



## Similar but not the same: The study of weavings cultural materials diversity in Sumba

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### ABSTRACT

This paper aims to show that cultural materials, which are often considered cultural and area-bounded, turn out to have a diversity that depends on each place's social, cultural, economic, and geographical dynamics. This paper will focus on cultural materials in the form of Sumba weaving cloth. This paper is based on research with a qualitative approach, especially with observation methods in several weaving centers in Sumba and in-depth interviews with weaving artisans. The result of this study is that Sumba weavings cloth has local characteristics that depend on environmental potential, social, economic, historical, and cultural aspects, as well as the knowledge of its weavers from each region in Sumba. This diversity is reflected in the manufacturing techniques, coloring techniques, and various motifs adorn the weaving process.

### 1. Introduction

I was confused when someone asked me to distinguish between weavings originating from Rindi, East Sumba, and Kampera, East Sumba, regardless of authenticity. The two weaving cloths (see figures 1 and 2) look similar, both in terms of color patterns and motif patterns. However, when delving into the narrative and socio-cultural dynamics, the two weavings, although similar at first glance, have their differences and characteristics. This paper will discuss more deeply the material of weaving culture in Sumba, namely to answer the question of why weaving centers in Sumba produce different characteristics on each.

Studies on cultural materials in Indonesia, especially those related to artistic objects such as textiles, tend only to discuss symbols, meanings, and religious aspects (Hoskins, 2002; Allerton, 2007; Suadnyana, 2020). Indonesian scientists themselves discuss more weavings cultural materials as art aesthetical objects and economical products (see Aulia

and Ikhwana, 2012; Precepts, 2013; Setiawan & Nurwaningdyah, 2014; Nurcahyani, 2018; Sudianto & Sadali, 2018; Prayitno, 2020). Thus, studies of weaving cultural materials focus too much on the weaving itself but must balance the social and environmental aspects that make up the cultural material. Cultural materials can be formed due to the influence of the social and natural environment.

Adams's (1969) study of the system and meaning of Sumba weaving is quite comprehensive. In one part, he recounts the connection of weaving with the king's funeral procession in Sumba. However, it should be underlined that not all Sumbanese have an aristocratic historical background and have a hierarchical social structure. Not all weavings in the Sumba region correlate with a hierarchical structure. There are more weaving studies in East Sumba (see Adams, 1972, 1974, 2013; Holmgren & Spertus, 1989; Forshee, 2001; Anas, 2013) than in Central Sumba, West Sumba, and Southwest Sumba. The lack of studies on weaving outside East Sumba implies the existence of different characteristics of the region and the social aspects of its people.

From everyday practices, we often see catalogs in tourism brochures and collections in museums about the variety of art materials from different parts of the world. For example, when we visit the [www.artoftheancestors.com](http://www.artoftheancestors.com) website page and then go to one of the gallery pages – Sumba – we will find various Sumba weavings textiles. However, various images of the Sumba weave lack information about its origins, especially where the weavings are made. The page of the Sumba weaving gallery on the site seems to illustrate that the entire weaving community on Sumba Island produces more or less the same type of weaving. Many books containing images of weaving have featured the names of the places where weaving was made.



*Figure 1 Weavings (hinggi) from Kambera, East Sumba (Photo by: Nimas Wicaksono, 2022)*



*Figure 2 Weavings (hinggi) from Rindi, East Sumba (Photo by Rijal Ahmad, 2022)*

This paper wants to show that the characteristics of weaving in each region in Sumba are determined by each place's social, cultural, historical, geographical-environmental,

and economic dynamics. Most generally, for example, we can see from the following facts and questions: why are the patterns and motifs of weavings in East Sumba more diverse than the weaves made in West Sumba? I will answer that in a section later.

## 2. Method

This paper is based on field research throughout August 2022 at weaver centers in East Sumba, West Sumba, and Southwest Sumba<sup>1</sup>. The research was conducted with a qualitative ethnographic approach using observation methods and in-depth interviews. In East Sumba, some of the weaver centers I visited weavers were: Kambera, Pau, Rindi, Kaliuda, and Kanatang. The weaver center I visited in West Sumba was in Tarung, Waikabubak. The weaver center I visited in Southwest Sumba is in Mangganipi. The research was conducted through in-depth interviews with weavers, natural dyers, and intermediaries between weavers and buyers. Among my informants were weaving artisans who focused on natural coloring, including Umbu Kornelis Ndapakamang and Umbu Ignasius in Kambera, Umbu Rian Remindau in Kanatang, Umbu Jordi in Kaliuda, Rambu Mutiara in Rindi, and Rambu Ana and Rambu Mbapu Watupelit in Pau and Pattawang, Yuliana Leda Tara in Tarung, Waikabubak, and Kornelia Holo in Mangganipi. The questions in the interview are about the weaving production process, the natural potential (especially vegetation) in each place, as well as the business process of weaving. My observations include observations of socioeconomic activities in the environment of each center.

