

A Cultural Study on the Weaving Craft *Tembe Nggoli* in the Social Life of the Dompu People

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ABSTRACT

Tembe Nggoli is a traditional woven fabric of the Dompu and Bima people. It has been the traditional clothing of Dompu people since the mid-17th century. It is a weaving craft in the form of sarong which it differs from Songket. This study focuses on philosophical beliefs behind *Tembe Nggoli* in Dompu people's life. This is a qualitative study using the semiotic approach by Charles Sanders Peirce. Each of *Tembe Nggoli* motifs, such as Nggusu Waru, Gari, and Nggusu Upa, has particular symbolic meanings. The motif of Nggusu Waru depicts 8 qualities that someone has to possess, including obedience to God and His messengers, wisdom, honesty, righteousness, courage, wealth, dignity, and good family background. The motif of Gari or Garis (straight lines) represents the symbol of honesty and firmness that someone should show in making decisions. The motif of Nggusu Upa symbolizes honesty, generosity, nobility, and the quality of being hard-working. These motifs express a deep hope or dream that Dompu's people are supposed to achieve. They stress much on traditional values and norms in accordance with Islamic principles. As progress is being implemented in the lives of Dompu's people, it is a traditional dress of the Dompu's people. Traditional clothes for men named Katente, Saremba (Nggodo), and Sambolo while women include Rimpu and Sanggentu.

Keyword: Cultural studies, Crafts, *Tembe Nggoli*, Dompu

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country of enormous wealth of crafts, one of them is the weaving craft called *Tembe Nggoli* practised in Dompu district, Bima. The district is famous for its craft which is different from other district, or even of other regions. It is different in both its making processes and its uses. *Tembe Nggoli* has been used in some traditional rituals and particular eventful days of the district.

Crafts are art works whose making process relies on skills with human hands, and crafts usually produce attractively artistic ready-made outputs. To practise crafts, someone needs to make continuing efforts undertaken with fighting spirits, adroitness, great dedication, and continued viability. Weaving crafts are human works influenced by other humans and their surroundings, and they require accuracy and keenness and rely on skills with human hands [1].

The existence of crafts in human life is assumed to be as old as human beings [2]. The term 'craft' is defined as a work that is painstakingly done and requires particular skills. The term of "craft" is not only refers to skills in processing raw materials, but they also refer to using simple tools as a direct extension. However, the technological

development in processing tools, the greater production volume, the heavier production schedule, and the higher quality standard have prompted craft industries to go into mass production [3]. In addition, the production system of crafts practised by craft men in small and modest-scale craft industry demands that they maintain high quality standards and perform such a prudent management that they can achieve great success in the export of craft products and get a useful insight into global market forces [4].

Crafts are art works stressing on skills and functions of human hands in processing locally available raw materials into ready-made products of aesthetic value. It can be said, therefore, that crafts deal with hand-made products or production of goods produced using skills with hands (handicraft).

Weaving is an ancient textile art created by assembling two pieces of threads, called the warp and the weft, on a loom and weaving them into fabrics. Woven fabrics have particular uses and functions in social, economic, religion, and aesthetic aspects of their makers' life. Weaving is a simple technique in cloth manufacture, i.e. by assembling yarn horizontally and vertically, or, in other words, by drawing a cross between warp and weft threads [5]. Woven fabric is usually made up of wood fibber, cotton, silk, or

other materials. In Indonesia, the manufacture of woven fabrics, generally produced on household basis, spreads over some islands such as Java, Sumatera, and Kalimantan. The regions, such as in West Sumatera, Palembang and West Java, are the most famous regions which has higher production of woven fabric among regions in Indonesia.

Weaving arts are closely related to a society's knowledge system, culture, belief, surroundings, and system of social organization. Given diverse social cultures, it is not surprising that weaving arts of a region differ from those of others. Weaving arts of a particular social community are therefore unique and represent the culture of the community. However, it is not this cultural dimension, but the quality of woven materials, the beauty of color combination, motifs, patterns, and ornaments that determine the quality of a woven product.

