

# Queer Decolonization and the Metaphor of the Androgynous God in Indonesia: A Cosmological Perspective on Local Culture

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## Abstract

The narrative of colonialism in Indonesia gave birth to teachings that understand gender as a fixed and absolute attribute. The so-called "mythology of innate" gender is reduced to a binary dichotomy based on sex. A mythology that supports a system of heterosexism and has an impact on homophobic and transphobic attitudes. This legacy of colonialism also gave birth to the metaphor of God depicted as heterosexual-masculine, which established a patriarchal system both in church and society. This article explores queer theology concerning local culture in Indonesia. My argument is that through *Ardhanarisvara* cosmology, *Watersnake*, and *Rangkong* Dayak cosmology, *Manang* (Balinese) and *Kodi* (Sumba) Cosmology, this queer decolonization narrative contributes to contextual queer theology, especially about androgynous metaphors of God. God's metaphor has an ambiguous and transgressive character, beyond gender non-normative thinking.

**Keywords:** decolonization – queer – androgynous – transphobic – homophobic – androgynous God

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia is a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, with all differences ranging from differences in religion, ethnicity, ethnicity, class, and gender sexuality. Based on a Wahid Foundation survey in October 2017, communists are the least favored group with a percentage of 21.9%. LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex) groups followed in second place with 17.8% and Jews 7.1%. All three are followed by Christians (3%), Atheists (2.5%), Shia (1.2%), Chinese (0.7%), Wahhabis (0.6%), Catholics (0.5%), and Buddhists (0.5%) (Tempo 2018; Tirto.id 2018). The hatred of the LGBTI community in the above percentage is quite high and is usually used as a tool in identity politics battles in Indonesia. Even in Yogyakarta in 2016, an Islamic mass organization, Forum Umat Islam (FUI) held a poster competition and anti-LGBTI campaign. The culmination was an anarchist action that occurred on February 23, 2016, in Yogyakarta, between groups that support LGBTI and groups of mass organizations that are anti-LGBTI, the result was the closure of the Waria Al-Fatah Islamic Boarding School Yogyakarta (CNN Indonesia.com 2016).

Sharyn Graham Davies traces the history of LGBTI discourse in Indonesia, such as the Sulawesi Bissu community and the Warok tradition of East Java for more than three centuries lived harmoniously with the Muslim community, but persecution began to occur in the 1960s through "Operation Penance" from an Islamic group called Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia (DI/TII) (Davies 2018, 10–15; Boellstorff 2005, 5–15). Most LGBTI discourse in Indonesian churches does not pay attention to political power and dynamics in the context of Indonesia's history, especially the rise of Islamic populism in the reform era (Tumanan 2020). From 2016-2023, sexuality began to become an open discourse and was discussed both in the public sphere and on social media. Harassment, homophobic bullying, and incitement to hatred against LGBTI people online, or so-called cyber-homophobia have become a habit on social networks. They are considered abnormal, immoral, sinful, and considered as contagious diseases (Republika Online 2016). In addition, Islamic religious views, Kh. Ma'ruf Amin who then served as chairman of the MUI, now vice president of Indonesia made a statement that LGBTI people should be fought with laws because their behavior is a crime (antaranews.com 2018). Meanwhile, Dim Samsyudin who is on the advisory board of MUI said that LGBTI people will destroy the nation with their morals and behavior (Republika 2018). From here, religion (theology) and politics contribute to discrimination against gender and sexuality (LGBTI) minorities ranging from humiliation, violence, imprisonment, job loss, family rejection, and violence in schools and public spaces.

From the above reality, it is not difficult to find evidence that any religion, except Hinduism and Buddhism, is very unfriendly towards LGBTI sexuality (Larson 2020, 411–13). LGBTI invisibility in religion means that their presence is not taken into account for space in texts and interpretations. To achieve this, marginalized communities must scramble for interpretation within the domination and strong patriarchal systems of biblical texts, such as bodily rights, sexuality, fantasy, eroticism, desire, intimate relationships, etc. This paper will explore the narrative of colonialism that provides discriminatory actions to different gender and sexuality communities. Through the diversity of local cultures in Indonesia, I argue that the binary non-gender dimension becomes a contextual theological insight into the queer decolonization paradigm in Indonesia. On the footing of intersectionality of culture, religion, and identity provides a foothold for the development of inclusive attitudes in welcoming and accepting different gender and sexual minorities.