## 3. Result and discussion

The surrounding cultural and ecological conditions often influence cultural materials. Cultural values tend to be ecologically oriented in maintaining harmonious relations with nature and God (Demmalino et al., 2019). In macro and contrast terms, weavings in Sumba can be divided into two types: weaving with the ikat technique and weaving with the *songket* technique (in East Sumba, it is called *pahikung*). The two types of techniques can be subdivided into more detailed sub-techniques. The technique of making motifs with ties takes longer than the *songket* technique. The weavings in East Sumba are more affluent in the variety of motifs and colors in one piece of fabric than the weaves in West Sumba. This fact cannot be separated from the differences in natural conditions in the two regions. The West Sumba region has more fertile soil conditions than East Sumba. The region also has higher rainfall, which is 208.3 mm/per year, while the East Sumba region only has 85.9 mm/per year in 2021 (Badan Pusat Statistik 2021).

In general, Sumba weaving consists of five aspects of its use as traditional clothing: wide cloth for men, sarong for women, large shawl cloth for men, fourth sash, and fifth headband. Each region in Sumba has different mentions. In West Sumba, for example, the wide cloth for men is called *ingi*, while in East Sumba, it is called *hinggi*. For the mention of headbands, in West Sumba, it is called *kapouta*, while in East Sumba, it is

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<sup>1</sup> The weaver center in this context refers to the weaving houses that have been built by the Uma Nusantara Foundation or Yayasan Rumah Asuh initiated by Yori Antar et al. This foundation focuses on assisting with the construction of traditional houses in various regions in Indonesia, one of which is the Sumba weaving route program which builds weaving houses in various village areas with their characteristics.

called *teara*. In terms of motifs, when we observe the motif images on the weaving in East Sumba itself, at a glance, we will indeed find similarities, such as images of turtles, crocodiles, horses, and so on. However, if we look much more deeply, especially by exploring the socio-cultural narratives of the weavers, we will find different characteristics from one weaver center to another.

These differences in ecological conditions have implications for several things that affect the results of weaving in both regions. Because the soil conditions in West Sumba are relatively more fertile, the people have a lot of agricultural activities with a harvest period of twice a year. Men in West Sumba carry out many agricultural activities. They build garden houses around his farming area. Most women whose husbands farm or garden help live and work in the garden or rice field. In addition, women help husbands sell garden produce, primarily vegetables, in the market. Weaving activities are usually carried out by women in between leisure activities, from farming and gardening activities. They used to weave during the day or evening after returning from the garden. Weaving work is carried out throughout the entire life between planting and harvesting. The sale of weaving is only an additional income because the primary income depends on rice fields and garden yield.

The social organization of the West Sumba community is more regulated in the organization of traditional villages. Everyone comes from a particular traditional village. They will visit traditional villages when there are traditional ritual activities, traditional weddings, or the death of family members. When there were no customary activities, people lived in the houses they set up around the territory of gardens or rice fields. These houses they call garden houses (Muzaqii et al., 2018). Women's choice of farming and gardening activities follows Coleman's idea that women's work is a rational choice to survive the challenges of nature, business opportunities, and family economic conditions (Hamid, 2022).

The people of East Sumba experience different conditions. Its dry ecological conditions make agricultural activities not widely carried out by the people of East Sumba. Compared with agricultural activities, animal husbandry activities are more in East Sumba than in West Sumba, namely cattle and horse husbandry. Many cattle and horses from East Sumba are sent outside the island, including to Java. Breeding activities are mostly and almost entirely carried out by males. Therefore, women in East Sumba have more time at home for weaving activities than women in West Sumba. The allocation of more time makes the creations on weavings in East Sumba more diverse in terms of technique, coloring, and variety of motifs than weaving in West Sumba<sup>2</sup>.

