

Sulapa Eppa: Bissu, Bugis Cosmology, and Queer Political Ecology

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Abstract

Various discourses about locality and indigenous peoples emerged as an effort to overcome the climate crisis. This term is also a part of seeing the sustainability of nature. This paper departs from arguments such as queer ecological studies and the indigenous paradigm. Furthermore, some of these academic studies are used to foster focus through indigenous knowledge in recalibrating the God-Human-Nature relationship through Bugis cosmology and the role of the *Bissu*. The main argument in this paper is to present Bugis knowledge and understand the embodied resistance in the existence of *Bissu* in South Sulawesi. This study used a qualitative method with participant observation and in-depth interviews. Data collection was carried out in two steps, namely, literature study, which was followed by participant observation and in-depth interviews. Data is then collected, classified, and interpreted through the indigenous paradigm as an effort to decolonize knowledge. The results of this study show some holistic, cyclic knowledge, and based on experience in the Bugis community, namely: (1) Environmental conservation can be guided by Sulapa Eppa as an environmental ethic based on Bugis cosmology; (2) Sangiang Serri as an eco-prophetic ritual that denounced heteropatriarchy; (3) Embodied resistance of *Bissu*'s gender identity ambivalence as a political representation of queer ecology.

Keywords: *Bissu*, Sulapa Eppa, Bugis Cosmology, Queer Ecology

Introduction

Natural disasters are a consequence of environmental degradation. The National Agency for Disaster Management (*Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana/BNPB*) noted that throughout 2019, there were 3,768 disasters in Indonesia - this has doubled from 2018 (1,999). Based on the Climate Change Vulnerability Map on the Directorate General of Climate Change Control website (2018), South Sulawesi is one of the areas with a high probability of natural disasters. Based on the general vulnerability index mapping through SIDIK, there are 73 villages that are vulnerable to climate change, floods, and landslides. As reported by mongabay.com (2022), environmental problems in South Sulawesi occur due to issues of exploitation of mining and groundwater, air pollution, and global warming. In environmental management, damage to watersheds (Daerah Aliran Sungai/DAS) due to the use of forests, rice fields, fields, plantations, and others has an impact on the potential for floods and droughts. In addition, water and air pollution caused by the disposal of factory waste and garbage

in sewage (drain) makes less oxygen that damages the ecosystem.

The climate crisis also exacerbates disasters caused by reclamation, marine sand mining on the coast of Makassar City and Takalar Regency, deforestation around Tokalekaju mountain, and damage to karst ecosystems in Maros and Pangkep Regencies (WALHI's End of Year Note 2018). Natural disasters also affect public health in South Sulawesi such as poor water and air sanitation. The lack of clean water leads to various diseases such as typhoid, polio, dengue fever, worms, diarrhoea, and respiratory tract infections (*ISPA*) as quoted on Jawapos.com (2019).

Departing from the explanation above, this paper arrives at the points of interest of climate damage, which also leads to cultural disintegration. The natural destruction of South Sulawesi is not only a climate crisis, but also a cultural crisis. Through the phenomenon of *Bissu*'s disappearing role due to desacralisation, the relationship between humans and nature has become

unbalanced. We are too preoccupied with the distortion of *Bissu's* gender identity, which is considered contrary to Islamic values; hence, *Bugis* society ignores the important role of *Bissu* in maintaining environmental sustainability. In fact, the existence of *Bissu* is crucial for environmental conservation. This has led the researchers to further examine the relational relationship between *Bissu*, *Bugis* cosmology, and the climate crisis in South Sulawesi. Through queer ecological politics, this research challenges heteropatriarchy, which is one of the main causes of human disconnection with nature and culture. This research aims to explore how *Bissu* and the local knowledge of the *Bugis* community are key to environmental sustainability in South Sulawesi.

The methodology used was qualitative with participant observation and in-depth interviews. For data collection, a literature study was conducted to contextualise this phenomenon in the intersectionality of indigenous, ecological, and queer issues. Then, the researchers conducted participant observation and in-depth interviews by taking part in *Bissu's* daily life. The fieldwork was conducted from November 2018 to October 2019. Initially, the researchers met *Bissu* Nandar, who is the head of *Bissu* in *Pangkep* Regency, along with their students. The researchers also met *Bissu* Jamil, who lives their daily life as *indo' botting*. Their ability as a bridal dresser has been passed down from generation to generation. *Bissu* Sahril, among the three, has an education level up to senior high school. They follow the older *Bissu* to live in the *arajang* house. All three interlocutors identified themselves as *calabai* early in life, then *Bissu* after receiving the call to become *Bissu*. The subjectivity of the three interlocutors suggests that *Bissu* means having a male body and a soul like a woman. In addition, we directly observed *mappalili* as a routine ritual before going to the fields in *Pangkep* Regency. The ritual we attended coincided with the momentum of moving the old *arajang* house to the new one. In the process, the *barzanji* ritual was performed by a religious leader as part of *Bugis* ritual before entering a new house. The data collected was then analysed through the indigenous paradigm as an effort to decolonise knowledge, and closed with a critical reflection from the authors.

