

Ikats from Indonesia: Diversity and Culture



Myra Widiono – Founder of Rumah Rakuji
and Chairperson of WARLAMI

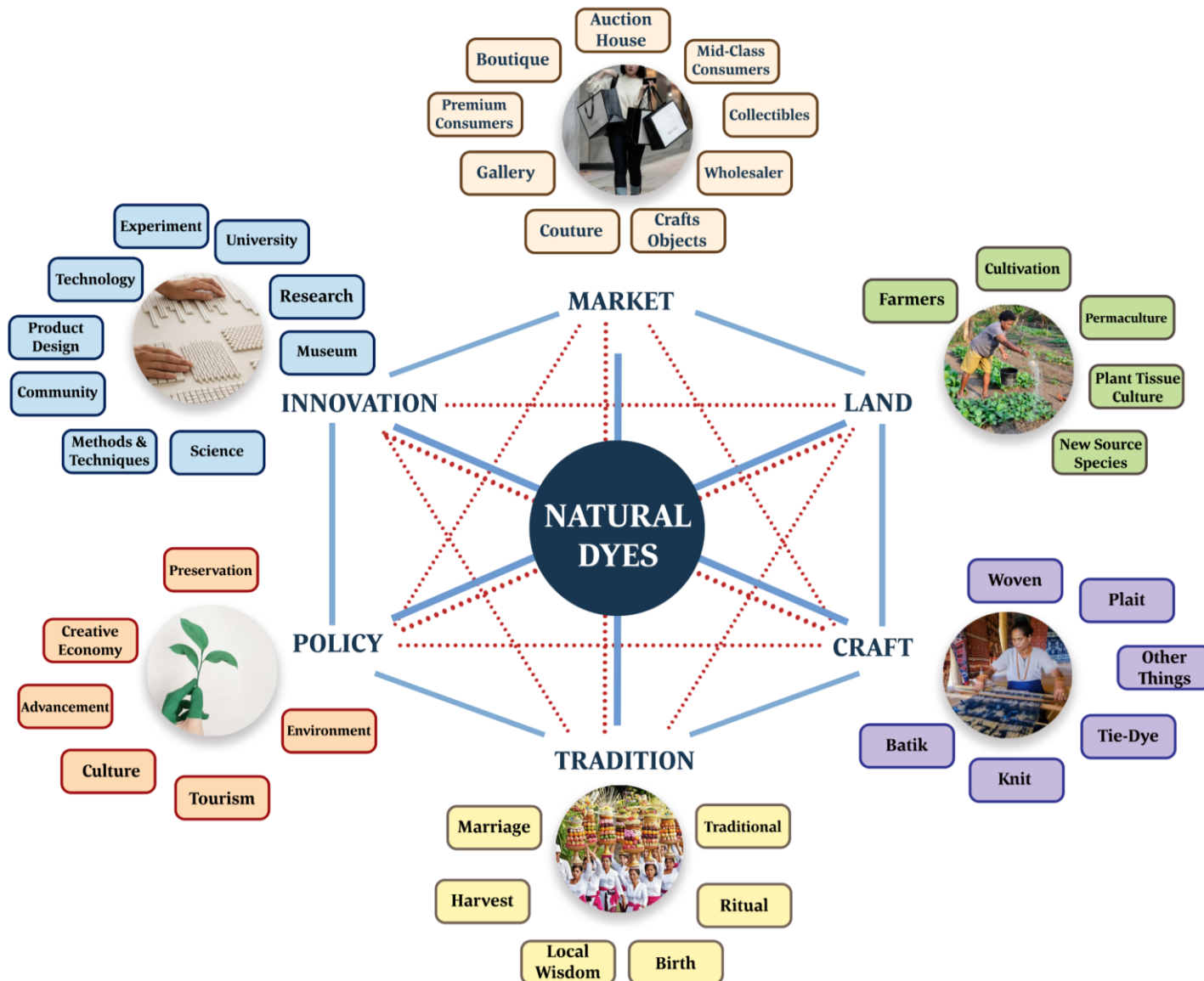
The Journey of Natural Dye Conservation



- Founder and chairperson of Indonesia Natural Dyes Organization (WARLAMI) (2015 – present)
- Actively participate in building a natural dyes ecosystem