The weaving craft *Tembe Nggoli* occurred in the mid-17th century as an implementation of ethical values of Islam, the official religion of the Dompu Sultanate [6]. It has been popular since the mid-17th century, but unfortunately the philosophical idea behind it is rarely explored. In consequence, young generations of Dompu people are about to lose the intrinsic meaning of this craft. The meaning of weaving is closely related to the lives of the Dompu people, for example to a man in the search for a mate other than good cook, but also to be skilled in weaving [7].

2. METHOD

This research used the qualitative method which tries to analyse social life by depicting the social world from the viewpoint or interpretation of individuals (informants) in natural settings [8]. Qualitative research is carried out to reach a scientifically acceptable solution to a problem without ignoring ethical values. This method helps at least to discover logical and empirical truth, which is actually inseparable from ethical truth [9]. Qualitative methods, which consider researchers to be the key instrument, are based on post positivism and are used to research the real nature of an object. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques are employed in selecting the sample of population to participate in the research. The research data are collected using triangulation and then analysed inductively. As is known, qualitative research stresses more on meanings than on generalization [10].

In this qualitative research, the researcher adopted the semiotic approach of Charles Sanders Peirce. Semiotics is a branch of science focusing on study of sign and everything bearing relation to signs like sign system and process. Peirce defined semiotics as the study of signs and everything related to signs, including sign functions (syntactic semiotics), relations of a sign to other signs (semantic semiotics), and an interpreter's processes of

using and receiving signs (pragmatic semiotics). According to Peirce, the true nature of signs is basically representative and interpretative. Unlike Saussure, Peirce saw signs not as a structure but as a signification process (communication signification) [11].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. *Tembe Nggoli*

Tembe Nggoli is a sarong which Dompu people have made a part of their traditional clothing since the mid-17th century. Its occurrence reflected the rise of a new culture in Dompu people, that is, Islamic tradition. Initially, *Tembe Nggoli* was worn as a replacement for traditional veils. This traditional woven sarong of Dompu is made of cotton fibers. It is produced in a vast range of bright colors, and it is decorated with special motifs of sarongs woven by hands. Its soft, breathable fabric materials and symbolic meanings behind it differentiate *Tembe Nggoli* from other products of weaving crafts.

Motifs with which *Tembe Nggoli* is decorated not only form prayers of agencies of craft men but also represent social groups. In this regard, some particular motifs belong only to aristocratic families, and some are available only to the general public. As for the general public, men and women cannot choose those motifs carelessly – there are particular motifs designed for each. In addition, the motifs of *Tembe Nggoli* illustrate inner human drive affected by human needs. It is the drive that motivates someone to act and behave in a particular way. The existing motifs carry artistic interpretations covering all inner motivation, reason, and drive prompting someone to perform an action. Human behavior, in essence, has a motif. Behavior is also called spontaneous, automatic reactions and has a particular meaning which is not necessarily consciously intended.

Actually, *Tembe Nggoli* does not have so many motifs as other woven fabrics of any other regions, considering symbols and pictures to be drawn as motifs have to conform to traditional Islamic values and norms in such a way that weavers are not allowed to use pictures of humans or animals as a motif of their woven fabrics. The philosophical idea behind *Tembe Nggoli* deals with building harmonious relationship among human beings, harmonious relationship between human beings and nature, and harmonious relationship between human beings and God as well as expressing hopes for the better future. All the idea is illustrated with the motifs and ornaments characteristic of *Tembe Nggoli*. There are a number of motifs with which *Tembe Nggoli* is decorated, and each of the motifs carries its specific meanings and purposes. Those symbolic meanings are mentioned as follows.

3.1.1. The Motif Nggusu Waru

The name Nggusu Waru was decided on in respect of the abundant number of the motifs of Ncori Waji, which if arranged will take the form of a flower with 8 petals. This motif signifies eight (8) good qualities or characteristics a leader should possess. The motif Nggusu Waru, or eight angles, is actually a mixture of two motifs: the motif Ncori Waji form and the motif of a square. The motif Ncori Waji is arranged side by side to the extent that it forms eight neatly arranged Ncori Waji shapes that look like a flower in bloom. The qualities this motif symbolise are mentioned in the following list.