## 2. The Roots of Homophobia and Heterosexism

There are many LGBTI people in Indonesia, but state and religious institutions often consider them to be communities of people "infected" by Western gay culture. The view that gay is immoral and contrary to traditional values is a view of heterosexism supported by religious teachings that understand gender as a fixed, unchangeable, and given attribute (Ichwan 2014, 199). Heterosexism does not directly lead to homophobia, but heterosexist societies are fertile ground for fueling homophobia and violence against LGBTI individuals. LGBTI in Indonesia from 1992-2002, where before 1999 violence against gay men in Indonesia was rare at extreme levels of escalation (discrimination in the public sphere), but after the New Order regime was overthrown and Islamic fundamentalist groups began to grow, a series of acts of violence against gays occurred (Boellstorff 2004, 468–74). From this, it shows that religious dominance gives birth to different perspectives, which ultimately affect people's understanding of issues of gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation.

Violence against LGBTI individuals stems from an understanding of the construction of homophobia. The term homophobia was first used in research focusing on negative attitudes or fears toward lesbians and gay men (Smith 1971). In 1979, American linguist Julia Penelope introduced the term "heterosexism". Heterosexism is a system of bias about sexual orientation, which exhibits prejudice in heterosexual relationships and has negative connotations towards bisexuals, lesbians, and especially homosexuals (Jung, Ph.D, and Smith 1993). This definition suggests that heterosexism is a system rooted in a systemic constellation, cognitively derived from beliefs about human sexuality. In ancient times, especially in rural areas, it was still common for two men to walk holding hands, furthermore, the Indonesian Civil Code was based on the Dutch Civil Code, which did not provide criminal penalties for homosexual activity, unlike the legal systems of Singapore or Malaysia inherited from British colonial rule (Blackwood 2007, 294). However, heterosexism is widespread because everyone is expected to marry heterosexually, and tolerance for non-normative sexuality only exists as long as people do not declare their sexual identity in public (Boellstorff 2007, 168).

At the psychological level, some experts explain that heterosexism exists because of the need for heterosexual men to maintain patriarchal structures that make women bond (dependent) with men and keep men connected to masculinity and women related to feminism (Ichwan 2014, 205). LGBTI diversity is seen as challenging traditional boundaries of sex, gender, and sexuality. Because it proves that gender identity is fluid and not as rigid as previously thought. From this explanation, heterosexism emerged as a reaction to prevent the collapse of the dominant order and link heterosexism with negative attitudes towards any form of pleasure-oriented sexual expression (same-sex eroticism) (Kilmer 2004, 35). Meanwhile, at the cultural/institutional level, scholars view that community institutions have the potential to give birth to heterosexism. Jeeseon Park says that to establish a scale of heterosexism, the five institutions are as follows: 1) family, 2) education, 3) law, 4) mass media, and 5) religious institutions (Park 2001, 18–21). Religious institutions are one of the most important factors in the development of heterosexism in Indonesia, especially the officially recognized religions are Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and cults of belief (believers).

Theologically, this concern about homophobia and heterosexism also causes God to be portrayed as heterosexual-masculine, continuing a dualistic politics that subordinates the social position of women and LGBTI people both within the church and in society (Goss 1993, 70). Of course, this heterosexual-masculine image of God contributes to the patriarchal system's efforts to perpetuate truth that is final and absolute. While most churches portray God masculinely, we rarely encounter God outside of heterosexual-patriarchy. Brian Wren finds that most metaphors used in the church are by using the metaphor KINGAFAP (The King God Almighty Father Protector) (Wren 2009, 118–20). These metaphors are used in the liturgy of worship and become the prayers of the people every week. Even the songs of the people show metaphors that emphasize 'hetero-patriarchy', starting from God is King, God is Judge, God is Father creator of heaven and earth. God who loves His only begotten Son. The Son who descended and became man, born in the form of a baby boy, suffered, died, rose, and ascended to heaven. This shows the existence of a strong Christian system and teachings regarding masculine metaphors. Even the titles of God are known as men, all metaphors model men for talking about God (Johnson 2004, 307–15).

In the political context, the reform era in Indonesia is seen as an optimistic era and brings the Indonesian nation towards a better democracy, but in reality, there is a lot of discrimination based on gender and sexuality (Platt, Davies, and Bennett 2018). In 1999, a speech by the mayor of Sengkang, the main Bugis district in South Sulawesi, said that transgender became an important part of Bugis society. He even ended his speech by saying, "Long live the transvestite!" (Davies 2018, 32). Unfortunately, that expectation became an anomaly, Davies noted there were many instances of discrimination within the Bugis community. There are two main reasons behind this anomaly: first, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. In historical observation, during the Sukarno (1945-1966) and Suharto (1966-1988) eras, Islamic fundamentalists were politically marginalized existentially. But this reform era, instead of being a democratic era, the reform era has become an arena for power struggles. Reformation thus created space to increase Islamism activity (Platt, Davies, and Bennett 2018).

