



Analysis of Taiganja Semiotics in the Kaili Tribe

Alfisyahr¹, Gazali², Ulinsa³, Efendi⁴, Agustan⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}Indonesian Language and Literature Education, FKIP Tadulako University

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Corresponding Author:

Alfisyahr

alfisyahrlarisa@gmail.com

Indonesian Language
and Literature Education, FKIP
Tadulako University

Abstract

This research aims to analyze the symbolic and philosophical meaning contained in taiganja, one of the cultural objects that has important value in the life of the Kaili tribe in Central Sulawesi. The type of research used is descriptive qualitative research. The method used in this study is a qualitative method. The data collection techniques used in this study are: 1) Observation (Observation), 2) Interview, 3) Documentation. The technical data analysis in this study is data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The results of this study show that taiganja is not just jewelry or decorative objects, but a symbol of identity, social status, and spirituality of the Kaili community. The shape of the taiganja circle symbolizes the cycle of life and balance between humans and nature, while the ornaments contain the meaning of fertility, strength, and protection. Philosophically, taiganja reflects the life view of the Kaili people who uphold harmony, togetherness, and respect for ancestors. In addition, this study emphasizes that through semiotic analysis, taiganja can be understood as a system of cultural signs that strengthens the identity and noble values of the Kaili community. This research is expected to contribute to the preservation of local cultural heritage and enrich the study of semiotics in the cultural context of the archipelago.

1. Introduction

Semiotics is a science that studies signs, symbols, and the meanings contained in them. The term semiotics comes from the Greek *semeion* meaning "sign". In cultural studies, semiotics is used to understand how a symbol represents the values, beliefs, and outlook on life of a society.

One of the cultural symbols that has a deep meaning in the Kaili tribal community in Central Sulawesi is *taiganja*. *Taiganja* is not just a traditional piece of jewelry, but a symbol of identity, social status, and spirituality that is passed down from generation to generation. This science discusses how signs, whether in the form of symbols, images, words, gestures, or other objects, can represent certain ideas, objects, feelings, or concepts that exist outside of themselves (Andiwa, 2016).

Symbol science is often related to fields such as semiotics (the study of signs and symbols), psychology, anthropology, and sociology. Through understanding symbols, we can better understand the way humans communicate, think, and interact with the world around them. Symbols can also reflect the cultural values and identity of a community group. This symbol not only serves as a marker, but also as a representation of the deep meaning in the social and spiritual life of the Kaili community (Nurfani, 2016).

A symbol is an image, shape, or object that represents an idea, or the sum of something. Although symbols are not values themselves, symbols are needed for the sake of appreciating the values they represent, therefore researchers will also examine their meanings and customary symbols. One of the symbols that has a deep meaning in the culture of the Kaili tribe in Central Sulawesi is *taiganja*. The science of symbols (semiotics) is associated with *taiganja* because *taiganja* is a cultural symbol that is full of meaning for the Kaili people. In the study of semiotics, symbols such as *taiganja* are analyzed to understand the meanings contained in them, both philosophical, social, and spiritual.

Taiganja, in Kaili meaning "bond" or "relationship," reflects the importance of connections between individuals and communities in the life of the Kaili people. This symbol not only serves as a marker, but also as a binder that unites members of society in various aspects of life, from traditional ceremonies to daily social interactions. In this context, *taiganja* is a representation of solidarity, togetherness, and the collective identity of the Kaili tribe. Virgiawan, 2024).

The Kaili people, especially in Sigi Regency, *taiganja* are often integrated into various rituals and traditional ceremonies such as marriage, birth, and death. Each use of this symbol in the context of ritual has a different meaning, but it still serves to strengthen the relationship between the individual and the community and between humans and nature. Through *taiganja*, the Kaili people express spiritual and cultural values that have been passed down from generation to generation.

