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# Embodied Piety

## Islamic Preaching and Indigenous Identity in the Pa'bitte Passapu Ritual Dance

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### Abstract

This study examines how Islamic da'wah values interact with Indigenous identity in the Pa'bitte Passapu ritual dance of the Ammatoa people in Tanah Toa, South Sulawesi. Using ethnographic methods and symbolic-interpretive analysis over four months, data were collected from customary leaders, performers, and community members. Originating from transformed cockfighting practices and the Sawerigading–La Galigo epic, the dance conveys Islamic ethics through movements (ammiti, appasilompo manu', sahung, abbesere, sitobo') and kelong songs—addressing gambling and violence while promoting ta'awun, respect, and solidarity. Thus, Pa'bitte Passapu acts as “embodied piety,” harmonizing sharia and adat. It shows how the Ammatoa internalize Islamic teachings, revitalizing Indigenous tradition rather than erasing it, contributing to debates on Indigenous resilience amid religious reform and globalization in Southeast Asia.

**Keywords:** Southeast Asia, Indigenous People, embodied piety, Islamic preaching (*da'wah*), Ammatoa community, *Pa'bitte Passapu*



## Introduction

Amid globalisation, modernisation, and the influx of external values, Indigenous communities worldwide continue to strive to preserve their identities (Ufie et al., 2022). Indonesia, with its rich ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, provides fertile ground for unique encounters between local traditions and religious teachings, particularly Islam (Halim et al., 2021). These encounters do not always manifest as conflict or dominance of one over the other. Rather, they often give rise to distinctive cultural forms born out of negotiation and adaptation between faith and local identity (Ibnu Azka, Fathur Baldan Haramain, 2024).

In Weber's view, religion is not merely belief in the supernatural but also fosters strong social cohesion, despite variations in tradition across religions (A. Putra, 2020). The culture of South Sulawesi is notably distinct from that of Java or Sumatra, which have been heavily influenced by Sanskrit (Indian), Chinese, Hindu, and Buddhist traditions (Ardhana & Wijaya, 2017). South Sulawesi's culture has tended to retain its distinct authenticity, reflecting a heritage rooted in Indigenous worldviews with minimal external influence before the arrival of Islam. However, Islam brought profound transformations across many aspects of life, affecting social structures, cultural systems, and even leadership and bureaucratic models (Pabbajah, 2021).

A compelling example of this cultural-religious interaction can be observed in the Ammatoa community of Kajang, South Sulawesi. Widely recognised as guardians of the *Pasang ri Kajang*, a deeply rooted system of ethical and philosophical values, the Ammatoa people simultaneously embrace Islam as their religion (Habiba & Wulandari, 2024; Zainuddin et al., 2023). Rather than abandoning their traditions in favour of a rigid, textual form of Islam, they have forged a middle path: a bridge between ancestral beliefs and Islamic teachings, between adat and sharia, between cultural embodiment and religious spirit (Maarif, 2012).

*Pa'bitte Passapu*, a ritual dance performed during weddings and other significant communal events (Samidi & Husain, 2024), stands as a concrete example of this negotiation process. The dance is not merely a display of cultural symbolism; it subtly conveys religious and spiritual values rooted in Islamic teachings. The movements of the dancers, their attire, and the ritual structure all serve as forms of embodied piety, religiosity expressed not only through words or sacred texts, but also through physical gestures, rituals, and living culture (Narayanan, 2003).

This study investigates *Pa'bitte Passapu* as a dialectical and hybrid space where Islamic preaching (*da'wah*) and the cultural identity of the Ammatoa people intersect, negotiate, and mutually reshape one another. Drawing upon an ethnographic approach and symbolic analysis, this research transcends the conventional view of the dance as mere cultural performance. Instead, it conceptualises *Pa'bitte Passapu* as a vernacularised form of Islamic *da'wah*, a localised articulation of faith that is contextually grounded, culturally embedded, and oriented toward revitalising Indigenous tradition rather than erasing it.

At a deeper level, the ritual embodies a process of religious vernacularisation and cultural resilience, demonstrating how Indigenous communities in Indonesia, and Southeast Asia more broadly, creatively engage with Islam while maintaining their ancestral ethos. The Ammatoa case exemplifies that religious transformation does not necessarily imply cultural rupture but can instead generate a dynamic synthesis of belief and belonging: a form of spiritual hybridity that bridges the sacred and the local.

In this light, *Pa'bitte Passapu* operates as both ritual and discourse, a site where Islamic values are reinterpreted through Indigenous aesthetics and where cultural identity is reaffirmed within Islam's moral framework. By situating this practice within ongoing debates on localised Islam, cultural negotiation, and identity politics, this study offers new insight into how Islamisation in Indonesia unfolds as a plural and dialogical process, shaped not by domination but by reciprocal adaptation and creative continuity.

## Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design to understand the symbolic meanings and religio-cultural practices embedded in the ritual dance *Pa'bitte Passapu* among the Ammatoa Kajang community in Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi. The ethnographic approach was selected because it enables the researcher to examine cultural practices from the perspective of the community itself, particularly in understanding how Islamic values are integrated with local customary norms. Fieldwork was conducted for approximately four months (May–August 2024), allowing the researcher to gain contextual insights through repeated observations of social activities and ritual practices within the community.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve informants selected through purposive sampling, including customary leaders, ritual performers, local religious figures, and community members aged approximately 30–70 years. The researcher also engaged in participant observation by attending ritual events directly and observing related social interactions. Supporting data were obtained through documentation, including photographs, video recordings, and local documents such as village archives and customary records.

Data analysis employed thematic and symbolic-interpretative methods through stages of data reduction, thematic categorisation, and interpretation of the ritual's symbolic meanings. Data collected in the Konjo language were translated into Indonesian while preserving their cultural context. To ensure data validity, the study applied source and method triangulation, as well as member checking with key informants and discussions with academic peers to strengthen the reliability of the interpretations.

## The Cultural and Religious Landscape of the Ammatoa Community

Tanah Toa Village, located in Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi, is recognised as the centre of the Ammatoa Indigenous community, which continues to preserve its traditional institutions and distinctive cultural system (Abdul Hafid, Suardi Suardi, 2023). Situated in a hilly and forested region, the village constitutes a spatial and cultural landscape that reflects the Ammatoa's long-standing ecological ethics and customary governance. Rather than merely a geographical entity, Tanah Toa functions as a symbolic and normative centre where the community's worldview, rooted in *adat* (custom) and spiritual belief, structures social relations, environmental management, and religious expression.

The Ammatoa Kajang community resides in Tanah Toa Village, Kajang sub-district, Bulukumba Regency, an area spanning 972 hectares with a mix of settlements, rice fields, plantations, and forests (Data Source: Tanah Toa Village, 12 February 2024). The community is known for its adherence to *pasang* (ancestral teachings) emphasising *tallasa kamase-mase* (simple living). The Ammatoa community is divided into two regions: *Kajang Dalam* (*Rilalang Embayya*), the traditional core area, and *Kajang Luar* (*Ipantara Embayya*), where people have embraced more modern lifestyles (Akib, 2008). Despite this division, both regions uphold the ancestral values of harmony with nature and simplicity.

The history of the Ammatoa traces back to To Manurung ri Kajang, the first leader believed to have emerged from a mythological beginning, riding an eagle and settling the land (Latief & Syam, 2022). The community has preserved these ancestral teachings and their traditional governance through generations of Ammatoa leaders. Their cultural and territorial identity is reflected in their mythology, black attire, and quadrilateral territorial boundaries (*Sulapa Appa*), which symbolise their connection to the land and its sacredness (Anggraini, 2023). These values are deeply integrated into their daily lives and cultural expressions, including traditional practices like the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance.

The Ammatoa Kajang community practises a worldview rooted in self-restraint and moral simplicity, expressed through the principle of *kamase-masea*, a way of life emphasising moderation, humility, and detachment from material excess (Akib, 2003). This ethos is grounded in the *Pasang ri Kajang*, particularly the maxim “*ako kaitte-itte risahocinde tappanging, ri caula tatimba-timba*”, which conveys the idea of valuing spiritual integrity over material wealth. Rather than denoting a literal exchange between worldly poverty and heavenly reward, *kamase-masea* articulates a philosophy of ethical sufficiency, a conscious choice to live simply as an expression of faith and harmony with nature.

Embedded within this moral framework are four key virtues, *lambusu* (honesty), *gattong* (steadfastness), *sabbara* (patience), and *appisona* (sincere surrender), which together constitute the *Pasang* system of moral guidance (Rabani & Husain, 2024). These values regulate daily conduct and sustain a worldview oriented not toward ascetic withdrawal but toward balance, sincerity, and communal well-being. In this sense, *kamase-masea* reflects not a transactional poverty for divine compensation, but a spiritual discipline that defines

ethical relations among humans, nature, and the Creator.

The *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance is a traditional performance originating from the Ammatoa Kajang community in Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi. The term *Pa'bitte Passapu*, literally meaning “fighting with handkerchiefs”, is believed to have been inspired by the traditional cockfighting practices that have long been embedded in the community’s social life (Ade Rezkiawan Embas, 2017). Over time, this cultural practice evolved into a symbolic dance form, transforming physical combat into a ritualised expression of courage, discipline, and communal identity.

The origin of the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance is often linked to the legendary narrative of Sawerigading and the *La Galigo* epic, central to the Bugis-Makassar cultural heritage. According to Ka R.D., one of the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dancers, there are two existing versions of the story explaining the creation of the dance, as follows:

It is said that Sawerigading had three sons. His first son, La Balobo, who possessed a strong spirit of leadership, departed for Java and became the forerunner of peace on the island. His second son, I La Patau, travelled to Luwu to study the art of *tariqa* (Sufi spiritual practice). The third son, La Galigo, remained in Kajang, where his lineage became part of the local cultural heritage.