Second, the decentralization policy is a reaction to the centralistic and militaristic system of government, but the ultimate goal of this development is to create a system that is in line with the local context and cultural wisdom in each region. But again, the reality is contradictory: some provinces and districts have begun to implement Islamic Sharia principles into their local rules. In the post-1998 reform era, there was a tremendous change, namely the freedom of organization began to grow, both the emergence of conservative turn (religious conservatism) and at the same time gender and sexuality communities in various regions and places (Bennett and Davies 2014, 1–24). One of the conservative Islamic agendas is the implementation of laws, such as the Pornography Law, No. 44, 2008. The law restricts women's freedom of expression and is considered contrary to traditional cultures from various regions, such as Papua, Kalimantan, and Bali. There were 443 regulations related to Sharia law adopted from 1998 to 2013. This development directly affects the existence of the LGBTI community as Platt points out that the system of decentralization of power works in a local way, where many local officials ratify laws in a homophobic and transphobic manner (Buehler 2016, 327).

### 3. Queer Theology at the Crossroads of Religion and Culture (Intersectionality)

There is a need for queer theology to embrace the confluence of queer issues in religions other than Christianity. In an increasingly changing and globalizing world, the intersection of religious and queer studies is becoming essential to understanding the construction of human identity. The Article Hugo Cordova Quero, *Straddling the Global South Bridging Queer Theologies in Asia, Latin America, and Africa* (2019) shows the process of the turn of the new century of queer theology developing concerning race/ethnicity, religion, social and geographical location (Quero 2019, 170). In the United States, racial dynamics and power mechanisms confront queer individuals and communities not only from dominant ethnic groups but also from ethnic communities where heteronormative conceptions of gender and sexuality have been ingrained for decades. This intersection is referred to as intersectionality, where individual experiences in a system of domination, are interrelated and hierarchical. In this approach, the idea that subjectivity is constructed by vectors of race, sex, and sexuality forms a "complex identity" (Meyers 2000, 154). Broadly, intersectionality refers to the ability of various systems of oppression to interrelate with each other and give rise to new hybrid oppression.

Patrick S. Cheng as a Chinese-American queer theologian shows that queer people from Asian America experience twice the oppression of American racial formations with characteristics of white supremacy

and expectations of gender roles and sexual work among Asian communities (Cheng 2013, 5–10). When it comes to Asian-American communities, there is an awareness of the diversity of both specific cultures, geographic origins, and linguistic heritages. Cheng developed rainbow theology to show the diversity that intersects faith, sexuality, and ethnicity in the lives of Asian American queer Christians. In addition, within the community African-Americans display negative views of homosexuality in black churches (Griffin 2010, 48–75).

In the Asian context, queer theology develops in a region characterized by a multi-religious environment ranging from Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and local religions in its interaction with Confucianism, Taoism, and Chinese ethical and philosophical systems. Aspects that Althaus Reid does not highlight sharply are that all religions highlight also issues of gender, sexuality, equality, family formation, sexual division of labor, cultural expectations, and gender roles in societies with different viewpoints, insights, and values (Quero 2015, 215–33). When referring to Althaus Reid, the perspective of intersectionality both religious, cultural, and ethnic is not the main highlight because the tendency in Argentina is homogeneous, namely Catholicism with Latina ethnicity. The difficulty in developing queer theology in Asia is the tendency of religions to interact with each other, legitimizing elements of one another. Asia has a "multiplicity" awareness of the existence of multiple identities and many layers of domination that need to be explored when one analyzes colonial history, race, class, culture, sexual orientation, and gender.

As happens in Chinese culture, Tonghzi is a term derived from a political background, which means "comrade". Tonghzi underwent a change that originally referred to a culture of exclusion to a culture of resistance. Tonghzi is considered an official feature that implies "being queer" (Quero 2019, 172). In Quero's explanation, Tonghzi symbolizes a strong sentiment to integrate same-sex love, politics (with the aim of challenging heterosexism), and culture (reusing Chinese identity). Ng Chin Pang wrote his master's thesis *Breaking the Silence* (2000) at Chung Chi College Hong Kong, not only bridging queer theory with Tonghzi's activities to produce Asian queer theology but also taking a postcolonial position, which made his writing a pioneer in the interdisciplinary field (Pang 2000, 59–84). Simultaneously, other Asian theologians began to develop contextual thinking and theological praxis in context with other religions such as Islam. Joseph N. Goh in his article *Transgressive Empowerment: Queering the Spiritualities of the Mak Nyahs of PT Foundation* (2014) uses the framework of queer theology to investigate the life experiences of waria (Mak Nyahs) in the context of Islam in Malaysia (Goh 2014). Goh stated that the Mak Nyah actively seek ways to practice Islam and harmonize with their gender and sexuality.