The difference in natural conditions between East Sumba and West Sumba also affects the diversity of vegetation related to weaving in the two regions. The dry East Sumba region makes it possible to grow many sacred trees that are taken root for the natural coloring of red. Nevertheless, as a mixed material to bind the red color, the weavers in

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<sup>2</sup> Farming and gardening activities are carried out in East Sumba under more limited conditions. From observations on the trip I made in East Sumba, agriculture can still be done in areas fed by rivers, such as around the Tanggedu area, East Sumba. I also found some onion farms in this region. However, such conditions are minimal.

East Sumba needed a loba plant (*Symplocos* sp. ) which is widely obtained from West Sumba because this plant grows in a fertile region. Meanwhile, the weavers in West Sumba do not use this material much because the weaves they produce using chemical dyes or the yarns used are already colored from the store.

In addition, vegetation conditions are different in each region because of the different ecological landscapes between West Sumba and East Sumba. In East Sumba, many limestone rocky hills have an impact on the condition of the *tarum* or tilapia (*Indigofera tinctoria*) plant, which is used for natural blue coloring. In the context of natural blue dyeing, I will explain the differences in weaving within the East Sumba region. In terms of differences in natural conditions alone, we have found a diversity of socioeconomic contexts that impact the material diversity of cultures in the form of weaving. In the next section, I will detail the diversity of weavings' cultural materials in East Sumba, one village in West Sumba, and one village in Southwest Sumba.

### *Rindi Village*

Rindi, commonly pronounced Rende, is a village located east of East Sumba Regency. From downtown Waingapu, Rindi is 72 kilometers away or can be reached in about 1 hour and 30 minutes. This village is known as one of the aristocracy villages in East Sumba besides Pau and Prailiu. This village has a historical background of the aristocracy structure and the dynamics of conflicts in the past. From 1800 to 1850, Rindi became an autonomous kingdom under Ana Mburungu. Rindi became one of the most powerful kingdoms in the East Sumba region (Wielenga, 1949; Forth, 1981). In the past, Rindi was also filled with conflicts and wars against other kingdoms around him. In 1895, Rindi invited the Kingdoms of Umalulu and Mangili to join forces against their common enemy, Karera (Parai Witu), in retaliation for the persistent case of horse theft (Kapita, 1976). Rindi was also in contact with the Dutch East Indies government.



Figure 1 The stone tombs of the kings in Rindi (Photo by Rijal Ahmad, 2022)

The weavings in Rindi are mostly ikat weavings. Rindi's historical and social context in the past had an impact on the variety of motifs and the social characteristics of the weaving of the region's origin. First, the background of conflicts or wars in the past gave birth to motifs in the form of *andungu*. The *andungu* motif is an image of a dead tree trunk so that there are no more leaves and human heads on the branches. *Andungu* itself, in

the past, was in front of the noble house, a symbol of victory over war. Currently, because the wood used comes from a dead tree, it is no longer there because it has been weathered. The human heads placed on the wooden stakes are the heads of the defeated enemy. Monni Adams (1981), in her notes to Sumba, wrote as follows: "... The vitality and flair for drama that show in their staging of riding contests and in their designing of fabrics which present grinning skulls on trees and crowned upright snakes come to the fore...".

In the 18th and 19th centuries, trade with outsiders brought foreign goods to Sumba, such as silk, knives, spears, and gold coins. The background of relations with the Dutch East Indies government also influenced the motives of Rindi's weaving. Rindi's weavings are decorated with motifs in the form of a Netherland Kingdom emblem and the image of Queen Wilhelmina. The motif-makers of the past obtained the two figures from Dutch coins. In addition, *patola* motifs also often adorn the weavings in Rindi. The *patola* motif comes from India textiles given by the Dutch government to local rulers in Sumba and other areas as gifts (see also de Jong and Kunz, 2016). The historical background that rindi was once led by a king also made the weaving motifs of Rindi decorated by figures that mean leadership, such as crocodiles and turtles.

"In Rindi, certain motifs should not be used by just anyone, especially those not from the nobility. Turtle-like motifs should only be used for the king's daughters. The crocodile motif should only be used for kings. Here, we also have a *papanggang* motif, telling of the king's followers who buried the king. Now, these motifs are widely spread outside Rindi and used by more and more people who are not even nobles". (Interview with Rambu Intan, Rindi, August 2022)

The weaving motifs in Rindi are hierarchical for both the user and the creator. According to my informant, Rambu Intan, the nobles can make distinctive motifs of their nobility, such as crocodiles, dragons, *patola*, and so on. This ability is not passed on to others outside their own family. People who are not nobles are not allowed to wear the weaving with motives that are not reserved for them.