Indigenous Paradigm: The Interdependence of Nature and Humans

"One seeks knowledge because one is prepared to use it"

Maggie Kovach

The indigenous paradigm is an attempt to escape the dichotomous reasoning between 'self' and 'the Other'. This paradigm comes from the fragmentation of knowledge that is entrenched in the educational system of Western countries through the Cartesian worldview. This occurred in the shift from theocentrism to anthropocentrism in the Enlightenment. The paradigm shift brought humans into rationality of thinking and the rapid development of science and technology that was (in fact) destructive to nature (Toynbee 1974). Not only destructive to nature, anthropocentrism that emphasises capitalist economics makes humans experience a crisis of spirituality. The emphasis on anthropocentrism can detach reason from the sacred. As a result, humans are trapped in rationality and then erode humanity. Nasr (1975) criticised the Cartesian worldview and presented the paradigm of perennialism. He argued that cosmology in the relationship between human interdependence and nature is precisely the basis of spirituality.

Lynn White (1967) argues for the need to re-evaluate how pantheism can answer the question of the separateness of the God-Human-Nature relationship. Humans should embody the cosmology of indigenous knowledge in their spirituality. And not trapped in the 'false' dichotomy between profane and sacred in the Cartesian worldview. Apart from dichotomous reasoning, the indigenous paradigm defines 'Otherness' not as a negation of 'self', but as a representation of transformation, hybridity, encounter, and experience (Rutherford 1990).

Bissu discourse in the indigenous paradigm is always in the pull of religion (*sara'*) and custom (*ade'*) in *Panganderrang*. As the foundation of the indigenous knowledge argument, the researchers refer to the *ade'* charter proposed by the first *Kadhi* as a counter-heteropatriarchal form of Islam *Bugis*. The understanding of *ade'* and *sara'* also emphasises the importance of nature as part of the human relationship with *Dewata SeuwaE*. Since the arrival of Islam in South Sulawesi, the position of *Kadhi* or religious leader has emerged in the social layering structure of *Bugis* society. *Datuk ri Bandang* was the first *Kadhi*. He was the most instrumental in establishing the institution of *sara'* in the Islamic kingdoms of South Sulawesi. His position as *Kadhi'* led *Datuk ri Bandang* to formulate two main principles in *sara'* institution, namely: 1) The *sara'* charter or agreement between custom (*ade'*) and *sara'*; the meaning is that *sara'* honours *ade'* and *ade'* honours *sara'*; the two do not cancel each other's decisions, if *ade'* cannot decide a case,

ade' asks *sara'* and vice versa; 2) *Sara'* officials should be of noble or royal descent to avoid clashes between the *sara'* and *ade'* (Ridhwan 2016).

However, after the fall of the New Order, democratisation gave rise to more varied Islamic movements in South Sulawesi such as Preparatory Committee for the Upholding of Islamic Law (*Komite Persiapan Penegakan Syariat Islam/KPPSI*), *Laskar Jundullah*, *Wahdah Islamiyah*, etc. The conservative turn of some Islamic movements in South Sulawesi through *da'wah*, education, and politics led to a more layered structure of *kadhi* and not all of them come from noble or royal descent; hence, the clash between *sara'* and *ade'* that always occur corner the position of *Bissu* as an important element in *ade'*. From this point, the authors highlight the importance of the concept of *Sulapa Eppa'* and the position of *Bissu* in *sara'* and *ade'* as a counterweight and connector of *Botting Langi'* (Upper World) and *Ale Lino* (Middle World) as explained in the next section.

