

Semiotic Meaning of Sumba Varieties Traditional Woven Cloths and a Sustainability of its Tribe

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ABSTRACT

Sumba island has become one of the famous tourism areas in the world. It has many unique traditions, such as *Pasola*, *Marapu*, traditional houses, megalithic tombs, traditional woven cloths, and natural beaches Sumba woven traditional clothes have many varieties of signifiers that represent not only its significance but also its place or area. The symbol as a signifier can be part of the human body, specific animals like horses, scorpions, deer, etc. All these symbols have their own meaning even their ideology. The natural colour materials of the woven cloths are taken from specific plants, and even the brown colour is taken from mud. Sumba traditional woven cloth is very unique, beautiful and famous. Sumba tribe still produces woven cloths in which they still keep the natural colour and its signifier. When producing the woven cloths, among them they still keep to use its local materials and their natural signifier. This is a way for them to sustain not just the woven cloths but also their culture.

Key words : Sumba tribe, Semiotic meaning, Woven traditional clothes

Introduction

Sumba Island has become promoted as a new tourism destination beyond Bali in the last ten years. There are a number of indigenous events that attract tourists to visit this island, such as *Pasola*, *Marapu* (Ngongo and Ngongo, 2021) megalithic tombs, traditional houses, beautiful and natural beaches, woven cloths with various motif and colours. This island consists of four regencies, namely, East Sumba, West Sumba, Central Sumba and Southwest Sumba. Germany magazine –Focus- 2018 had chosen Sumba Island as the “most beautiful Island in the World.” The reason to choose Sumba as the most beautiful Island in the World was because of Sumba’s exotic savannah ecosystem, exotic beaches, cultural heri-

tages like unique megalithic tombs, weaving, traditional houses and *Pasola* riding culture (Lewokeda, 2018). This fact attracts people from other countries to visit Sumba island. When they visit this island and want to go back to their countries, they will buy some souvenirs such as woven clothes and others.

Relating to the woven cloths wearing by the communities of that regency in a ceremony event or in their daily activities there are various kinds, such as, its symbol, colour, and functions. Sumba traditional woven cloths consist of *hinggi* and *wee, yee*. *Hinggi* is for wide and long clothes that wear by man and *Lau* is a name of cloth in a form of sarung that is usually worn by women. The woven cloths are worn, such as its motif/characteristics and colour of the woving cloths pictures or represents its regency.

Besides, each motif, signifiant in that clothes has cultural meaning and even ideological meaning. The process of weaving a cloth takes time about one to seven months even a year. It is the same as the clouring process in which people have to take a special tree to be processed as become colour used. That is why a piece of weaving cloth of Sumba is expensive. The price of each cloth can be around one to five million rupiahs.

There are various characteristics of Sumba traditional woven cloths. The characteristics of woven cloths are unique and they have signs and meaning in which from the view of linguistics according to Saussure in Hodge and Kress (1988); Halliday (1989), and Pierce 1839-1914 in Hodge and Kress (1988), was known as semiotic or semiosis. Sausure proposed a dualistic notion of signs, relating to the signifier as the form of the word or phrase uttered, and to the signified as the mental concept. Semiosis as an irreducibly triadic process, namely an object, a sign and an interpretation or interpretant. Pirece in Hodge and Kress (1988) classified signs into three major types: icons (based on identity or likeness: e.g. road sign), index (based on contiguity or causality: e.g. smoke as a sign of fire) and symbol (a merely conventional link, as in Saussure's 'arbitrary' sign). While social semiotics expands the interpretable semiotic landscape to include all cultures codes (Halliday, 1989; Ngongo, 2019; Ngongo and Ngongo, 2021)

Considering the uniqueness of weaving cloths of Sumba island, the writer wants to describe the varieties, symbols, meaning and process of weaving traditional weaving cloths. It also describes how the community sustain it as one of their ancestors local belief systems like *Marapu*. Therefore, this chapter covers three parts. First part is Varieties of Woving Cloths and its semiotic meaning. The second part is Colouring and Woving Process. The third pars are Woving cloths as the sustainability of Sumbanese tribe.