- a. Mato'a diruma la'o rasu (obedience to God and His messengers)
- b. Maloa ra bade (wisdom)
- c. Mantiri nggahi kalampa (honesty)
- d. Mapoda nggahi paresa (righteousness)
- e. Mambani ra disa (courage)
- f. Matenggo ra wale (wealthiness)
- g. Mabisa raguna (dignity), and
- h. Londo dou taho (good family background)

3.1.2. The Motif Gari

The motif Gori is so called just because lines become the dominant ornament on *Tembe Nggoli* with this motif. Dompu men usually wear this kind of woven fabrics in their daily activities such as farming and prayer. This motif consist of two major shapes, i.e. lines and squares, which are woven in a repeated pattern on the fabric.

This motif carries a symbolic meaning that as lines are straight, humans have to be honest and firm in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. In the local language of Dompu, the free translation of English phrase ‘straight lines’ is Gari Ma Rombo. What is meant by being straight here is that humans must live their life with absolute honesty no matter how bitter the reality they face is. The line motif on the woven fabrics of *Tembe Nggoli* means firmness firm in performing duties – a common characteristic of maritime nation. This motif has an intrinsic meaning for people of Dompu and Bima in their everyday life which values honesty and firmness to be the standards of behavior. Woven fabrics with this motif are available in such bright colors as red, pink, green, baby blue, dark blue, yellow, black, and white, which all represent the quality of being honest, firm, but still simple.

3.1.3. The Motif Nggusu Upa

The motif Nggusu Upa consists of two shapes. The motif designing process begins with making patterns arranged side by side as the main motif. This is the reason why this motif is called Nggusu Upa. *Tembe Nggoli* with this motif is usually worn by women. Rhombus motifs on women’s clothing are a clear example of the motif.

Tembe Nggoli with this motif has four (4) angles, which in the local language of Dompu is called Nggusu Upa. The motif represents behavioral characteristics of Dompu people, which include honesty, generosity, nobility, and the quality of being hard working. Using this motif, *Tembe Nggoli* usually uses pink Nggoli yarn as its basic color, while the motif is yellow as it is woven using golden yarn. *Tembe Nggoli* with the motif Nggusu Upa is the traditional clothing worn in some special events such as a royal parade, a cultural art parade, and traditional dances.

3.2. Tricothomy in Peirce's Theory of Semiotics

Semiotics is the study of signs. A sign is everything humans can observe or everything humans can grasp a meaning of it. In this regard, something can be called a sign only if it carries a meaning or humans can attach a meaning to it. The main focus of semiotics is on sign uses, in which a thing represents or stands for other things. In Peirce's semiotic model, the signification process, also called the process of semiosis, moves through three steps: (1) *representamen*, a sign, or a thing representing another thing, (2) *object*, a direct result of the cognitive process of representamen, and (3) *interpretant*, further interpretation of the receiver of signs.

The three steps make the process of semiosis unlimited, since an interpretant can be a new representamen which in turn becomes new interpretant and so on. Therefore, the signification process endlessly repeats. As long as the idea of an interpreter can be understood by other interpreters, the interpreter plays an important role as an agent relating a sign to its object. Understanding the semiotic structure is a fundamental aspect an interpreter cannot ignore. An interpreter is a researcher, observer, and analyst of an object.

3.3. Analysis of Motifs based on Trichotomy of Peirce's Semiotics

What we see here is Peirce's basic claim that sign consist of three inter-related parts: a sign, an object, and an interpretant. For the sake simplicity, we can think of the sign as the signifier. The object, on the other hand, is best thought of as whatever is signified. The interpretant, the most innovative and distinctive feature of Peirce's account, is best thought of as the understanding that we have of the sign/object relation. The importance of the interpretant for

Peirce is that signification is not a simple dyadic relationship between sign and object: a sign signifies only in being interpreted. This makes the interpretant central to the content of the sign, in that, the meaning of a sign is manifest in the interpretation that it generates in sign users.

