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# Cultural Ideology in Woven Fabric Motif of *Insana* Communities at The Indonesian– Timor Leste Border

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**Abstract**

The *Insana* woven pattern has a distinctive shape and arrangement. This is considered to be correlated with the socio-cultural life of *Insana* community. The problem discussed in this study was what cultural ideology that was contained in the *Insana* woven fabric pattern. This study aimed at describing the cultural ideology in the woven fabric pattern of the *Insana* community. This study was a qualitative descriptive study. The focus of this study was the *Insana* woven fabric pattern which led to the cultural ideology it carried. The results reflected that *Insana* woven fabric consisted of two types, namely *sotis* and *bunak*. The basic pattern generally utilized in *Insana* woven fabric was in the form of a rhombus. In addition to the rhombus, the weavers developed other patterns such as *bei'* 'crocodile' and leaf shapes. The basic colors of *Insana* woven fabric were black and white. In addition, other colors such as red, yellow, and green were also added to enrich the aesthetics value of the woven fabric. The cultural ideologies behind the use of patterns on *Insana* woven fabrics were (1) the rhombus pattern symbolized the appreciation of the *Insana* community for the work of the first king, (2) the *bei'* pattern symbolized the *Insana* community's appreciation of the crocodile as an effort to commemorate the crocodile's services in the past, (3) the linking relationship between the patterns in the woven fabric symbolized the social strata of the *Insana* community. In addition, it illustrated that the *Insana* community could not live individually, but they were social human beings. Another cultural ideology shown in *Insana* woven fabric pattern was *Insana*'s feudal system of government in the past.

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## 1. Introduction

Ideology and culture are two things that are correlated with each other (Cf. Latupeirissa et al., 2019). Ideology occupies an abstract space and can only be manifested in culture. Culture becomes a vehicle for ideology to materialize. In addition, culture is also an arena where ideologies clash with each other. Sujaya et al. (2021) asserts that to be able to say something about ideology in culture, there is no other choice but to present the two in interaction. Cultural ideology is understood as a system of thought, belief, symbolic practices related to socio-cultural actions (Kim, 2007).

Traditional cloth is one of the typical cultures of the Indonesian people which is spread in almost every region. Cultural characteristics of traditional fabrics are translated into traditional hand-woven fabrics and create patterns and motifs as manifestations of the daily life of the local community (Yi, 2005). The woven fabric motif produced by weavers in North Central Timor Regency (one of the regencies in the NKRI-RDTL border area) is actually a form of *Insana* culture. All the results of creativity that continue to develop in their interactions with the outside world are a manifestation of culture (Vogt, et al., 2010). The motif of woven cloth is also considered as an arena of interaction between ideology and culture (Langkameng & Latupeirissa, 2020). The interaction between the two can be observed through how the weavers present unique motifs that underlie the culture of border communities. The motif of woven cloth is one of the cultural transmission media of an area. This is emphasized by Fadly (2016:133) that the culture of a nation will be known and even adapted by other nations through a transmission process. Ideologically charged media can be positioned as text or discourse in the form of colors and images or illustrations which are one unit in the media (Udayana, 2017:113).

The urgency of this research is the ideology of selecting and naming the motifs found on *Insana* woven fabrics in North Central Timor Regency. The selection and naming of this woven motif is suspected of having a close relationship or connection with the culture of the local community and the life of the nation and state in the context of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. The cultural ideology of the people behind the selection and naming of this motif is an absolute knowledge to be known locally, nationally, and globally (Nalenan & Liubana, 2020).

For example, the woven fabric with the Nunkolo chain pattern is one of the typical woven fabrics of East Nusa Tenggara Province, South Central Timor Regency. The ideology behind the motif, namely (1) woven cloth dominated by red color symbolizes the courage of the Nunkolo man, (2) the motif is modified from a geometric shape with the middle stem symbolizing the source of water, and (3) the edges are jagged. symbolizes the hilly and winding area of the South Central Timor Regency.