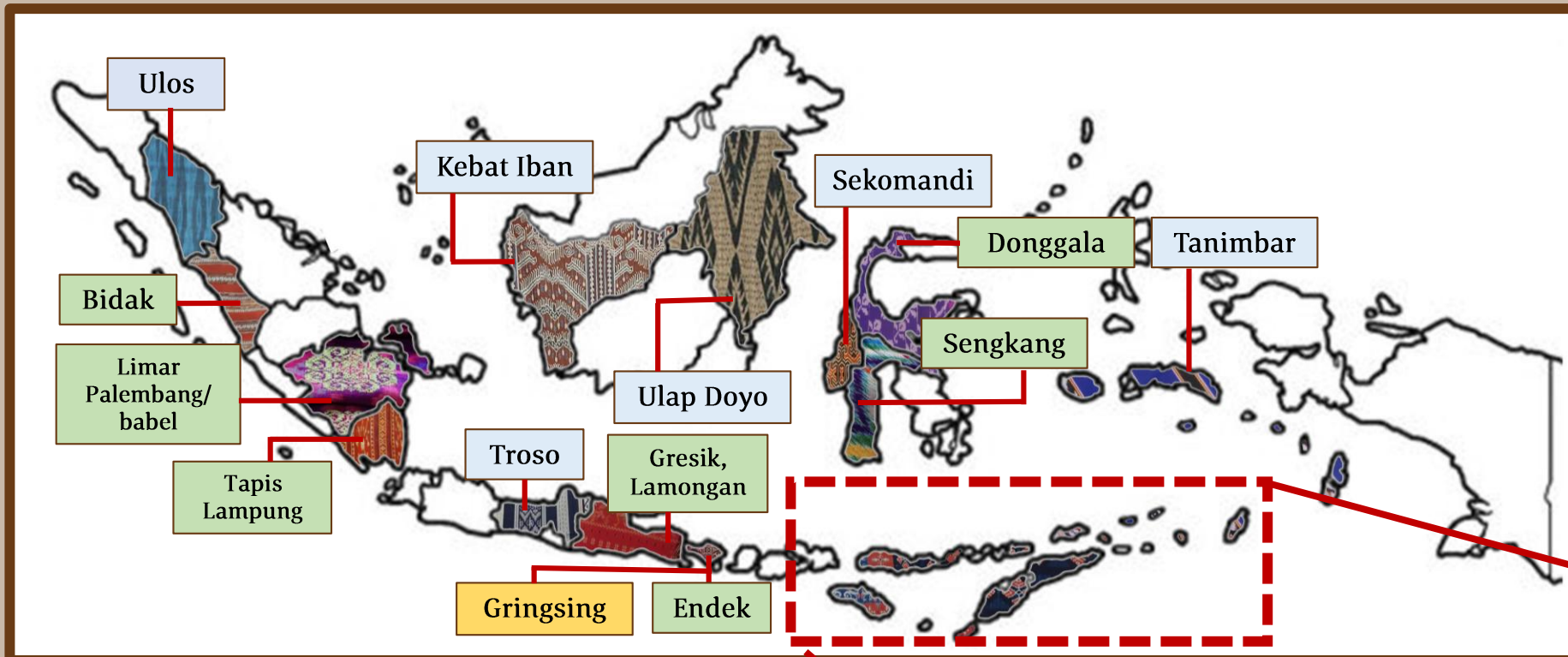
Warlami's Natural Dyes Scheme






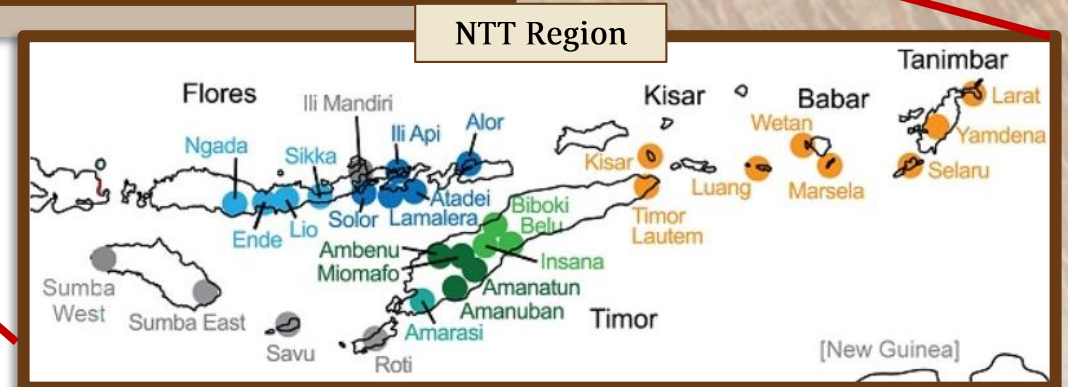
This natural dye ecosystem has been applied through natural dye workshops in several areas such as:

