

## ANALYSIS OF FORM AND MEANING OF THE IKAT WEAVING MOTIFS DALA MAWARANI, SIKKA DISTRICT, FLORES, EAST NUSA TENGGARA

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### ABSTRACT

Indonesia is known for its cultural diversity, one of which is the tradition of ikat weaving featuring the dala mawarani motif originating from Sikka Regency, Flores, East Nusa Tenggara. Essentially, the process of making ikat woven fabric requires a significant amount of time and effort. The Sikka ikat weaving showcases various motifs with diverse shapes and meanings. The aim of this research is to understand the form, composition, rhythm, and visual meaning of the dala mawarani motif in the daily lives of Sikka Regency's community. This study utilizes observation and interview methods, employing qualitative analysis. The findings of this research indicate that the visual form of the dala mawarani motif is the result of repeating geometric shapes arranged in a star-like manner, as in the Sikka local language, "dala" means star. According to the beliefs of the Sikka community, stars symbolize wisdom and purity. The conclusion drawn from this research is that the dala mawarani ikat motif represents the morning star, symbolizing wisdom, purity, and success. It is expected to provide enlightenment, protection, guidance, and serve as a means of warding off adversity for those who wear it. This research is expected to have a positive impact on local governance and communities in efforts to preserve and develop culture, as well as in enhancing knowledge.

**Keywords:** *form, meaning, visual, motif, ikat weaving, dala mawarani, sikka.*

### INTRODUCTION

Sikka Regency is one of the regencies located on the island of Flores, East Nusa Tenggara Province. Sikka Regency directly borders the Flores Sea to the north, East Flores Regency to the east, Ende Regency to the west, and the Sawu Sea to the south. Sikka Regency is famous for its traditional woven ikat fabric, which is one of the many cultural heritage products typical of Indonesia, traditionally made by weavers.



**Figure 1: Administrative Map of Sikka Regency**

Source: <https://sikkakab.go.id/sikkakab/kelan/images/administrasi-sikka-a1-1.jpg>

The hand-woven ikat cloth of Sikka Regency with the motif of dala mawarani is one of the many textile products highly beneficial to the local ethnic community, carrying significant philosophical elements.

The process of making ikat weaving also involves several time-consuming processes that can span months. Sikka ikat weaving is carried out by women who possess high creativity and artistic skills. Sikka ikat weaving is not merely an artistic creation; its production process also considers symbols of social status, religious beliefs, culture, and economics. In fact, some specific motifs require high levels of concentration and contemplation during their creation, (Octaviani, *Komalasari* & Sanjaya, 2020).

The habit of weaving is widespread in every region of Sikka Regency, carried out by women with various motifs inherited from their ancestors. Initially, woven cloth served as body coverings and also as dowry items. Over time, this ikat woven cloth became known to the wider community. It has attracted the attention of both local and international communities, leading to its commercialization to meet the economic needs of the local community and to promote the existing culture within the broader society, (Marlini, 2020).

The art of Sikka weaving comprises various motifs and geometric decorative patterns. In addition to being an art form, the motifs and geometric decorations in ikat weaving hold religious-magical value, rooted in the thought patterns, beliefs, and customs of ancestors, thus possessing sacred and mystical power with a strong spiritual foundation, (Orin Bao, 1992)

The Sikka Regency ikat weaving possesses distinctive motifs and patterns that vary, utilizing natural dyes and rich in cultural symbols. The motifs used in Sikka weaving are often inspired by nature, myths, and the daily lives of the people of Sikka Regency. Some common motifs found in Sikka woven fabrics include humans, animals, plants, and various geometric shapes. Geometric patterns combined with weaving motifs typically take the form of squares, such as sun or star motifs, (Pale dan ningsi, 2023). In line with the opinion above, Octaviani dan *Komalasari* (2020) It is stated that, The motifs of Sikka ikat weaving are considered to have profound value. These values include spiritual significance, political significance (associated with customary rituals and traditional leaders), and socio-economic significance (as customary fines to restore social balance).

The dala mawarani motif is one of the motifs found in the ikat cloth of Sikka Regency. The dala mawarani motif is highly favored by textile collectors, businessmen, and fashion designers due to its aesthetically pleasing form and colors. The dala mawarani motif in Sikka Regency's ikat cloth is visualized with geometric shapes arranged resembling a star. Therefore, according to Reja (2013), It is expressed that with the symbol of the Morning Star, it is hoped to provide illumination or guidance, as well as serving as a means of warding off misfortune. The meaning of Dala Mawarani is the Morning Star, a symbol of wisdom and purity.