Taiganja, in the context of the Kaili tribe, is often associated with various aspects of life, such as traditional ceremonies, religious rituals, and social interactions. This symbol reflects the close relationship between individuals and

communities, as well as between humans and nature. In Kaili society, *taiganja* is a binder that unites community members, strengthens a sense of solidarity, and preserves traditions.

Taiganja is a precious gold pendant that shows the social status of the Kaili family. This heirloom is often used as a wedding dowry and as a sacred object in traditional ceremonies. *Taiganja* depicts a woman's womb, which the local community believes to be the beginning of human life.

Semiotic analysis of the *taiganja* symbol is important to understand the meaning contained in it. Semiotics, as a study of signs and meanings, allow us to dig deeper into how the symbol of *taiganja* functions in a cultural context. Through this approach, we can identify the elements

that form symbols, as well as how the Kaili people interpret and relate them to daily life. However, in an era of increasing globalization, local cultural symbols, including *taiganja*, face significant challenges. Foreign cultural influences and rapid social changes can threaten the survival of their traditions and the meanings contained in these symbols. Therefore, it is important to conduct an in-depth study of the *taiganja* symbol, in order to understand its meaning and function in the context of the Kaili tribe's culture.

This research has a reason why the author is interested in taking the title of "Semiotic Analysis of *Taiganja* in the Kaili Tribe" because researching the semiotic analysis of *taiganja* in the Kaili tribe scientifically is important to understand the social and cultural meaning contained in the symbol. Its uniqueness lies in the way these symbols reflect the identity, values, and social status of the Kaili people, as well as how they function in their cultural context. This research is expected to contribute to efforts to preserve local culture, as well as increase understanding of Indonesia's diverse cultural richness. By understanding and appreciating symbols such as *taiganja*, we can preserve the sustainability of a valuable cultural heritage for future generations.

2. Method

The type of research used in this study is qualitative research. This approach is a research process that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from informants and observable behaviors. The qualitative approach has natural characteristics (*Natural Setting*). In qualitative research, the research process is more important than the results. Data analysis tends to be carried out inductively, and meaning becomes essential (Moleong, 2020).

The location of this research is in Sigi Regency, Central Sulawesi. The location was chosen because it is an area where cultural symbols develop *Taiganja* in the life of the community Kayleigh. This research was carried out within a period of one month, adjusted to the needs of the researcher.

The type of data used in this study is qualitative data that is descriptive. The data collected is in the form of words or images so that it does not emphasize

numerical data. Qualitative data can be obtained through various methods of data collection of interviews, observations, and documentation.

1. Primary Data

Primary data is data or information obtained directly by researchers from primary sources in the field, such as the results of interviews and observations.

2. Secondary Data

Secondary data is supporting data obtained from indirect sources, such as books, scientific journals, and other written documents.

The main instrument in qualitative research is the researcher himself. Sugiyono (2013) stated that in qualitative research, researchers play a role as the main instrument in data collection and analysis. The data collection techniques in this study include: **Observation, Interview and Documentation**

Data analysis is an effort made by systematically searching and compiling data obtained from interviews, field notes, and other materials, so that the data is easy to understand and the findings can be informed to other parties. This process involves grouping data into certain categories, breaking the data into small parts, compiling patterns, filtering relevant information for further study, and formulating conclusions that can be understood by both researchers and other readers (Sugiyono, 2017).

1. Data Reduction

Data reduction is the process of sorting and simplifying data so that it can be presented in the form of a complete narrative that is relevant to the focus of the research. Data reduction is applied to the results of observations, interviews, and documentation by reducing data that the author considers insignificant to the researcher.

2. Data Presentation

The presentation of data is carried out after the data has been analyzed. The data that has been processed is then presented in the form of a narrative description so that it is easy to understand and analyze further. Data analysis is a process to obtain raw data. Then change informants that are useful in decision-making. Data is collected and analyzed to answer hypothesis testing questions. From the presentation of this data, it is hoped that it can provide detailed and substantive data clarity with supporting data.