#### *Pau Village*

Similar to Rindi, Pau is also an aristocracy village located in Melolo. In the past, Pau was an alliance with the Rindi kingdom. From Waingpau, Pau is about 1 hour away. If the weavings in Rindi are mostly ikat, then the weavings in Pau have the characteristics of *songket*, or *pahikung*. *Pahikung* weaving is a characteristic associated with Pau (Pollock, 2012). Compared to Rindi, Pau is relatively lush, so there is a lot of vegetation whose leaves, stems, and roots are widely used as natural weaving materials, such as yellow wood (*Arcangelisia flava* L.), mahogany leaves (*Swietenia magahoni*), morinda root (*Morinda citrifolia*), and tarum leaves (*Indigofera tinctoria*). In addition to the leaves, I encountered the use of mud with the leaves of certain plants for natural dyes in Patawang, a village near Pau. Using mud and leaves is possible because the Pau region and its surroundings are fertile because there are flowing rivers. Because there is a lot of vegetation available to be used as a natural coloring agent, the weaves in Pau are richer in color.



Figure 2 A child about eight years old is making weaving with the *pahikung* technique in Pau (Photo by Nimas Wicaksono, 2022)

In manufacturing techniques, there are four *songket* techniques in weaving in Pau, namely the first *songket palarang* technique. This technique is the easiest or standard technique, with the threads in and out being 2-1. The second is the *pajimbolang* technique, which is the technique with the threads in and out 2-2. The third is the *pawuru* technique which produces *songketan* on thicker, tighter, and embossed motifs. This technique is the most difficult. Fourth is the *pambeli mbapang* technique, the *songket* technique on the inner and outer sides of weavings.

"Not all weavers in Pau master all the techniques of *pahikung*. Of the four types of *pahikung* in Pau, only some weavers can master the three to four techniques. Many weavers master only one or two techniques. The *pawuru* technique, for example, so far can only be done by my family. Apart from being difficult, in the past, only certain families were allowed to work on this technique for their weaving". (Interview with Rambu Mbapu Watupelit, Pau, August 2022)

As in Rindi, Pau Weaving is hierarchical as well. The characteristics of weaving in Pau lie in the *pahikung* and the variety of colors that distinguish it from weavings in other regions, although in terms of motif figures, it is similar to weaving in other regions. As a form of expression of the relationship between Pau and Rindi in the past, in Rindi there is a *katanaka*<sup>3</sup> bird motif. This bird was believed to be the anchor of the death of a king in another village. If any of these birds fly over the village of Rindi, there will soon be news of the death of a King who died, including Pau.

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<sup>3</sup> I suspect this is a form of crow that is usually associated with a death event.

### *Kanatang*

Kanatang is located on the north coast of East Sumba, about 20 kilometers from Waingapu. In terms of motifs, because of its presence near the sea, the motifs that make up the weavings from Kanatang are figures related to sea animals sea, like shrimps and turtles. In addition, there is also a star motif (*kawuru*). Because the area is close to the coast, weavers in Kanatang use rocks that can be quickly taken from the surrounding area. These rocks serve to produce lime as a blue reinforcing material. Kanatang is a weaving center known for its blue-producing solid characteristics, the deep blue.

Thread staining is carried out by immersion of the thread into a natural dye from *tarum*. The yarn tied according to the desired motif will be dyed into a blue dye liquid to get a blue base color on the fabric. The ties on the thread will be opened and closed according to the color you want to get. The part of the thread that is not tied will be exposed to the dye and absorb the natural dye. If you want to get a red color, the process is the same except that it is dyed into the red dye liquid from the root of the holy. Nevertheless, before dyeing, the yarn will go through a petroleum process using pounded pecans. The dyeing process of threads into natural dyes is carried out about 5 to 12 times depending on the desired character of the color (the darker, the more through immersion).



Figure 3 Weavings (*hinggi*) from Kanatang  
(Photo by Rijal Ahmad, 2022)

"Many weavers from outside Kanatang asked us to dye their yarns blue. That is because our blue coloring is felt to be the strongest. Usually, they bring their yarn, but sometimes some buy yarn with a blue color from here." (Interview with Umbu Rian, Kanatang, August 2022)

Umbu Rian Remindau (35 years old), a practitioner and coordinator of the Kanatang weaving center, said that often weavers outside Kanatang enlist the help of weavers in Kanatang to do the dyeing or natural dyeing of blue. He also recounted that although natural dyeing materials and dyeing support materials are held in Kanatang, the dyeing process is carried out outside Kanatang, and the results will differ. The blue coloring is a sacred process in Kanatang and many other regions of East Sumba, such as Kampera, Haumara, Lambanapu, Rindi, and Pau. The place to do blue coloring should not be

approached and entered by women who are pregnant, comes the moon, and men whose wives are pregnant<sup>4</sup>.