In the Indonesian context, the Waria Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school is an important queer theological discourse at the intersection of religion, culture, and ethnicity. In the study of Kharirunnisa and Indrawati Is *There Still Paradise for Me? A Phenomenological Study on Religiosity in Santri Pondok Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah Yogyakarta* (2017) shows the contestation of social "acceptance space" in the community (Khairunnisa and Indrawati 2017). Explicitly, the authority of the Qur'anic and sunnah texts only mentions two types of human identity namely male and female (QS, An-Najm 45), whereas in fiqh literature there are four types of human identity namely male, female, *khunsa* (the term in gender science is intersex) and *mukhannis* (who are biologically male, but identify as female and want to change their



sex (Mulia 2010, 292). Through the presence of the waria Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school, I think there is a process related to contestation and negotiation about the practice of Islam in waria. Negotiations are important in strengthening the presence of waria in society and eliminating negative stigma, especially harassment and discrimination against transgender.

The article, *Tafsir Progressive Islam and Christianity Against Gender Diversity and Sexuality: A Guide to Understanding the Body and God* (2020) which explores the reinterpretation of religious texts both Christian and Islamic in a new and inclusive way, because often religious texts become a foothold in the doctrine of hatred towards LGBTI (Alfikir 2020, 1–8). This progressive interpretation should be appreciated in the interfaith context in Indonesia in breaking the deadlock in the struggle for tolerance in a multi-religious and ethnic society. But what Althaus Reid, a queer theologian from Latin America, hopes for is an interpretation that refers to queer solidarity whose goal is not agreement (socially accepted inclusion) but diversity (positionality). Despite all this, this progressive interpretation of Christian Islam in Indonesia should be appreciated as a struggle for acceptance in social society, but queer theology moves critically in its liberating, "disruptive" and disruptive efforts to show subversif in the midst of heteronormative systems (alternative – positionality).

The article Pui Lan, *Theology as a Sexual Act* (2003) responds to Althaus Reid's queer theology, explaining the Asian context in his encounter with religions other than Christianity (Pui-lan 2003). Pui Lan's critical note is first, what about Jewish theology, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism? Do we also say that their theology is sexual as well, like Althaus Reid's statement that Christian theology is sexual theology? These questions pose a serious challenge in developing Althaus Reid's queer theology in diverse and plural contexts such as Asia. Despite these criticisms, according to Pui Lan, Althaus Reid restored women's sexual 'pleasure' as a transgressive act, as it indirectly highlighted sexual and political frameworks, as well as the nature of church domination or hierarchy (Pui-lan 2003, 149–56). In my opinion, Althaus Reid's work offers a direct new insight into postcolonial criticism in unraveling homophobia and colonialism as a theological analysis that Pui Lan had not taken into account.

#### 4. Narratives of Colonialism and Moral Norms in Indonesia

Sugirtharajah shows that in the period of colonialism, missionaries were domineering and used the Bible to "corrupt" other belief systems and spread exclusivity in the context of the supremacy of colonialism (Fabella and Sugirtharajah 2003, 20). Gender becomes a constitutive factor that intersects with ethnicity, class and social status with the aim of enforcing not only patriarchal culture but also authority of power (Pui Lan 2002, 275). Pui Lan says that missionary literature shows an "aggressive", expansive, instructive and oppressive mission (Pui Lan 2002, 275). While Musa Dube says that in the 19th & 20th centuries, Bible translations were aimed at foreign missionary interests and obtained much information from the ideology of colonialism (Dube 2001, 6–7). Even in the period between 1900 and 1960, no leading theological journal in Britain contained a single article on colonialism and the impact of imperialism in the Third World (Sugirtharajah 2012, 22–25). During that period, what happened was the justification of colonialism and imperialism as part of God's mission (the mission of the church). Pui Lan realized that the colonialists who came to the East preached Christ as conqueror (colonial Christ) (Pui-lan 2005, 168–85). This metaphor causes Christianity to view the East as colonized people worthy of submission (objects).

