personal interview with AY, 14/4/22).

During my field research, I followed Yuni's Bissu in his activities as a director of the Cultural Arts Institute, civil servants, and *Kerukunan Waria*, as well as in rituals as a Bissu. Bissu Yuni is also active in *Kerukunan Waria*. Currently, he serves as the Secretary of *Kerukunan Waria*. His activities with the organizations are also closely related to religious aspects. He told how he won the MTQ competition held by the *Kerukunan Waria* in South Sulawesi. Moreover, he also told how his activities with Cultural Arts Institute during the fasting month – not only fixated on Bugis cultural activities, but he also invited



the *anak-anak sanggar* to study, break the fast together, and learn about Bugis adat (personal interview with AY, 14/4/22).

According to Bissu Yuni, the values of the Bugis people do not discriminate against a person based on their gender identity. He feels that he has never experienced discrimination in the name of Islam in his daily life. He realized his identity as a *waria* – and chose to do *shalat* as a man. According to him, the preference was based on his understanding of adat and Islam. He described that the other Bissu also did it with the same reasoning. Bissu's prayer practice explains how dynamic the boundaries between his *waria* and Islam identity. When being asked about his gender identity, Bissu Yuni identified himself as a *waria*. According to him, identity is dynamic within him – it is difficult to choose one of them. There are times when he becomes a *waria* and/or is known as a *waria* if he fills a role in the organization. Meanwhile, the identity of a Bissu is present when he performs a ritual as a *Bissu passere'* or dancing Bissu. Another identity displayed when he worked as a civil servant or director of the Cultural Arts Institute. These identities cannot be separated – displaying interchangeably one identity over another does not mean reducing the sacredness as a Bissu as long as he fulfils his obligations in rituals. (personal interview with AY, 14/4/22).

*"I never experienced discrimination in a religious environment. I never feel differentiated. I feel equal to others. For me, I prefer to perform shalat as a man like currently. I could not lie to myself. I would feel sinful if I do so. It is my conviction to be both woman and man and to pray. I choose to be the latter (in clothes). Shalat is consecrated for me. It can mean different for others, but it is what it is, at least for me. If you see Bissu when they conduct shalat Jum'at, they will change their outfit (baju bodo) after the ritual regardless of the fabric. Even it is the best silk. We would still wear baju kurung for shalat."*

*(Tidak pernah ki', Dek, di lingkungan agama, saya dibeda-bedakan. Saya merasa samaji' dengan lainnya. Kalau saya ki', Dek, saya ini keinginan sendiri shalat begini, sampai sekarang, saya tidak bisa bohongi, keyakinan dalam diriku' dalam sini – ya tidak bisaki' ku bohongi' – shalatu sebagai laki-laki, kalauji' harus sebagai perempuan, bersalah perasaanku, seperti saya bohongi diriku sendiri, karena shalat bukan main-main – tidak tahu kalau yang lain. Makanya, Dek, lihatki' juga waktu itu, ketika shalat Jum'at, Bissu-Bissu itu lepaskan baju bodo setelah ritual, kami ganti baju – tidakki' kami shalat dengan baju bodo walaupun sutra)*

Bissu Yuni also conveyed his gender knowledge in the framework of *pangnaddereng* when he also criticized the idea that *waria* must be dressed as 'women'. He argued that it should not be subject to such restrictions. Accordingly, he said the *waria* were the souls of women trapped in men's bodies. How a *waria* expresses their identity is not only determined by long hair or women's clothes. Instead, *waria* have the autonomy to dress as they wish – it should also be the choice of each individual (personal interview with AY, 14/4/22).

*"It is what I want to emphasize. What is wrong if I choose to dress like this? Why is it like there are written rules to be waria like long hair or women's outfits? Should it be like that? Should waria or calabai be associated with things like that? We should understand that being waria is within. It is your identity, not something you made up in order to get validation. If I enforce myself to do so, Isn't that what jeopardizes my identity?"*

*(Makanya saya bilang, saya berpenampilan seperti ini, mau orang kenapa, bilang kasi panjang rambutmu – baju barumu, baju-baju perempuanka'? Haruskah waria atau calabai identik seperti itu di'? Nah itu. Calabai atau waria itu dari dalam, bukan dibuat-buat. Kalau dibuat-buat, itu yang bahaya)*

It also applies when performing *shalat*. He implied how the Bissu would remove his make-up and change into *baju kurung*. According to his acquaintance, the *waria* also conduct the same. The boundaries

of their *waria-ness* and Islamic piety as a Bissu are present in their choice to pray as a man – it is a form of appreciation for the *pangngaderreng* as a Bugis person – understanding how adat and Islam can be carried out together in daily practice (personal interview with AY, 14/ 4/22).