- North Sumatra
- West Kalimantan
- East Sumba
- South Central Timor
- Sikka and Ngada Region (NTT)
- Tenganan, Karangasem, Nusa Penida region (Bali)

Map of Ikat Distribution Across Indonesia



-  : Warp Ikat
-  : Weft Ikat
-  : Double Ikat



The Ikat Techniques of Indonesia

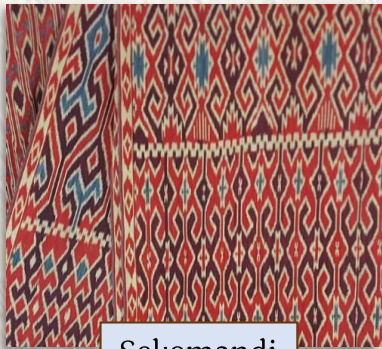
Warp Ikat



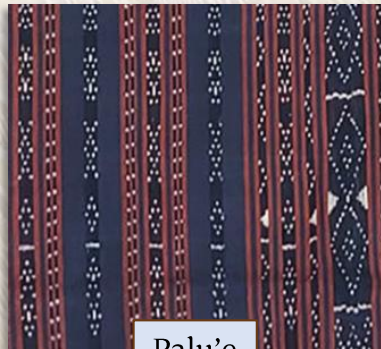
Ulap Doyo



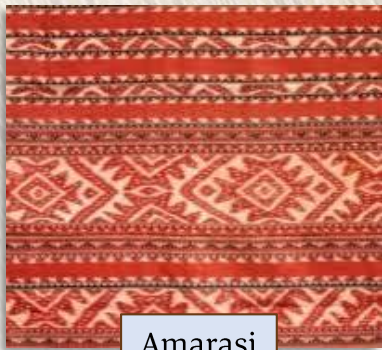
Savu woven



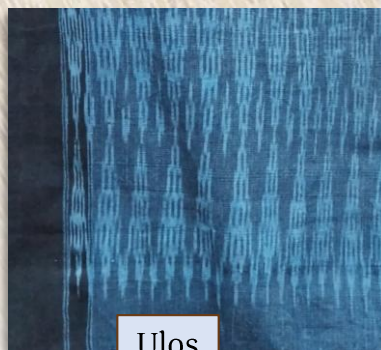
Sekomandi



Palu'e

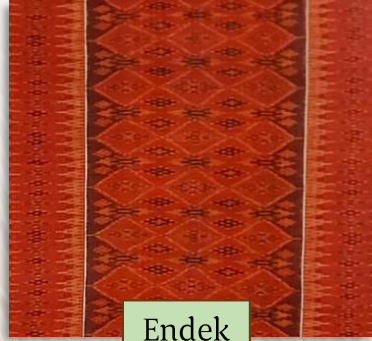


Amarasi

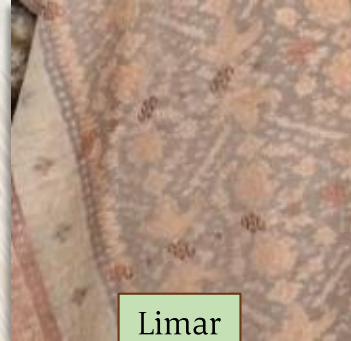


Ulos

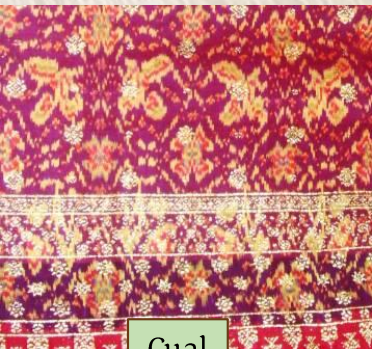
Weft Ikat



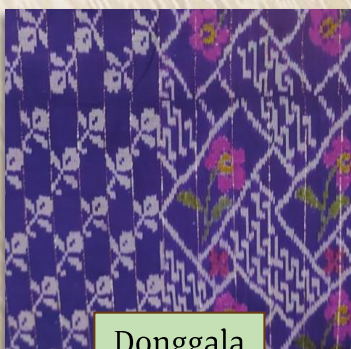
Endek



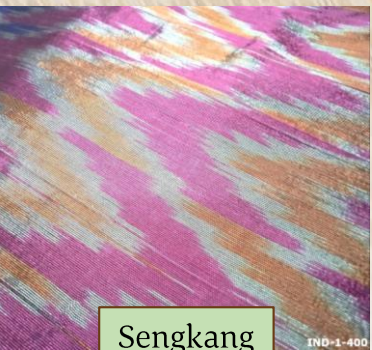
Limar



Cual



Donggala



Sengkang



Bidak

Double Ikat



Gringsing Wayang Kebo



Gringsing Wayang Candi



Gringsing Cicempaka



Bantenan

The Similarities and Differences

The Similarities

The similarities between the ikat are mostly on its function as textiles, such as:

- Daily clothing
- Ceremonies
- Weddings
- Funerals
- Trade
- Etc



The Similarities and Differences

The Differences



'Ikat' Process Method



Oiling Step