Based on the interview with R.D., he explained:

“La Galigo, the son of Sawerigading, greatly enjoyed watching cockfighting matches, which also served as entertainment for his father, the king. As he grew older, La Galigo became increasingly fascinated by the sport and even owned a fighting cock that was said to be invincible. One day, La Galigo decided to challenge cockfighters from other kingdoms to prove the superiority of his rooster. After defeating many opponents, a sense of arrogance began to grow within him. Eventually, La Galigo ordered his men to search for the greatest rooster capable of defeating his own, in order to test his cock’s unmatched strength.” (Interview with R.D.)

Once upon a time, there was a powerful and undefeated rooster owned by a king, which eventually became the opponent of La Galigo’s rooster. During the match, it appeared that the rooster belonging to the arrogant young La Galigo was about to lose. Suddenly, La Galigo cut the necks of both roosters, declaring, “*puli i manu a,*” which means “a draw” or “both roosters die.”

Witnessing this act of deceit, the king’s men attacked La Galigo, leading to a violent clash and bloodshed. When Sawerigading learned about the incident, he was deeply disheartened by the violence that had resulted from cockfighting. Consequently, he banned the practice, declaring it illegal for anyone to continue. Under the king’s decree, cockfighting was replaced by the *Pa'bitte Passapu* game, a contest using headcloths (*destar*) instead of roosters, as a symbolic substitute intended to prevent conflict and bloodshed among the people.

Another story tells that the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance was created by the first Karaeng Kajang, who was titled the First King of Kajang.

Based on the results of the interview with R.D., he added that:

“Once upon a time, when the king wanted to marry his beloved girl from a neighbouring country, at the same time there was another king who wanted to propose to the beautiful girl. According to the existing culture, if a girl was proposed to by two men at the same time, and if both suitors had the same rank or caste, then there had to be a fight or a duel of pain between the two suitors to determine who was most entitled to propose to the girl.” (Interview with R.D.)

The two kings agreed to fight. A contest of skill between Karaeng Kajang and his rival king was held. After a long fight, neither of them gave up because their supernatural powers were equal. Finally, the fight was stopped temporarily for deliberation and to find other alternatives to determine the winner. Then it was agreed that the two suitors must find a rooster to fight, with the provision that whoever’s rooster lost must withdraw, and the one whose rooster won would have the right to marry the beautiful girl.

It is said that in this fight, Karaeng Kajang’s chicken won. The victory made Karaeng Kajang very happy because he would soon marry the girl of his dreams. This victory was very memorable in the heart of Karaeng Kajang and greatly delighted the hearts of his followers and all his people.

In an interview with R.D., he explained in detail:

“After a long time, the memory was still always remembered by Karaeng Kajang, until one day when Karaeng Kajang was gathering with Ammatoa and his followers at a party, Karaeng Kajang said to his followers ‘*appabitte sako la kuttei*’ (I want to see you fight). The followers were shocked because there were no chickens to fight. They asked ‘*apa lani pa’bitte karaeng*’ (what do you want to fight?). Hearing the conversation between Karaeng Kajang and his followers, Ammatoa, who always followed his instructions, said ‘*appa’bitteko passapu*’ (just fight with a headband). Simultaneously, the followers immediately took the *passapu* or headband on their heads and then put it on their heads as a symbol of a rooster. They imitated the movements of the fighting chickens in front of Karaeng Kajang and Ammatoa. From this incident, *Pa’bitte Passapu* began to be often performed by the Kajang *le’leng* Ammatoa traditional community and became a hereditary tradition.” (Interview with R.D.)

*Pa’bitte Passapu* is a dance to welcome traditional guests or performed at wedding events. This dance is accompanied by singing and musical instruments while wearing a headband (*Passapu*).

Figure 1: Performing the Pa'bitte Passapu Dance



Source:

<https://www.somasinews.com/2021/09/16/lomba-pabitte-passapu-dan-anggaru-meriahkan-festival-budaya-kajang-4/>

The *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance is performed by six people, four of whom are dancers and two are musical accompaniments playing drums. The implementation process is carried out in several stages, beginning with the preparation stage. Things that need to be prepared before performing the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance are the equipment and supplies required for the performance, including the *palingoro* musical instrument (drum), traditional Kajang men's clothing, and the *passapu* (headband). SBG, a *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance performer, said: "*Injo Pa'bitte Passapua ala'-ala' anu nipakea ganrang na passapu, na bajunna usual napake pa'bitte baju le'leng, na tope le'leng. Passapu nipakea rua ianjo passapu nu riulua na passapu nu dihajua pa'bitte*" (In the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance, the equipment used is a drum and a *passapu*; the clothes usually worn are black clothes and a black sarong. There are two *passapu* used, namely the *passapu* used on the head and the *passapu* which is considered a fighting cock). (Interview with SBG)

The players who will appear in the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance performance, both as dancers and musicians, must prepare all the necessities that will be used, starting from wearing traditional Kajang men's clothing in the form of a *passapu* as a headband, clothes, and a sarong typical of the Kajang people. The players also do not forget to prepare all the tools

used, such as drums and the *passapu* which are considered fighting chickens. SPE also said: “*Nabai, kunjo players have to make lekleng clothes na passapu. before injo na passadiakangi lanipakea appada gandrang na passapu*” (That’s right, the players there have to wear black clothes and a *passapu*. Before that, a drum and a *passapu* have to be prepared). (Interview with SPE)

The accompanying music used is the *palingoro* drum beats in pairs, which is classified as very simple and monotonous. The clothing worn in this dance is very simple and symbolises the life of the Kajang Indigenous people, who have the principle of living *ak-kamase-masea* or living in simplicity. The *passapu*, which is a cloth in the form of a *destar* (headcloth), is the same as the cloth used as a head covering by Kajang men. The *passapu* is also used as a symbol of a substitute for fighting cocks, played by the dancers like chickens.

