

The Function and Meaning of *Tope' le'leng* in the Death Ritual of The Kajang Tribe, South Sulawesi.

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ABSTRACT *Tope' le'leng* in the Kajang language means black sarong and is a typical sarong of the Kajang tribe worn by men and women, both for daily wear and worn at various ceremonies held by this tribe. The study of *tope' le'leng* has been quite a lot. Still, no one has discussed its function and meaning in the death ritual of the Kajang tribe, considering that *tope' le'leng* has been recognized as one of the Kajang tribe's identities among other tribes in Indonesia. This study examines the function and meaning of *Tope' le'leng* in death rituals, starting from when the corpse was still at home, funeral preparation, funeral processions, and follow-up rituals until 100 days. This research used an ethnographic approach with descriptive analysis. Data analysis used triple pattern (*Pola Tiga*) theories in Paradoxical Aesthetics from Jakob Sumardjo. The data sources in this study are *Tope' le'leng*, the funeral ritual itself, the shaman who led the death rituals, and the local community who followed the funeral ritual. Data collection techniques used participatory observation and interviews. The results showed that *Tope' le'leng* functioned as an object of donation, a sign of grief. It is a marker of a family of mourning (not wearing clothes other than *tope' le'leng*) as a ritual object to cover the bamboo coffin and Pammorangan. *Tope' le'leng*, as a ritual object, shows the social strata or economic level of the grieving family in the community. The Kajang people believed that the deceased spirit could see the family and the shaman as long as they did not wear clothes other than *tope' le'leng* for 100 days. As one of the ritual and sacred objects, *tope' le'leng* has presented a moment of transcendence and belief in the existence of spirits in death rituals. Based on the triple pattern theory (*Pola Tiga*), namely the relationship between the upper, middle, and lower worlds. *Tope' le'leng* has another function as a relationship connector between God, man, and nature. The simplicity of its form and composition does not detract from its function and meaning and even reinforces its sacredness as a ritual object in Patuntung beliefs.

KEYWORDS *Tope' le'leng*; *Death Ritual*; *Kajang*.

INTRODUCTION

Kajang is the name of one of the sub-districts in Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi. *Kajang* sub-district has an area of 21.50 km² with a coastline length of 20.2 km² (*Peta bulukumba*, 2020). In the *Ammatoa* traditional area in Tana Toa Village, The *Kajang* tribal people call their residences. The village of Tana Toa has two groups; the outer *Kajang* settled and resided in seven other villages in the *Kajang* sub-district, while the Inner *Kajang* settled in the Benteng hamlet. The language used is the Konjo language.

According to Kaseng, this konjo language is one of the dialects of the Makassar language spread in part of the Bontocani District, Maros Regency, around the Camba district and the east coast of Bulukumba (Imran and Sabarrang, 2022).

The *Kajang* tribe has an oral culture through *Passang*, which means news. This message is a revelation of knowledge and experience about all aspects and twists and turns related to life passed orally by their ancestors from generation to generation. The *Kajang* tribe has a belief called *Patuntung*.

This belief teaches that if humans want to seek the truth, then humans must rely on three things, respecting *Turiek Arakna* (God), respecting the land given by *Turiek Arakna*, and respecting ancestors. Trust and respect for *Turiek Arakna* is a primordial awareness. This awareness is an essential thing in *Patuntung's* belief. For the *Kajang* tribe, *Turiek Arakna* is the creator of everything in the world and has the nature of eternal, almighty, and all-powerful. The *Turiek Arakna* has believed to have passed down his orders to the *Kajang* people in the form of *passang* (messages/revelations) to *Ammatoa*, the first human from the *Kajang* tribe.

The *passang* handed down to *Ammatoa* must be obeyed and implemented by the *Ammatoa* indigenous people. If they break the tide, they believe they will get bad things in their lives (Darmapoetra, 2014). The *Kajang Dalam* tribe (the *Ammatoa* community) rejects modernization. There are still many *Kajang* people who are illiterate and cannot speak Indonesian until now. Modernization is the difference between outer *Kajang* and inner *Kajang* in daily life.