3. Conclusion

Conclusions are drawn based on the results of data analysis that have been presented to find the meaning and relevance of the data in accordance with the research objectives. In context, Matthew B. Miles and A. Michel Huberman say "the third important analytical activity is to draw conclusions". From the beginning of data collection, a qualitative analyst begins to search for the meaning of objects, noting the regularity, patterns, explanation of possible configurations and causal flows of prepositions.

3. Result

The results of this study explain the content of the interview between the author and the informant, as well as the results of the observations that the author made in accordance with the purpose of the research. The results of this study are as follows:

4.1.1 Forms of *Taiganja Symbols* in the Kaili Tribe

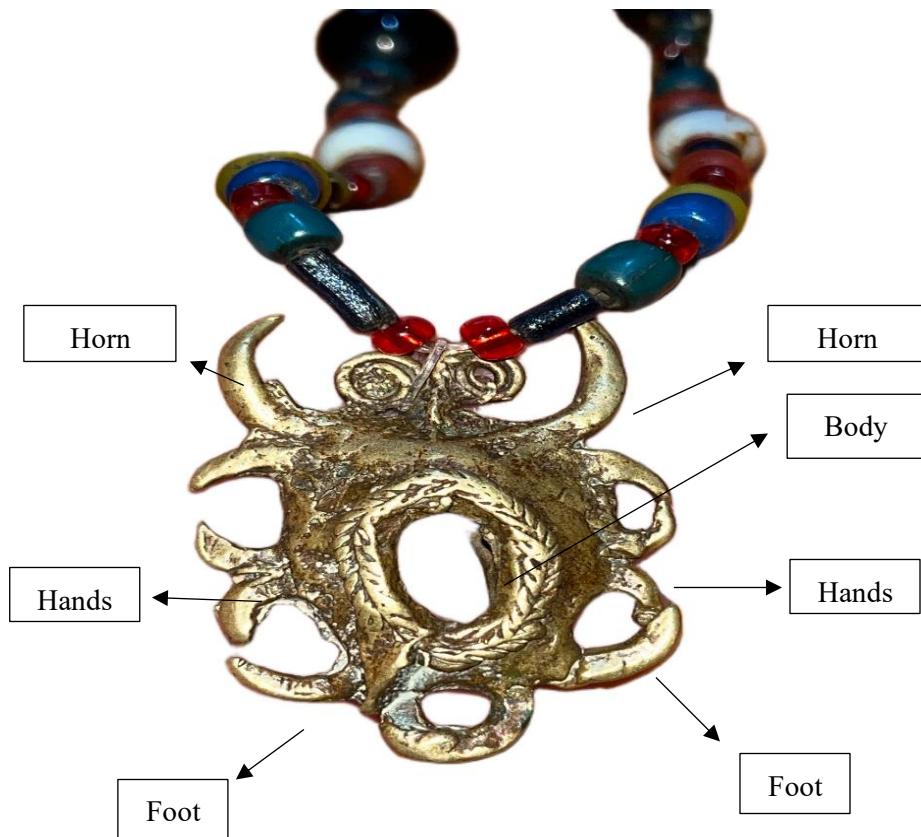


Figure 4.1 *Taiganja pendant*

Source: Atman 2026

No.	Taiganja Parts	Kaili Language Terms	Symbolic Meaning
1.	Horn	<i>young</i>	Symbolizes strength, protection, and care. The horn represents the forces of nature and the ancestors that guard the source of life. In the context of Kaili culture, the horn symbolizes the role of ancestors and the forces of nature that guard