In the performance stage, the dancers and musicians take their designated places. The musicians beat the *palingoro* (drum) slowly. During the performance stage, the dancers will perform the *Pa’bitte Passapu* dance. The core movements of the *Pa’bitte Passapu* dance are *ammiti* (spinning), *appasilompo manu’* (equalising the size of the chicken), *sabung* (fighting), *abbesere* (fighting), and *sitobo’* (stabbing). Based on the results of an interview with RD, a *Pa’bitte Passapu* dance performer, he said: “*Lalang gerakanna rie siurang nak ia minjo nu firstyya ammiti, ammiti artina injo pasikuku-kukui manu sahunganna, pasilompo manu sahunganmi, maingi injo pa’bittemi manu’na, maingi pa’bitte rie dikua abbesere, abbeserei karna anre na Tarimai ka betaanna. Sitobo, sitoboi ka sihambangimi.*” (In the core movement of the *Pa’bitte Passapu* dance, there are five movements. The first is spinning. In spinning, the meaning is that a fighter warms up his chicken to be pitted, then equalises the size of the fighting chicken. After that comes the cockfight. After the cockfight there is a fighting movement because they do not accept defeat, and the last movement is the stabbing movement, which occurs because in the fight they become heated and cannot be controlled) (Interview with RD).

The *Pa’bitte Passapu* dance is none other than the traditional Kajang dance performed by dancers and drummers. *Sabung / pa’bitte* is the final stage or the core of the *Pa’bitte Passapu* dance, where a person will fight a chicken to find out who will be the winner in the fight. From the core movements of the *Pa’bitte Passapu* dance explained by Rudding, it was emphasised by RSL by saying: “Anu ku isse battu ri gurungku Ka Rudding, pantaranna intina rie movement 7 siurang movement, he minjo Hille, Pasilele Manu, Soe Saunggu-unggu, Ngasa Taji, Abbulan Taji, Pa’bitte Passapu, Papulikang. The meaning of Hille ia minjo pangantara na manua mange ri pa’sahunganga, Pasilele Manu gunanna haji’ si lompo manu sahungang, Soe Saunggu-unggu maingmi, Ngasa taji na pakatarangi taji na, Abbulan Taji na tide taji a ri manu sahunganga, punna mainngmi injo na Pa’bittemi manu’na mingka wrong sekrena anre na Tarimai ni lose i na pappulikang kaleji manu’na. kunnimi inni na sihbangi na sitobo’I sa’genna mate.” (In addition to having core movements, there are seven movements that I know from my trainer, Ka Rudding. The first movement is *Hille, Pasilele Manu, Soe saunggu-unggu, Ngasa Taji, Abbulan Taji, Pa’bitte Passapu* and *Papulikang*. The meaning of *Hille* is as an introduction to the location. *Pasilele*

*Manu* is a movement to find an opponent. *Soe saunggu-unggu* is a movement of agreement or contract. *Ngasa Taji* is a movement to sharpen weapons. The *Abbulan Taji* movement is to put weapons on the chicken that will be fought. Then the chicken that is being fought is pitted, and the last movement is that one of the owners of the chicken that was defeated goes berserk because he cannot accept that his chicken was defeated, considering the game a draw. This is where conflicts usually occur, so that they kill each other). (Interview with RSL)

Regarding the core movements of the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance as explained by Ridding, a *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance performer, the researcher concluded that there are several movements. First is *ammiti'* (turning). RD stated that the first movement in the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance is *ammiti'* (turning), and this movement is called *pappanai bambang*, which means to provoke emotions. RD said: "This movement is to provoke the emotions of the players or fighters through cockfighting. The *ammiti'* (spinning) movement is done three times by holding the *passapu* (headband) which is considered the cock being fought." (Interview with RD) The *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance is performed by a group of men to hold a cockfighting activity carried out in the local community. This dance is performed every time a traditional guest is received, so that it becomes a unique dance, and it is worth knowing the meaning of each movement. In the *ammiti'* (spinning) / *silonreng* movement, this is a spinning movement to heat the chicken or *passapu* that will be matched.