The *Kajang* tribe has many distinctive traditional arts as their cultural products. According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, art can be discussed through form, function, and content, while according to Paul Ricoeur, form has displayed and perceived. The process is an aspect of the usefulness of a work of art. Meaning is the content or concept referred to or conveyed by the form (Junaedi, 2021). *Tope' le'leng* is one of the cultural products of the *Kajang* tribe in the form of a black *sarong*. *Kajang* women weave *tope' le'leng*, and this weaving skill is passed down from

generation to generation because, in ancient times, it was a skill that *Kajang* women had to possess as a condition for marriage. In addition, *tope' le'leng* has believed to have a close connection with nature.

Tope' le'leng is one of the works of art produced by the culture of the *Kajang* tribe. These are primarily sold in art shops or at the *tope' le'leng* weavers. *Tope' le'leng* is hand-woven and costs around Rp500.000,00 –Rp700.000,00 depending on the cotton yarn quality, and the price will go up to Rp1.500.000,00 if *tope' le'leng* has been sewn into a *sarong* and gone through the *garussu'* (rubbed with shells until the surface of the cloth is shiny), while the price of a *lipa'* (ordinary *sarong*) is much lower, around Rp100.000,00 up to Rp500.000,00 because the yarn material can be synthetic and made using factory machines (Dewi et al., 2020). The high price of a *tope' le'leng* affects the level of ownership and use of the *Kajang* people. They care for this *sarong* to keep it shiny and worn for special or formal ritual events. *Tope' le'leng* is no longer shiny but still in good condition for daily wear.

The woven yarn is cotton fiber dyed with natural dyes using *tarum* plants (*Indigofera tinctoria*) and limestone powder. The resulting color is navy blue, so to produce a very dark blue close to black, it must be dyed more than 15 times and depends on the weather. The ornaments found on *tope' le'leng* are ancient decorations passed down from generation to generation in geometric-shaped motifs such as circles, crosses, and thin and thick lines obtained from plain cross variations. The names of the decorations are based on colors, such as *Ratu Puteh* (white

motif), *Ratu Gahu* (Green motif), and *Ratu Ejah* (red motif).

The composition of the decorative motifs and color combinations is based on the weavers' creativity. These motifs are commonly found in the *tope' le'leng* owned by the *Kajang* people. The meaning of these motifs is known only personally based on the weaver's creativity. These motifs do not affect the purpose of the *tope' le'leng*. There is no specific motif for any ritual. All *tope' le'leng* can be worn in all *Patuntung* ritual ceremonies if they are still in good condition and shiny anytime they attend rituals.

This dark blue *sarong* is considered a black color typical of the *Kajang* tribe in the natural dyeing. According to a semiotic study by Maknun, Tahir, and Suryaningsih (2020), black for the *Kajang* tribe represents the meaning: (1) dark at sunset on the western horizon; (2) eternal, steadfast, and honest; (3) simplicity/similarity; and (4) death. Black is the darkest color. There is no darker color than black, like dark when the sunset on the western horizon.

Then the black color has the connotation of being firm and honest, as an illustration of the eternal character of the *Kajang* community. Because of this connotation, the black color is known as the distinctive identity of the *Kajang* tribe, distinguishing it from other tribes in the Bulukumba Regency and even throughout South Sulawesi. This unique black color can be seen in their clothes, consisting of *tope' le'leng* worn by all *Kajang* men and women. The third connotative representation of the tribe is identical to the black color, which is sacred by this tribe because it means equality in all

things, including the similarity of the simple life in simplicity. Furthermore, the fourth connotation means that black is a lasting color, as with death. Death is eternal, and the only way to return with the ancestors and the *Turiek Arakna*.

The life of the *Kajang* tribe, starting from faith, society, and cultural arts in the form of *tope' le'leng*, has a specific pattern. A relationship between God, man, and nature clearly illustrates the pattern in the life of the *Kajang* tribe. According to Jakob Sumardjo (2014), this pattern is called the triple pattern (*Pola Tiga*), the relationship between the upper, middle, and lower worlds.