One of the issues to be investigated concerning the dala mawarani ikat motif in Sikka Regency is the form, composition, placement rhythm, and meaning of the dala mawarani ikat motif in the lives of the Sikka Regency community. Therefore, there is a need for research that focuses on the form, composition, placement rhythm, and meaning of the dala mawarani ikat motif, so that this research can provide additional information, knowledge, and insights into the form and meaning of the dala mawarani ikat motif in Sikka Regency. This is particularly important for weavers, textile collectors, businesspeople, artists, cultural practitioners, and the younger generation, especially within the Sikka Regency community.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The research of Feri Sanjaya (2020), In their research titled "Interpretation of Tokek Motif in Utan Welak Maumere Woven Cloth," the researchers utilized a qualitative method involving semiotic analysis approach. In this study, the researchers focused on analyzing the communication symbols in the form of Tokek motif meanings in Utan Welak Maumere woven cloth, using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis model. Data collection techniques included observations at Utan Welak cloth-making workshops, interviews with workshop owners, and literature review related to semiotics and fabric motifs. The objective of this research was to elucidate the symbolic meanings,

both written and visual, of the Tokek motif in Utan Welak ikat woven cloth in denotative, connotative, and mythological aspects. The findings of the research are as follows: Denotatively, the Utan Welak ikat woven cloth features images of tokeks, a type of four-legged reptilian creature with tough skin and a loud voice. Connotatively, the tokek symbol holds the belief of bringing luck. Additionally, the black and white base colors symbolize eternal life, resilience, and colorfastness. Connotatively, the tokek motif can be interpreted as a magical symbol representing the embodiment of ancestral spirits. Furthermore, due to the magical symbolism of the tokek image as the embodiment of ancestral spirits, the cloth is worn only by certain groups in society. In terms of mythology, the belief in acquiring luck serves as motivation for people to continue wearing the cloth and preserving the tradition.

The research conducted by Khoiriyah et al. (2020) In their research titled "Identification of Plane Geometry in the Pattern Motif of Solok Banyuwangi Woven Cloth," the researchers employed an exploratory research method with an ethnographic approach. The study was conducted in the Banyuwangi region, specifically in the Jambesari Village, Giri District, Banyuwangi Regency. The methods used included observation, interviews, and documentation. In this study, the researchers focused on identifying the geometric elements present in the Solok Banyuwangi woven cloth motifs. The results of the research revealed the presence of plane geometric elements in the Solok Banyuwangi woven cloth motifs. These plane geometric elements include points, lines, triangles, quadrilaterals, hexagons, fold symmetry, rotational symmetry, congruence, and similarity. The motifs found in Solok Banyuwangi weaving include point motifs, line motifs, equilateral triangle motifs, rhombus motifs, hourglass motifs, combined rhombus motifs, and combined hourglass motifs. All motifs adhere to the concept of plane geometry except for the equilateral triangle motif, which lacks rotational symmetry.

The research by Leonard Davinci Elain Koten et al. (2021) titled "Hermeneutics of Ikat Weaving (Utan) Lian Lipa from Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT)" utilized a qualitative research method with a phenomenological hermeneutic approach employing the Symbolic Interaction Theory by George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer. The study was conducted at the Bliran Sina Ikat Weaving Studio, Kajowair Village, Hewokloang District, Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province. The research methodology involved qualitative methods and data collection techniques including observation, in-depth interviews, and document studies. In this research, the focus was on the symbolic motifs of the Lian Lipa ikat weaving. The findings of the research revealed that the hermeneutics of the ikat weaving motifs fundamentally stem from the mindset and social interaction processes that have occurred since ancient times.

## METHODOLOGY

The data collection method utilized in this research involves observation and interviews, employing qualitative analysis. The study was conducted in Lepo Lorun, Lalat Hamlet, Nita Village, Nita District, Sikka Regency, Flores, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), on March 17, 2024. The subject of this research is Mrs. Alfonsa, serving as the key informant. She plays a crucial role in maintaining the work system and providing encouragement for the female artisans in Lepo Lorun, while also educating them to preserve and nurture local culture. Data collection techniques and instruments include observation and interviews.

## DISCUSSION

### The History of Ikat Weaving in Sikka Regency

Based on the direct interview with Mrs. Alfonsa in Lepo Lorun (2023), she revealed that the ikat weaving of Sikka Regency began to be known around 596 years before Christ, as evidenced by the discovery of the "Bronze Weaver" statue made of bronze, found around the years 556 and 596, over 1400 years ago. The statue depicts a mother breastfeeding her child while holding a weaving. The Bronze Weaver statue itself is currently housed in the National Gallery of Australia (Personal Communication, Alfonsa, March 17, 2024, in Lepo Lorun).