Although there are three swaprajas, in this study, the researcher focuses more on the study of cultural ideology on the Swapraja *Insana* woven fabric motif. The reasons that underlie the specification of the focus of this research are: (1) the coverage area of the three autonomous regions is very wide so that researchers need to specialize in research points in order to obtain accurate data and avoid biasing the discussion of the data; and (2) there are several motifs of woven fabrics of the *Insana* community which have relatively expensive selling values which are suspected to have a relationship with the cultural ideology of the *Insana* community.

## 2. Materials and Method

This study uses a qualitative approach. It intends to understand the phenomena of what is experienced by the research subjects such as behavior, perception, motivation, action holistically (Data & Silverman, 2011). This research is focused on the woven fabric motifs of the NKRI – RDTL border community in North Central Timor Regency, especially in Swapraja *Insana*. The time used in this study was four months from the time of the research. The data of this research is in the form of

symbols or motifs used on woven fabrics. Furthermore, the data in the form of symbols or motifs are interpreted in written form in the form of simple sentences. The source of data in this study is the woven fabric produced by the weavers in the *Insana* Swaraja.

## 3. Research Results and Discussion

The focus of the analysis in this study is the naming of woven fabrics and the shape and color of the motifs that will lead to the cultural ideology in woven fabrics. The three focuses of this analysis are described as follows.

*Woven Fabric Naming*

The naming of woven fabrics by the *Insana* community is based on the way it is made. Based on the method of manufacture, the woven fabrics of the *Insana* community are divided into two, namely *sotis* and *bunak* woven fabrics. *Sotis* and *bunak* woven fabrics are made in two stages. The first stage is the manufacture of *futus*. This stage begins with *non abas* (the thread is stretched per strand over the *salaka* to form *futus* according to the desired width of the fabric). *Salaka* is a tool made of several flat woods with a thickness of ± 1 cm, a width of ± 4 cm, a length of ± 1.5 m, and the shape of the letter X.

After non-abas, the next is the formation of motifs on the *futus*. The motif is formed by tying several strands of thread (± 20-30 strands of thread) with a *kufa* (rope made from the inside of the young leaves of the gewang) to form the desired motif image. Next, the process of giving the base color to the *futus*. In this process, the *futus* is colored by cooking it with a color mixture according to the desired color requirement. *Futus* is cooked with a duration of 5-10 minutes to get maximum color results. The dye used is *tarum* (a natural dye made from *tarum* leaves, noni root, and wanteks. *Tarum* produces a deep black color, while the noni root produces a yellow color. Wanteks is used to complement colors that cannot be obtained naturally. The color of wanteks is adjusted to taste the color of the *futus* maker. After that, the *futus* is removed and stretched on a banana leaf for the drying process. Next, the rope is untied in the shape of the motif on the *futus*. This stage is the last stage of making *futus*.

The second stage in the manufacture of woven fabrics is weaving. This stage begins with non (*futus* stretched over the *salaka*). At the weaving stage, *salaka* is usually equipped with other properties, namely *seni* (a flat piece of wood measuring about 1.5 meters that is used to tighten the threads on the *futus* when weaving), atis (small wood 0.5 in diameter with a length of about 1.5 meters). which is used in conjunction with *seni* to tighten the thread on the *futus* during the weaving process), tai nono (a rope used to measure the length of the *futus* to be woven in the form of *tais* or *beti*. The length of the tai nono greatly determines the length of the *tais* or calves according to the size of the need), whales niun (made of buffalo or cow skin, and sacks used as supports that hold the back of the weaver to easily tighten and smooth the threads on the *futus*), Ut and pua pa'u (made of 0.10 diameter wood with a length of about 70 cm which is connected to the whale Niun by a pair of ropes that function to tighten and smooth the threads on the *futus*). After that, the *futus* are woven by the weavers into *tais* or *beti*.

The naming of *sotis* and *bunak* on *Insana* woven fabrics appears in the second stage, namely the weaving stage. The motifs produced by weaving threads with the help of sticks and *seni* 'thread cutters' are called *sotis*. The duration for making *sotis* is very short (it doesn't take long, which is ± 1-2 weeks), while *Bunak* is produced by tying each strand of thread with colored thread according to the color of the motif formed. Making *bunak* cloth is very complicated and takes a long time up to 5 – 12 months. This weaving method determines the selling value of *Insana* woven fabrics. The selling

value of *Insana* woven fabrics is based on the *futus* weaving process. Therefore, the selling value of *sotis* cloth is cheaper than the selling value of *bunak* cloth.

