

*Traditional Knowledge, Culture and Ecology of the Kajang Custom Area:  
An Ecosemiotics Study*

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**Abstract**

The modernization of society may corrode and influence the culture prevalent in general, but it will not have the same effect on the culture of the Kajang traditional community. The urgency of this inquiry is prompted by the fact that Kajang remains unaffected by the passage of time. This research aims to explain (1) the philosophy of life of the Kajang traditional community, Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, and (2) the relationship between traditional communities and the area's ecology. To address these three issues, we employ the semiotic trichotomy technique proposed by Peirce (1966) and the dialectal language ecology framework developed by Bang and Door (1993). Both are explained according to the realm of study between the culture inherent in indigenous communities and the language used by their speakers. The data collection methods used in this research are field observation, documentation, interviews and recording. Data was analyzed qualitatively. The results of the study show that the philosophy of life of the Kajang traditional community is to live very simply, have enough, preserve the surrounding nature, preserve culture, curb lust, and maintain morality. These are all based on the concept of *tallasak kamase-mase*, living simply. With *tallasak kamase-mase*, the community protects traditional areas (forests, gardens) because the relationship between traditional communities is not only with the creator but also with humans and those who have died. Furthermore, the house structure of the Kajang traditional community is unique and full of symbols.

Keywords: Ecology Language, Ecosemiotics, Culture of Kajang

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## **Introduction**

Traditional knowledge is born from the habits of society in a way of survival, of course, the experiences and past of their predecessors. From that experience, knowledge is created that can be applied by treating humans with other humans, treating forests in the Customary Area and the relationship between humans and the creator. The Kajang customary community is in a forest area called the Kajang Ammatoa customary area. The forest, for the Kajang customary community, has a special meaning. They believe the forest is where human spirits descend from heaven to earth and vice versa. In the area, there is a customary leader called Ammatoa and other structural ministers. The community believes Ammatoa was the first human to descend from heaven to earth. The area is believed to be Tana Toa, which the world recognizes as a customary area in Bulukumba Regency. It has been awarded the best forest guard in South Sulawesi.

This belief makes them harmonious between leaders and their communities, communities within the customary environment and outside the customary area, and even harmonious relations between forests and humans, humans and the creator. Because by considering that the forest is a sacred area full of supernatural powers that can bring prosperity and disaster if the forest is not preserved according to the philosophy of life (philosophy) of the Kajang indigenous community. In addition, another uniqueness displayed by the Ammatoa Community in Kajang, Bulukumba Regency, is that it is unique compared to other community groups in Bulukumba. Its uniqueness is indicated by always dressing in black, such as shirts, sarongs, knee-length pants, headbands for men, and headscarves for women. Therefore, this research is considered urgent to be discussed at an international conference and published in international proceedings as a treasure trove of knowledge for foreign countries. Indonesia is rich in language, art, and culture and has traditional knowledge that still exists today.

## **The Used Theory**

Various theories are born about the relationship between humans and their environment. Research on ecological discussions across disciplines is being updated and used as a research topic due to human needs and natural phenomena. In basic understanding, ecology is knowledge about managing and knowing the conditions or portraits of nature, specifically those of humans and animals. The relationship between species such as fish in the estuary and butterflies on land and the reciprocal relationship between components that form an environment. From here arises an understanding of the meaning of the joints of life. However, with the development of technology and the increasing age of geography, humans feel the difference in the environment, so collaborative science is needed from one field to another field of science. Ecology language emerged in the discussion of language related to the environment, which ultimately gave rise to a cross-disciplinary theory, namely ecolinguistics. Furthermore, ecosemiotics are used because of the relationship between the environment and the concept of natural signs, as research (Maran and Kull, 2014), *Ecosemiotics: Main Principles and Current Developments*.