Sulapa Eppa': Environmental Ethics in Bugis Cosmology

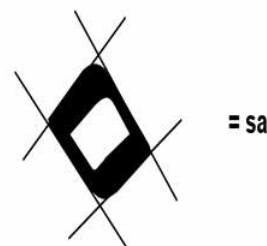
This section explains how *Bugis* cosmology applies *sulapa eppa'* as environmental ethics. We can see how *Bugis* cosmology fits into the indigenous paradigm. This is seen in the balance between living and non-living beings and entities, as explained below. *Bugis* cosmology generally believes that the world is built on four essential elements: water, fire, wind, and earth. These four elements are associated with a philosophical view that is identical to the consonant *sa* (*s*) in the *lontara* script (see Figure 1). *Sa* (*s*) is identified with the four cardinal directions (Mattulada 1985). The concept of *sulapa eppa'* is inseparable from interrelated analogies such as red for fire; white or clear for water; yellow for wind at dusk; and black for earth. The cosmology of *sulappa eppa'* is also evident in the production of rice (white, black, yellow, and red rice) as the main food source for *Bugis* people (see Figure 2). In addition, based on Morrell's research (2001), *Bugis sarong* weaving motifs are also inspired by *Sulapa Eppa'* philosophy, which is reflected in the four-sided plaid cosmic motif as a representation of human harmony with the four elements of life, namely earth, fire, air, and water.

The four elements represent the God-Human-Nature relationship. In *Bugis* cosmology, humans are at the centre with the responsibility of 'control'. Control is not to exploit, but to create harmony; harmony and balance between themselves and God and nature (Mahbud 2008). In addition, the visualisation of the letter *sa* (*s*) makes *Bugis*

people understand the concept of balance. *Bugis* people always have an analogy that if the letter *sa* (*s*) is faltering or too heavy on one side, it will indicate imbalance and disorder. If that happens, the stability between humans and God and nature is lost. *Bugis* people believe that if individuals or groups only prioritise one part, they will eventually suffer the consequences because they tend to emphasise one trait only (Mahbud 2008). As expressed by *Bissu* Nandar:

"Yero diasengge sulapa eppa, de na matane cuali, de to na maloppo cuali, balanced i. Nappa de to namaega pahanna, cecdi mo onion, mallinrukki ri anu maega."

"What is called sulapa eppa', it is neither one-sided nor big on one side, it is balanced. There are also not many understandings in it, only one that must be interpreted, taking refuge in the will of the people" (*Bissu Nandar*, 2019, January interview).



Balance applies not only to the God-Human-Nature position, but also to the element of balance within each body that affects human relationships. *Bugis* cosmology places the preservation of nature, which also relates to human relationships, as a moral burden (Mahbud 2008). In this context, *Bissu* as religious ritual leaders in pre-Islamic *Bugis* society know the intricacies of *Sulapa Eppa'*. The *Bugis* cosmology passed down by *Bissu* through rituals is considered a source of knowledge in *Bugis* land. For example, when the researchers interacted with *Bissu* after *mappalili* ceremony (ritual before going to the rice fields) was completed, which became a momentum for the younger generation to ask *Bissu* various knowledge, including mysticism.

"I saw many young generations, men and women, sitting on their knees in front of Bissu elders. In between conversations, they slipped questions about the concept

that has always been upheld together, about *Sulapa Eppa'*. Like a teacher who gives lessons to his students, so does *Bissu* Nandar straightforwardly explain the concept of *Sulapa Eppa'* to the younger generation who come to ask him" (Field Notes, 2019).

When *mappalili* ceremony is in progress, some *Bissu* is seen busy chanting mantras. *Bissu* believes that to summon the gods (divine spirits), they must offer offerings stored in four places to represent *Sulapa Eppa'*. For example, water is symbolised by throwing offerings into the river or partially submerging *arajang* (a sacred royal object that they guard). Fire is symbolised by scraping *arajang* into the centre of the ground which has four stones. Bugis people believe that long ago the four stones were used by their ancestors as a furnace to start a fire. Later, land, which is symbolised by storing offerings in large trees inhabited by *tenrita* (spirits) or scraping the bottom of *arajang* in rice fields, the care of which was reserved for *Bissu*. Lastly, the wind is symbolised by the storage of several offerings during the ritual on the roof of the house (*rakkeang*). In addition, *arajang* guarded by *Bissu* is also stored on the roof of the house. This is meant for the gods, who inhabit the *arajang*, to be close to the upper world of the gods. Respect for the harmony of *Sulapa Eppa'* is the fulfilment of the basic Bugis human element for life. The presence of balance is not based on one trait being the top priority, but rather the unity of four interdependent spaces. This is the basis of Bugis' ideal environmental ethics in the context of civil society.