Second is the *appasilompo manu'* movement (equalising the size of the chicken). This is a movement to match the size of the chicken that will be pitted, or a movement to find an opponent that is equal to be used as an opponent. According to the Kajang community, everything must be balanced, including the opponent, so that *appasilompo manu'* or equalising the size of the chicken that is pitted does not cause jealousy when *Pa'bitte Passapu* is carried out. Third is *sahung* (cockfighting). RD stated: "This *sahung* movement is a movement that pits the *passapu* or headband, which is likened to a cock that is being fought. From the results of *appasilompo manu'* or equalising the size of the cock that is being fought, it is balanced." (Interview with RD) In Indonesian society, especially the Kajang community, cockfighting is very popular. Cockfighting is identical to gambling that has been embedded in society, so that it has a negative impact on cockfighting participants. The Kajang community creatively created a dance called *Pa'bitte Passapu* so that cockfighting can be eliminated because it can have a negative impact on society.

Fourth is *abbesere* (fight). In the game of cockfighting, it sometimes becomes an arena for fighting between both parties who do not accept defeat, so that a fight occurs. This is included in the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance and taken as a unity so as to create a complete story of the cockfighting fight. Fifth is *sitobo'* (stab fight). In cockfighting, the losers or those who do not accept defeat cause a fight. This fight that occurs does not find a solution to solve the problem because the cockfighting players have high emotions, so that there is a stabbing match (*sitobo'*) killing each other. This dance shows that a stabbing match will occur. It is depicted in the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance, which displays movements, costumes, and songs as they are, giving rise to a sensation for those who witness it.

From the interview results, there are seven movements that are usually performed in the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance, and these movements represent the simplicity of the core movements of the dance. RSL's explanation is as follows. *Hill* (turn) is an introductory movement or a movement that tells of a journey to a place or location for cockfighting. *Soe saunggu-unggu* is a movement to find an opponent, or a fighter looking for an opponent he wants to fight and looking for a chicken that is considered the best. *Ngasa taji* is a movement of sharpening or sharpening weapons attached to the feet of fighting chickens. The spurs here function to weaken the opponent; cockfighting here is the same as cockfighting in general. *Abbulan taji* is a movement after sharpening the spurs; the sharpened spurs will be attached to the chicken. Once the spurs are already attached to the chicken, it is a sign that the fight will begin. *Pa'bitte Passapu* is the core movement of this dance. In this dance, the *passapu* or headband of the Kajang community is considered a fighting cock. While dancing, one of their *passapu* falls, thus indicating that someone has lost the fight.

**Figure 2. Dancing Using a Handkerchief**



Source:

<https://www.merahputih.com/post/read/tarian-pabitte-passapu-tak-ada-ayam-sapu-tangan-pun-jadi>

While dancing, one of their *passapu* falls, thus indicating that someone has lost the fight. *Papulikang* is the movement of the one who loses and goes berserk because he cannot accept his defeat and considers the game a draw or that no one loses, thus causing a dispute or conflict between the players.

Each work of art that is created certainly has a specific purpose and goal as well as moral messages contained within it, whether the purpose and goal are physical or depicted in the concept of its presentation. The *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance, besides having movements, is also accompanied by *kelong* or singing. *Kelong* in the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance is a song accompanied by movements. RSL explained the lyrics of this *kelong* or song in detail. He said:

First verse:

*Hillee ee*

*E bosì memangmi kuklampa* (when the rain came, I had already left)

*Solo memangmi kuklimbang* (when the flood hit, I had crossed)

*Kunjungku naung* (really has been swept away)

*Manyuk sampara kalengku* (myself wandering)

Second verse:

*Bosiki ritala-tala* (rain is being tuned)

*Rammanga ri bangkeng bukik* (dark clouds at the foot of the hill)

*Mannanro nakku* (keep longing)

*Mampaempo taru U'rangì* (collecting memories)

*Mangu'rangì ma'rangmangi* (remembering, groaning in pain)

Third verse:

*Ee pasituju-tuju sai tunrunna gandraea nipakarennya ehaillee* (watch the drum beat so we can dance)

*Ee tallung banggima ri Bone* (I have been in Bone for three days)

*Matinro manu'-manu'* (never sleep soundly)

*Na taro uddani ehaille ee ee* (just miss that's why *haille ee*)

*Ee ri Bantaeng panjo tana na tekko galunna* (there is a fertile, winding land)

*Ee sarru'tanna saysae e haille* (unable to count *haille ee*)

*Ee lak sahungi manu'ku didi pute didi mata ecakunnu'-kunnu ehaille* (I will fight my cock, its white feathers and yellow eyes *ecakunnu'-kunnu ehaille*)

*Ee tarosani lanrong-lanrong mallolang manu kalamappirannu-rannu ehaille* (give the jungle fowl as a treat)

Fourth stanza:

*Ee cuppaga tekko tarana sa'bulan-bulan leo esalu'lae-lae haille ee* (cempaga chicken is fitted with curved spurs, it walks jumping up and down)

*Ee jarra-jarrako paboto'pakanre bakke manu natarako inrang ehaille ee* (stop gambling, you scavenger of fighting cocks, you will be wrapped up in the forest)

*Ee manu agaro manunu papitto tea mitte namasuli ballinna ehaille e* (what kind of chicken do you have, even though it's put in a cage it won't peck even though it's expensive)

*Ee apa kurang ri Bantaeng, kattung ringgi tali-tali na rupia ehaille* (what's missing from Banteng, *kattung ringgi*, rupiah ropes are all there)

*Ee lallonrai mintu mange cincinna bakkarana togena sirento ehaillee* (the beautiful chicken with the ring and beautiful tail feathers has passed) (Interview with RSL)

In the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance song, it tells the story of the figure of Ilagaligo and Saweregading at that time. Even though it was raining and flooding, he still came even though he was on the other side of the island to do cockfighting, which in his view was positive from the Kajang ethnic community as a *silaturahmi* to maintain kinship and preserve the brotherhood that was established, so that the Kajang community would not forget each other.