Ecolinguistics and ecology of language are two names that have the same meaning, depending on field experience, culture, and perspective when seeing something observed. The term ecology was first introduced by a German biologist, Ernest Haeckel (1834). At that time, he had not realized the connection between the environment and language. Then, in 1970, the idea of language ecology emerged, initiated by an expert named Einar Haugen.

This expert tried to focus his study on the relationship between ecology and language as an interdisciplinary study.

Furthermore, Muhlhausler, in his writing entitled *Ecolinguistics in The University* (2002: 2), explains that:

Ecology is the study of functional interrelationships. The two parameters we wish to interrelate are language and the environment/ecology. Depending on whose perspective one takes, one will get either ecology of language or language of ecology. Combined, they constitute the field of ecolinguistics. Ecology of language studies the support systems languages require for their continued wellbeing and the factors that have affected the habitat of many languages in recent times.

Related to this, there are three ecolinguistic parameters, namely (1) the existence of interrelationships, interactions and interdependence; (2) the existence of a certain environment; and (3) the existence of diversity in a certain environment can be used as a guide in dissecting language and the environment (Fill and Muhlhausler, 2001: 1). Meanwhile, to approach the object of study in the realm of signs in Indigenous Peoples, a semiotic approach is needed.

Semiotics is a science that studies signs in human life (Noth, 1990: 3; Maras, 2002: 115; Hoed, 2008: 3). This means that everything present in our lives is seen as a sign, something that we must give meaning to. According to the followers of structuralist de Saussure, a sign is a meeting between form (reflected in a person's cognition) and meaning or content (understood by humans who use the sign). Furthermore, the relationship between form and meaning is not personal but social, based on social "agreements/conventions" (Noth, 1990: 59-60). There are conventions among indigenous peoples that form as habits and become culture. One form of culture that can be observed is the use of the philosophy of life of the Kajang indigenous people as traditional knowledge that must be recognized and preserved.

## **Method**

The data collection method used in this study is participatory observation. This method is carried out by actively participating or being directly involved in the socio-cultural activities of the Kajang community. In addition to conducting participatory observation, the Traditional Leader was also interviewed to obtain socio-cultural background data on the perception of whites and blacks and continued to the core discussion of the interview, namely the life guidelines that can make the community exist until now, of course, in the Kajang community. Recording was carried out using audiovisual equipment to help ensure that the interview results were not scattered and quickly forgotten. Interviewing the Traditional Leader was also accompanied by audiovisual recording techniques and note-taking techniques. The data were analyzed qualitatively-interpretively.

## ***Literature of Journal***

From the results of literature searches or library studies, several writings were found in journal articles and proceedings articles, which have discussed the Ammatoa community in Kajang, Bulukumba Regency. These writings can be seen as follows.

1. The practice of local wisdom of kajang people to save forests and biodiversity: A cultural-Based Analysis (Rahman et al., 2019)
2. The function and meaning of tope'le'leng in the death ritual of the kajang tribe, south Sulawesi (Juniati, 2022)
3. A cognitive linguistics study to reveal the conceot of death of Indonesia indigenous tribe (Ma'rud & Rita, 2021)
4. Reflection of the pasang ri kajang in settlements traditional communities kajang bulukumba regency (Erawati et al., 2022)

### ***Literature of Book***

1. Hasanuddin, et al. entitled "Spectrum of Cultural History and Bulukumba Tradition" (2007). This book has discussed the early history of the emergence of the Ammatoa community, ritual events, and the diversity of grave forms and types of tombstones and house morphology). This article only mentions that black is the identity colour of the Ammatoa community.
2. Akib, "Ammatoa: The Black-Clothed Community" (2008). This article discusses the Kajang community generally from the aspect of social and cultural anthropology (belief systems, settlement patterns, and the role of Ammatoa). The mention of the colour black in this article only refers to identity.
3. Palammai and Mappasomba entitled "History of the Existence of the Five Karaeng Tallua Custom in Kajang" (2012) can be said to generally discuss the Kajang community from the aspects of social and cultural anthropology (mythology of the Kajang community, leadership of the Kajang community, the current situation of the young generation of the Kajang indigenous community).
4. Darmapoetra entitled "Kajang: Lovers of Togetherness and Conservation of Nature" (2014). This book can be said to discuss the Kajang community generally from the aspect of cultural anthropology (religious system and ritual of andingingi 'cooling', in this case meaning 'cooling nature').