### *Kaliuda*

Kaliuda is located at the eastern end of East Sumba, 112 kilometers from downtown Waingapu. The closest distance to other economic centers is to Mangili, about 6 kilometers away. If Kanatang is known for its characteristics of blue coloring, then the weaver center in Kaliuda is known for its characteristics of natural red coloring. The Kaliuda region is also located in the coastal area. Therefore most of its people work as fishermen and seaweed farmers. Many sacred trees grow in the Kaliuda region. Although the primary coloring material, namely the root of holiness, can be obtained easily in Kaliuda, the supporting material, namely loba, is imported from outside the region, especially West Sumba.



*Figure 4 Weavings from Kaliuda (Photo by Rijal Ahmad, 2022)*

Unlike in other places in East Sumba, where blue dyeing is sacred, blue dyeing in Kaliuda is not sacred. Please be aware that blue staining becomes the basic coloring before the thread is dyed red. In terms of motifs, Kaliuda weaves are decorated with various motifs that tend to be smaller in style. The motif figures on Kaliuda weaves are also relatively different from those weavings in other regions. The motifs in Kaliuda weaving are people dancing, people riding horses, people doing cockfighting activities, and traditional leaders who are forecasting chicken intestines. Although the Kaliuda weaving motifs are more petite than other regions, the depiction is more detailed or complicated.

"We are here, weaving is a saving in the future. We weave for periods of pay for children's school fees or when there are family celebrations. We are mainly here farming and raising livestock. Weaving is a side activity.", said Umbu Jordi, the coordinator of the weaving center in Kaliuda. In the socioeconomic aspect, weaving is a supporting economic activity other than farming and raising livestock. Kaliuda residents who live

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<sup>4</sup> I suspect this difference in results also relates to the drying process. The position of the height of the region and exposure to sunlight in Kanatang may also be different from other places to produce other colors. The dyeing process is not only related to the material and abilities of a person but also there is drying and so on. Nevertheless, this is debatable.

near the coast and people from Sabu have economic activities as fishermen and seaweed cultivators.

*Tarung, West Sumba and Mangganipi, Southwest Sumba*

As a comparison, I also visited Tarung in West Sumba to study its weavings<sup>5</sup>. As I mentioned at the beginning, the soil conditions in West Sumba are more fertile because they get higher rainfall than in East Sumba. West Sumba (as well as Central Sumba) is the area with the most significant agricultural land in Sumba. Compared to East Sumba, where there are more cattle breeders, in West Sumba, more people raise buffalo. The buffalo is an important animal for the people of West Sumba in two ways. First, it is to support their agricultural activities. Second, buffalo is needed in the life cycle rituals in West Sumba, such as marriage and death. Not infrequently, traditional houses in West Sumba are decorated with buffalo horns. The buffalo is also an important animal in the West Sumba people's cosmos system, mostly *Marapu* adherents. The buffalo is believed to be the animal ridden by the dead to get to *parai Marapu* (Muzaqii et al., 2019).

The productivity of agricultural products, especially paddy rice, is higher in West Sumba than in East Sumba. In West Sumba, rice productivity reached 182.60 kW/ha, while in East Sumba, it was 38.37 kW/ha. Men and women do many activities in the fields and fields. Women only have a little time for weaving activities. Women of productive age help their husbands work in the garden or rice field. They work on weaving. Elderly women (over 70 years old), such as Mama Lida Mude (78 years old) and Mama Lokba (77 years old), do more work making weavings containers from lontar leaves and pandanus. The work related to weaving that elderly women usually do is to roll yarn and make motifs with songket techniques. Elderly women do not have enough energy and energy to do the weaving work. Under such conditions, weavings in West Sumba are no longer as complex in motifs and processes as in East Sumba (Forshee, 2006).

Despite having more fertile soil conditions, planting plants for natural coloring on weaving in West Sumba has yet to be carried out. Weavings in West Sumba are mostly made with chemical dyes, both from dyes and colored yarns from the store. Therefore, the variety of weavings colors in West Sumba is much more. In terms of motifs, West Sumba weavings are decorated with many cultural materials that are widely used by the community, such as *mamuli* (female jewelry in the form of female genitalia) and traditional houses. In addition, there are also animals around, such as chickens and buffaloes.