			the source of life. The direction of the horn facing outward or upward indicates man's relationship with the universe as well as the spiritual dimension.
2.	Body	<i>Growth</i>	The <i>oval or uterus-like</i> body of <i>taiganja</i> is the main symbol of <i>taiganja</i> , symbolizing the womb as the source of life, fertility, and the sustainability of offspring. The body is the center of the meaning of <i>taiganja</i> as a symbol of women's dignity.
3.	Hands	<i>Squirt</i>	The <i>taiganja</i> hand, which appears as an arch or hook on the left and right sides of the body, is interpreted as a symbol of guard and protector. The hand symbolizes an active role in maintaining life, family, and customary values, symbolically the hand as a social responsibility in maintaining life and customary values.
4.	Foot	<i>soup</i>	It symbolizes the support of life, stability, and continuity of life. Feet are also interpreted as a symbol of the path of life and regeneration. The hole or open shape on the foot signifies the path of birth and the transition between the world of origin and the world of life.

Taiganja is a very valuable symbol for the people of Central Sulawesi. This symbol is one of the jewelries made of bronze and gold, as a marriage dowry from a man to a woman. *Taiganja* is forged to resemble a buffalo's head with a narrow slit in the middle that resembles a woman, and on the side of the face and back there are jewelry. *Taiganja* has also become a symbol of social status for a person in traditional societies in various regions in Central Sulawesi.

The decorative motifs found in *taiganja* symbolize fertility, prosperity, steadfastness in holding rules and customs. Generally used in marriage ceremonies of partial dowry. The symbol of *taiganja* in the form of a womb is not only known

by the people in Central Sulawesi, but also known in the West Nusa Tenggara and East Nusa Tenggara areas known as "Mamuli", gold earrings in the form of omega Latin letters.

In Sigi Regency, there is a large monument in *Taiganja Park* as a reminder of the philosophical meaning of the culture of the people of Central Sulawesi. In the southern part of the park, near the riverbank, a pair of monuments stand arched facing each other, symbolizing the *symbol of taiganja*.

Informant A (51 years old) explained that:

"*Taiganja* is a traditional jewelry of the Kaili people that has a deep meaning, not only as a body decoration but also as a symbol of social status, honor, and spiritual protection. Since ancient times, *taiganja* has been used as a wedding dowry, family heirloom, and a marker of cultural identity. Its distinctive shape resembles the letter omega (Ω), horseshoe, female womb, or crescent moon symbolize balance, fertility, new life, and the cycle of nature. The philosophy of *taiganja* is inspired by the surrounding nature where the Kaili people live, namely the coastal and mountainous areas. The carved motifs of leaves, water, waves, and vortices symbolize the harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and ancestors, as well as the sustainability of life from generation to generation. Each part of *taiganja* has a symbolic meaning: the lower arch symbolizes the source of life, the central space reflects the human soul, and the carvings on the edges become a binding of spiritual and social values. In the belief of the Kaili people, *taiganja* is believed to have protective power from evil energy and evil spirits, as well as bringing blessings to the wearer. Therefore, *taiganja* is not only aesthetically valuable, but also a medium of inheriting the value of life, spirituality, and local wisdom of the Kaili people".

From this statement, it can be seen that *taiganja* has a basic shape resembling the letter " Ω " (omega) or an open semicircle at the bottom. This shape symbolizes the female womb, which is interpreted as the source of life. According to the craftsman, the process of making *taiganja* is carried out using the cuang technique, which is a metal printing method using wax and clay. This technique is considered an ancient technological heritage that has been known to the Kaili and Kulawi people since centuries ago.

Environmental and environmental factors also affect the shape of *taiganja*. The motifs found on the edges are often inspired by the nature of Kaili, such as river flows, leaf shapes, and mountain arches. The spiral ornaments on both sides of the *taiganja* depict the cycle of life and the balance between humans and nature.

Traditional leaders explained that the shape of *taiganja* is not uniform throughout the Kaili area. In coastal areas, *taiganja* tends to be slimmer and decorated with marine motifs, while in mountainous areas, it is thicker in shape with decorations resembling leaves or animals. These differences reflect the local

environmental and philosophical conditions of each region. In general, the materials used to make *taiganja* also symbolize social status:

- a. Gold and silver were used by the nobility or customary officials.
- b. Brass or copper is used by ordinary people.