Ahimsa-Putra (2007) notes that the people of South Sulawesi believe that the figure of a leader called *karaeng* or *arung* is determined by his or her ownership of *arajang* (heirlooms). It is a well-known fact in South-Sulawesi society that *arung* or *karaeng* owns *arajang*. In addition, *arung* or *karaeng* also owns land, gardens, rice fields, ponds as resources that are actually owned by *arajang*. In other words, power actually belongs to 'arajang' not 'arung' or 'karaeng' because the power possessed by 'arung' is actually borrowed from the power of *arajang* (Ahimsa-Putra 2007). This is similar to Goffman's (1955) and Hornborg's (1994) research. *Bissu*, as the guardian of *arajang*, is tasked to properly manage the resources owned by *arung* or 'karaeng'. The power base comes in the form of mantra chanting and expertise in caring for *arajang* that has been passed down from generation to generation.

The same applies to the sacredness of lands, big trees, rivers, and other resources. *Bissu* believes that

there are points considered as *posik* (centre) of the land that will always be guarded by spirits (*to tenrita*). *To tenrita* will get angry and haunt a person who disturbs the place where they live (Lathief 2004). Some myths of sacred places become shields to preserve the location. For example, the place used by *Bissu* to collect spring water for a ceremony, *Bissu* will visit seven springs to collect water, which will be put together in one container. *Bissu* will recite certain mantras to ask permission from the guardian (*to tenrita*) of each well. All seven springs used when *Bissu* wants to start a ceremony have a mythical guardian. This symptom is in line with the results of Nurfadillah's research (2019), that offerings tend to be found in places believed to be inhabited by spirits, so that they do not disturb humans in their activities in that place. This is in accordance with Aaisyah's research on environmental ethics. She argues that *I La Galigo*, for example in the episode *Ritumpanna Welenrenge*, is closely related to the concept of ecoprophetics. For example, *maccera* ritual is a tribute to trees and the supernatural beings that inhabit them. This ritual is performed by *Bissu* in a way that the trees must be painted with the blood of several animals in the forest. This ritual is performed to increase *sumange* (the power of nature). *Sumange* is believed to be the power of *Botting Langi* (Upper World) for humans. This knowledge system demonstrates how Bugis society promotes respect between humans and nature (Pelras 2006; Kern 1993 in Aaisyah 2018).

The knowledge of *posik* shows how water become one of the elements of livelihood. All water sources have myths about cleanliness that must always be maintained. The phenomenon indicates that the myth about water sources that must always be kept clean is nothing more than a way of preserving these water sources. The ritual of giving offerings for *to tenrita* is a symbol of the sacredness of nature that must be maintained as a shared resource. If we think about it more deeply, the myth of the fear of people doing 'dirty' things in this place is used to maintain and protect the sacred springs. The knowledge of *to tenrita* as *posik* is evidenced by the number of pipes that flows directly to people's houses in one of the springs (aquifer). Ironically, one very large pipe is directly connected to one of the drinking water companies in the area (Field notes 2019). Despite the capitalisation of resources through groundwater extraction in the aquifer, *Bissu* remains faithful to performing rituals by upholding *sulappa eppa'* as environmental ethics.

Ritual in Honour of the Life-Giving One

According to *Bugis* people, cosmology juxtaposes all gender elements as life-givers. Not just one of them. The *La Galigo* story tells us that *Sangiang Serri* was the son of *Batara Guru* who died and turned into a rice goddess (Hamonik 1991). Her honour is attached to her position as the child of *Batara Guru*, who was the first human being to descend on earth. *Bugis* people believe that to honour and love rice is to honour *Sangiang Serri*. The challenge to heteropatriarchy is seen in the important role of *Sangiang Serri* and the important position of *Bissu* (who is 'in between') in rituals to connect the Upper and Middle Worlds. *Sangiang Serri* is a female personification of the Goddess of Rice (Hamonik 1991; Koolhof 1999; Sintang 2004; Purday 2013; Sulkarnaen 2017). Respect for *Sangiang Serri* is evident in the *mappalili* ritual, which can only be guided by *Bissu*.

In the days leading up to the ritual, *Bissu* is busy preparing tools and materials. Everything is taken directly from nature such as banana trees, coconuts, nutmegs, and rice. *Bissu* says that natural materials must always be available for use in rituals. For example, one bamboo stick, one banana tree, and one bundle of paddy. Before cutting down the bamboo tree, *Bissu* sits kneeling in front of the tree and chant a certain mantra, then they meditate. As if in dialogue, *Bissu* asks the bamboo tree, how long will it last if you cut it down at this time? After being spoken to, *Bissu* then hits the bamboo tree three times with a machete, after selecting the bamboo with the longest durability.