Methodology

This paper was classified as a descriptive qualitative design in which data informing this study was collected by interviewing and observing as proposed by Marshall and Rossman (1995); Bogdan and Biklen (1982); Ngongo (2019). By applying purposive sampling, five Sumbanese informants were chosen since they fulfil the criteria needed in which they

were native speakers who understand the local language and traditional woven cloths. They were interviewed in order to collect data relating to the names, meaning and process of traditional woven cloths; while field observation was done to collect data relating to signifiers varieties of traditional woven cloths. All data gained were identified, classified, analyzed and interpreted. The first author herself own observation and experiences as native Sumbanese speaker was used to enrich the narratives of the research.

Results and Discussion

Varieties of Woving cloths and Semiotic Meaning

There are a number of signifiers used in traditional woven cloths. Each signifier has its own meaning. The signifier used in woving cloths usually are animals, such as, horse, deer, hen, scorpion, rooster, etc. It also uses people who is riding in a horse, or even only head of people, and another life signifier such as *Mamoli*, *Mamoli* is a dawry made of gold that is usually given to a bride's mother in a process of the marriage ceremony (Ngongo, 2013). All those animals and people signifiers can be looked at the woven cloths that are worn by man and women, except *Mamoli* is only looked at the women's woven cloths. Woven cloths for man is called *kain selimut* and for the woman is called *sarung*. There are three types of woven cloths made, namely *kain* (for man) *sarung* (for a woman) and *salendang* 'scarf' (can be worn by man and woman). When *salendang* is worn by man, it is called *kapouta* (it is tied on man's head together with *kain* that is worn on man's waist).

Table 1 pictures signifiers and signifies of woven traditional cloths, such as horse, deer, lion, rooster, cokatoo, people, *mamoli*, main house, etc. Those signifiers are animals, people and only one metal made of silver or gold. Each of these signifiers implies its own meaning.

Based on the data from interviewing the five informants, they almost had the same information relating to the signifier and signifies of woven cloths.

- Ndara Horse

Horse in Sumba island is usually used by people as their transportation. Horse can be used also as dowries that are given to the bride's parents by the groom's parents on the marriage ceremony (Ngongo,2013). The image of a horse on woven cloths signifies greatness, pride, masculinity and

Table 1. Sumbanese's signifier and signifier of Traditional Woven Cloths

No	Signifier	Signifie
01.	<i>Ndara</i> 'horse'	<i>Rato kalada</i> 'greatness', <i>kalada ate</i> 'proud', <i>kabani</i> 'masculine', <i>galle kua na</i> 'prosperity. and <i>pandou mandii</i> 'social status'
02.	<i>Karanggata</i> 'Deer'	<i>Ata pande pa-pangedda</i> 'wise of leader'
03.	<i>Mawailo</i> 'rooster'	<i>Oro moripa</i> 'awareness of life', <i>pamoripa wai</i> 'source of life', <i>kabani</i> 'masculine', <i>moripa</i> 'awareness' and <i>pa-ia na/bokota</i> 'unity'.
04.	<i>Pero</i> 'Cockatoo'	<i>Paia na/Bokota</i> 'unity'
05.	<i>Mahang</i> 'lion'	<i>Pangiddi na</i> 'power'
06.	<i>Ata</i> 'People'	<i>Pata ata pia</i> 'natural human being'
07.	<i>Umma Kalada</i> 'main house'	<i>Paia na</i> 'unity'
08.	<i>Mamoli</i> 'gold or silver metal' used as woman's dawry	<i>moripa mawinne</i> 'feminim, human life'
09.	<i>Kurra</i> 'lobster'	<i>mawinne pawessi</i> 'women strength'
10.	<i>Wonnu</i> 'turtle'	<i>pawessi</i> strength and <i>pangiddi na rato</i> 'power of the king;
11.	<i>Wosa</i> 'crocodile'	<i>moripa mawinne</i> 'Women's life'
12.	<i>Kaboko gokko</i> 'dragon'	<i>pawessi</i> 'strength', <i>pangiddi na</i> power
13.	<i>Manu</i> 'chicken'	<i>mbabu</i> 'rich, wealthy, <i>galle kua na</i> 'prosperous'