*Motive Shapes and Colors*

The beginning of the emergence of motifs and woven fabrics in *Insana* was motivated by the community's need for body coverings or clothing. The first motif used by the *Insana* community is in the form of diamond defense and is the imagination of the first *Insana* king. This idea originated from the results of the King's contemplation of the impact of Dutch colonialism. During the colonial period, the *Insana* community did not recognize education which was seen as having a negative impact on social, economic, and political life at that time and in the future. The underlying idea and motivation of the King behind the making of this motif is to educate or educate the community, create jobs for the community, and as a marker of the identity of the *Insana* community with other communities.

The motifs used by the *Insana* community are generally the same, but the way of working on the motifs in woven fabrics is different. The motifs found on *Insana* woven fabric resemble a wake formed from four straight lines or equal sides with two pairs of opposite sides parallel and the two diagonals intersecting perpendicular to each other. The flat shape with the identification above shows some of the properties of a rhombus . Therefore, the shape of the motif on the *Insana* woven fabric can be ascertained to be in the form of a rhombus. However, along with the times and the skill of the weavers in weaving, the weaver community in the *Insana* Swaraja began to add new motifs such as the *bei'* 'crocodile' motif. This is because in ancient times human life blended with nature so that the weaver community inspired and imitated what was presented by nature or the environment. Although there are several developments of motifs in *Insana* woven fabrics, the form of motifs that are often used in woven fabrics is in the form of rhombus.

*Insana* woven fabric is dominated by black and white as the basic colors. In addition to these two basic colors, woven fabrics are also combined with other colors such as red, yellow, green, and orange to add to the aesthetics of the woven fabric. The use of colors and forms of motifs is also a marker of the identity of the *Insana* community with the people of the other two autonomous regions in the North Central Timor Regency in particular and other communities nationally and globally.

*Cultural Ideology in Insana Swapraja Woven Fabrics*

In general, ideology is defined as a complex of knowledge which as a whole becomes the basis for a person or society to understand the universe and the earth as a whole (Weiss et al., 1987). Cultural science teaches that humans influence and are influenced by the surrounding nature (Irawan, 2016:5). Therefore, it cannot be denied that all human creativity, taste, and initiative will not be separated from the ideas or ideas that underlie them and are sourced from the surrounding nature. Cultural ideology is a system of thought, belief, and symbolic practices related to socio-cultural action.

Cultural ideology as a material practice of an institutionalization of systematic ideas echoed by a particular cultural community. In connection with some of the concepts above, the cultural ideology intended in this study is directed at the ideas, ideas, and knowledge of the *Insana* community in choosing and forming motifs on the woven fabrics produced.

The cultural ideology in the woven fabric motifs of the *Insana* community is traced through the shape and color of the woven fabric motif. The shape of the motifs, both rhombus and *bei'*, and the leaves used in woven fabrics must be intertwined and cannot be separated in *sotis* and *bunak* fabrics. The use of the rhombus motif as the basic motif on the *Insana* woven fabric as a form of

appreciation from the *Insana* community to the first king who produced this motif based on the results of contemplation. This motif was created by the king to educate the public to be familiar with the informal education system. In addition, this motif was created to create jobs for the *Insana* community.

The cultural ideology behind the use of the *bei'* motif in woven fabrics is as a form of appreciation to crocodiles. In ancient times the ancestors of the *Insana* community used the services of crocodiles as water transportation to cross from one island to another for trade purposes. Crocodiles are seen as helpers of the ancestors in the past so that they are remembered in the form of motifs.

The interlocking relationship between the forms of the motifs of diamond, bei, and leaf motifs in woven fabrics shows the social strata of the *Insana* community. In addition, it shows that the *Insana* community cannot live alone, but need each other. They live together and support each other. The hierarchy of the social strata of the *Insana* kingdom which is shown in the woven cloth motif starts from the highest power structure to the lowest. The highest hierarchy of power is occupied by *usi naek* (king) who occupies a central position of power, *usif -usif* (nobles), *fetor* (extension of the king's arm), *tumuku* (village head), *amaf* (tribal head), *nakaf-nakaf* (head of family in certain ethnic groups) and *to tafa* (the crowd).