On her social media, Bissu Yuni was quite active in uploading the activities he described above on WhatsApp Story, Facebook, and Instagram. The interaction and communication activities were quite high, seen from the intensity of uploads, which ranges from 3-4 uploads per day. According to Bissu Yuni, cultural promotion could be done through social media – thereby, she often uploads her activities with Cultural Arts Institute and the preparation for rituals. Not infrequently, he uploaded ritual documentation as a marker on his virtual timeline (Bahfiarti et al., 2021: 198).

Considering the way Bissu Yuni articulates herself, he did not secrete his waria, Bissu, or Islamic identity anyhow. Social media helped him to network with other communities, as well as to self-actualize. He also had the 'power' to shape his 'image' in society. He showed all his activities with the *waria* community, Bissu community, and Cultural Arts Institute, yet to some extent, in his work as a civil servant. During the fasting month of 2022, he uploaded *tarawih* prayers with other Bissu every day. He said it required to be done to counteract the negative stigmas of people who thought that Bissu was *mushrik*' (personal interview with AY, 14/4/22).

## Conclusion

From the discussion above, the findings in the research can be seen from the connectedness of bissu's gender identity and how they negotiate their identity within the frame of Bugis Islam. It can be drawn as follows. First, interpretation of *Attoriolong* and androgynous myth as the source of authority for Bissu has shifted due to homonationalism. It fabricates binary oppositions, for instance west/east, liberal/homophobic, secular/religious, sacred/profane. Because of that, I would imply that in Bugis society, it is based on *adat* and Islam, where the two mutually support each other, not eliminating the existence of Bissu. But unfortunately, the Bugis values on *panganderreng* does not eliminate conflict but only prolongs a passive tolerance for queer individuals without protective governments. These dichotomies destruct the concept of Bugis Islam, that the absence of Bissu's role in the celebration of *Hari Jadi Bone ke-692* showed beyond doubt the lack of authority in the sense of the structure of *adat* within society.

Secondly, apart from the recognition in the structural level, the safe space still remains in the Bugis society. It occurred due to the *pangaderreng* rooted and practised by the Bugis people. As it can be noticed in the acceptance of families, relatives, and the community regarding 'the coming out process by the 'calabai' before they become Bissu. However, accepting Bissu is only possible in a limited way within the spectrum of Islam. In consequence, a negotiation shall be made by the bissu in between *adat* and Islam narratives.

Lastly, through Bissu's identity negotiation, it shows that Islamic piety emerges from the queer spiritual space as a journey of life, a pilgrimage, and a movement – in the process of coming out, relationships with family, relatives, and society, to the awareness of gender identity, sexuality, and gender expression. queer spiritual space is demonstrated through personal narrative. Bissu's activity as a social actor in everyday life indicates 'embodied resistance' (*resistensi yang menubuh*) through the learning of *Attoriolong* (*pangngaderreng*) and Islam (*Rukun Islam* and *Rukun Iman*). It also arises in the queer digital space used by Bissu to construct a connection and belonging as a form of resistance – beyond the heteronormative narrative that disciplines the body.

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### Interviews

Interview with Kerukunan Waria Bissu Bone (KWRB), was carried in Kopitiam Bone, in December 3, (2021), Bone Regency, South Sulawesi.

Interview with PO, was carried in November 11, (2021), in Lapangan Merdeka, Bone Regency, South Sulawesi.

Interview with PAD, 4/2/22 was carried in February 4, (2022), in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi.

Interview with PY, was carried in February 7, (2022), in *Kantor Dinas Kebudayaan Kabupaten Bone*, Bone Regency, South Sulawesi.

Interview with IC, was carried in February 7, (2022), in *Kantor Dinas Kebudayaan Kabupaten Bone*, Bone Regency, South Sulawesi.

Interview with AY, was carried in May 14, (2022), in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi.

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