

**A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF EAST SUMBA TRADITIONAL  
WOVEN CLOTHES**

**A THESIS**



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**ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM  
TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION FACULTY  
ARTHA WACANA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**

**KUPANG**

**2026**

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KUPANG  
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## **A THESIS**

**This Thesis is Presented as Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of *Sarjana Pendidikan* in English Education Study Program**



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**MOTTO**

*“The Lord will go before you, He will be with you, He will not leave you or forsake you.”*

*Deuteronomy 31:8*

## **DEDICATION**

This paper is dedicated to the writer's loved ones:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ, who granted the writer grace, wisdom, and health in order to complete this thesis.
2. The writer's beloved parents, Lukas Mila Banda and Vince Mboru bara, for your unconditional love, sacrifices, and prayers that have guided me throughout this journey.
3. Dear siblings, Paulus, Irene, Christian, Ambu and Filipus, for your constant encouragement, understanding, and love that have strengthened me along the way.
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Kupang,

The Writer

# A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF EAST SUMBA TRADITIONAL WOVEN CLOTHS

## ABSTRACT

**Mahadewa Kahewa Marak<sup>1</sup>**

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This study aims to analyze the semiotic meanings of traditional woven cloth motifs in East Sumba Regency. The research addresses two main questions: (1) what symbols are found in the traditional motifs of East Sumba woven cloths, and (2) what meanings are represented by those symbols. This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method. The data were collected through observation of traditional woven cloth motifs and interviews with informants to obtain interpretations of the symbols. The data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis based on semiotic theory. The findings reveal that there are ten symbols found in the traditional woven cloth motifs of East Sumba, namely Mamuli ‘jewelry’, Njara ‘horse’, Tau ‘human’, Manu ‘rooster’, Kabebak ‘butterfly’, Papanggang ‘tribal ceremony’, Mahang ‘lion’, Kaka ‘parrot’, Ruhha ‘deer’, and Mandu Hawurung ‘dragon’. Each symbol carries a specific cultural meaning. Mamuli symbolizes femininity and the position of women; Njara represents virility, strength, agility, heroism, and high social status; Tau symbolizes human existence as God’s creation and ancestral identity; Manu represents awareness and leadership; Kabebak symbolizes beauty, life processes, and struggle; Papanggang represents new life after death; Mahang symbolizes courage and authority; Kaka represents wisdom, deliberation, and consensus; Ruhha symbolizes strength and perseverance; and Mandu Hawurung represents luck, strength, and victory. These findings indicate that traditional woven cloth motifs in East Sumba function not only as decorative elements but also as cultural symbols that reflect the values, beliefs, and identity of the Sumba people.

**Keywords:** *semiotics, traditional woven cloth, East Sumba, motifs, symbolic meaning*

# ANALISIS SEMIOTIK TERHADAP KAIN TRADISIONAL SUMBA TIMUR

## ABSTRAK

**Mahadewa Kahewa Marak<sup>1</sup>**

**Magdalena Ngongo<sup>2</sup>**

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Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis makna semiotik motif kain tenun tradisional di Kabupaten Sumba Timur. Penelitian ini memfokuskan pada dua rumusan masalah, yaitu: (1) simbol-simbol apa saja yang terdapat dalam motif kain tenun tradisional Sumba Timur, dan (2) makna apa yang terkandung dalam simbol-simbol tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi terhadap motif kain tenun tradisional serta wawancara dengan informan untuk memperoleh interpretasi makna simbol. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis deskriptif kualitatif berdasarkan teori semiotika. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat sepuluh simbol dalam motif kain tenun tradisional Sumba Timur, yaitu Mamuli ‘perhiasan’, Njara ‘kuda’, Tau ‘manusia’, Manu ‘ayam jantan’, Kabebak ‘kupu-kupu’, Papanggang ‘upacara adat’, Mahang ‘singa’, Kaka ‘burung nuri’, Ruhha ‘rusa’, dan Mandu Hawurung ‘naga’. Setiap simbol memiliki makna budaya tertentu. Mamuli melambangkan feminitas dan kedudukan perempuan; Njara melambangkan kejantanan, kekuatan, ketangkasan, kepahlawanan, dan status sosial yang tinggi; Tau melambangkan keberadaan manusia sebagai ciptaan Tuhan dan identitas leluhur; Manu melambangkan kesadaran dan kepemimpinan; Kabebak melambangkan keindahan, proses kehidupan, dan perjuangan; Papanggang melambangkan kehidupan baru setelah kematian; Mahang melambangkan keberanian dan kewibawaan; Kaka melambangkan kebijaksanaan, musyawarah, dan mufakat; Ruhha melambangkan kekuatan dan ketekunan; serta Mandu Hawurung melambangkan keberuntungan, kekuatan, dan kemenangan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa motif kain tenun tradisional di Sumba Timur tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai elemen hias, tetapi juga sebagai simbol budaya yang merefleksikan nilai-nilai, kepercayaan, dan identitas masyarakat Sumba.

**Kata kunci:** *semiotika, kain tenun tradisional, Sumba Timur, motif, makna simbolik*

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