Ontologically, the eight writings have the same material object, namely the Ammatoa community in Kajang, Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi. However, seen from the aspect of its formal object or the element of the material object, the four journals and the four books are different, so their epistemological basis is also different. Thus, the methods and results of the discussion are also different from each other.

This study also chooses the same material object, namely the Ammatoa community in Kajang, Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi. But with a different formal object, namely seen from the side of traditional knowledge, culture and ecology in the life of the Ammatoa community. This problem has not been discussed in the eight writings mentioned above. This study uses semiotic and ecolinguistic theories with qualitative and interpretative methods.



Picture 1: Tradisional Knowledge (Showing Identity)  
Documentation Source: Imyen Talas

The Kajang indigenous community highly sanctifies the area where they live and believes that the world and its contents have supernatural powers, such as living trees, life, and objects that are given power. In the andingingi (cooling) ritual, several activities, one of which is burning a crowbar, are seen in the photo above. The following refers to the three parts that are meant by traditional knowledge: culture and the Kajang culture in the Customary Area.



After showing the sharpness of the object, one of them was pointed at by the ammatooa.

Trying to show that cardboard will be punctured by the heat of the object that has been burned/heated.

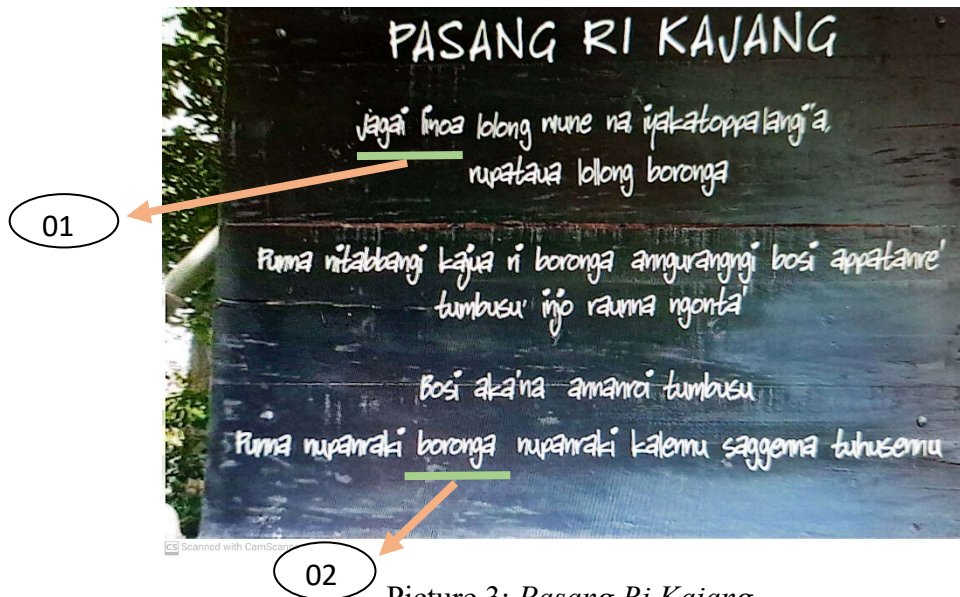
The cardboard is immediately perforated with a very gentle touch by the crowbar.

