

STUDY OF HISTORY, TECHNIQUE AND MOTIF OF BIMA *TEMBE*

Morinta Rosandini

morinta@tcis.telkomuniversity.ac.id

School of Creative Industries – Telkom Univeristy
Bandung, West Java, Indonesia

Abstract

BimaTembe is an excellent sample of cultural artifact that many people regard it as: (1) manufactured by a traditional loom techniques, (2) contained with variety forms and great philosophical motifs. In the other side, the religion system in Bima is influenced by the introduction of Islam to the region of Bima since the 14th century.

This research examined the relation between the elements of BimaTembe and one of its functions. The elements include: (1) the traditional techniques of making BimaTembe, (2) the variety forms and philosophical motifs of BimaTembe.

Keywords: bima, tembe, technique, motif

1. Introduction

Bima (*Mbojo*), as one among other 1.340 tribes that exist in Indonesia, has its culture developed well on the eastern coast of Sumbawa Island, an island that is located in the central part of Indonesia. In the province of West Nusa Tenggara, the local citizens of Bima are known as *Dou Mbojo* or Bima people who speak their own language, Bima language (*NggahiMbojo*). The government system in Bima regency was the sultanate, ruled by a Sultan, and also has becoming a symbol of its religion system, which is Islam. Islam has a great influence to the culture of Bima, and one of them was cultural product called Bima Sarong, or usually known by the local citizens as *Tembe*. This research will examine how a belief system in Bima could have a major impact in the creation, philosophical value and also the function of *Tembe*, as an Indonesia's cultural artifact.

2. The Belief System in Bima

In the 7th century, traders from various regions came to Bima, Bima's natural assets that produced resources such as Sapang wood, yellow wood, teak, candlenut, rattan and resin have made it as a potential destination for economical transaction (Ismail, 2006). As a trading route, Bima has encountered an acculturation, which was effecting the current beliefs. Beside of the economical factor, the belief system in Bima was also influenced by the government system at that time. In his book, M. Hilir Ismail (2006) ^[1] stated that, "Politically, Bima can be divided into some state eras, and here are the chronological eras of its government's political system; *Naka* era (pre-history), *Ncuhi* era (proto-history), Monarchy era and Sultanate era". The belief system that evolved in the Sultanate era was Islam, therefore, the developing culture at that time was

acculturated to the Islam religion. Other cultures were adopted from the local rules and adjusted to the Islamic system.

3. The Arrival of Islam in Bima

Before the arrival of Islam in Bima, the local citizens believed in *Makamba* and *Makimbi* (dynamism and animism) (Ismail, 2006)^[1], a belief built upon agreement and shared spirit. While the entry of Islam, was indicated by the emergence of Sultanate of Bima. Sultanate of Bima was began in the 17th century, precisely in 1609 BC, when the King of Bima agreed to accept Islamic doctrine into the kingdom (Mutawali, 2013)^[2]. When there was a fight over the throne between King La Ka'i, who ruled the kingdom, and his uncle, who wanted to take over his position. However, King La Ka'i initiatedly asked for support from the King of Makassar across the ocean, and he would help King La Ka'i if he agrees to learn Islam. After both of the Kings agreed, King La Ka'i regained the throne with the help of King of Makassar. After the fight, King La Ka'i got his territory back, and crowned as a Sultan of Bima I and has given a name Sultan Abdul Kahir. That was the end of Monarchy era, replaced by the new government system, Sultanate, a government system that is based on Islam and cultural (tradition) system that is oriented to the norms of Islam (Mutawali, 2013)^[2]. Undeniably, King of Makassar, who had embraced Islam earlier on, had a major contribution on the entry of Islam to Bima in the 17th century. The agreement led King of Bima to learn Islam and carry it inside the kingdom, until it changed the government system into Sultanate, which was the symbol of Islamic throne^[3].

4. The Evolution of Islam in Bima and Its Influence to the Local Culture

Not only affecting the government system of Bima, the role of Islam also affected its local culture. The cultural element that was influenced by Islamic belief was cultural artifact of Bima. The sultanate objects that were used during traditional ceremony as well as objects that were being used in the society, they were having philosophical values related to Islam as their belief. Based on the author's observation, one of many artifacts that has a high philosophical value and also greatly associated to Islam in Bima, is *Tembe*, a special textile from Bima in a form of colorful fabric, that serves as daily apparel in the society.