Table 1. Trichotomy in Peirce's semiotic model

Representant	Object	Interpretant
	<i>Tembe Nggoli Nggusu Waru</i>	The motif Nggusu Waru represents eight qualities a leader must possess, that is, a leader must be a believer and righteous person, have a wealth of knowledge, value honesty, speak polite words, display gallantry, have physical and mental health, possesses dignity, and belong to good family background.
	<i>Tembe Nggoli Gari</i>	The motif Gari, which means lines, implies that humans have to be honest and firm in making a decision as a line is straight.
	<i>Tembe Nggoli Nggusu Upa</i>	The motif Nggusu Upa symbolizes four main behavioral characteristics humans must have, namely generosity, honesty, nobility, and the quality of being hard working.

As clearly seen, those motifs contain wise sayings that represent prayer and hopes of both weavers of *Tembe Nggoli* and those wearing it. Every motif of *Tembe Nggoli* carries a particular meaning and philosophy. It is the philosophy and the meaning that help build the social system and identify people by their socio-economic classes. The motifs bring implied moral messages in the form of symbolic meanings, because of which Dompu people wear *Tembe Nggoli* in their daily life.

3.4. Implementation of *Tembe Nggoli* in Dompu People's Social Life

Tembe Nggoli is implemented as traditional clothing Dompu people wear in their everyday life. There is a clear difference in the way men and women wear *Tembe Nggoli*. Dompu women wear it as Rimpus and Sanggentus, while Dompu men do so as Katente, Sarembas (Nggondo) and Sambolos. These terms will be explained in the following paragraphs.



Figure 4 Rimpus and Sanggentus

Source: Awal, 2020

Rimpus is the most common to the general public of all the forms in which *Tembe Nggoli* is implemented. Rimpus is a type of clothing worn to cover female *aurat*, body parts required by Islam to be covered. Furthermore, in practice, there are two kinds of Rimpus: Rimpus Colo and Rimpus Mpida. Rimpus Colo is for married women, who wear Rimpus like the common way they wear veils (*jilbab/hijab*), that is, without covering their faces. On the other hand, Rimpus Mpida is for unmarried women, who wear Rimpus to cover all their face but their eyes. Sanggentus is also the form in which *Tembe Nggoli* is implemented by women. They wear it just like the way they wear *gamis* (dress robes) by covering all their bodies from shoulders to ankles.



Figure 5 Katente, Saremba, and Sanggolo

Source: Awal, 2020

Katente is a form of clothing Dompu men wear in implementing *Tembe Nggoli* in their life. Dompu men wear Katente just as they wear sarongs in prayers, that is, by folding its top about their waist to the extent that its bottom is raised up the ankles. Saremba is a dress code in which a piece of a sash (Saremba) is wrapped on one of the shoulders, and the sash is wrapped around the waist, called

Buhu Kebi, if they are about to perform an activity. Another form used in implementing *Tembe Nggoli* is Sambolo, or a headband. It is worn by winding it around the head, which is similar to the way to wear Udeng, a traditional headband of West Java.

4. CONCLUSION

The detailed discussion above leads to a conclusion that the contributing factor of the manufacture of the woven fabric *Tembe Nggoli* is a plan to replace hijab (jilbab), which was everyday clothes of Mbojo people in the mid-17th century. *Tembe Nggoli* ushered in the rise of a new culture in Dompu ethnic community, namely the Islamic culture. The motifs of *Tembe Tembe Nggoli* reflect a guiding philosophy and carry deep meanings that contain prayer and hopes for society. Additionally, the meanings and philosophy are largely instrumental in building the social system of Dompu people and identifying people by their socio-economic classes.

Tembe Nggoli is implemented in Dompu people's daily life in the hope that moral messages it contains can be conveyed effectively. The implementation is in the form of daily clothes Dompu people wear in their activities. Needless to say, *Tembe Nggoli* is available in different forms of clothes for men and women. It takes the forms of Rimbu and sanggentu for women and the forms of Katente, Saremba (Nggondo) and Sambolo for men.

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