The local wisdom in cutting bamboo possessed by *Bissu* is a lesson learned from their ancestors and transmitted from generation to generation within *Bugis* society. *Bissu* is able to estimate the durability of the bamboo they cut down. Some last three to five years and some even up to 10 years. The selection of bamboo that does not make a loud sound when being hit indicates that the bamboo is old enough and has fibre density so that it can last a long time if used. Meanwhile, bamboo that makes a loud sound when being hit indicates that the bamboo is young. Young bamboo does not have maximum fibre density, so it does not have durability. This is what *Bissu* Sahril (56 years old) told us when we talked to him while preparing the materials for the ritual. He recounted the hereditary experience gained from previous *Bissu*, just like the way he felt when he thought of cutting down bamboo.

Bissu always teach the *Bugis* people about the existence of bamboo tree that has a meaning. For

them, bamboo tree is very useful for human life. During the early stages of growth, or before buds and leaves emerge, bamboo tree first perfects its root structure. The root that digs into the earth makes bamboo a tree that is very strong, flexible, and does not break easily even in strong winds. The meaning of bamboo tree teaches the *Bugis* people to grow, develop, and achieve perfection, like a bamboo tree that moves from the inside out, not the other way round. In addition, in life, the strong root of bamboo depends on the understanding, appreciation, and practice of faith in God that is embedded in the heart. This is the root of the *Bugis* people's way of life.

In line with *Bissu* Sahril, *Bissu* Jamil (52 years old) also expressed the same thing. *Bissu*'s relationship with nature is shown by his knowledge of nature. They described a time when a couple came to them for interpretation, because after a year of marriage they have yet to be blessed with children.

"Makedanna de'pa gaga wijakku, langsung lokka ka malanggi colli daung rekko ota, nappa malaka uwwai ri ketuangge, ubacai ni nappa mitai di uwayye denre, siruntui padanna pucu', langsung ka pedanggi ye urane'e. de' tongenna tu namitta nak".

"When two people came to me, they said they have yet to have children. I immediately took two betel leaves and took water in a basin. After I recited the mantra, I put the leaves into the water and their shoots met. I immediately told the good news to her husband that in the not-too-distant future, they would be blessed with a child" (*Bissu* Jamil, 2019, January interview).

The couple asked for guidance in order to have children. After the consultation, *Bissu* Jamil heard that they were about to celebrate the birth of their first child. *Bissu* Jamil used betel leaves as a medium for their power that did not just come out of nowhere. Rather, they learned it for a long time and it requires them to use a certain leaf. Likewise, when they predict the annual harvest of farmers, for them the more festive *mappalili* ritual ceremony is held, the more likely the harvest will be abundant.

To date, the procession of *mappalili* ceremony or the initial ceremony to descend the rice fields to ask for rain by *Bissu* is still routinely carried out. Farmers believe that if the entire series of *mappalili* rituals are not performed, it will bring misery to their crops. Farmers' belief in *Bissu* does not come without reason. Farmers believe that *Bissu* can invite, even move rain to make their crops abundant; as well as control animals that are suspected of bringing pests to rice. *Bissu* can

transfer rice pests to other animals or plants that are less useful to many people. The belief in *Bissu's* power to call for rain and repel pests makes them even more sacred to people. I had several conversations with *Bissu* Emil, who admitted that their power comes from *arajang* they keep. In line with the view of Ahimsa-Putra (2007) that the researchers have previously mentioned, *Bissu's* greatest source of power comes from *arajang* ornaments (royal objects), which shows the relationship between nature and God.

Meanwhile, *bata'* (corn), *betteng* (sago), and *na berre'* (rice) as the main source of food (agricultural products) for people in South Sulawesi are related to honouring *Sangiang Serri*. This can be seen from the series of rituals performed before, during, and after planting rice. Firstly, *Bissu* performs *maddoja bine* (sowing seeds) ritual before farmers plant the seeds (Sulkarnaen, 2017). Then, *Bissu* performs *maccera darame* ritual after the crop is harvested (Harfila, 2019). After *Bissu* has successfully guided farmers to start planting rice, they then oversee the growth of rice by routinely making small offerings every Friday night in front of *arajang* (royal object). The honouring of *Sangiang Serri* shows how the interdependency relationship in narrative and metaphorical forms.

"We ask the gods (God) so that farmers are always given good rains, because there are also bad rains, which are usually accompanied by strong winds that can damage crops. We also pray that farmers go to the fields with a happy heart, so that the harvest is abundant, not eaten by pests. We do this ritual every Friday night" (*Bissu* Emil, 2019, January interview).