The depiction of social strata in woven fabrics is observed through the arrangement of motifs. The composition of the rhombus motif sequence shows the relationship between the region and the people who inhabit the region according to the level of power. Inside the woven fabric, there are larger rhombus motifs and several forms of smaller, interlocking rhombus motifs. The large ketupat defense shows the territory of the *Insana* community. While the other small ketupat motifs show the people who inhabit the *Insana* area. The rhombus that is in the middle or central position shows the location or position of the *usi naek* 'the king', while the two rhombuses flanking the *usi naek* show the position of *usif -usif* (the nobility). The position of *usif* and rising age is also marked by the use of different color motifs. The up-and-down position in the middle is marked in orange, while the *usif* position is marked with a red heart shown on the left and right.

Furthermore, the position of the *fetor* is shown through the orange half-defense diamond motif attached to the *usi naek*. The position of the *amaf* (tribal head) is shown through a small rhombus motif with a combination of black and golden yellow under the *fetor*. The position of the *tumuku* (village head) is shown through two orange diamonds located on the right and left outside the *usi naek*, *usif* , *fetor*, and *amaf* areas. The position of *to tafa* (crowded audience or ordinary people) is shown through the pink and orange half rhombus motifs located on the right and left outer areas of the *usi naek*, *usif* , *fetor*, and *amaf* areas.

The white color in the *Insana* ketupat motif is a dividing line that separates the positions of *usi naek*, *usif* , king (*usi naaek*), *usif* (nobleman), *fetor* (extension of the king's arm), *tumuku* (one level above *amaf*: village head), below In *tumuku* there are nakafs who head several family heads in certain tribes, *amaf* (tribal chiefs), and *to tafa* (crowded audiences). *Usi naek*, *fetor*, *amaf*, and *to tafa* are likened to nails and flesh that cannot be separated because they form a territory.

The woven fabric is separated by a line that separates the outer side from the inner side of the woven fabric. On the outside there are several small motifs in the form of a triangle arranged upright and upside down. The triangular motif on the outside depicts the topography of the *Insana* Swapraja territory flanked by hills.

In addition to the depiction of the hierarchy of social strata based on the arrangement of motifs, the depiction of social strata is also shown through the rights and authorities of the *Insana* community using woven cloth. In ancient times, *bunak* was only used by *usif* naek 'king' as a marker of social strata. *To tafa* and others can only wear *sotis* and are not allowed to wear *bunak*. This depiction of the use of woven cloth shows the feudal system of *Insana*'s government in the past. However, along with the times and changes in royal power, people from all walks of life are allowed

to use *bunak* without distinguishing between social strata of society. All citizens in the kingdom were treated equally until now.

## 4. Conclusion

Based on the discussion of the research results, it is concluded that *Insana* woven fabric consists of two types, namely *sotis* and *bunak*. The terms *sotis* and *bunak* are distinguished in the second stage of making woven fabrics. *Sotis* is a woven fabric that is produced by weaving threads with the help of sticks and *seni* 'threads'. *Bunak* is produced by tying each strand of thread with colored thread according to the color of the motif formed. The basic motif commonly used in *Insana* woven fabric is in the form of a rhombus. In addition to the rhombus, the weavers developed other motifs such as *bei'* 'crocodile' and leaf shapes. The basic colors of *Insana* woven fabric are black and white. In addition, other colors such as red, yellow, and green are also added to add to the aesthetics of the woven fabric.

The cultural ideology behind the use of motifs on *Insana* woven fabrics is (1) the rhombus motif symbolizes the appreciation of the *Insana* community for the work of the first king, (2) the *bei'* motif symbolizes the *Insana* community's appreciation of the crocodile as an effort to commemorate the crocodile's services in the past, (3) the linking relationship between the motifs in the woven fabric symbolizes the social strata of the *Insana* community. In addition, it shows that the *Insana* community cannot live alone, but need each other. They live together and support each other. Another cultural ideology that is shown through the rights and authority to use woven cloth. *Bunak* woven cloth can only be used by *usif* naek who shows *Insana*'s feudal system of government in the past.

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