The *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance contains a message of preaching based on Islamic values according to the Qur'an and Al-Hadith. These messages have an important role to be applied in everyday life, because they function as determinants of good or bad attitudes of a person and society as a whole. In its implementation, the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance contains various implied meanings, both through the objects used and through the interaction between the dancers, which ultimately convey special messages to those who watch (Hasan, 2019). The *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance contains movements that are full of meaning and high moral values. Every movement in this dance reflects the lifestyle of the Kajang people, while also providing valuable lessons. These movements show the obedience of the Kajang people to their leaders and their respect for others. In addition to deepening knowledge about the nature of life, the Kajang people also have a deep understanding of things that are "essential." They are known to be close to mystical and magical aspects, but this does not make them arrogant. On the contrary, they remain humble and full of compassion, both towards friends and enemies, especially towards those who are weak or helpless. The Kajang people are also famous for their family culture and spirit of mutual cooperation, which are still well maintained.

This dance contains symbols that are naturally interpreted by the community, spontaneously appearing in their hearts and finally embedded in collective understanding. Likewise with each variety of movements; although the dancers state that the movements initially had no special meaning and were only created as entertainment, each movement actually has its own meaning for the community. SME, a *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance performer, said: "*Pa'bitte Passapuinna lalang loyal' movementna anre nakliki ma'na, mingka dance inni anjarimintangang tau kunnia mae ri Kajang*" (The *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance does not have its own meaning in every movement. However, this dance is entertainment for the Kajang community). (Interview with SME) Basically, literally every movement in the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance does not have a special meaning, but this dance contains high moral values that can be valuable lessons. The existence of the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance is very much accepted by the Kajang community, not only as a form of entertainment, but also as a way to preserve their culture.

Regarding the denotative meaning of the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance, first, in terms of physical movements, every movement in this dance, such as spinning (*Ammiti*), fighting each other (*Sabung*), or stabbing (*Sitobo*), denotatively only refers to certain physical actions performed by the dancer. For example, *Ammiti* is literally only understood as a spinning movement performed by the dancer. Second, in terms of the symbolic media aspect, for example, the *passapu* used in this dance is a symbol of a chicken, which in the context of the dance denotatively only refers to the object or symbol.

Regarding the connotative meaning of the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance, first, in the aspect of fighting or cockfighting (*Sabung*), the cockfighting movement in this dance connotatively does not only depict two chickens fighting each other, but can also refer to symbols such as violence, gambling, or fighting in life. This dance, through its movements, conveys a moral message that unhealthy competition or fighting (such as gambling or violence) can have negative impacts. Second, in the stabbing movement (*Sitobo*), this movement, which depicts killing each other, does not only refer to physical action alone, but can be seen as a symbol of conflict and fighting in social life or in society. This dance reminds us of the importance of avoiding violence and teaches that violence will never bring goodness. Third, in the aspect of mutual respect and mutual assistance, the movement made by the dancer to lift someone who has lost (*tau ribule*) can be interpreted connotatively as a symbol of empathy, togetherness, and mutual assistance. It emphasises deeper social values such as solidarity, helping those in need, and showing respect for others.

The above was emphasised by IML as the Director of the Village-Owned Enterprise when interviewed. He said: "According to my understanding, the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance has many moral messages in the social aspect, especially for the Kajang community. This dance not only functions as entertainment, but also as a means to convey noble values. In every movement that is displayed, the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance teaches the importance of maintaining good relationships with others, fostering a sense of togetherness, and strengthening solidarity between individuals. This moral message is a guideline for the Kajang community in everyday life, as well as a reminder for them to always respect each other, help each other, and establish harmony. That way, the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance is not just an artistic expression, but also a form of cultural preaching that directs society towards a harmonious social life." (Interview with IML)

The results of the interview show that there is a deep meaning in each movement of the dance. Socially, it has the meaning of togetherness, affection, mutual assistance, mutual respect, and cooperation. The *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance teaches people to establish harmonious relationships in community life. Through the behaviour reflected in each movement, this moral message provides guidelines that regulate individual actions, so that they can distinguish between right and wrong. This message also encourages individuals to behave well without harming others, thus creating an environment of mutual respect and support. The author will describe the denotative and connotative meanings in the following table.