**Figure 2: Bronze Weaver Statue**

Source: <https://www.artoftheancestors.com/flores>

The Sikka Regency ikat weaving features various motifs with diverse shapes and meanings. These motifs can be geometric, stylized representations of plants, or animals found in the surrounding environment. The process of arranging motifs involves displaying them repeatedly and in a systematic manner. The repetition of ikat motifs means that the same motifs are arranged repeatedly, avoiding monotony and creating an overall sense of rhythm. Rhythm can be achieved through the arrangement of motif sizes, where the main motifs are larger than the supporting geometric motifs, arranged in varying sizes repeatedly.

#### **The Dala Mawarani woven ikat motif**

The Dala Mawarani motif, according to Mrs. Alfonsa, originates from Sikka Krowe, specifically in the western region of Sikka. The Dala Mawarani ikat motif is explicitly translated from the word "dala," which means star. The Dala Mawarani motif reflects a five-pointed star and is a derivative motif of the Sikka ikat weaving motif, Rempe Sikka. Thus, various woven motifs were born under names like Rempe Sikka Kelan Dala Mawarani, Rempe Sikka Kelan Naga Lalang, and Rempe Sikka Kelan Medeng. Dala Mawarani itself has many terms such as Dala Mawarani Tunggal, Dala Mawarani Susun Rua, and Dala Mawarani Turan Rua. The Dala Mawarani ikat motif is an authentic motif from Sikka Krowe, Flores, East Nusa Tenggara, which is not found in other regions (Personal Communication, Alfonsa, March 17, 2024, in Lepo Lorun).

According to Mrs. Alfonsa, the current form of the Dala Mawarani motif has been extensively modified. Some are mixed with kobar, some have reduced their unit elements, some have added elements, and some have modified the edges with curves or cone-like shapes. Therefore, the Dala Mawarani motif is not strictly angular. This modification process is done carefully because we no longer live in the era when the motif was created; rather, we are merely a community preserving tradition and culture (Personal Communication, Alfonsa, March 17, 2024, in Lepo Lorun).





**Figure 3: Dala Mawarani woven sarong**

Source: Wilfridus Ero

Based on the interview findings, Mrs. Alfonsa mentioned that in the process of designing the motif of the Dala Mawarani woven sarong, they utilize techniques such as "kristik" and fold symmetry. Therefore, in the parts where the motif follows a symmetric pattern, it will be folded just like creating the shape of a full moon, where the half-moon shape is depicted first. However, in the parts with asymmetric patterns, they are not folded like other symmetric shapes. In the process of creating one motif of the Dala Mawarani woven sarong, it requires very high concentration levels because the work is difficult and intricate. The calculation is necessary to obtain an odd number counting up to forty-five "siwan" (one "siwan" contains five or seven threads) in one "tokang" or "li'in lepet." This involves splitting up or down. Therefore, in the process of making one woven cloth, it requires more than two thousand "siwan" (Personal Communication, Alfonsa, March 17, 2024, in Lepo Lorun).



**Figure 4: Main motif of dala mawarani**

Source: Wilfridus Ero



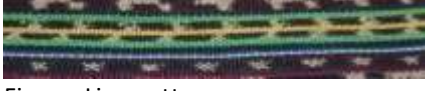







**Figure 5: Supporting motif**

Source: Wilfridus Ero





The Dala Mawarani woven cloth features a main motif (ina gete) depicting stars, as well as several other decorative motifs serving as supporting motifs (huran), along with non-motif decorative lines known as siwan ha, siwan telu, or mikat lima, and so on, which are interconnected with each other. The placement process of these motifs on the ikat weave is carried out according to established guidelines because each motif has its own pattern.

Through observation, it is found that the Dala Mawarani ikat weaving motifs in Sikka Regency contain several geometric elements that are interconnected, forming a pattern on the ikat woven cloth. These geometric elements include:

No	Geometric Elements	Visual	Description
1.	point	 Figure 6: Point Source: Wilfridus Ero	Point are a geometric element commonly found within an ikat weaving motif. Dot patterns are arranged in such a way as to follow a reference image to achieve symmetry. The role of dot patterns here serves as boundaries and connectors between motifs, thus enhancing the beauty and appeal of the woven motif.
		 Figure 7: Point Source: Alepo	
2.	Line	 Figure: Line patterns Source: Alepo	Line patterns in the Dala Mawarani ikat weaving motif are classified into two types: straight lines and curved lines. Straight lines in the Dala Mawarani motif act as boundaries between motifs, while curved lines are used as patterns to create supporting motifs, such as stylized representations of plants found in the Dala Mawarani motif.
		 Figure 9: Curved Lines Source: Alepo	