4.1.2 The Meaning of the *Taiganja* Symbol for the Kaili Tribe

The meaning of the *taiganja* symbol for the Kaili tribe is very rich, symbolizing fertility, affection, and sincerity of heart that comes from the depiction of a woman's womb as the beginning of human life. In addition, *taiganja* is also a symbol of high social status, indicating nobility or a certain position, which is often used as a wedding dowry and sacred objects in traditional ceremonies.

Informant A (51 years old) explained that:

"According to the view of the Kaili people, *taiganja* is a sacred symbol of life that unites honor, fertility, and spiritual strength. It is not just an ornament, but a marker of identity and a binding of human relations with nature and ancestors. Its circular shape affirms the philosophy of life that continues to rotate uninterruptedly, the balance between the male and female elements, and the harmony between the real world and the spirit world. Each part of *taiganja* contains a deep meaning: the lower arch symbolizes the womb as the source of life, the hole in the middle reflects the space of the soul where consciousness and human values dwell, while the upward open end becomes a symbol of prayer, hope, and a direct connection with ancestors. The carvings of nature around him confirm that man does not stand alone, but rather coexists with nature and cosmic forces. In Kaili's belief, *taiganja* is believed to have protective powers that protect the wearer from bad influences and strengthen the dignity and honor of the family. Although *taiganja* is now more widely understood as a symbol of culture and ethnic identity, its basic value as a symbol of life balance, the sanctity of life, and respect for ancestors is still alive and maintained until the present generation".

From the results of the interviews, the Kaili people view *taiganja* as a symbol of fertility, love, and life balance. Its circular shape is interpreted as a symbol of the unity between men and women, as well as the connection between humans and nature and God. Traditional leaders explained that philosophically, *taiganja* describes the "beginning of life", which is the womb as the place where humans first get life. Therefore, this object is often used in traditional wedding ceremonies as a reminder of the origin of life and the sanctity of the relationship between husband and wife.

In addition, *taiganja* also contains spiritual values. People believe that this object has protective power from bad things and is a symbol of blessings. Metal craftsmen say that before making *taiganja*, they usually say traditional prayers so that the results bring good to the owner.

- a. The older generation views it as a sacred object and heirloom that has spiritual power.
- b. The younger generation sees it more as a symbol of cultural identity and traditional works of art.
- c. Even so, all levels of society still consider *taiganja* as a symbol of pride and identity of the Kaili tribe. The meaning of *taiganja* has also undergone a slight shift between generations.

4.1.3 The Function of *Taiganja Symbols* in a Socio-Cultural Context

The *taiganja symbol* has an important function in the socio-cultural context of the Kaili tribe community in Central Sulawesi, especially as a status marker, a symbol of prosperity, and jewelry that glorifies women. One of the main functions of *taiganja* is as a marker of social status for its wearer. Jewelry that is generally made of this precious metal is used to indicate a person's position or dignity in society. The use of *taiganja*, especially in traditional ceremonies, reflects the level of prosperity and honor of the wearer's family.

Informant A (51 years old) explained that:

"*Taiganja* has an important role in the traditional life of the Kaili people. In the past, *taiganja* was used in various sacred ceremonies such as traditional weddings, welcoming guests of honor, harvest thanksgiving, and rituals to honor ancestors. This jewelry is generally worn by noble women as a necklace or breastplate, as well as being a family heirloom that is inherited from generation to generation. Apart from being a symbol of social status, *taiganja* is also believed to have spiritual powers that function to protect the wearer and bring prosperity. Along with the times, the function of *taiganja* has shifted. Today, *taiganja* is not only understood as a sacred object, but also as a symbol of the culture and identity of the Kaili people. Its form is often presented in traditional performances, art exhibitions, traditional fabric motifs, home decorations, and regional souvenirs. Although its religious values are not as strong as they used to be, the philosophical meaning of *taiganja* is still maintained as a symbol of honor, balance of life, and respect for ancestors. Through the preservation and introduction of *taiganja* to the younger generation, the Kaili community seeks to maintain the sustainability of tradition while fostering a sense of pride in their cultural identity in the midst of modernization".