social status. Greatness implies social statues of noble clan/people who usually riding a horse when they travel. Besides that, the signifiant of horse implies prosperity. It also signifies regions or natural places that are appropriate for shepherding horses.

- *Karanggata* 'Deer'

Deer usually can escape from people's encirclement. This implies that braveness of a leader to react and awareness of a leader to solve problems that exist. Therefore, signifier of the deer especially its horn signifies as a wise of leader that is care of his people's life. A leader is hoped can bring properous for his people and he can solve problems faced.

- *Mawailo* 'Rooster'

Rooster is usually used by Sumbanese for their ritual prayer service of *Marapu* (Sumbanese belief). The signifier of the rooster signifies as awareness of life and a leader that takes care of his people. It is realized by them that rooster always crow early morning to wake up people. It also signifies as a source of life, masculine, awareness and unity.

- *Pero* 'Cockatoo'

The farther of *Marapu* is known as *Kaka Ratu*. Physically a cockatoo is small but its eye is bright and red. Therefore it signifies as a leader that is manifested as *Rato* (King) or *Marapu's* Leader. Relating to the use of cockatoo, there is a paralelism namely *Kaka ma kanguhuru Parihu Pa Uli* 'Cockatoo that is grouping- parrot that is friendship'. This paralelism implies a feeling of unity that represents Sumbanese faith to have decision of their problems by discussing it together.

- *Ata* 'People'

The use of people as signifier in woven cloths signifies natural human being, lonely but its function is to reject bad thing/attitude. The image of a man is riding a horse signifies powerful. It is also shown only head of a man used as signifier at woven cloths. this implies that as human being one should think firstly before making a decision.

- *Mamoli* 'metal that is made of gold or siver'

Mamoli (see picture nuber 21) is used as dawry that is given to bride's mother by groom's parents. It is used as a honor for bride's mother who has looked after and take care of her daughter. Its image as a womb of woman. It signifies a woman who is masculine and feminim

- *Umma Kalada* ' Main house'

Uma kalada 'main house' is used as an image in woven cloth. It signifies unity. It reminds the community to be unity when they want to decide something that include their tribe. All decisions must be decided together in this *umma kalada* 'main house'. None decision be decided in their home garden. They believe that their ancestor still in *uma kalada*. Their ancestor will take care of them.

- *Mahang* 'Lion'

Lion especially the characteristics of *Mahang katiku tau* (an mage of lion with man's head). This kind of signifier implies power.

- *Kurra* 'Lobster'

Signifier of lobster are usually looked at women's *sarung*. It signifies strength of women. It also implies women's habit and strength to do diffenrent

activities simustaneously. Like lobster that have eight back legs to walk, metaphorically a Sumbanese woman can do her different activities at home simoultaneously including weaving cloths for her family.

Plants that are used to produce natural colour of Traditional Woven Cloths

Process of colouring takes procedures in which the materials of colouring are taken from special plants such as *mengkudu* or *Morinda citrifolia* L. / Rubiaceae. The roots of this plants are taken and processed procuded red colour. It is the same as other plants in which its leaf or skin are taken. Table two presents kinds of plants that are used as natural source of making colour.

Table 2 pictures some plants that are used to produce varieties of colours for woven cloths by weavers. Sometimes they also use mud to keep the colour strong. The process of producing the colour takes time, such as root being (1) washed, (2) dried, (3) cut into small pieces and then (4) be pounded, and so on.