However, changes in the types of cropping patterns affect the balance of nature and the stability of the knowledge passed down to *Bissu* about *bata'* (corn) and *betteng* (sago) as crops. Today, the harvests from maize and sago plants have been abandoned by *Bugis* people as staple foods. They shifted from a hunting and gathering society to a sedentary farming system marked by the opening of rice fields in the era of President Soeharto in the 1970s, which centred only on *na berre'* (rice) (Anwar 2018). Land conversion due to the shift in the types of cropping patterns from polyculture to monoculture no longer allows sago to grow. Agricultural lands dominated by rice fields and ponds make *Pangkep* unfriendly to sago trees that must grow for a long time first. Unlike maize commodity that can still grow as it lives during the transition between rice harvest seasons.

Pangkep Regency is known for its agricultural activities. This is supported by data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS) regarding

the area of rice fields which is higher than ponds, namely 8,987 hectares of rice fields and 7,267 hectares of ponds (BPS Pangkep 2018). This figure is taken from the three sub-districts used as research samples (Labakkang, Ma'rang, and Segeri) where *Bissu* exists as a balancer between nature and humans (in relation to *Sangiang Serri* or the Goddess of Rice). The shift from agricultural activities to ponds also affects the constellation of natural balance. The landscape of the region that is not far from the coast, making lands originally used for agricultural activities to be turned into ponds that are only filled with nearly uniform fish species. As if ignoring the fact that Pangkep Regency is mapped with agricultural activities, the government encourages the promotion of regional excellence and 'directs' the promotion of fishponds and marine products alone, which are not in accordance with the contours of the Pangkep Regency area.

***Bissu*: Embodied Resistance and Queer Ecological Politics**

Heteronormativity comes from a heteropatriarchal system that enables the exploitation of the environment with consequences presented by various actors. Heteronormativity is therefore considered to undermine social institutions that balance relationships between humans, as well as humans and nature when looking at the interdependence between nature and culture (Mortimer-Sandilands 2010). The dual structure not only implies intrinsic meaning for individuals, but also creates 'mortal boundaries'. This dichotomy creates rigid binary categories such as: native/non-native, civilised/wild, sacred/ profane, traditional/modern, male/female, and masculine/feminine and ignores how social balance and system function. Queer political ecology looks at how the 'false' binary dichotomy created by heteropatriarchal system eliminates the narratives of marginalised groups and popularises the rhetoric of the 'conquest' of nature, the romanticisation of modernity, and the human right to control nature with technology for the good of all humanity (Starhawk 1989).

The politics of queer ecology looks at the liminality that women are not only those who are in female bodies and feminine souls, but can also be in male bodies and feminine souls. That femininity transcends the limited body and soul of heteronormativity. Not only that, a queer ecological perspective helps to understand how a personification can remove nature's sovereignty over their body. For example, how women are only objectified and 'tried' to be governed based on their bodies. This can be seen in the analogy between women and nature, such

as a forest that is still “virgin” as a definition of unspoiled nature; or the personification of Mother Earth also seems to limit that the nature of nurturing and care is embodied in the words “woman” and “Mother”. Heteropatriarchal views gives rise to the metaphor that women’s bodies are personified with natural resources. We must understand that queer ecology encourages us to consider land as a living thing, just like human. Therefore, if we talk about reclamation for example, the land should have the authority over the transition of its body, not humans (Bååth 2021).

Queer ecology is not only about gender and sexuality, but also political resistance. This approach presents how reality is something that is considered ‘strange’, dynamic, and will never be ‘normal’. Queer ecology can provide diversified perspectives on ecological policies and political practices in everyday life; and understand how gender shapes the way we interpret ‘nature’ and the unnatural, which in turn relates to how individuals treat other beings and the role of socio-economic and political institutions in producing power. According to Lee Pivnik, founder of the Institute of Queer Ecology, queerness in ecological studies embodies the ‘in-between’, grey area, and diversity. It represents elements of nature and reality that are not compartmentalised (Parkins 2018).

In essence, *Bissu* (in performing rituals) emphasise queer politics, i.e., the relationship between humans and nature must look beyond binary oppositions, should not be limited to masculine or feminine traits inherent to the body or soul, nor to nature, representing the sacredness of androgynous ancestors in *Bugis* cosmology. The existence of *Bissu* demonstrates the importance of the interdependence of the two elements: male and female and feminine and masculine as caretakers and guardians of nature. The presence of *Bissu* is a critique of the perpetuation of heteropatriarchal norms by challenging (again) the dichotomies in the dominant society. Distortions in the elements of *Sulapa Eppa’* lead to the destruction of nature and fragmentation of human relationships, leading to cultural destruction. The special relationship that exists between *Bissu* and nature is not only seen from *mappalili* ritual procession, but also from *maggiriq*, and *mappadandang* or *macedareme*. *Bissu* sacrifices their bodies as a medium between the Upper and Middle Worlds. The unity of body, mind, and soul is seen in *maggiriq* ritual, which means *Bissu* goes into a trance and draws a dagger (*keris*) into their body as an extension of the Gods. The *Bissu* conducts awareness that is wrapped in a magical and sacred perspective. Further, *mappadandang* or *macedareme* is a form of

gratitude that is carried out after farmers succeed with their harvest. The whole ritual is a series that should not be interrupted as a form of *Bissu’s* respect for nature.