Composition Concept

1. The Ikat Process Method Differences

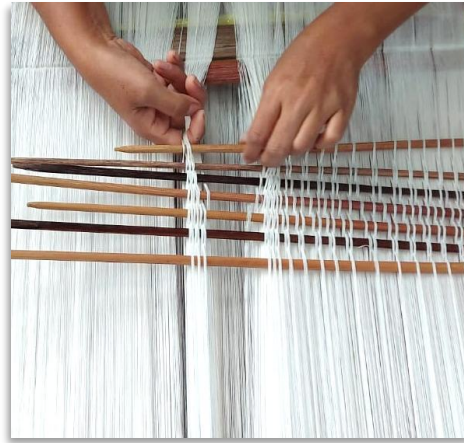
The differences applied in the Ikat Process.

The method of ikat process also different in certain areas regarding their culture.



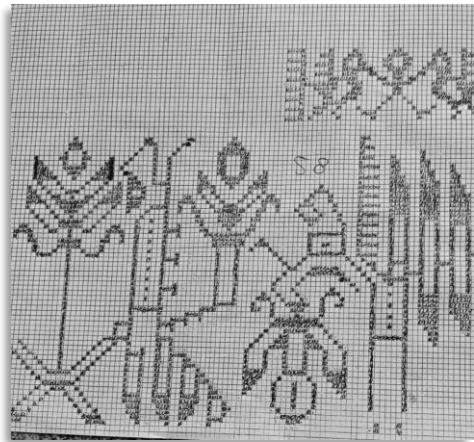
East Sumba

Sketches on the yarn



Batak

- No sketches on the yarn
- The motifs appear in their minds, passing down from generation to generation



Savu island

- Sketches on the paper
- Direct ikat on the yarn



Dayak Iban

- No sketches on the yarn
- Motifs appear in their mind
- The younger artisans follow the example of the 'finished' woven
- The older artisans got the pattern inspiration through dreams

1. The Ikat Process Method Differences



Ikat Sumba, East Sumba - The longest step Ikat

Ikat Sumba known as their complex pattern, has 42 steps that can be divided into 7 stages. The 7 stages include Cotton spinning, warp preparation, ikat making, natural dyeing, weaving preparation, weaving process, and finishing. In East Sumba, they originally used the 'Tali Gewang' or Palm leaves to make ikat, nowadays to speed up the process, they use raffia rope and do the ikat up to 6 pcs / frame