Based on Jakob Sumardjo's theory, it is undoubtedly exciting to study more deeply the use of *tope' le'leng* in a specific ritual, such as the death ritual. It has become an identity and is known to uphold traditions. *Tope' le'leng* will be worn by *Patuntung* adherents forever, wherever they are, as daily clothes and traditional attire. As ritual objects in every procession in the *Patuntung* faith. The death ritual has similarities in the use, function, and meaning of *tope' le'leng* inside and outside the customary area.

Based on the database, there are other studies of *tope' le'leng*. The studies examine the techniques of *Kajang* fabrics making by Kurniati (2017), Malleleng Community Perceptions of Black Weaving *Sarongs* in Malleleng Village, *Kajang* District, Bulukumba Regency by Sri Wahyuni Nur (2017), the Existence of Local Wisdom (Study of Values); Social value of the traditional *sarong* of the *Kajang* Community, Bulukumba Regency by Adi Pesta Irawan (2014). The Cultural dimension of Black representation

of Ammatoa Community: Study of Cultural Semiotics by Tadjuddin Maknun, M. Dalyan Tahir, and Ita Suryaningsih (2020). The Meaning of *Tope' le'leng* in Tana Toa Village, Kajang District, Bulukumba Regency (Charles Sanders Pierce Semiotic Analysis) by Asnidar Abbas (2021). The results of the last-mentioned research related to *tope' le'leng* used Semiotics analysis and stated that *tope' le'leng* has an essential meaning for the Kajang tribe. It has become the identity of the Kajang tribe because it is worn in *patuntung* rituals such as marriage and death.

Based on the studies conducted, this research will examine the function and meaning of *tope' le'leng* in death rituals starting from *Attarahang* (funeral ritual) to *A'bilang bangngi* rituals (mourning period ritual).

This research method used an ethnographic approach with descriptive analysis. Data analysis used triple pattern (Pola Tiga) theories in Paradoxical Aesthetics from Jakob Sumardjo. The data collection technique used participatory observation and interviews. The research location is in Tana Toa Village, outside the Ammatoa customary area, to document all activities carried out, considering a prohibition on modernization in the Ammatoa customary law in Benteng hamlet, including documentation tools. The primary data sources are *Tope' le'leng*, the funeral ritual, and a *Patuntung* named Lati' (75 years old), a shaman or religious leader who Guides the spirits for 100 days, and the local community who follows the funeral rituals.

DISCUSSION

The triple pattern (Pola Tiga) in pre-modern society developed in an environment that lived with farming. The mindset would be very different from that of the culture of the gatherer. People who live in a triple pattern are more independent living from agriculture. As a farming community, they will create, protect, and maintain nature to continue living and be held for survival. More extremes happened to the Kajang people to keep their hearts alive by rejecting modernization. The things divide the Kajang community with the term Inner and Outer of Kajang.

Triple Pattern (Pola Tiga) departs from the belief of antagonistic dualism, such as the heavens above and the earth below. Triple Pattern (Pola Tiga) recognizes the existence of harmony that unites the upper and lower worlds, heaven and earth; this harmony is the third entity, namely the middle world, as a link, medium, and intermediary that bridges all conflicting entities. The middle world is a paradoxical world, where there will be many oppositions but who unite.

In Kajang society, this middle world is human. Ammatoa was the first human being to become the link between nature and *Turiek Arakna* (True Source). As the first human being, Ammatoa (the first bohe), with its source teachings *Pasang ri Kajang* taught about: 1) living simply, living in a clean state, praying continuously, and the rituals in the teachings of *Patuntung* are still practiced today; 2) functioning as teachings, saviors, social control, and unifying; 3) as an application of *Patuntung* beliefs in relations with *Turiek A'arakna* (God Almighty),

relationships with *tallasa kamase-mase* (simple living), and relationships with the natural environment (Hasan and Nur, 2019).

The death ritual is led by a shaman who leads every procession from the corpse still in the funeral home to the funeral to guiding the spirits after burial, accompanying when the deceased souls answer various questions from the ancestors of the grave guardians. The shaman will visit the tomb daily in the morning, afternoon, and evening for 100 days. This shaman's visit is to comfort, not to be restless, to be sincere, and to leave mortal life to avoid the occurrence of curious spirits. The shaman guided the souls and led all the follow-up rituals after the funeral held by the bereaved family. Shamans intercede between spirits and the underworld as well as intermediaries between spirits and abandoned families.