The main challenge faced by *Bissu* is desacralisation, which leads to the loss of their role and position. Their resistance is not considered as political resistance because it has no place at the structural level (Umar 2008). This is evidenced by the determination of *mappalili* ritual, which is decided by the local government, not *Bissu*. At the most extreme point, their role was eliminated in the ritual in early 2022. According to an interview with one of the traditional leaders,

“In the past, *mappalili* was done to invite rain. But not anymore. *Mappalili* is done when the budget has been disbursed although there is a cycle for rain to come; it could be November this year or October next year. Now, it is no longer like that because it must be adjusted to the budget disbursement, which is only done in November” (AD, 2019, November interview).

In addition, *Bissu* were not present at the *Mattompang Arajang* ritual on Bone’s 62nd Anniversary. *Puang Matoa Anchu* invited several people to be present at his residence when the ritual was performed (28/03/22). Instead of protesting to the local government and customary (*adat*) groups about how crucial their role was in such a ritual, *Bissu* performed *Tola Bala’* ritual. *Puang Matoa Anchu* explained that this ritual was performed as an apology to *Dewata SeuwaE* because *Mattompang Arajang* was performed without *Bissu*. The greater the attempt to distort them, the greater the strength of *Bissu* to survive. *Bissu’s* non-violent resistance is interpreted as embodied resistance to their unrest. The absence of *Bissu* in a ritual can affect the positionality of the indigenous group to stand with *Bissu*.

Successful queer ecological politics can be seen in the resistance of two-spirits against the construction of a pipeline access in Dakota that passes through reservation land and sacred sites in North Dakota in 2016. Two-Spirit identifies itself as an indigenous queer or *indigiqueer*. During European colonisation of North America, gender and sexual expressions that conflicted with Western dichotomous concepts were eliminated, erasing two-spirits tradition in many North American nations. This also led them to the Native Americans Meeting in Winnipeg, Canada. They asked to separate their identity into their own terms that better represents their locality, ‘Two Spirits’ and to disassociate themselves from LGBT+ identification. They were not trying to leave the movement, but they felt that indigenous communities do not always have the same agenda priorities as the LGBT+ movement.

At the meeting, Cecelia Rose LaPointe, Director of the Native Justice Coalition of the *Ojibway* and *Métis*, said that the breath of the two-spirits' struggle cannot be forced into "limited colonial LGBT+ terminology". This could lead to dichotomous entrapment and essentialise gender and sexuality that should be ambivalent for two-spirits. In indigenous knowledge, two-spirits means connectedness to *Ojibway* culture as a whole human being in body, mind, and spirit. Elise of Idle No More, a two-spirits from Ohlone Island also said:

"My two-spirits identity has nothing to do with my sexuality. My job is to fulfil my roles and responsibilities in my community. Our existence transcends the notion of sex and gender. Two-spirits bridge an existence of opposites, be it masculine vs feminine, eternal vs temporal, spiritual vs earthly" (Amor, 2018).

Two-spirits fight to maintain their identity that is directly related to nature. Because for them, land is part of themselves. Violence against land is violence against the ancestors who also live within them. It is also why they call for an alliance between environmental activist movement and two-spirits and other *indigiqueer groups*. If separated, a pattern of repeated coloniality due to multiple discrimination will occur (Amor 2018).

We can see that the contrast between two-spirits' resistance and that of *Bissu* shows the weak role and position of *Bissu* in Bugis society. Does the example of two-spirits' resistance show the failure of *Bissu* to fulfil their role as the God-Human-Nature connector? This shows the powerlessness of *Bissu* to fulfil their role due to the various layers of discrimination and marginalisation they face. The real impact of the removal of *Bissu's* role and position in rituals is a warning of the need for new steps in strengthening *Bissu* community. The limited emphasis on *Bissu* empowerment strategies has led to a tendency towards 'resistance' to change within Bugis society. In this context, *Bissu's* position becomes static and their authority is constantly diminished within the community. At this point, the researchers emphasise *Bissu* as *indigiqueer* and queer ecological politics to become an articulate point of symbolic and political resistance for *Bissu*. *Bissu* need to come out of their *Bissu* resistance. However, this requires the help of many parties. It is important to remember that *Bissu's* resistance is cultural resistance through rituals, which requires empowerment. The horizon of *Bissu* movement must be embedded in their role in the context of Bugis society. Accentuation of the meaning of *mappalili* and *sulapa eppa'* rituals could be a new focus (Triadi 2019; Ismoyo 2020).

