

The Analysis of Ti'i Langga as an Icon of *Rotenese* Culture with Special Reference to Forms and Meanings (A Semiotic Study)

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Forms, Icon, Meaning, Semiotics, Ti'i Langga.	This research aims to describe and explain the forms of the Ti'i Langga as an icon of <i>Rotenese</i> culture and to describe and explain the symbolic meanings of the Ti'i Langga as an icon of <i>Rotenese</i> culture. The researcher has formulated two research questions for this research as follows: (1) What are the forms of the Ti'i Langga as an icon of <i>Rotenese</i> culture? and (2) What are the symbolic meanings of the Ti'i Langga as an icon of <i>Rotenese</i> culture? The researcher used a descriptive qualitative method. The data were collected through interviews, taking notes, and documentation. The researcher describes the research results based on interviews with informants. The researcher presents the data in the form of a narrative description. The results showed that Ti'i Langga has structural forms and specific meanings. Ti'i Langga contains the physical structure of Ti'i Langga, variations of Ti'i Langga, style and ornaments, and materials and manufacturing techniques. Ti'i Langga contains traditional meanings, cultural meanings, religious meanings, gender meanings, and modern meanings. The Ti'i Langga hat is not just a traditional head covering, but also a meaningful cultural symbol that represents the identity, social values, and local wisdom of the <i>Rotenese</i> people.
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INTRODUCTION

According to Suniarini et al. (2017:386), one aspect of cultural legacy is symbols, each of which has a different meaning. Traditional clothing has diverse symbolic meanings, especially in East Nusa Tenggara. Ti'i Langga is a symbol of the cultural identity of the *Rotenese* people. The use of this hat reflects pride and recognition of their cultural heritage. The term Ti'i Langga comes from the Rote language (Teranu dialect), which means "hat." The term then refers to a type of hat woven from Palmyra leaves (*Borassus flabellifer*).

Ti'i Langga is traditional headgear worn by the *Rotenese* people in East Nusa Tenggara and is widely recognized as an important cultural icon. More than just a head covering, it embodies social identity, aesthetic values, and symbolic meanings that reflect the worldview of the *Rotenese* community. However, academic discussions on Ti'i Langga remain limited, as most studies focus on ethnographic or descriptive aspects rather than analyzing its semiotic dimensions. The main research problem lies in the lack of a systematic explanation of how Ti'i Langga, through its physical forms and symbolic features, functions as a sign system within *Rotenese* culture.

This study employs semiotic analysis to interpret Ti'i Langga beyond its physical structure. The research plan involves two stages: first, identifying and describing the variations and forms of Ti'i Langga and interpreting the symbolic meanings attached to these forms; and second, relating the findings to the cultural, social, and ritual functions of the *Rotenese* people.

Theoretically, this research is grounded in semiotic studies, particularly Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic model of the sign, which consists of the representamen, the object, and the interpretant. This framework allows Ti'i Langga to be analyzed not only as a physical object but also as a cultural sign that conveys meaning through its forms and symbolic attributes.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze Ti'i Langga as a *Rotenese* cultural icon with a specific focus on its form and meaning. The results include a comprehensive description of its structural form, an interpretation of its symbolic meaning, and a deeper understanding of its role in expressing cultural identity. This research also contributes to cultural preservation efforts and enriches the application of semiotic theory in the study of traditional artifacts.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method. The qualitative approach is chosen because the research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the forms and meanings of Ti'i Langga as an icon of *Rotenese* culture. This method allows the researcher to explore the deeper meanings embedded in the data as well as the cultural context in which Ti'i Langga is used.

The sample for this research consisted of three key informants selected for their knowledge and understanding of Ti'i Langga. The data collection techniques used in this study included interviews, note-taking, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted by asking direct questions between the researcher (interviewer) and the informant (resource person) to obtain comprehensive and detailed information regarding the form and meaning of Ti'i Langga. The researcher recorded key points during the interviews through systematic note-taking to organize and maintain data accuracy. Furthermore, documentation was conducted through videos, photographs, and audio recordings to ensure the completeness and reliability of the information collected.

This research was conducted in March 2025 at Rumah Sasando, located on Jl. Timor Raya Kilometer 22, Oebelo, Central Kupang Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. Rumah Sasando is a cultural center that preserves traditional *Rotenese* arts and crafts, providing a relevant context for observing and analyzing Ti'i Langga. The location allows the researcher to directly access authentic cultural artifacts, interact with local experts, and gather detailed information on the forms and symbolic meanings of Ti'i Langga within its cultural setting.