Asia including Indonesia is not only a matter of geographical area but also a matter of socio-cultural construction, dynamic and constantly changing. For theologians, the term Asia has a recognizable set of meanings: ranging from the history of colonialism, diverse religious traditions, diverse cultures, suffering and a long history of patriarchal system rule and different political struggles (Pui-lan 2003, 24). Asia is unique in the Third World in that it has produced a very long hermeneutical tradition of scripture, which is quite independent of the West by establishing counter-provocative discourses contrary to Western hegemony (Pui-lan 2003, 28). Pui Lan said that in addition to reading the Bible from the standpoint of interfaith dialogue, Asian theologians also draw on the wisdom and resources of ancient Asian myths, scriptures, tales, and tales for new insights on how to interpret the Bible.

Colonialism that occurred starting in the 1500s was also inseparable from the role of Christianity in supporting the idea of heterosexuality in Indonesia. Among all European countries, the Netherlands is very strict in treating same-sex practices and cross-dressing (transvestites) and Dutch courts have the determination to eradicate it (Blackwood 2007). Dutch law states that men who engage in same-sex practices are tried and sentenced to death. The article Peter Murell, *Sin and Sodomy in the Dutch East Indies* (2013) said that the crime of sodomy is a crime that receives a severe sentence both in the Netherlands and in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) because it is seen as a crime against the natural order (Murell, 2003). Paradoxically, the laws in the Dutch East Indies legalized prostitution for both men and women. This fact shows that the discourse of colonialism also helped shape the mindset of heteronormative systems. Murrell relates the trial and execution of a man named Joost Schouten, a merchant, administrator, diplomat, and writer and he served in a court of law as a judge in Batavia (Jakarta), where he was known to have committed homosexual acts.

Joost Schouten was a public official in the Dutch East Indies who was not only active in public affairs but also the leader of the church council at the time. In historical records, he was the most powerful candidate to become the next governor-general of Batavia (Murell 2003). This trial sentence shows clearly that the discourse of colonialism is intertwined with the Christian teaching on the sin of Sodom in Genesis 19. This discourse influences the mindset and culture of heterosexism, where heterosexuality is seen as the only normative form of sexuality. In her confession, Schouten said that he had been allowed to be used as a "woman" and committed heinous acts with several other men (Murell 2003). In 1936 news of homosexuality in several cities in Java, involving civil servants, a Christian political party called on the governor-general of the Dutch East Indies to investigate and take firm action against the sin of homosexuality (Aldrich 2003, 199). From this, we see that the discourse of colonialism and the influence of Christianity in the colonial era contributed to the development of heterosexism (queer rejection in Indonesia).

## 5. Cosmology of Innate Gender and the Ideology of State Ibuism

The article Blackwood, *Gender Transgression in Colonial and Postcolonial Indonesia* (2005) said that there was a shift in gender discourse during the colonial period, which was previously referred to as sacred gender cosmology, containing masculine and feminine energy, as in the Bissu tradition in South Sulawesi and Manang in Bali as a pattern of the universe, a sacred unity in maintaining the community, now transformed into a mythology of "innate" gender (mythology of innate), which is reduced to a binary dichotomy based on sex, female and male (Blackwood 2005, 859). The period that began roughly

in the 1600s witnessed a change in the lives of local women where Dutch colonialism and Islamic practice became dominant. I see that Dutch and Islamic interests are often seen as antithetical and opposite in the history of cosmology in Asia, especially Indonesia.

Since the 13th century, Islam began to replace Hindu-Buddhism in the Javanese kingdom, where historically two centuries later the Java region embraced Islam as a whole (majority). Andaya in *The Changing Religious Role of Women in Pre-modern South East Asia* (1994) shows that Islam is a monotheistic religion, along with Christianity, which has a doctrine with a portrayal as a male-oriented, legalistic, and hierarchical religion (Andaya 1994). This is what Blackwood calls "innate gender mythology", which emphasizes belief in one almighty being, the masculine God, who created male and then female as his mate (Blackwood 2005, 862). This is different from God who is androgynous in local cultural cosmology before Islamic and Christian discourse exerted its influence in Indonesia. This Islamic discourse denies the magical power arising from sacred gender cosmology, which contains ambiguity. The Islamic faith is seen as a belief that emphasizes gender differences and gender boundaries that limit women's lives. As a result, women disappeared from the historical civilization of political leadership because they contradicted God's law (Meade and Wiesner-Hanks 2020, 335). The cosmology of sacred gender is replaced by the teaching that gender is a fixed, unchangeable, and God-given attribute of man. The role of transvestite individuals in local ritual practices (community religiosity) declined and was delegitimized because new religions discouraged shamanic practices and syncretistic rituals.