The death ritual of the *Kajang* people will involve mourners, and the bereaved family has prioritized the family in the same house as the corpse. There were other performers of the ritual, in this case, the shaman who had led all the death processions for 100 days and the *Basing* artists, namely the distiller and the female singer who accompanied the flute and chanting of mourning songs to comfort the spirits before being buried.

Pre-modern art is a religious culture, namely a culture of belief and tribal religious faith. All religious cultures are based on the collective tribal culture, so reading the art symbols means reading their religion (Sumardjo, 2014). *Tope' le'leng* is one of Indonesia's pre-modern works of art as a form of respect for ancestors, so *tope' le'leng* has a symbolic meaning in every religious

ceremony. The aesthetics of *tope' le'leng* is faith, namely what is believed to be a definite, collective, structured, and determinist worldview.

Tope' le'leng is vital in the death ritual, especially in the relationship between the upper, middle, and lower world relations. For example, for the spirit to see the family he left behind and the shaman who guided him for 100 days, neither the shaman nor the whole family who lived in the same house with the deceased for 100 days wore no clothes other than *tope' le'leng*. In this case, the *tope' le'leng* has become a ritual object that connects these three entities, i.e., the upper, middle, and lower worlds.



Figure 1
The situation at the funeral home shows bereaved families, neighbors, and relatives who are mourning.

The *tope' le'leng* in the death ritual begins when the corpse is still in the mourning house. The neighbors and relatives came to the homes of residents who had died by bringing *Tope' le'leng* (black *sarong*) or *lipa'* (ordinary *sarong*) in new conditions for bereaved families. The mourners giving *tope' le'leng* or *lipa'* serves as a donation object that can be useful in the future for the grieving family and is meant as a sign of mourning and condolences.

Based on the price of this *sarong*, its ownership and use also symbolize social strata. So, the more mourners who came and gave *tope' le'leng* would show the higher the social strata of the grieving family, as seen in the *Attarahang* procession (funeral ritual).

There were several stages of the death ritual, the function, and the meaning of the *tope' le'leng* in each way, starting with *Attarahang* (funeral ritual). In front of a funeral home, bamboo sticks would be plugged to tell the mourners the gender of the corpse at home. If one bamboo stick was announced, it meant male, and two bamboo sticks were female. The corpse is bathed and prayed for by the shaman, the next step. The corpse is wrapped in sheets of thin white woven cloth. After reading the prayer, it is continued the *pabasing* ritual. After the *pabasing* is completed, the corpse is lifted into a bamboo coffin covered with a *tope' le'leng*. Its function was that the tenuous bamboo coffin could cover the corpse when put to sleep. The meaning of *Tope' le'leng* as a cover for this coffin was to show the social strata of the grieving family. The more *Tope' le'leng* covered the coffin up to 40 pieces, the higher the social strata. After that, the families said

goodbye to the corpse, escorting the corpse to the village cemetery area. The corpse is buried and accompanied by prayer at this funeral; the mourners leave the burial area.

A remarkable thing happens when an *Ammatoa* (customary leader) dies, namely when *Ammatoa's* body is bathed in the stilt house, and under the stilt house, a *tedong* (buffalo) is slaughtered.



Figure 2
Bamboo coffin covered with 40 sheets of *tope' le'leng* and *lipa*.

When a family is mourning the death of a family member, the shaman and the bereaved family (the family who live with the corpse) do not wear clothes, only wear a *tope' le'leng*. This way of wearing the *tope' le'leng* distinguishes the bereaved family from the mourner, considering everyone will gather in black mourning clothes. This way of wearing *tope' le'leng* means that spirits can see their family and *patuntung* who guide them if they only wear *tope' le'leng* and nothing else. The tradition of not wearing clothes other than *tope' le'leng* for the bereaved family and *patuntung* lasts up to 100 days, according to their belief that for 100 days, the deceased

spirit is still around the house and family.

A series of rituals after *Attarahang*, namely *a'bilang bangngi*, means counting nights/days. After the funeral, there are three mourning rituals: *A'kalli*, *Ngalle Bangi*, and *A'dangan rituals*.