Names of Woven Clothes

Subanese woven cloths consists of different names such as *Kawur* and, *Kombu*. *Kombu* has red colour whereas *Kawuru*'s image has blue colour. This kind of woven cloth is made by *Kambera* weaver society, East Sumba regency. This characteristic is called *Habak*. It is put in the centre of the cloth. This signi-

fier implies meaning or signified as a woman who is working hard.

Kaliuda cloths is from Rende village, *kombu* cloths are from Kambera village, Pau village. *Pahikung* clothes are from Kambera, Rende, Prailiu and Pau villages. The name used implies the places. Following Jackson analysis on Max Weber' theory of ethnicity, the authors identified that there are 8 ethnics groups settled in Sumba Island such as *Kambera*, *Wewewa*, *Kodi*, *Mamboro*, *Anakalang*, *Wanukaka*, *Loli* and *Lamboya* (Jackson, 1982). Most of the ethnic groups have their own local languages which cannot be understood by other ethnic groups, however people settled in the boundary can speak more than one local language or at least understand each local language in nearby other ethnic groups. Woven traditional Cloth that is wore by a sumbanese implies his/her village and tribe. For example, *kaliuda* woven cloth is from Rende village, *kombu* woven cloth is from Kambera, Pau village, and *Pahikung* is from Kambera, Rende, Prailiu, and Pau villages. *Pakette*, *rukka* woven cloths, etc are from Kodi, Wewewa, Southwest Sumba. The following table present names of woven traditional cloths.

Table 3 pictures that Sumba traditional woven cloths have 13 characteristics. Each name has its own characteristic that also pictures its area being made of. The name of those traditional woven cloths can be shown at the following images (Figure 1). From these images it can be looked at men wearing *kapouta* on their head.

Table 2. Plants that are used as natural dye for coloring the cloths (addapted from Murniati and Takandjandji, 2015 : 227)

No.	Plant's Local name	Plant's Scientific and its familiy name	Parts of plant that is used	Produced colour
1.	<i>Wora</i> or <i>nila</i> , <i>tarum</i>	<i>Indigofera tinctoria</i> L./ Leguminoseae	leafs, stalk, seed	Blue-black
2.	<i>Kombu</i> or <i>mengkudu</i>	<i>Morinda citrifolia</i> L./ Rubiaceae	root	Red
3.	<i>Loba</i>	<i>Symplocos</i> sp./ Symplocaceae	stalk's skin, dried leaf	Mordant to tie the colour
4.	<i>Kawilu</i> or <i>kemiri</i>	<i>Aleurites moluccana</i> (L.) Willd./Euphorbiaceae	content of candlenut	Colour preservative
5.	<i>Walakari</i> or <i>dadap</i> (flowering tree)	<i>Erythrina</i> sp./ leguminoseae	stalk's deep skin	Colouring smooth
6.	<i>Kalisso</i>	<i>Spondias pinata</i>	skin	Black
7.	<i>Kessi</i>	Rengas (varnish tree)	leafs	Black
8.	<i>Linno</i>	-	skin	Red
9.	<i>Kanobbu</i>	-	leafs	Red

Table 3. Names of traditional woven cloths

No.	Name of traditional woven cloths based on characteristics	Village(s)
01.	<i>Kaliuda</i>	<i>Rende</i>
02.	<i>Kombu</i>	<i>Kamera, Pau</i>
03.	<i>kamera</i>	<i>Kamera</i>
04.	<i>Pahikung</i>	<i>Kamera, Rende, Prailiu, Pau</i>
05.	<i>Kanobbu</i>	<i>Kodi</i>
06.	<i>Pakette</i>	<i>Wewewa, kodi</i>
07.	<i>Lambaleko/ songket</i>	<i>Wewewa</i>
08.	<i>Pasodo</i>	<i>Wewewa</i>
09.	<i>Pagillingo</i>	<i>Wanoka, loli, lamboya, anakalang</i>
10.	<i>Kain mamboru</i>	<i>Mamboro, Anakalang</i>
11.	<i>Mette bolo</i>	<i>Waijewa, anakalang, loli, lamboya.</i>
12.	<i>Rukka/ kanobbu</i>	<i>Kodi</i>
13.	<i>Pasikku</i>	<i>Wewewa</i>