5. Bima*Tembe* as An Artifact of Bimanese Culture

BimaTembe has becoming one cultural product in the society, and its existence has been since the *Ncuhi* era in the 7th century, when the people started to create clothing by woven^[1]. The shape, philosophy and etiquette of using *Tembe* have been through many changes until today. It depends on the natural conditions and the current system of belief. Here are some brief explanations about *BimaTembe* in general.

6. Production Techniques

BimaTembe was made through a weaving process. This weaving activity has been practiced in Bima since the 7th century, which generally conducted by the women. The equipment used was loom or usually called loom *Gedongan* (backstrap-loom). *Gedongan* is a traditional loom without using any machines. To use this loom, the weaver has to sit on the floor and work with several heddles. The fabric's position is looped on the weaver's hip, so that there will be a connection between the weaver and the fabrics. The local weavers use *Gedongan* until today, in some area throughout Bima region.

7. The Types of *BimaTembe*

BimaTembe can be classified based on its origin and growth, such as: *Tembe Rakyat* (Public *Tembe*) and *Tembe Istana* (Palace *Tembe*). Detail explanations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Classifications of *BimaTembe*

Type of <i>Tembe</i>	Time of Creation	Character	User	Material
<i>Tembe Rakyat</i> (Public <i>Tembe</i>)	This type of <i>Tembe</i> is the oldest one in Bima, and commonly being wore in the community non-palace.	This type of <i>Tembe</i> is the oldest one in Bima, and commonly being wore in the community non-palace.	This type of <i>Tembe</i> is the oldest one in Bima, and commonly being wore in the community non-palace.	This type of <i>Tembe</i> is the oldest one in Bima, and commonly being wore in the community non-palace.
	This <i>Tembe</i> has been existed since before Islam entered Bima.	This <i>Tembe</i> has been existed since before Islam entered Bima.	This <i>Tembe</i> has been existed since before Islam entered Bima.	This <i>Tembe</i> has been existed since before Islam entered Bima.
<i>Tembe Istana</i> (Palace <i>Tembe</i>)	This type of <i>Tembe</i> emerged in the Sultanate era, when Islam has entered Bima region.	Bright color, because it used spun gold and polyester. Strong fabric, because it used spun gold.	The Sultan, palace staff & citizens	Spun gold & colorful polyester

8. The Motifs of BimaTembe

BimaTembe has various motifs, depend on the various types, natural conditions, also social and political situation (the belief system) at that time. Some motifs can be seen in the Table 2.

Table 2: Sample of BimaTembe Motifs

Type of Tembe	Motifs	Image
<i>Tembe Istana</i>	<i>Nggusu waru</i> ^[5]	
	<i>Samobo Flower</i> ^[6]	
<i>Tembe Rakyat</i>	<i>Nggoli</i>	
	<i>Salungka</i>	

The others motifs of *Tembe Istana* are *Sakato flower*, *Aruna flower*, *Kakato Flower*, *Gari*, *Nggosu Toli*, *Nggosu Upa*, and *Pado Waji Motif*.

Up the year of 1980's, only a certain community commonly wore *Tembe Istana*, which were the aristocrats. However, H. Nurdin, who was the Head of the Department of Industry and Trade Regional Government of Bima at that time, attained to bring *Tembe Istana* out from the palace and could be worn by any community, even by the common people. As a matter of course, H. Nurdin did this with permission from the palace. Until today, any level of society can wear *Tembe Istana* openly.

9. Conclusion

There are some conclusions that can be drawn from the study above about *BimaTembe*. From its creation, it is known that weaving a fabric in *gedongan*, a traditional loom, can make a *BimaTembe*. Using human hands in the making, *BimaTembe* has various types of motif, which were influenced by the nature and philosophical values to human character according the Islamic thoughts. The existence of *BimaTembe* in the society was closely related to the arrival of Islam in Bima region since the 14th century. Through this study about the elements of *BimaTembe*, the author is hoping that it would create a public interest to know and understand deeply about *BimaTembe*, as one of the extraordinary cultures in Indonesia, especially in traditional textile.

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Corresponding Address

Morinta Rosandini., S.Ds., M.Ds.

Lecturer

Telkom Creative Industries School

Telkom University

Bandung, West Java, Indonesia

E-Mail: morinta.rosandini@gmail.com; morinta@tcis.telkomuniversity.com