**Table 1. Embodied Piety in the Context of Indigenous Ritual**

<b>Dance Movements</b>	<b>Denotative Meaning</b>	<b>Connotative Meaning</b>
Ammiti Movement (rotating)	A rotating movement performed by the dancer.	A symbol of dynamics or movement in life that never stops, can refer to change or preparation for something new.
Sahung Movement (cockfighting)	Pitching passapu (chickens) in a fight.	Symbolizes conflict or competition, and can refer to gambling or violence. The moral message teaches to avoid detrimental behavior.
Sitobo Movement (stabbing)	The act of stabbing each other as a form of violence or fighting.	Shows the consequences of violence that do not bring good and reminds us that violent actions only cause harm.
“Tau Ribule” (lifted) movement	The losing dancer is lifted by another dancer.	Symbol of mutual assistance, showing empathy and a sense of togetherness in helping people in trouble. Teaches solidarity and concern for others.
“Passapu” (chicken) symbol	The tools or objects used in the dance depict chickens.	In local cultures, chickens can refer to courage, strength, or even a symbol of gambling and detrimental cockfighting.
General moral message	This dance entertains the audience with physical movements depicting fighting and brawling.	This dance teaches the importance of respecting others, avoiding violence, helping each other, and avoiding harmful actions.

Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The table above shows that denotatively, the *Pa’bitte Passapu* dance only depicts physical movements and symbols seen in the performance, such as spinning movements, fighting,

and the use of tools or chicken symbols. However, connotatively, this dance has a deeper meaning that includes moral, social, and ideological messages that it wants to convey to the audience, such as avoiding violence, the importance of helping each other, and respecting others. Thus, the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance is not just a performing art, but also a means to convey values that shape behaviour and social interaction in society. SBG, a *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance performer, said: “*Ma'na dance Pa'bitte Passapu nipaingai paranna tau injo sahung manu' nukodi nasaba' appamumbai pabotorang na sisala'sala paranna ta*” (The meaning of the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance is to remind the community that cockfighting is not good because it leads to gambling and causes the severing of ties between members of the community). (Interview with SBG)

The *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance also contains social criticism of the habits of some people who are trapped in cockfighting activities, the practice of which often involves gambling and violence against animals. This dance conveys a moral message that warns society of the negative impacts of such behaviour, and emphasises that victory obtained by cheating ultimately leads to failure. In addition, the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance also teaches the value of mutual respect, not only towards fellow humans but also towards nature and animals. This can be seen in the initial movement of bowing performed by the dancer as a form of respect for guests and a humble attitude, reminding society to always maintain ethics and good relationships with the environment and other living things. RSL, a *Pa'bitte Passapu* dancer, said: “At the end of the dance, the dancers help one of the dancers who is losing.” (Interview with RSL)

The message of mutual assistance embodied in the *tau ribule'* movement of the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance closely aligns with the ethical core of Islamic teachings (*sharia*) and the spirit of *da'wah*. Within Islamic ethics, *ta'awun* (mutual cooperation) and *ukhuwwah* (social solidarity) are fundamental principles that sustain communal harmony and moral balance. In the context of the dance, the act of lifting a fallen dancer represents more than a gesture of physical support; it performs a symbolic enactment of Islamic moral order, emphasising compassion, empathy, and shared responsibility. Through this embodied symbolism, the *Pa'bitte Passapu* becomes not merely a cultural artefact but a living form of non-verbal *da'wah*, transmitting Islamic values through aesthetic expression and collective participation.

However, this symbolic dimension cannot be separated from the Ammatoa Kajang identity, which is deeply rooted in the fusion between Islam and *adat* (customary law). For the Ammatoa people, faith and tradition are not separate spheres but interdependent moral systems that together regulate human conduct, environmental ethics, and communal relations. The *Pa'bitte Passapu* thus becomes a performative space where Islamic piety is indigenised, and *adat* is revitalised through religious meaning. This synthesis reflects what scholars of Southeast Asia describe as the “vernacularisation of Islam”, a process by which universal Islamic values are localised within specific cultural idioms, producing forms of spirituality that are both authentic and contextually relevant (Zuhri, 2022).

The preservation of this dance by the Kajang community also reveals the broader

Southeast Asian negotiation between modernity, religion, and heritage. Across the region, communities continuously balance the demands of modernisation, with its emphasis on rationalisation, economic growth, and institutional religion, with the need to maintain cultural authenticity and ancestral continuity (Alexander, 2018; Sanmee, 2024). The Ammatoa's commitment to safeguarding the *Pa'bitte Passapu* demonstrates a counter-discourse to homogenising modernity: it asserts that cultural expression can coexist with religious orthodoxy, and that tradition can serve as a medium for moral renewal rather than a remnant of the past (Ibnu Azka, Fathur Baldan Haramain, 2024). In this sense, the dance performs a philosophy of resilience, revealing how Indigenous Muslim communities reinterpret change without losing their ethical centre.