3.	Triangle		<p>In the main motif of the eight right-angled triangles, they are arranged to form a star shape where their diagonal sides face each other, and their horizontal sides connect with balanced and symmetrical spacing and sizes. The triangles in the inner part are not formed through tying but rather through the dyeing process. This pattern can be seen in the main motif as a base for the symmetrical right-angled triangle patterns on the outer part. The right-angled triangle pattern is located on the outer side and symbolizes the rays of light from a star.</p>
	Right-angled Triangle	 <p>Figure 10: Right-Angled Triangles in the Main Motif Source: Aleppo</p>  <p>Figure 11: Right-Angled Triangles in the Main Motif Source: Aleppo</p>	
	Equilateral Triangle	 <p>Figure 12: Equilateral Triangle in the Main Motif Source: Aleppo</p>	
	Isosceles Triangle	 <p>Figure 13: Isosceles Triangle in Supporting Motif Source: Aleppo</p>	



4.	Square	 <p>Figure 14: Square in the Main Motif Source: Alepo</p>	The visual of these squares is formed from symmetrical triangle bindings of the right-angled triangle motif. The empty spaces created by the bindings of the right-angled triangles placed opposite each other. This shape also serves as a base for the triangles to resemble a star.
		 <p>Figure 15: Square in the Main Motif Source: Alepo</p>	As for the squares found in the inner part of the main motif, they are formed from binding positions, drawn from the point where each end of the right-angled triangles meets.
5.	The diamond-shaped	 <p>Figure 16: The diamond-shaped Source: Alepo</p>	The diamond-shaped motif in the Dala Mawarani weaving serves as a boundary or gap separator in the star motif, often accompanied by lines as additional decorative elements.
6.	Star	 <p>Figure 17: Star Motif Source: Alepo</p>	The star motif is formed from the arrangement of several geometric shapes such as triangles and squares that are interconnected

#### The Meaning of the Dala Mawarani Ikat Weaving Motif

The meaning of the Dala Mawarani ikat weaving motif, according to the beliefs of the Sikka Regency community, is that stars symbolize wisdom and purity. Therefore, for the people of Sikka Regency, the Dala Mawarani motif is hoped to provide guidance and protection, serving as a means of warding off evil for those who wear it. Its fundamental philosophy lies in the North Star always guiding sailors during the night and farmers as they head to their gardens in the morning. Hence, the Dala Mawarani motif is also interpreted as hope and luck for families (Orin Bao, 1992).



In agreement with the statement above, Mrs. Alfonsa also expresses that the meaning of the Dala Mawarani motif itself is success. This is seen from the motif's shape, which reflects the form of a star, believed to be a symbol of success. This philosophical meaning is also reflected in traditional poems that say "inat gemu bunga, met dala mawarani," which translates to "a mother adorning flowers, her daughter adorned with diamonds and gems on her forehead or chest." This implies that a mother's actions and advice will be followed by her daughter, and if her daughter succeeds, the accolades go to the mother, not the daughter, as the mother has successfully raised her daughter to succeed.

According to Reja (2013), the Morning Star symbol is hoped to provide guidance and protection, serving as a means of warding off evil. The meaning of Dala Mawarani is the Morning Star, symbolizing wisdom and purity; "Dala Reta Waen - Mawarani Wali Rahang" means the star on the forehead symbolizes wisdom, the star in the heart symbolizes purity.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results and discussions, it can be concluded that the motif of the Dala Mawarani ikat weaving is a combination of several geometric elements arranged in such a way as to form a star pattern (dala) and several additional decorative motifs arranged according to established guidelines. In the process of arranging the motif of the Dala Mawarani ikat weaving, there are several repetitions of shapes and patterns. The repetition of shapes and patterns in ikat weaving motifs here means that the same motifs will be arranged repeatedly, avoiding monotony and creating an overall rhythm. Rhythm can be displayed through the arrangement of motif shapes, such as varying sizes of motifs arranged differently repeatedly. The process of arranging motifs is also carefully considered, especially in the placement of the main motif, which is typically larger than other supporting decorative motifs. The geometric elements found in the Dala Mawarani ikat weaving motif include dots, lines, triangles, and squares. The Dala Mawarani ikat weaving motif of Sikka Regency is also believed to have high philosophical meanings, such as wisdom, purity, and symbols of success, and it is hoped that it can provide guidance, serve as protection, and ward off misfortune for those who wear it.

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