A'kalli Ritual on the 20th day, *Patuntung* with his family made a bamboo fence and recited prayers for the spirits led by *Patuntung*. They did not wear clothes, only wore the *tope' le'leng* so their family's souls could still see their grieving family.



Figure 3
A grieving family is seen praying inside a bamboo fence at *A'kalli Ritual*.

Ngalle Bangi Ritual is an event every five days after *A'kalli*. On the 25th day, a goat is slaughtered, and a *pammonrangan* is made, a particular area covered with *tope' le'leng* and *lipa'*, the last place for the deceased soul when it dies. The *tope'le'leng* and *lipa'* cover *Pammonrangan*, a sacred place not allowed to be entered by anyone other than family and the shaman. The meaning *Pammorangan* is a place for the deceased spirit for 100 days to feel calm at home before heading to eternity in the afterlife.

Pammorangan is a sacred place and must be clean; if there is a family dispute in the mourning home, the marks left by the

deceased spirits in the *pammorangan* will appear. This sign can be seen by humans, the shaman, or people with solid inner eyes. The *Ngalle bangi* ritual is a ritual that adjusts the ability of the grieving family because it is carried out every five days. In this ritual, in addition to a goat being prepared, a *pabasing*, namely the accompaniment of a flute performed by two men and two women who sing mourning songs believed to entertain the spirits in *pammonrangan*. The singer only understands the meaning of the chanting of mourning songs; sometimes, the chanting gives a happy atmosphere and an intense, sad atmosphere that can bring tears to those who hear.

At this *Ngalle Bangi*, neighbors and relatives are present to bring *kanrebarata*, a food offering for the spirits and inhabitants of the other world (Ahuluheluw, 2018). This food offering is read as a prayer by the shaman, and This food offering is not allowed to be eaten because the food that has received this prayer is specifically for the spirit. Ritual *Ngalle Bangi* is most often held on the days 20th, 25th, 40th, and 70th.



Figure 4
The *pammonrangan* was built in the place where the deceased died at home.

In the death ritual, bamboo also becomes a ritual object starting from the gender marker in front of the funeral home. Bamboo is also considered an intermediate medium between the nature of life and death, so starting from the bamboo coffin, the fence of the tomb for 100 days and during *pataba ere* on the 40th and 70th days (watering the grave by skipping water from the bamboo stem).

A'dangan Ritual is 100 days celebration that culminates in the mourning ritual. On the 100th day of this event, all 26 of the tribal council (consisting of ministers in the *Ammatoa* government structure) gather to watch these spirits released into the afterlife with their ancestors. The tribal council will testify that the souls during their life in the world no longer have worldly affairs, one of which is debt. However, chiefs of the tribal council do not apply to The Ata family. Ata is considered enslaved person or people who have broken promises to their ancestors.

The next step, when testify completed, was continued by completing the tomb with a stone headstone. At the *A'dangan* event, the tribal council, neighbors, and relatives who attended the *A'dangan* wore a 'le'leng *tope* complete with other clothes, while the bereaved family and the shaman only wore a *tope' le'leng*. After the *A'dangan* is complete, the grieving family can wear their daily clothes to signify that the mourning period has passed.

Tope' le'leng is a result of the cultural arts of the *Kajang* tribe, whose weaver's ability has been passed down from generation to generation. *Ratu* means that the decorative motifs found on *Tope' le'leng* are made only in the form of a cross variation of the weft from colored threads (white, red, light

blue, and green). The *Ratu* is made on the edge of the *sarong* without dominating the composition of *tope' le'leng* to highlight the black color to emphasize the identity function of the *Kajang* tribe. *Tope' le'leng* has a deep philosophical meaning because of the black color. It functions as a ritual object with different meanings depending on the ritual. It is said that *tope' le'leng* is closely related to nature because nature manifests three things believed in the *patuntung*: respecting *Turiek Arakna* (God), respecting the land given by *Turiek Arrakna*, and respecting the ancestors.

Tope' le'leng will always be a ritual object and traditional attire in every ritual held by the *Kajang* Tribe. *Tope' le'leng* weavers are also called artists because art is present in humans through experience through their senses. According to Lati' a shaman for *patuntung* rituals, all human work is the will of God.