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<sup>5</sup> Most of the literature discussing Sumba textiles never mentions weaving outside East Sumba. Literature on weaving in West Sumba, Central Sumba, and Southwest Sumba is minimal.



Figure 5 Kalidur or fabric edges on weaves in West Sumba (Photo by author, 2022)

Although terms of coloring and motifs are not as complex as the weaves in East Sumba, the weavings in West Sumba have characteristics on the fabric's edges, called *kalidur*. Only some people can make this part of the fabric edge because of its complexity. The more layers of *kalidur*, the higher the price of a weave. There are four types of weavings in West Sumba, especially the typical fabrics of the Loli people:

1. *Ye'e mata bolo*, a splattering scabbard with a spun tassel on the side.
2. *Pawora*, is a white cloth with striated motifs on the edges with red and yellow colors.
3. *Lambaleko*, which is woven with a common songket motif.
4. *Ingi wulu mata*, which is a weaving cloth whose ends have no spin.



Figure 6 Weavings from Southwest Sumba (Photo by Rijal Ahmad, 2022)

My last trip in this observation project was in Mangganipi, Southwest Sumba. Weavings in Southwest Sumba tend to be plain, or the motif is in the form of stripes. I had the opportunity to meet Mama Kornelia Holo (76), the only woman weaver in Mangganipi who still makes weaves with yarn from cotton spun and natural dyes. Similarly, in West Sumba, weavings in Southwest Sumba do not use many natural dyes.

### Discussion: Diversity of Socioeconomic Dynamics

We have seen the diversity of weaving in Sumba from its material perspective. Now I want to show the diversity in the socioeconomic aspects of the weaver community in Sumba, certainly concerning its weaving. In some places where natural conditions tend to be dry, weaving becomes the main economic activity, not only by women but also men. For example, weaving is the main economic activity for the people in Rindi and Kanatang. Men in those regions began to engage more in weaving activities starting in the 2000s<sup>6</sup>. The proceeds from the sale of weaving become the primary support to meet the economic needs of the family and social needs, such as marriage or death of family members.

For people who are relatively fertile in their areas, such as in Kaliuda, East Sumba, and Tarung, West Sumba, weaving is a supporting economic activity in addition to farming and gardening activities. For them, the proceeds from the sale of weaving are savings or deposits for the foreseeable future. Males in more fertile territories are less involved in weaving activities. Likewise, women only have a little time allocated for weaving activities—an exciting finding in Mangganipi, Southwest Sumba, in Mama Kornelia Holo (76). If, in other areas, weavings are sold in exchange for a certain amount of money, weaving in Mangganipi is traded with buffalo.

In terms of usage, there are also differences between the king's villages, or villages with a more hierarchical social structure, such as Rindi and Pau, and villages with a more egalitarian social structure, such as Kanatang, Kaliuda, and Tarung. In Rindi, Pau, and some of the territories that once stood as the centers of the kingdom, certain weaves could only be used by the nobility. Such weaves are distinguished by their motives. For example, the motifs of crocodiles and turtles should only be worn by the king and the king's daughter. Nowadays, certain family groups (which are also families of noble blood) are considered to have mastered specific ways of making motifs and weaving techniques, for example, the Watupelit family in Patawang, Pau, who can make *pahikung* weaving with the *pawuru* technique, the *pahikung* technique that is considered the most difficult. The ability to make certain motives among noble families until now has been something that is sought to remain exclusive.

In Kambera and Haumara regions, East Sumba, there is a weaving cloth in the form of a shawl called *kawuru*<sup>7</sup>. This shawl is used by men and is basic white. The shoulders are decorated with star motifs. A shawl with this motive has a meaning about leadership. The way of interpreting the meaning of motifs in Kambera and Haumara weavings is also different from the way of interpreting the motifs in other regions. According to Adams (1972), a weaving cloth with a white color in the middle indicates that the weave is a symbol of nobility. Most motifs in East Sumba, except Haumara and Kambera, are

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<sup>6</sup> Before the 2000s, women mainly carried out weaving activities, starting from spinning the thread, making ties, and dyeing, to weaving. Increasingly to the present, the people of East Sumba consider that the demands for economic needs are getting more significant. Therefore, the men also began to engage in producing weaving. Men's weaving activities are usually related to the collection of materials and the dyeing of colors.