1. The Ikat Process Method Differences

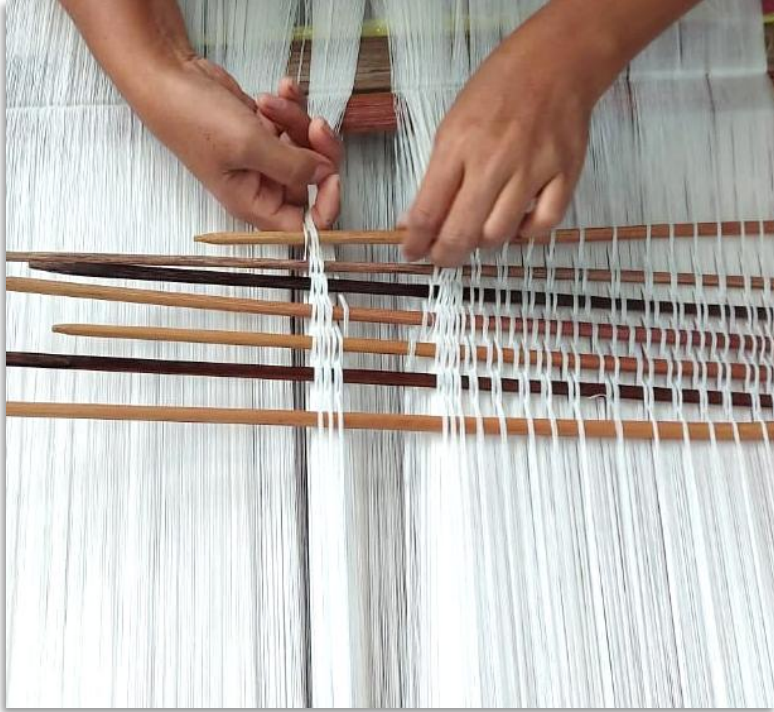


Savu Island- Woven as the maternal identity

The Savu textiles located on Savu Island, NTT, were used to bind their warp ikat with leaves such as Lontar, Palm, and Coconut palm leaves. Nowadays they prefer raffia because of its durability with heat. In 1 frame they could bind up to 4 textiles to shawls, while the sarongs could not.



1. The Ikat Process Method Differences



Ulos, North Sumatra - Mamutik

‘Mamutik’ is known as the name process method in Ulos woven, the unique point of the Mamutik is using wooden rod or slat to separate the specific yarn to make motifs before the Ikat step.



2. The Oiling Method Differences

The differences applied in the Oiling method.

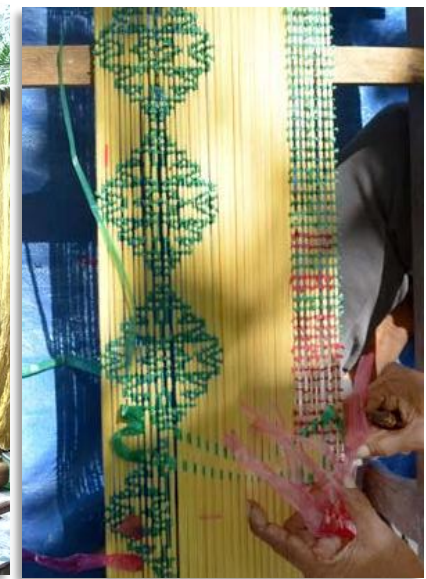
In some areas such as Sumba, they prefer to do the Ikat first followed by the oiling method, on the other hand, in different areas such as Kapuas Hulu (Dayak Iban), Savu Island, Sikka, they do the Oiling first then the ikat process.



East Sumba
North Sumatra



Kapuas Hulu (Dayak Iban)
Savu Island



Sikka
North Sumatra

2. The Oiling Method Differences

Different White Colors Resulted



Ikāt → Oiling → Brighter in the white area

Oiling → Ikāt → More muted white / ivory

3. The Composition Concept Differences

The ornamentation in Indonesian ikat weaving is closely tied to the cultural and historical influences of the archipelago. The Dongson culture brought elements of nature into textile design, with **common motifs like lozenge shapes, as well as representations of flora and fauna**. These patterns reflect the deep relationship between nature and human creativity in traditional Indonesian textiles.