Based on the results of interviews with informants, the function of *taiganja* in the life of the Kaili community can be categorized into three main aspects, namely social function, spiritual function, and cultural function.

1. Social Function

Taiganja serves as a binding symbol of social relationships, especially in wedding ceremonies. In the Kaili tradition, this object is used as a dowry or traditional property, which signifies a man's seriousness and honor towards the bride's family. In addition, *taiganja* also serves as a marker of social status. People who have *taiganja* from gold or silver are considered to come from respectable families or have an important position in the customs.

2. Spiritual Function

Taiganja is believed to have the energy of protection and blessings. Traditional leaders say that in some ceremonies, *taiganja* is placed in the middle of a ritual circle to ask for safety and balance in life. For some people, *taiganja* is also a symbol of human relationship with the Creator, showing that life comes from God's grace and must be maintained in its purity.

3. Cultural Function

In the cultural context, *taiganja* serves as the identity of the Kaili people. This symbol is often used as motifs in woven fabrics, traditional house carvings, and batik designs typical of Central Sulawesi. This use is a form of preserving symbols so that they remain known by the younger generation.

Traditional leaders also mentioned that currently the local government and cultural institutions have begun to raise *taiganja* as an icon of the Sigi region, as a form of respect for the cultural heritage of the Kaili tribe.

4. Discussion

Based on the results of the study, it is shown that *taiganja* as a cultural symbol has a complex semiotic meaning. At the denotative level, it appears as a metal object with aesthetic value. However, at the connotative level, it becomes a symbol that binds society in cultural, social, and spiritual values. Roland Barthes' analysis shows that *taiganja* forms a "cultural myth" that affirms the identity of the Kaili people as a community that values the balance between humans, nature, and God. The change in meaning from generation to generation shows the existence of cultural dynamics. Although its sacred function is diminished among young people, the *taiganja* symbol is still maintained as an icon of traditional culture and art.

This is in line with Barthes' theory that signs are always open to social and historical reinterpretation. Thus, *taiganja* is proof that cultural symbols are never static, but continue to transform according to social developments, without losing their original meaning as a marker of the identity and ancestral heritage of the Kaili tribe. From the results of observations and interviews, information was obtained that *taiganja* is still considered an important symbol in the life of the Kaili people, especially in the social and spiritual context. Although its use has begun to decrease among the younger generation, the philosophical meaning and cultural values contained in it are still maintained and respected by the traditional chiefs.

Most informants explained that *taiganja* is often used during traditional wedding ceremonies (*notate dala, nebolai, and monikah*), as well as in welcoming guests of honor. In that context, *taiganja* serves as a symbol of honor, fertility, and social bonds between two families. In addition, the results of observations show that the form of *taiganja* circulating in the community consists of various variations, depending on the social status of the owner. For noble families or traditional figures, *taiganja* is usually made of precious metals such as bronze, gold and silver, while people usually use brass materials. The size also varies, ranging from small ones the size of a hand to large ones with a length of about 15–20 centimeters.

The informants also emphasized that *taiganja* is not only jewelry, but also has spiritual value. This symbol is believed to bring blessings, protect from harm, and be a reminder of the values of unity and togetherness in the Kaili community. Analysis of the semiotics of *taiganja* in the Kaili tribe sees this jewelry as a system of signs rich in meaning, including symbols of social status (more *taiganja* indicates higher status), magical protection (as a talisman to protect against evil spirits), as well as cultural heritage values that are passed down from generation to generation. *taiganja* also demonstrates the technological sophistication and ethnomathematical knowledge of the Kaili tribe in its complex design and manufacture.