Although Islamic practices had an impact on women's roles, transgressive ritual practices continued as they did in the colonial era (Meade and Wiesner-Hanks 2020, 323–42). This is said from the beginning, Islam is a religion that can adapt together with the local community. Historical records show the existence of waria priests from local communities in several regions in Indonesia, starting from the Banten region (West Java), which is famous for its devout Muslim environment, even waria ceremonial dances were still performed in the palace in the 17th century (Meade and Wiesner-Hanks 2020, 336). These waria dances were also popularly presented by several theaters in Indonesia until the 1960s, a fluid gender play that entertained the local community. The adaptation of Islam (inculturation) to the ritual practices of local culture, can be seen from Davies' research in the Bissu community of South Sulawesi, where male Bissu invoke the prophet Muhammad in their prayers and ritual mantras (Davies 2010, 197). Until the 19th century, the practice of Islam in Indonesia was dominated by Sufi traditions, which made room for the ritual practices of waria and the spirit world, but things changed with the arrival of Wahabi Reformist groups aimed at "purifying the teachings", which cleansed from all beliefs and rituals of non-Islamic local communities (Blackwood 2005, 860).

The emergence of the Wahabi Reformist group, marked the existence of the Kahar Muzakar movement with its operation named "Operation Penance" during the 1960s legitimizing the persecution of the Bissu community in South Sulawesi. The movement "forced" the Bissu to turn into "real men" following Islamic teachings. The history of queer community discourse in Indonesia shows that there has been a harmonious life in the Bugis Muslim community for more than three centuries (Davies 2010, 10–15). The root of the problem of queer rejection in Indonesia is not only the way of interpretation of scriptural texts, but most LGBTI discourse in Indonesian churches does not pay attention to political power and



dynamics in the context of Indonesia's history, especially the rise of Islamic populism in the reform era (Tumanan 2020). From this, we see that Islam, especially reformist Wahhabi groups, has contributed to the development of heteronormative systems in Indonesia, namely that queer communities are seen as "severe chaos", sources of crime, violating the fundamental order of nature, where the heterosexuality system becomes the only normal and accepted sexual expression by society in general (Blackwood 2007).

The Article Blackwood, *Regulation of Sexuality in Indonesian Discourse: Normative Gender, Criminal Law and Shifting Strategies of Control* (2007) shows that the New Order regime (Suharto era) attempted to control sexuality, by enacting repressive gender ideologies that stigmatized alternative (non-normative) gender identities (Blackwood 2007, 295). Julia Suryakusuma calls it the ideology of "State Ibuism", where gender politics is traditionally constructed (normative) and gender binary (Suryakusuma 1996, 92–119). The concept of "State Ibuism" is not only promoted through state programs and policies but also through the proselytizing of religious leaders who uphold the idea of gender differences naturally. In that ideology, hidden the belief that a man and a woman were created to mate, marry and have children (reproduction). This ideology of "State Ibuism" can be seen from the way President Suharto took power by destroying the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) and the largest women's organization, Gerwani (Indonesian Women's Movement) (Wieringa 2003). The politics of sexual morality was implemented by Suharto by stigmatizing Gerwani members as "immoral" women. By claiming to be the Father of the Nation (Father of Development), Suharto made political claims based on the politics of sexual morality (protector of morality).

The ideology of "State Ibuism" is different from the ideology carried in the early days of Indonesian independence, such as in the era of President Soekarno's government (Wieringa 2015). All family members are involved in meeting the needs of a revolutionary society, not only men (husbands) but also women without exception. The commonly used term is "Revolutionary Emancipation". President Suharto in the mid-1960s took control of political and economic tensions, leading to an intra-military coup. The Suharto regime created negative accusations and prejudices of hatred against Gerwani (Indonesian Women's Movement) which was also part of the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party), based on this, he orchestrated genocide with the killing of PKI people in 1965-1966. From this, some analysis shows that the New Order regime built its leadership on masculine ideology, which subordinated women. According to Boellstorff, this requires a process called hetero-normalization, including developing homophobic attitudes (Boellstorff 2004). The destruction of Gerwani in October 1965 marked the end of a progressive women's movement, independent women both nationally and internationally. The remaining women's organizations are organizations in the traditional gender perspective and controlled by the state, starting from Dharma Wanita (civil servant wives organization), Dharma Pertiwi (military/army wives organization), and PKK (family welfare development). These organizations spread three "natural" functions, namely related to the symbol of *konco wingking*, a Javanese term that gives a negative stigma to women. This shows that the stability of the nation in the New Order era depended on women's submission, alienating (alienating) non-normative gender. From this description, government publications are quite successful in promoting the ideology of heterosexism, where marriage is a mandatory norm as part of Indonesian society.