<sup>7</sup> The mention of *kawuru* in the context of weaving in East Sumba has two meanings. If the word *kawuru* begins with the word *perpetuate*, then what is meant is wide weavings for men with blue coloring. The Word *kawuru* means star.

interpreted singularly, such as the old brother's motif, which symbolizes deliberation or togetherness, and the deer motif, which symbolizes high social status.

The motifs in Kambera and Haumara are interpreted in a dyadic or paired manner, such as kuda and dog: meaning to be big-spirited and generous; Snakes and deer or shrimps: life after death; a yam and duck: meaning leadership, leader sometimes in front and sometimes in hindsight; dragon with deer: can mean positive (mighty), can mean negative: pride; cock and horse: symbol unity; and lizard and Rat: orang which is not good. This parallel meaning seems to be in harmony with what de Jong (1935), Geertz (1965), and Adams (1973) once wrote about the symbolic system of dualism or parallels in the formal rules governing the main activities of society, including in textile material culture.

Although it has several differences in the weaving characteristic of each region, the material of weaving culture also has similarities. First, weaving is an essential element of dress for the people and culture in Sumba. A woman made a piece of weaving for her husband and child. Secondly, weaving has significance in the context of rituals and the social organization of kinship. In rituals, weaving becomes the ceremonial cloth worn by ritual actors. In certain cultures, the clothes worn depend on religious ceremonies or other rituals. Specific usage signifies the value that conveys a particular message (Danesi, 2004; Feinberg, Mataro, & Burroughs, 1992). In kinship, weaving becomes a material of giving (see also Anas, 2007). In the marriage ceremony, weaving becomes the material for giving back by the female family to the male family, who has given gold and animals. In the event of death, weaving becomes the material of giving to noble family members who have died. In addition, weaving has become a commodity traded commodity in all regions of Sumba.

Cultural materials such as weaving should not be discussed singularly but should be discussed with humans and their entire ecosystem, including culture. For example, Sunarya (2016) states that from the design of batik textiles (mainly classical batik), we can learn the cultural background, beliefs, customs, and characteristics of the community as well as their way of looking at the environment and the surrounding nature and the values of their spiritual beliefs. According to Sunarya (2016) and Krisnawati et al. (2019), who studied batik, and Wijaya and Permana (2018), who studied fabrics and their relation to collective identity, said that batik as a textile could be used as a group, institutional, and state identity. Through this article, I want to raise the local identity of each Sumba weaving textile-producing region. Adams (1980) says, "aesthetic principles in Sumbanese fabric designs reflect values in social life, and these relate to cosmology, rank, region, and gender, which combine in the artistry of creating cloth." De Jong (2019) also said that the ikat technique is a cultural heritage important for forming group identity.

Although Sumba weaving has diversity based on its people's regional and social characteristics, these characteristics are not exclusive. The inclusivity of this characteristic occurs explicitly in the context of weaving as a commodity good. For example, weavings outside Rindi often use typical royal or noble motifs such as Rindi. Likewise, the weavings in Rindi also often combine the *pahikung* technique, as in Pau,

with the binding technique on the weaves. Weaves outside Kaliuda also often enlist the help of red dyeing experts from Kaliuda to get a solid red color. Concerning characteristics, Martini et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of legal protection for traditional cultural expressions. It is still an open space for discussion of how copyright protection law and so on can be contextual in the inclusiveness of cultural expression characteristics, particularly in weaving.

The business process of the weavers is as follows. First, cotton threads are purchased in the store. Some weavers who still own cotton gardens make yarn from spun cotton, but this is more limited in availability and time. Yarn is purchased in the form of rolls. Natural coloring materials are obtained from searching for themselves in the surrounding environment. *Tarum* plants are usually widely available around the house, especially during the rainy season. Holiness plants that are taken root are widely obtained in gardens. Usually, holiness is deliberately planted. Support plants for color binders are obtained from two sources. First, it is self-searched in forests, such as pecans, the leaves and roots of certain plants, and lime from corals taken from the coast. Second, it is purchased from other regions where materials are more abundant, such as loba from West Sumba for weavers in East Sumba. The price of yarn is usually Rp50,000.00 per roll, and the price of loba is around Rp20,000.00 per kilogram.

