

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Indonesia has a rich cultural heritage that makes it famous around the world. Every cultural heritage owned by Indonesia has its own distinctive characteristics and can serve as an identity for the nation. A culture owned by the Indonesian people can be seen from the original character of the people of Indonesia. The original character is a personality that makes an attitude, and action of those who distinguish themselves from others. The original character can reflect the culture that it belongs to

One example of cultural heritage in Indonesia is East Sumba weaving. East Sumbanese weaving is considered as one of their main source of learning. It is called weaving because the binding of the weaving in the process played a key role in adjusting predetermined patterns or motives. The power of the eastern Sumba fabric lies not only in a unique, ornate design of social meaning to public life, but also in a process that involves the weaving of the soul, allowing months of labor to pass with great patience and persistence. As a result of the change in people's character traits and characteristics, there will be a change in people's attitudes, and actions that make it appear that the individual has a special identity that no one else can have Koentjaraningrat (2015: 83).

A certain group of people with a culture when faced with another culture slowly by other elements would be accepted without causing the cultural personality to lose, affected or unaffected by one culture to another that would be viewed from the cultural point of view to change. Bahar ( 2005: 9) According to

Bahar (2005), when a certain group of people with a specific culture interacts with another culture, they can adopt new elements without losing their original cultural identity. This concept reflects the idea of acculturation, where cultural exchange can occur harmoniously, allowing individuals to maintain their values and traditions while also embracing influences from other cultures. Based on the theory it can be stated that emphasize the importance of open dialogue and interaction between cultures. When different cultures engage with one another, it can stimulate innovation and development, provided there is an awareness and appreciation of existing differences. However, challenges may arise if one culture attempts to dominate another, which could lead to conflict and the erosion of cultural identity. Therefore, an approach that fosters mutual respect and prioritizes cooperation in intercultural interactions is crucial for maintaining balance.

The Eastern Sumba region geographically lies between 119°45 - 120°52 east longitude (BT) and 9°16 - 10°20 (LS) (Welly, M. 2015). Moreover, Welly stated that People can reach East Sumba by ship as well by airplane. The distance between Waingapu to cross Sawu Sea is about 220 km. Crossing the Sawu Sea, the ferry from Waingapu to Kupang takes about 28 hours. It could be more than 28 hours or even less. 35 minutes is the average flight time from waingapu to Kupang, and vice versa

There are many aspects that can be studied in East Sumba, such as language, culture, tourism, customs, and one of them is traditional woven cloth. The traditional woven cloth of Sumba contains symbols that represent the cultural values and beliefs of the Sumba people. The process of making these woven fabrics involves the use of natural materials derived from local plants, such as red dye from

certain plants and brown color from clay. The symbols on the woven cloth, such as images of animals or other natural elements, have specific meanings that reflect the ideology and cultural identity of the Sumba tribe, and this aspect is referred to as semiotics. (Ngongo et al., 2022).

Meaning of symbols is formed through social interaction. In the context of East Sumba weaving, the motifs on the fabric can be seen as symbols reflecting the cultural values, beliefs, and identity of the community. By understanding the meanings behind these motifs, it becomes evident how these symbols are used to shape and strengthen social relationships within the society Blumer (1969).

Semiotic is the science that studies everything that can function as a sign. sign as anything that can replace something else in communication. signs are not limited to just visual or verbal forms; they encompass all elements within culture that convey meaning or information within a specific context. signs can include words, images, objects, and even actions, all of which have the ability to represent or replace another object. elaborates on the relationship between the signifier (the physical form of the sign) and the signified (the concept or meaning associated with the sign). In communication, these signs operate within a larger system known as the semiotic code, which consists of the rules and conventions that allow members of a society to understand and interpret signs collectively. This code plays a crucial role in how signs are read and interpreted. the concept of "interpretation," where the meaning of a sign is not fixed but depends on the cultural and social context in which it is used. Interpretation can vary between individuals or groups, depending on their cultural background, experiences, and knowledge. Therefore, semiotics is

not only concerned with identifying signs but also with understanding how these signs are read and interpreted in different situations. (Eco, U. 1976).

The reason the writer chose this topic is due to the cultural and symbolic richness of East Sumba weaving, particularly in the processes of fabric production, motif design, and the cultural meanings embedded in each motif. Moreover, the writer aims to explore and interpret the meanings of each motif found in East Sumba traditional woven cloth.

## **1.2 Research Problems**

Based on the background above, the writer states the research problems of this writing as follows:

- 1 What are symbols found in traditional motifs of woven cloths in East Sumba Regency?
- 2 What are meanings of those symbols in traditional motifs of woven cloths in East Sumba Regency?

## **1.3 Aims of Study**

The aims of this research are:

1. To identify the symbols found in traditional motifs of woven cloths in East Sumba Regency.
2. To describe the meanings of those symbols in traditional motifs of woven cloths in East Sumba Regency.

## **1.2 Significance of Study**

### **1.2.1 Implication**

The meaning of symbols is constructed through a process of interpretation. In semiotic theory, symbols function as signs that represent particular objects and generate meaning through interpretation. According to Peirce's (2010), meaning emerges from the relationship between the sign, the object, and the interpretant. In the context of East Sumba weaving, the motifs on the woven cloth function as signs that represent cultural values, beliefs, and social identity. Through semiotic analysis, this study demonstrates how the meanings of the motifs are interpreted by the community and how these symbols convey cultural significance. Therefore, the findings of this study support Peirce's semiotic theory by showing that traditional woven motifs operate as meaningful signs within a cultural system.

### **1.2.2 Application**

The study is expected to provide information on the meaning of each motif found in East Sumba weaving to students, lecturers, and broader communities. The meaning of the symbol of the weaving is an important thing possessed by the East Sumbanese that it is a unique culture to be understood and maintained.

The study aims to educate students, lecturers, and the broader community about the meanings of motifs in East Sumba weaving. It emphasizes the cultural significance of these symbols and the importance of preserving this unique aspect of East Sumbanese heritage.