Patuntung belief held by the *Kajang* tribe is a belief that has cosmo-centric mythology, cosmic transformations into humans. By understanding the origin of everything, *Kajang* people get a grip on life to behave and live, continue what to do, and avoid forbidden things. Mythology is the basis for the ethical life of the *Kajang* tribe. According to Jakob Sumardjo (2016), religion is related to the metacosm, which brings invisible things into human life so that the blessings of transcendence can make people more alive. Likewise, the *Patuntung* and the function of *Tope' le'leng* as one of the ritual and sacred objects has presented a moment of transcendence in *pammorangan* and belief in the existence of spirits in a death procession. Belief in mythology is the collective faith of

tribal peoples. It does not matter whether the myths make sense and correspond to human experience or not.

The simplicity of the overall form of the *tope' le'leng*, whose overall composition is dark blue but is believed to be black, and its philosophy does not diminish its function and meaning and even strengthen its sacredness as a ritual object in the *Patuntung* belief. Besides being a myth of religion, myth is also a tribal philosophy. However, the myths of the tribes changed in each era. Even within one tribe, a myth can turn into various variants, similar to the myths in the *Kajang* tribe. The *Kajang* tribe has transformed over time, starting with a group of primordial people who were pressed or stranded in the middle of the wilderness. Their experience and knowledge have not made it possible to conquer the wild nature of the forest. Their technology is inadequate and straightforward and still carries prehistoric technology from generation to generation to this century. The belief in their life comes from the growing forest, so the *Kajang* humans cannot live without the forest, giving rise to the belief of *Patuntung* and *Pasang*.

The relationship between the upper, middle and lower worlds in the triple pattern found in the cultivating tribes in Indonesia is not the same. In the *Kajang* tribe, the role of nature/earth is very close to connecting the ancestral natural world with humans. The ritual objects used to achieve transcendence are chosen from nature, such as bamboo and *tope' le'leng*, derived from natural fibers (cotton). People who still devoutly believe in *Patuntung* as their religion are consistently not using modernization to remain close to nature, which means staying connected

to the world above, in this case, the *turiek arakna*, and their ancestors.

The division of the *Kajang* tribe into inner and outer *Kajang* in line with the development of the times is a sign that belief myths are changing. Modernization is a very striking difference that can be seen by the community in general in the life of the *Kajang* tribe inside and outside. However, the *tope' le'leng* as a cultural product can identify the *Kajang* ethnic community wherever they are, which makes it different from other ethnic groups in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Tope' le'leng is a result of the cultural arts of the *Kajang* tribe, whose weaver's ability has been passed down from generation to generation. *Tope' le'leng* has a deep philosophical meaning because of the black color. It functions as a ritual object with different meanings depending on the ritual. To give a function as the identity of the *Kajang* tribe, which is identical to the color black. The *tope' le'leng* is closely related to nature because nature is a manifestation of three things that are believed in the *patuntung*: respecting *Turiek Arakna* (God), respecting the land given by *Turiek Arrakna*, and respecting the ancestors.

The existence of *tope' le'leng* in the death ritual begins when the corpse is still in the mourning house. *Tope' le'leng* functions as a donation object that can be useful in the future for the grieving family and is meant as a sign of mourning and condolences and also symbolizes social strata as a sign between the mourner and bereaved family. *Tope' le'leng* is vital in the death ritual, especially in the relationship between the upper, middle, and

lower world relations. For example, for the spirit to see the family he left behind and the shaman who guided him for 100 days, neither the shaman nor the whole family who lived in the same house with the deceased for 100 days wore no clothes other than *tope' le'leng*. Bamboo also becomes a ritual object starting from the gender marker stuck in front of the funeral home. Bamboo is also considered an intermediate medium between the nature of life and death, so starting from the bamboo coffin, the fence of the tomb for 100 days and during *pataba ere* on the 40th and 70th days (watering the grave by skipping water from the bamboo stem). The ritual objects used to achieve transcendence are chosen from nature, such as bamboo and *tope' le'leng*, derived from natural fibers (cotton) that connect these three entities, i.e., the upper, middle, and lower worlds.

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