

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Indonesia is an archipelago with an extraordinary wealth of customs, culture and natural beauty. Each region of the country has its own cultural identity, such as regional languages, traditional clothing, dances and distinctive architectural forms. This diversity makes Indonesia a nation rich in cultural heritage that must be preserved, especially in an era of globalisation that can erode local cultural identity. One aspect of culture that is important to preserve is the traditional house, which reflects the local wisdom of the community. Traditional houses are not just dwellings, they are also full of philosophical, spiritual and social meaning, and serve as a means of passing on cultural values to the next generation.

Indonesia is also an archipelagic country, with a variety of customs and cultures on each island. This diversity makes Indonesia rich in cultural heritage and in the current era of globalisation, it is important for us to maintain and pay attention to regional cultural wealth as part of the national identity. Yunanto (2021) further explains that one aspect of Indonesian culture is local wisdom, which is reflected in the diversity of religions, tribes and languages. Local wisdom is an important element that needs to be explored, studied and revitalised as it plays an important role in strengthening the nation's identity to face global challenges. One of the regions rich in culture and local wisdom is the island of Sumba in East Nusa Tenggara.

The island of Sumba in East Nusa Tenggara is inhabited by the Sumba tribe, most of whom are animists who believe in ancestral spirits known as marapu.

Simanjuntak explains in the journal 'Sumba Cultural Enchantment' (2016:2) that the name 'Sumba' comes from the word 'humba', which in the local language means 'indigenous' or people who come from this place. This reflects the identity of the Sumbanese people, who have a strong attachment to their homeland. The people of Sumba refer to themselves as Tau Humba, meaning the original inhabitants or natives of the island of Sumba. This designation reflects their close connection to the island's long cultural heritage and traditions, as well as their pride in being indigenous to the region. Geria and nurdiah, in the journal architecture and human experience by Purbadi (2023), define that the people of Sumba still partly adhere to the Marapu belief, which is the root of the social, political and cultural systems of the Sumbanese people. The Marapu faith affects all aspects of Sumbanese life, including their traditional houses. According to sources in Anakalang, the existence of high roofs on Sumbanese houses is a direct manifestation of the existence of the Marapu belief. On the other hand, according to building science, high roofs have guaranteed structural strength.

On the other hand, Sumba Island has a lot of beauty that can be enjoyed by local and foreign tourists. According to Turner in Simanjuntak (2016:3), Sumba Island, which is surrounded by the sea, presents a very stunning natural landscape. Its pristine natural beauty, with vast and fertile savannah fields, creates a peaceful and calming atmosphere. Farm animals roaming freely in the countryside add to the sense of closeness between man and nature. The preserved forests and unspoilt beaches with big waves add to the island's appeal to travellers.

In addition to its natural beauty, one of the most common things encountered is the traditional house of Sumba, which has its own uniqueness,

namely towering. This traditional house can be found in East Sumba Regency, Central Sumba Regency, West Sumba Regency and Southwest Sumba Regency. Sumba is also known for its strong cultural heritage. Traditional rituals centred on ancestor worship are an integral part of community life. This creates a distinctive spiritual atmosphere where every ceremony and celebration has a deep meaning associated with honouring ancestors and the forces of nature. Traditional houses with curved roofs perched on hills also add to the charm of the island. The existence of these houses reflects the local wisdom and way of life of the Sumbanese people, who are strongly attached to tradition. All these elements, both natural and cultural, make Sumba a very interesting and fascinating destination to explore.

Traditional Sumbanese houses use natural materials such as reeds, selected trees and forest ropes such as rattan, etc., and the shape of the roof tends to be towering (tower roof). Reny's research (2018:95) shows that the cosmology of traditional Sumba houses is vertically divided into three main parts: upper, middle and lower. The upper part is described as a place for ancestors to live, the middle part as a place for residents to live, and the lower part as a place to raise livestock. In terms of horizontal spatiality, the spatial patterns in traditional Sumbanese houses are divided into 'male - female', 'public - private' and 'sacred - profane', and the fireplace is located in the centre of the house.

Sumba's traditional houses contain deep meaning, both philosophical, spiritual and cultural. This meaning is reflected in every element of the Sumba traditional house, from the building materials, to the design, to the rituals performed in it (zheerlin, detikBali Wednesday 26 June 2024). According to

(KBBI), meaning is the sense, intention and understanding of a linguistic form. Meaning is also interpreted as the landscape of language understanding. Mansoer in Muzaiyanah (2012:146) explains that the term 'meaning' often causes confusion because the meaning can vary depending on the context in which the word or phrase is used. In this case, meaning does not only refer to the direct meaning but is also influenced by various factors such as cultural, social or specific situations. Meaning is strongly influenced by the way a word or phrase is pronounced, as intonation or manner of speaking can affect the way people understand or interpret the meaning at hand.

On the other hand, a symbol can be understood as a sign or sign used to represent a particular object, idea or concept. This symbol can be a physical form, words, sounds or visual signs that have an agreed meaning. For example, the word 'table' is a symbol that refers to a physical object called a table, and the sound or writing is understood to have the same meaning by people who understand the language. Symbols play an important role in communication because without them we cannot effectively convey ideas or information.

Semiotics is a theory that expands our understanding of meaning by emphasizing the relationship between signs, objects, and interpreters. According to Peirce (1958), the meaning of a sign cannot be understood in isolation, but rather as part of a more complex system: a triadic relationship consisting of a representamen (or symbol) that points to an object, which is the thing referred to or represented by the sign, and an interpretant, which is the understanding or meaning that arises in the mind of the recipient regarding the object in question. Additionally, he explained that symbols are signs whose meaning is formed

through convention or social agreement rather than based on similarity or a physical relationship with the represented object. Therefore, symbols can only be interpreted if there is a collective understanding within a culture or community about what they represent.

Based on the conditions of the above explanation, the reason for the author to choose to examine the symbol and meaning of the traditional house of Sumba is to deepen the knowledge of the symbols in the traditional house of Sumba, which contain many philosophical values and need to be preserved by the next generation. By analysing the symbols and meanings of the traditional house of Sumba, we can find out how the people of Sumba preserve the traditional houses by interpreting the symbols that exist in their traditional houses through the carvings on the pillars of the house, and the meaning of each part of the house that is reflected in their daily lives. With this research, the author can contribute to semantic and linguistic studies to show how symbols and meanings are used as a tool to preserve culture, especially in traditional houses.

In addition, the results of this study can be a more contextual learning material to help learners understand symbols and broader meanings.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are the symbols found in traditional house in Loli
2. West Sumba?
3. What are the meanings embedded in the elements of traditional house In Loli West Sumba?

1.3 Aim(s) of Study

1. To find out the symbols in traditional house in Loli West Sumba
2. To find out the meanings embedded in the elements of traditional houses in Loli, West Sumba

1.4 Significance of Study

1.4.1 Implication

According to Roland Barthes' semiotics (Husaina, 2018), This theory is based on the terms 'signifier' (marker) and 'signified' (sign), and was developed into a theory of metabases with three signification systems: denotation, connotation, and mythical meaning.

1.4.2 Application

The results of this study are expected to help other researchers who want to conduct further research related to traditional houses, especially West Sumba traditional houses and West Sumba traditional house symbols. This research is expected to add information about West Sumba traditional house for education and society.