Ultimately, the *Pa'bitte Passapu* dance stands as a microcosm of Southeast Asian Islamic pluralism, where art, ritual, and belief intersect in creative tension. It exemplifies how local traditions can function as bridges between sacred and cultural worlds, translating divine values into lived, embodied practice (Holloway, 2003). In doing so, it offers a model of cultural sustainability, showing that heritage preservation and religious devotion are not opposites but complementary forces that together shape the moral landscape of contemporary Muslim societies in Southeast Asia.

Based on the discussion above, the *Pa'bitte Passapu* ritual dance performed by the Ammatoa people of Tanah Toa stands as tangible evidence of the dynamic encounter between Islamic preaching and customary identity. Rather than being passive recipients of religious transformation, the Ammatoa community demonstrates an active and selective process of negotiation, absorbing, reinterpreting, and internalising Islamic values within the moral and symbolic structure of their ancestral traditions. Through its ritual gestures, symbolic formations, and sacred attire, *Pa'bitte Passapu* embodies an integrated form of religiosity where piety is not only articulated verbally but also performed physically and emotionally. This fusion of devotion and culture transforms the dance into a lived expression of *taqwa* (spiritual devotion), mediated through the aesthetic and ethical codes of the community's worldview.

This study reveals that Islamic preaching (*da'wah*) in the Ammatoa context transcends the boundaries of verbal discourse or institutional authority. It operates instead through cultural media that harmonise with local cosmologies and social ethics. *Pa'bitte Passapu* thus becomes a performative arena in which *sharia* and *adat* do not stand in opposition but mutually reinforce one another, producing a unified moral landscape that reflects collective identity and spiritual resilience. Such synthesis underscores the adaptability of local culture, not by rejecting external religious influences, but by creatively assimilating them into Indigenous meaning systems. Consequently, *Pa'bitte Passapu* is not merely a ritual performance but a medium of *da'wah*, a symbol of unity, and a testament to the enduring vitality of local wisdom amid the pressures of religious and cultural standardisation.

When viewed comparatively, the embodied religiosity expressed in *Pa'bitte Passapu* resonates with other Southeast Asian traditions that employ ritual movement, music, and oral storytelling to convey spiritual and ethical messages. For instance, the *Saman* dance of

Aceh integrates rhythmic unity as a metaphor for collective worship, while the *Zapin* dance in the Malay world and *Kuda Lumping* in Java blend Islamic remembrance with pre-Islamic ritual symbolism (Asniah, 2023; Salim, 2021). Similarly, oral forms like the *Hikayat* and *pantun* preserve Qur'anic morals and local myths within performative art (R. A. Putra, 2024). These examples suggest that across the region, embodied practices function as living vehicles of faith, transmitting religious values through sensory, communal, and emotional engagement rather than through formal theological articulation. In this shared pattern, Southeast Asian Islam manifests as an experiential, performative, and culturally adaptive phenomenon.

In a broader transnational sense, Indigenous Islamic expressions such as *Pa'bitte Passapu* challenge the global trend of religious homogenisation that often seeks to standardise faith according to Middle Eastern or institutional norms. Instead, they assert the legitimacy of localised spiritual epistemologies, where Islam is not imposed but incarnated within the language, gestures, and values of local heritage. This pluralistic articulation of Islam strengthens Southeast Asia's position as a region of religious creativity, where the sacred and the cultural are not binaries but complementary sources of meaning.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the *Pa'bitte Passapu* ritual dance of the Ammatoa Kajang community serves as a vivid manifestation of embodied piety, where Islamic preaching and Indigenous identity are not oppositional forces but dynamically negotiated elements of a unified cultural system. Through its symbolic gestures, ritualised choreography, and sacred attire, this dance transforms bodily movement into an expression of faith, turning devotion into a visible and performative act deeply rooted in the Ammatoa cosmology. Rather than treating Islam as an external imposition, the Ammatoa people internalise its moral teachings within their customary order, creating a lived synthesis where *sharia* and *adat* coexist harmoniously. In this sense, *Pa'bitte Passapu* is more than a ritual performance, it is a form of cultural *da'wah*, through which Islamic ethics of solidarity, humility, and justice are conveyed not by speech but by motion, rhythm, and communal participation.

The ritual becomes a pedagogical medium that bridges the spiritual and the social, translating religious ideals into everyday life. This reflects how Indigenous Muslims in Southeast Asia actively reinterpret universal Islamic principles through local aesthetics and embodied practices, asserting both cultural continuity and spiritual authenticity. Ultimately, the *Pa'bitte Passapu* ritual underscores that piety is not only articulated through doctrine but also embodied through practice, a living testament to how faith can inhabit culture without erasing it. Recognising such expressions invites a more nuanced understanding of Islamisation as a process of adaptation rather than replacement, where religious and cultural identities are continually redefined through performance, symbol, and collective meaning.

This study, however, remains limited by its geographic and temporal scope, focusing primarily on the Ammatoa Kajang community. Future research should explore comparative cases among other Indigenous Muslim societies in Southeast Asia, incorporating psychological, performative, and transnational perspectives. Such inquiries would deepen our understanding of how embodied piety operates as both a mode of religious transmission and a strategy of cultural resilience in the face of changing spiritual and social landscapes.

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