## 6. Queer Decolonization in Local Culture in Indonesia

The Article Michael G. Peletz, *Gender Pluralism: Southeast Asia since Early Modern Times* (2009) shows that the practice of waria and gender pluralism occurred long before the arrival of colonials who brought Christianity and before Islam arrived in Indonesia (Peletz 2009, 37). There are historical records of "Transvet Rituals" found throughout the island of Southeast Asia from pre-Islamic times. From small inland groups to coastal kingdoms come reports of individuals who have roles as healers, sacred intermediaries, ritual leaders, and priests who occupy positions of gender ambiguity in carrying out their duties. Various forms of gender crossing and cross-dressing are associated with sacred figures (rituals), healers, singers, and dancers who perform in traditional (community) celebrations. They are not on the fringes of society but become important actors who are trusted to maintain the spirituality of the community. From here, it shows the existence of transgressive figures and roles in community rituals in Indonesian society. I use tracing myths, local cultural literature, ethnohistoric records and contemporary discourses to explore the cultural history of gender-transgressive practices in Indonesia.

First, the cosmology of Ardhanarisvara. In the Hindu-Buddhist period in the country, there was legitimacy of gender behavior derived from the combination of syncretism between Hindu and Buddhist beliefs with Austronesian ritual cults, as was the case with inscription monuments from the Srivijaya Kingdom in Sumatra in the 8th-14th centuries AD and the Majapahit kingdom in Java in 13-15 AD, namely the worship of Ardhanarisvara, which is called Lord Siva, which appeared between 375 AD in the Kushan region of India. Lord Siva is called the god of creation, destruction and at the same time the god of fertility. Lord Siva is characterized as androgyny, hermaphroditic, bisexual, and ambiguous in his gender (Peletz 2009, 24). Scholars find that there are many interpretations of Siva's gender and sexuality in iconography from region to region, so Peletz argues that this multi interpretive existence creates the conditions for a flourishing expression of gender and sexuality of diversity, as well as a climate of pluralism regarding sex, gender and shared aspects of the human experience of eroticism (Peletz 2009, 25). Since the 14th century, historical records reveal the existence of a thriving Tantric cult in Indonesia. This Tantric cult works from the worship of the god Siva that the universe is nothing but a concrete manifestation of the Divine energy that creates and maintains the universe. This ritual uses sexual or erotic relations, not only heterosexual but also homosexual.

In one of the Hindu texts, the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishads*, the story of Lord Siva describes the beginning of the world, the beginning of the universe. Atman divided himself into two, namely creating man and woman. The article Carl Olson, *The Saiva Mystic and the Symbol of Androgyny* (1981) says that it is through the sexual union of these two beings that all life comes into existence (Olson 1981, 377). Olson points to the universal principle of androgynous religiosity. In his explanation, all things are closely related to the realm of human identity both about gender and sexuality. From here, androgyny became the basis for mystical engagement with the Divine, as was also the case with Indonesia's local wisdom community.

Ellen Goldberg's writing, *The Lord Who is Half Woman: Ardhanarisvara in Indian and Feminist Perspective* (2002) revealed that Ardhanarisvara or Lord Shiva is unique because the aspect shown is called God who is half female (Lord who is half female) (Goldberg 2012, 1–2). While some sources suggest that Ardhanarisvara is a combined form of Shiva and Sakti/Parvati, the role and presence of

women hold a wealth of information about the feminine God. The transformation into Parvati shows myths and character transformations in Hinduism that are seen as great subjects, having dimensions of resistance, freedom, etc. (Goldberg 2012, 153).

Second, *Watersnake* (Goddess of the Underworld) and *Rangkong* (God of the Upper World) in Dayak Ngaju, Kalimantan. The ancient tradition relates to the transvestite ritual performed when a man wants to become an *Iban Manang* (shaman). Sutlive explains that the ceremony was performed by another *Iban Manang* and after the ritual was performed, the man was transformed into a shaman (Sutlive 1992, 273–84). The transformation was marked by a change in her name and status as a woman. She dressed as a woman and was given her new status in society. Men are known to take husbands or engage in same-sex relationships. According to historical records, in the mid-1800s it is shown that there were men called *Basir* and women called *Balians*, they were referred to as people who experienced gender transgresif (Schärer 2013, 53).