The data analysis follows the model proposed by Sugiyono (2008: 245), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The researcher organizes the data, identifies key patterns and themes, and interprets the results in relation to the research questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The following are the results of research on Ti'i Langga as a cultural icon of the *Rotenese* people, focusing on its forms and symbolic meanings, presented in tables and images illustrating its physical structure.

No	Forms	Meanings
1	The Base	The base of the Ti'i Langga, which refers to the circumference of the head, symbolizes the cycle of life, the continuity and interconnectedness of humans with society, and the natural world
2	The Brim	The brim, which refers to the tip or edge of the Ti'i Langga hat, symbolizes balance, order, and harmony in the lives of the <i>Rotenese</i> people
3	The Crest	The crest is the part that tapers upwards or the antenna, which is usually called "kule" or "soba" in the <i>Rotenese</i> language, symbolizing the nature of the <i>Rotenese</i> people, who tend to be tough and have a symbol of leadership.

The researcher found that Ti'i Langga is a cultural icon of the *Rotenese* people. Its physical structure, including the brim, base, and crest, carries symbolic meanings that reflect the identity, worldview, and value system of the *Rotenese* people. Ti'i Langga also serves as a cultural sign that holds historical, social, and spiritual meanings.

Discussion

The base of the Ti'i Langga, which encircles the head, is the hat's primary structural element. Shaped as a circular band, it is woven densely from palm leaves using a concentric spiral technique to ensure strength and durability, with an outer diameter of approximately 20 cm, an inner diameter of 17–18 cm, and a height of 8–10 cm, adjusted to fit the average adult male head. The weaving is reinforced with thin bamboo slivers or hardened lontar fibers, while the inner side is lined with soft fabric or plant fiber for comfort. Symbolically, the circular form represents the cycle of life, continuity, and the interconnectedness between humans, their community, and nature. Structurally, the base supports the brim and crest, making its proportions and integrity essential to the overall form of the Ti'i Langga, reflecting both its functional and cultural significance.

The brim of the Ti'i Langga, forming the outer edge of the hat, encircles the head and extends outward, crafted from tightly woven palm leaves to maintain its broad and rigid shape. Measuring approximately 44–48 cm in diameter and 12–14 cm in width, with a thickness of 0.7–1 cm, the brim protects the wearer from the sun and provides structural support for the hat. Constructed as a continuation of the base, the weaving employs single-direction flat or two-direction cross patterns, reinforced with thin rattan or bamboo to preserve symmetry. Visually, it creates a majestic and balanced appearance, and symbolically, it represents harmony, order, openness, and abundance in *Rotenese* society. The brim is often decorated with geometric motifs from naturally colored or dyed palm leaves, enhancing both its aesthetic and cultural significance.

The crest, known in the *Rotenese* language as "kule" or "soba," is one of the most iconic features of the Ti'i Langga, rising from the crown and tapering upwards, typically 40–60 cm in height. Its shape and size vary according to regional customs, the wearer's social status, and the hat's cultural function. Symbolically, the crest consists of nine levels, each with two curves, and each curve contains 18 notches

representing the number of kingdoms (nusak) on Rote Island. These 18 notches are divided by a straight-line symbolizing balance, while a straight line on the body of the Ti'i Langga reinforces the crest and signifies equality. Technically, the crest is made from strong, flexible young palm leaves, shaped through drying or steaming, and reinforced with bamboo fibers or fine wire. It is inserted into the crown and secured with palm leaf ties, natural glue, or traditional pinning, and often decorated with patterned plaits or fiber knots for aesthetic appeal. Although its shape may deform over time, this does not diminish its symbolic or aesthetic significance, highlighting the Ti'i Langga's role as both a cultural and artistic icon.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study's results, the forms of Ti'i Langga reflect its multifunctional role in *Rotenese* society as a unique cultural artifact rather than merely a traditional head covering. The pointed top or horn-shaped projection varies according to social or ceremonial use. Symbolically, Ti'i Langga conveys identity, tradition, and values, serving as a sign of leadership, confidence, and authority. In addition, it represents philosophical and moral values that strengthen cultural pride and resilience, highlighting its communicative function and role in cultural preservation and in strengthening ethnic identity in Indonesia's pluralistic society.

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