In the manufacturing process, the weavers can use several services, namely yarn coloring services, ranging from Rp. 75,000.00-Rp. 100,000.00 for blue and red colors, and the price of coloring and yarn ranges from Rp. 150,000.00-Rp. 200,000.00, bonding services for Rp. 150,000.00, and the price for weaving services is around Rp. 150,000.00-Rp. 200,000.00 per sheet of sarong or cloth for men. Weavings are sold with the following price variations: sarong fabrics for women with natural dyes are sold at around Rp. 2,000,000.00 to Rp. 5,000,000.00. Women's sarong fabrics with chemical or mixed dyes (chemical and natural) are sold at around Rp. 1,000,000.00 to Rp. 1,500,000.00. Wide cloth for men is sold at around Rp2,000,000 to Rp4,000,000.00. In addition, some shawls are sold for Rp. 1,000,000.00 to Rp. 2,000,000.00 and slings for Rp. 400,000.00 to Rp. 750,000.00.

As a commodity, weavings are sold to guests who come to centers or villages or sold to buyers over long distances. Weavers also often market their weaving products through social media channels. The prices set for a piece of weaving cloth have not been based on detailed calculations of the raw materials, processes, and energy expended. The weavers do not have a complicated bookkeeping system to calculate profit and loss. They sell weaving to fellow Sumba people at a lower price than buyers outside Sumba. The Sumba people also buy weaving to be used as gift items for weddings and the deaths of their relatives.

The transmission of knowledge is also an issue often discussed among weavers. In Pau, for example, children still in elementary and junior high school education are already involved in weaving, especially in simple jobs, such as rolling yarn. Thus, the process of transmitting knowledge can run. However, in other places, only a few young people are willing to engage in weaving instead of finding a living by going to school and working elsewhere outside Sumba. In some places, such as in Rindi and Pattawang (near Pau),

the process of transmitting knowledge is still passed down within one's family environment. This avoids competition for the ability to weave with specific techniques. In the Kambera region and several other sub-districts, Umbu Kornelis Ndapakamang, along with several teams, such as Umbu Agung from Rindi, have compiled a local content book on Sumba weaving. Therefore, knowledge about weaving is taught in elementary schools in East Sumba. In Southwest Sumba, practically, almost all weavers no longer use natural dyes on the grounds of effectiveness.

No	Weaving Center	Characteristic	Dynamics/Changes
1	Rindi, East Sumba	Have a historical background of work that influences its motives; It has a relationship with the Dutch colonial government, so there are motifs inspired by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, such as lions and Queen Wilhelmina; The making and use of weaving with specific motifs were hierarchical between nobles and non-nobles. The peculiarity of the motifs here is the classic motifs and ikat with shades of blue, black, and red,	The use of motifs on weavings and the use of everyday life are increasingly accessible and no longer hierarchical.
2	Pau, East Sumba	It has a historical background, so the weaving and its motifs are hierarchical. The peculiarity of the motifs here is the motifs made with the <i>songket (pahikung)</i> technique with more diverse color patterns. It has four <i>pahikung</i> techniques.	Some specific techniques, especially <i>Pawuru</i> or <i>pahikung</i> techniques, are considered the most difficult, done by fewer and fewer people because only a few have the ability.
3	Kanatang, East Sumba	It is located in the northern coastal region of East Sumba and has the characteristics of a solid blue coloring. The motifs are many in the form of sea animals.	His motives began to develop in the form of animals that were not water-oriented.
4	Kaliuda, East Sumba	It is located in the southern coastal region of East Sumba and has the characteristics of solid red coloring. The motifs tend to be small in size, and the pattern of laying the motifs is compartmentalized.	The ability in solid red dyeing is getting less and less mastered by weavers in Kaliuda.
5	Tarung, West Sumba	Not too much use of natural dyes; The motif is made with a simple <i>pahikung</i> technique. The weave is predominantly plain or striated; has a peculiarity on the ends of the fabric or <i>kalidur</i> .	Some weavers began to develop knowledge and practice of natural dying.
6	Mangganipi, Southwest Sumba	The weave tends to be striated or plain and has a peculiarity on the edges of the fabric.	Some weavers began to abandon the knowledge and practice of natural coloring.

#### 4. Conclusion

Through my observations on cultural materials in the form of weaving in Sumba, I want to convey that Sumba weaving is not a homogeneous cultural material on one island. Instead, the weavings scattered from the western end to the eastern end of Sumba Island illustrate the diversity and complexity of each group of people scattered on the island, including historical aspects, ecological potential, knowledge distribution, and social, political, and economic dynamics. A deeper and more detailed perspective on cultural materials, especially in Indonesia, is critical to legitimize cultural diversity. By looking at cultural objects in detail, we seek to appreciate each community's social and cultural characteristics.

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#### Conflicts of Interest

I declare no conflict of interest. The founding sponsors had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript, and in the decision to publish the results.

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