Queer ecological politics is expected to re-locate *Bissu's* function in customary institutions, without reducing their central position as a ritual leader. *Bissu's* function in rituals can be emphasised as an embodied resistance. The resistance of *Bissu* community is not only about the aggressive and intolerant majority Islamic group, but also the aggressiveness of capitalism and homophobia. Massive exposure from all parties without consideration for the empowerment of *Bissu* community also needs to be observed because it can lead to the iconisation of culture and tourism. Ideally, iconisation goes hand in hand with capacity building and networking, both internal and external. Through a cultural approach, strengthening *Bissu's* social capital will improve socio-cultural institutions, local wisdom, and environmental preservation. To be effective, such empowerment needs to collaborate with South Sulawesi Waria Harmony (*Kerukunan Waria Sulawesi Selatan/KWRSS*). It needs to be emphasised that the sacred characteristics of *Bissu* come from the ambivalence of their gender identity. Stakeholders' reluctance to engage with non-normative minority groups should be targeted as a key challenge.

In other words, Bugis and *Bissu's* cosmological knowledge and queer ecological political frames can be an alternative to the formation of resistance narratives. This right aims to give authority to *Bissu* community so that they can better fulfil their important ritual roles. The initial initiative has been seen from a meeting held by Perkumpulan Wija Raja (PERWIRA) Lapatau. PERWIRA Lapatau is an organisation that houses the descendants of King Lapatau (the 16th King of Bone). On 4 May 2022, a focus group discussion on "Strengthening Bone Regional Customary Institutions" emphasised the importance of *Bissu* community in the institutionalisation of *adat*. This initiative needs to be well guarded. For further action, queer ecological political strategies can be based on the Cultural Advancement Law No. 5/2017. Even within the frame of culture, queer ecological politics can be achieved. A cultural strategy for the protection, development, utilisation, and fostering of *Bissu's* ritual governance, indigenous knowledge, and technologies that are closely related to their role in maintaining the balance of God-Human-Nature interdependence can be a good bridge for the ecological movement and the non-normative gender movement in South Sulawesi to create impetus for the Provincial and District/City PPKD.

Closing

The climate crisis can be interpreted as an imbalance in the God-Human-Nature relationship. The loss of interdependence between the three misses the aspect of spirituality in humanity. This happens because of human-centred Cartesian dichotomous or anthropocentrism. The indigenous paradigm comes as an epistemology disobedience by emphasising the knowledge of *Bissu* community that can actually be a guide to overcome the climate crisis. For example, in *Bugis* society, *Sulapa Eppa'*, *Bugis* cosmology, and the embodied resistance of *Bissu* can be the basis of queer ecological politics. The values that exist when *Bissu* perform their rituals cannot be separated from the four elements of life in the universe, namely fire, water, air, and land. Every ritual performed by *Bissu* is a 'medium' for the production of local knowledge of *Bugis* people to use natural products in moderation, without damaging the existing ecosystems of plants and animals.

However, *Bissu* no longer have authority in rituals and customary institutions. The organisation of rituals become the domain of the local government, without involving *Bissu* in its decisions. We should be alarmed by the removal of *Bissu's* role and position in the structure of traditional rituals, such as the *mattompang arajang* ritual on Bone's 62nd anniversary. This proves the cultural divide in *Bugis* society. The loss of cultural values in life and livelihood. Human's alienation separates them, not only from nature, but also from their local knowledge. In other words, the cultural rupture that occurs in the context of *Bissu* requires a narrative that becomes a bridge to maintain the existence of their rituals and beliefs.

The analysis above is based on field data that has been recorded and translated through this paper. The narrative of queer ecological politics is expected to be an alternative approach in interpreting the existence of *Bissu* and understanding the dynamics in the context of *Bissu*. This can be done as an effort to preserve the environment based on the value of *Sulapa Eppa'*, which is part of environmental ethics in *Bugis* cosmology. In addition, the experience as a *Bissu* in seeing and considering *Sangiang Serri* as part of an ecoprophetic ritual that dares to challenge heteropatriarchal thinking, becomes its own distinction that has not been found in common in other times and spaces. This makes the nature of resistance embedded in *Bissu* being approached as an embodied resistance to the ambivalence of gender identity within the scope of queer ecology.

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