Generally, the composition motif in Indonesia woven textiles can be specified as 3 group:

- a. Reversible one-way
- b. Same direction one-way
- c. Mirrored



3. The Composition Concept Differences

Composition (Case: East Sumba)



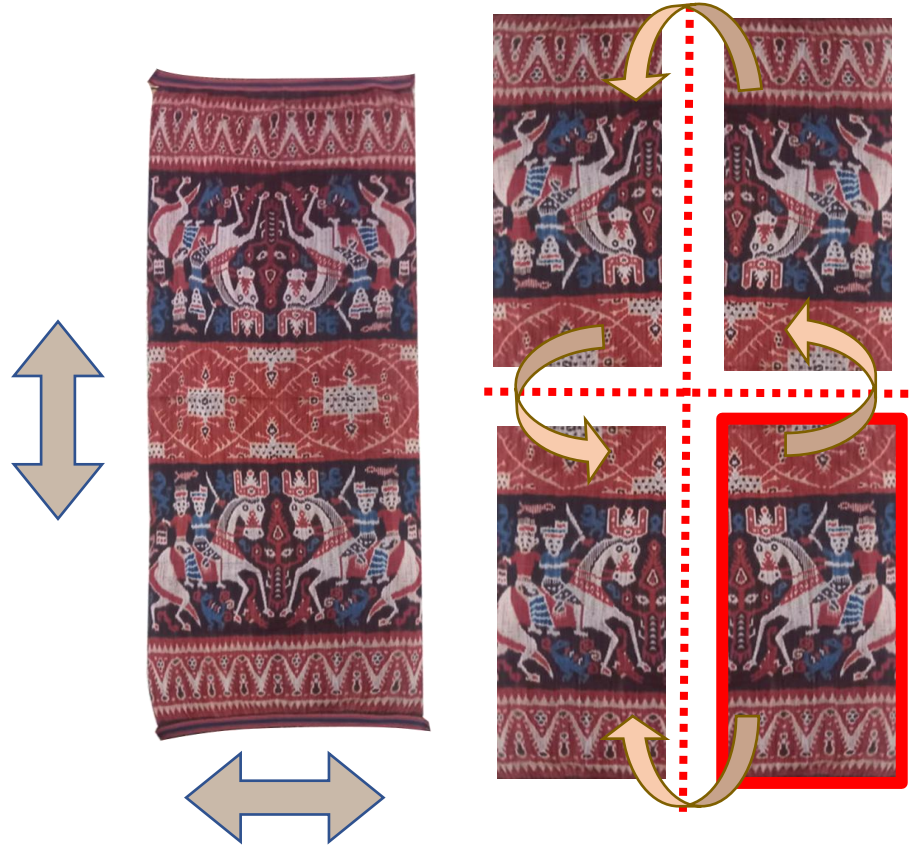
Kihil

The Reversible One-way 'Kihil' pattern can be viewed from both directions. It's perfect for shawls because the design will look the same on both ends.



Kihil

The Same Direction One-Way 'Kihil' pattern can be viewed from 1 direction only. The pattern is stacked one way depicting how artisans tell the story. This type also preferred by the Europeans