Some Strategies to sustain Sumbanese’s tribe

There are some strategies applied by the villager or weavers to sustain their tribe in order to still keep their local knowledge of weaving cloths. Generally, elders teach the younger women how to weave. Intuitively, their daughter learn how to weave from their mother or elder woman in their village. Other strategy line, traditional event, home industry and local government policy.

a. Traditional events

Woven cloths must be worn by Sumbanese in attending traditional event, such as *Pasola*, marriage event, traditional party, etc. This strategy can be a way for them to sustain their local knowledge of weaving traditional cloths. Therefore, woman still keep this knowledge by training their daughters to weave the cloths like *sarung*, *kain*, or *salendang*.



Fig. 1. Sumba traditional woven cloths (Image number 1-2 are called *Kombu* cloths, number 3-4 are *Kawuru*, number 5-6 are *pahikung*, number 7 is *lambaleko*, number 8-10 are *pakette*, number 11-12 are *mette bolo*, number 13-14 are *kaliuda*, number 15-16 are *kamera*, number 17 is *pagillingo*, and number 18 is *lamboya*, number 19 is *ruka/ kanobu* and number 20 is *pasikku* woven cloths. Number 21 is called *Mamoli*).

Beside wearing these traditional cloths, woven clothes are used as a symbol in wedding ceremonies. Groom's parents have to prepare lots of woven cloths to be given to bride's parents. The number of woven cloths for every wedding ceremony consists of 50-80 pieces. Woven cloths are also used to traditional event when someone died. People who come to see the dead body will bring a piece of woven cloth. If the dead body is a man, *kain* will be brought, and if a woman, *sarung* will be brought. These cloths are put near, beside, or on the dead body.

b. Home industry

In order to fulfil the family of cloths, some weavers work together to produce woven cloths or they have home industry in which they can sell their woven clothes to earn money. They can also weave clothes based on the order from people outside the village. They can even send cloths to other places or island. The weavers commit to keep the characteristics of the cloths, such as its signifier and colour that pictures its places.

c. Policy of the Local government

The policy of the government of East Nusa Tenggara, Governor's letter number BO.165/III/2019 about the use of territorial motif woven cloths of East Nusa Tenggara for government employment (Seo, 2019). This letter stated that the use of NTT territorial motif was aimed to sustain cultural value, encourage tourism promotion and economy growing through society small industry in East Nusa Tenggara. It can be stated that this letter clearly stated to order every government employee to wear uniform clothes made of woven traditional cloths. Therefore, every government employee has to wear clothes made of woven traditional cloths twice a week.

This factual condition impacts beneficial to Sumba tribe to sustain their ancestors local knowledge of weaving cloths. This policy can also help weavers to earn money for their family.

Conclusion

Sumba traditional woven clothes are very unique, beautiful and famous recently. Sumba tribe still produce woven cloths in which they still kept the natural colour and its signifier. The signifiers are in forms of animals, people and specific metal made of gold

called *mamoli*. Each symbol or its signifier implies its own meaning that represented their culture and belief. In order to have the varieties of colour red, white and brown using for woven cloths, they apply their local knowledge by using specific plants around them like in a forest or garden. When producing the woven cloths, they still keep to use local and natural materials. This is a way for them to sustain not just the woven cloths but also its culture. Moreover, in order to sustain the local knowledge, there are some strategies applied, namely, wearing traditional cloths on every cultural events, some weavers work together to have their weaver group or society/home small industry, and they are supported by government policy that order government's employee to wear territorial motif clothes twice a week. It is suggested that other researches may investigate other cultural heritage of Sumba tribe that have not been investigated in order to sustain its language and culture.

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