Scharer as a researcher from the West refers to *Basir* and *Balian* as "being someone else". The word "others" refers to supernatural beings who then take over these people. Both *Basir* and *Balian* are seen as mediators between the community and the spirit world. From this, it can be seen that *Basir* and *Balian* experience gender ambiguity. Their dress differed from those of "other women" because of their great wealth as royal nobles. Scharer noted *Basir* as a hermaphrodite who dressed as a woman. This shows that *Balian* and *Basir* occupy different statuses in society, a status that transcends masculinity and femininity. In the cosmology of the Dayak Ngaju people, *Balian* and *Basir* ritually represent the unity of two beings called *Watersnake* (goddess of the underworld) and *Rangkong* (god of the upper world), who together form what Scharer calls a total unity, a "bisexual" divinity, existing in a fusion of the masculine and the feminine. This sacred mythology firmly shapes everyday gender meaning, a transgressive ritual practice that derives meaning and power from gender-ambiguous cosmologies of gods and goddesses.

Third, *Manang* Cosmology (Bali) and Dewa Kodi (Sumba). Penelope Graham's research literature entitled *Iban Shamanism: An Analysis of the Ethnographic Literature* (1987) revealed that in the mid-1800s *Manang* Bali was female (Graham 1987). Of the four women Graham found in literature, one lived in the late 1800s, while the last was in the early 1970s. A Balinese *Manang* woman known as *Manang Gieng* after a man, adopted the male way of walking, sitting, smoking, and going out with men to work on rubber processing in the forest. The article Karsch-Haack, *The Homosexual Life of Primitive Peoples* (1911) says that in Bali, women cross-dressing perform services in temples (places of shadow) (Karsch-Haack 1975). This evidence is corroborated by Jane Belo's research that both "transvestite" men and women, as well as girls and boys, crossdress in sacred ritual dances (Belo 1962, 50–58). Many anthropologists say that these people are men and women who prefer to behave like the other sex. In addition to Bali, on the island of Sumba, they know him as *Kodi*, a priest who plays a role in religious duties, a role that is ambiguous gender (Asia 1990, 281). Janet Hoskins in *Doubling Deities, Descent and Personhood: An Exploration of Kodi Gender Categories* (1990) says that during her time there, in the mid-1900s a priestess named *Dewi Padi* held the highest position (Asia 1990, 280–82). According to Hoskins, "crossed" priestesses (gender transgressive) transform sexual identity into a complete and powerful blend of male and female aspects.

Anthropologist Mark Hobart's observation, *Engendering Disquiet: On Kinship and Gender in Bali* (1995) says that the supreme being in Balinese cosmology is not represented as male or female, but as a sacred union of the two (Hobart 1995). The Balinese are "pious figures, by combining the characteristics of both sexes (Belo 1962). These gods and goddesses represented the cosmological duality of harmonious couples, a transgressive practice, which became a symbol of cosmic ambiguity. Even in religious belief, *Kodi* contains several gender-bound gods, called Mother and Father. The god responsible for childbirth is called the Great Mother/Great Father. Men and women are born with feminine masculine elements or energies, but through life cycle rites, they become distinct and complementary beings. The fusion of masculinity and feminism exists in the God *Kodi*, whose sacred gender mythology is the source of the divine and the human, placing human gender distinctions within the divinity of the self, in which gender, masculinity, and feminism are found in the design of the universe. This view of sacred gender cosmology occupies a central space in Nusantara, resulting in transgressive ritual practices, which combine masculinity and feminism in one body.

## 7. Conclusion

Every religion that dominated Indonesia in a certain period has influenced or changed people's understanding of issues of gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation. Old cosmologies of androgynous and dual-gender deities have provided an ideological belief that gender is fluid and transgressive. This analysis of local historical, cultural, and religiosity can be a resource for the development of queer theology in Indonesia. History in Indonesia shows that Islamic and Christian conservatism has increased the system of heterosexism and contributed to the emergence of transphobia expressed through acts of discrimination and violence. Queer theology moves on differences in sexual epistemology, which challenges the system of heteronormativity as an understanding of closed, orderly, and limiting social space. Through *Ardhanarisvara* cosmology, Watersnake, and *Rangkong* Dayak cosmology, *Manang* (Balinese) and *Kodi* (Sumba) Cosmology, this queer decolonization narrative contributes to contextual queer theology, especially concerning androgynous metaphors of God. God's metaphor has an ambiguous and transgressive character, beyond gender non-normative thinking. Thus queer theology becomes relevant in diverse and plural contexts such as in Asia, especially Indonesia.

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