Picture 2<sup>1</sup>: Field Data Designation Analysis

Ancestors or people before them (Kajang society), spirits, and supernatural powers are believed to exist, and their existence is actual. The traditional leaders and their community strongly feel this belief. They want to maintain the balance with several natural phenomena, namely andingingi or cooling the earth. This community is Muslim with traditional Islam, which they call patuntung, which firmly adheres to the messages of their ancestors to their predecessors. The patuntung beliefs collected in Pasang consist of four ideas. The ideas/elements in question are: 1) Elements related to God or supernatural beings and

<sup>1</sup> Please note that previously everyone could visit or enter the traditional area, by wearing black clothes and removing footwear and could document everything that visitors were interested in photographing, one of which was taking pictures with the community and others. However, currently taking documentation inside the area is strictly prohibited!

including supernatural powers; 2) The element of spirit is closely related to the last concept (Allo Anjoregang), namely the existence of heaven and hell and so on (Erawati, 2022).



Picture 3: *Pasang Ri Kajang*  
(Excerpt from the Life Guidance of the Kajang Indigenous Community)

The messages above, one phrase and one word that can be analyzed by representing the contents of the sentence above and adjusted to the image displayed in this study:

	<b>Local</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Phrase	<i>Jagai linoa</i>	Take care of the earth
Word	<i>boronga</i>	forest

### a. Boronga/Forest

Forest is a home, a place to live, a container, and a path (Indigenous people's perspective).

From the ecological perspective, with the presence of their predecessors, they are present and alive. With them living, they must hold fast to their ancestors' message; with their ancestors' message, they exist until now. With their existence, they have received the UNESCO award for being the best forest guardian in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. There is the involvement of spirits with the presence of tree containers because trees are believed to be the path of the rise and fall of ancestors to communicate with customary leaders in the customary area.

### b. Jagai lino/ Take Care of the Earth

Meanwhile, to protect the earth or in the local language of the community, "jagai linoa" was done by the Indigenous community before the entry of the Islamic religion into the area. Researchers can say that this message or call is purely one of the traditional knowledge from the many other conventional knowledge possessed by the community. Similar holy books of Muslim communities can be found, and recommendations to protect and care for the earth open the world with the creation of a caliph/leader (Qur'an 35:39, Qur'an 6:165). Furthermore, Qur'an 7:56 reads, "And do not cause corruption on the earth after Allah has



made it good." Continued Qur'an 30:41, which reads, "Damage has appeared on land and in the sea due to the deeds of human hands" This is related to the *andingi lino* ritual, which is held every year to maintain the balance of the earth and its contents (Shihab, 2002). Because with this ritual, there is a contaminated relationship between humans and their God, humans and fellow humans, humans and supernatural beings and humans and the surrounding nature. Then, <sup>2</sup>the Qur'an 17:26 sounds, "And do not waste (your wealth) excessively". In terms of the sign in this verse from the perspective of sign semiotics, the Kajang community understands the concept of Islam very well, which calls for not being wasteful in spending wealth or ownership in the idea of *tallasa kamase-masea* for the Kajang people or living with complete simplicity. So, it can be interpreted that these are all messages from their ancestors that serve as the guidelines for the lives of their community.

## Conclusion

The results of the research show that the philosophy of life of the Kajang traditional community is to live very simply, have enough, preserve the surrounding nature, preserve culture, curb lust, and maintain morality. These are all based on the '*tallasak kamase-mase*' concept, living simply. With '*tallasak kamase-mase*', the community protects traditional areas (forests, gardens) because the relationship between traditional communities is not only with the creator but also with humans and those who have died. Furthermore, the house structure of the Kajang traditional community is unique and full of symbols. The front view does not have a 'paladang' or terrace because all guests are considered important and God's guests, as a form of importance that can be discussed in the house.

Furthermore, the kitchen of the Kajang traditional house is located at the front. This means that all guests being entertained can see the process of making the banquet, including both drinks and food. Lastly, the houses of the Kajang traditional community have a roof shape that resembles a boat, and every house in the traditional area faces west.

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<sup>2</sup> Messy, M., & Charles, C. (2022). Character Education in the Qur'an Surah Al-Isra Verses 23-30 According to Tafsir Al-Azhar. *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research*, 2(1), 472-482.

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