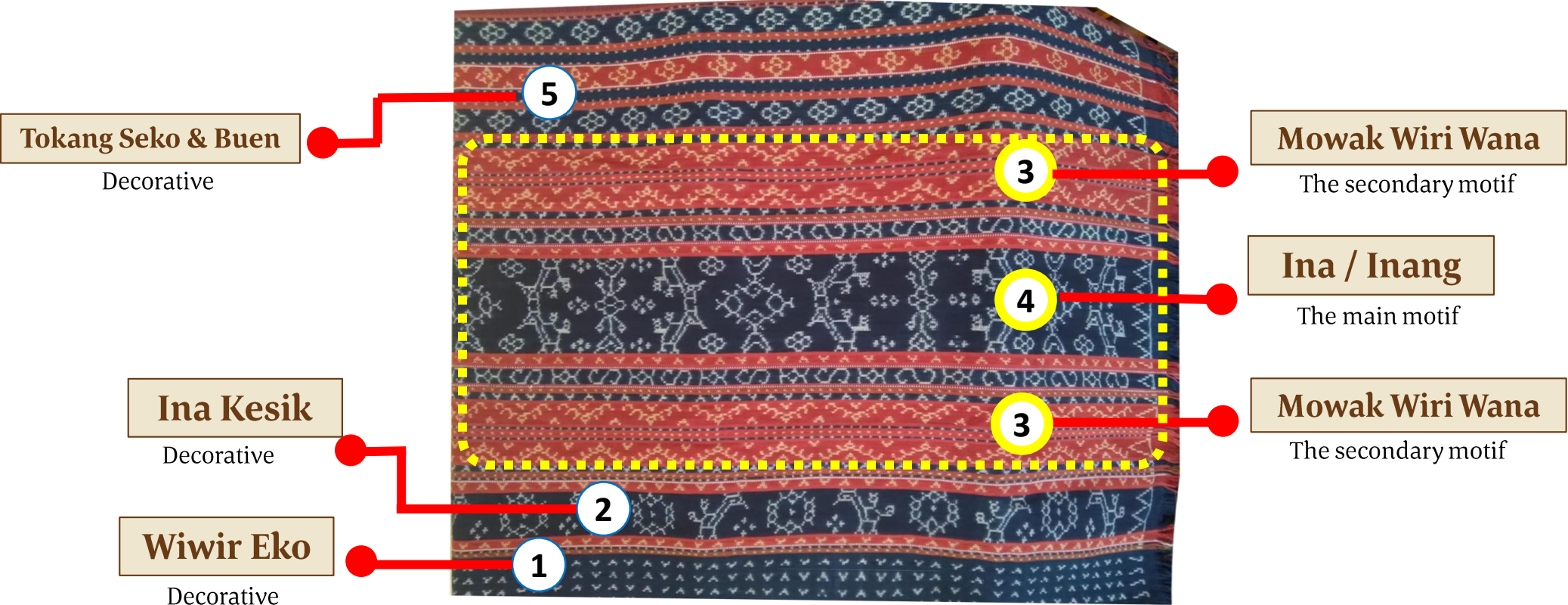


Kappit

The 'Kappit' style, started with only 1 ikat pattern, resulting in a mirrored pattern

3. The Composition Concept Differences

Composition (Case: Sikka)



In the Sikka region, where patrilinealism is practiced, the overall woven symbolize the unity of a family or tribe. It is featured with a main motif called **Inang**, meaning "mother." This pattern always placed between the secondary motif which symbolizes "father" or "firstborn son," representing the protector of the mother.

3. The Composition Concept Differences

The 'Gap'



In Savu Island the gap is part of the culture, it won't be called Savu textiles if there is no gap.



In Sikka, the gap in the sarong intentionally allows space for cutting.



In most areas with warp ikat, the gap occurred in the ikat process. In Savu Island the gap is part of the culture, it won't be called Savu textiles if there is no gap. In Sikka, the gap in the sarong intentionally allows space for cutting. meanwhile, in East Sumba, there is no gap because of the ikat technique and the motif sizes.

3. The Composition Concept Differences

Motifs (Case: East Sumba)



1



Horse without rider :
Unity & Masculinity

2



Modern style

Horse with the rider:
Symbolize the majesty and heroism

3



Traditional style

In East Sumba, the motifs depict flora, fauna, and geometric patterns. While the geometric designs are influenced by Patola from India, the East Sumba patterns are more dynamic and inspired by nature. For example, the horse plays an important role in daily life. Due to its value and functionality, it is common for East Sumba textiles to feature the horse pattern depicted in **various styles based on their region.**

3. The Composition Concept Differences

Motifs (Case: Savu Island)



Marked with blue /
black lines at the end
of the fabric

Hubi Iki
‘younger sibling’



Marked with red
lines at the end of
the fabric

Hubi Ae
‘older sibling’

Conclusion

Indonesian ikat weaving is incredibly diverse and rich in culture. It has both similarities and differences across various aspects. These differences—such as in technique, method, principles, and aesthetics—contribute to the remarkable richness of Indonesian ikat fabric in terms of value, stories, and traditions. In facing global challenges and as inheritors of the nation's heritage, it is essential to understand the unique potential of each type of fabric and to take concrete steps to elevate and popularize ikat weaving in Indonesia. Through the WITS 2024 program, I hope to promote and introduce Indonesian ikat weaving from a different perspective alongside my peers, for the advancement of ikat weaving worldwide.