4.3 The Meaning of *Taiganja* from a Semiotic Perspective

- a. Social Status Symbol:** The number of *taiganja* possessed indicates a person's social status in Kaili society. The more *taiganja* one has, the higher his social status, and is often associated with the upper class or the nobility.
- b. Magical Protection Symbol:** *Taiganja* is often used as a talisman or magical object that is believed to provide protection to the wearer from evil spirits and supernatural disturbances.
- c. Symbols of Technological and Mathematical Sophistication:** The intricate design of *taiganja*, including geometric patterns such as trapezoids and rectangles, reflects the high craftsmanship of the craftsmen and the application of sophisticated ethnomathematical principles of their time.
- d. Cultural Heritage Symbol:** *Taiganja* is a valuable family heritage and is often passed down from generation to generation. Its use in traditional events and important ceremonies shows strong cultural values and continues to be maintained today.
- e. Symbol of Beauty and Grandeur:** *Taiganja* is a part of traditional clothing that adds a sense of elegance and grandeur, as well as being a symbol of the greatness and cultural beauty of the Kaili tribe.

4.4 Symbolic and Philosophical Values of *Taiganja*

Based on semiotic analysis, *taiganja* can be broken down into several symbolic and philosophical meanings:

- a. Symbol of Female Glory:** *Taiganja* is often associated with the respect and glorification of women in Kaili culture. This jewelry symbolizes the dignity and important role of women in the family and indigenous peoples.
- b. Social Status and Prosperity:** In ancient times, *taiganja* was made of valuable materials such as gold or bronze, and its ownership indicates the owner's high social status and prosperity. The bigger and more complicated the *taiganja* has, the higher the social status of the family.
- c. Cultural Identity:** *Taiganja* serves as a strong identity marker for the Kaili tribe. Its distinctive motifs and shapes represent cultural heritage and local wisdom that have been passed down from generation to generation.
- d. Protection and Well-Being:** Some interpretations also state that *taiganja* is believed to have magical powers or spiritual protection for the wearer, as well as bringing good luck and well-being in married life.
- e. Traditional Ties and Marriages:** *Taiganja* is often an important part of traditional ceremonies, including weddings. The giving of *taiganja* in a traditional procession can symbolize the ratification of family ties and a commitment to maintain customs.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research on "Semiotic Analysis of *Taiganja* on the Kaili Tribe", it can be concluded as follows:

1. *Taiganja* is a cultural symbol that is full of meaning in the life of the Kaili people. Its shape which resembles the letter omega (Ω) or horseshoe symbolizes fertility, strength, and protection. The motifs and ornaments found in *taiganja* reflect the harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and ancestors. Thus, *taiganja* is not just an ornamental object, but a symbol that unites the spiritual, social, and cosmological values of the Kaili people.
2. Semiotic analysis shows that *taiganja* contains deep denotative and connotative meanings. Denotatively, *taiganja* is a metal piece of jewelry used by noble women. However, connotatively, it represents social status, ethnic identity, and sacred symbols related to belief in ancestral power. This meaning is formed through a sign system that is inherited from generation to generation and internalized in the socio-cultural life of the Kaili people.
3. In a social context, *taiganja* functions as a medium of cultural communication. Its use in traditional ceremonies, weddings, or religious rituals plays a role in emphasizing the identity and pride of the Kaili ethnicity. *Taiganja* is also a means of maintaining social solidarity and strengthening intergenerational bonds through the inheritance of traditional values.
4. The function of *taiganja* has changed over time. In the past, *taiganja* was used as a marker of social status and a sacred heirloom. Now, its function

has expanded to become a cultural symbol and traditional artwork used in tourism promotion and cultural preservation activities. Nevertheless, its philosophical meaning is still respected by the Kaili people as part of the ancestral heritage that must be preserved.

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