

Strategic Strengthening of the Troso Village Fabric Industry as a Sustainable Fabric Center

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Abstract

Troso, a village in Indonesia, has excelled in fabric production since the 17th century, selling textiles with motifs drawn from across Indonesia locally and globally. Advancing from traditional Pancal weaving to modern techniques like Non-Machine Weaving Tools (ATBMs) and dinamo-powered methods, Troso's economic autonomy thrives on creativity and cultural heritage. This study explores these methods through qualitative research, emphasizing how these fabrics preserve Troso's cultural identity while driving its economy, illustrating the village's enduring prosperity and job creation.

Keywords: Troso; Indonesia; fabric production; cultural heritage

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1.0 Introduction

Indonesia is a diverse nation with various ethnic groups due to its geographical conditions. Because of its vast geography, Indonesia has a rich and diverse way of life, influenced by the culture of each region as inherited from previous generations. Each ethnic group has its own distinct culture. The term "culture" originates from the Latin word "colere," which means to cultivate and develop (Adzrool et al., 2023). From the existing understanding, "culture" can also be interpreted as encompassing knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs, abilities, and habits acquired by humans as members of society (Adzrool et al., 2023).

In this discussion, the focus is on the craft of weaving in Indonesian society. Weaving was chosen because it is widely practiced throughout the archipelago, and woven fabric is a heritage passed down from Indonesian ancestors (Sarwono et al., 2023). Weaving is one of the traditional arts that reflect Indonesia's cultural heritage, carrying significant values and meanings about life. For the Indonesian people, traditional weaving is a local cultural asset that signifies Indonesia's unique identity (Adzrool et al., 2023). Weaving is a craft that produces material (fabric) from threads (such as cotton or silk) by interlacing them across a warp. The weaving process uses specialized equipment called looms (Novia Nur Anisah & Muh Fakhrihun Na'am, 2021). One type of weaving is ikat weaving, which involves forming patterns by tying threads with non-porous ropes, such as raffia or plastic, so that tied areas resist dyeing. The untied

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parts absorb the dye, and the colored threads are woven using non-mechanized looms (ATBM) to create the desired motifs (Misbahul Awang Sakti & Kholis Roisah, 2020).

The existence of woven cloth dates back to ancient times when it was used as an interior element. In Indonesia, various regions, including Central Java, have craftsmen who specialize in ikat weaving. One notable ikat weaving craft village in Java is Troso, located in Jepara. Troso ikat weaving is a traditional art that represents the cultural and historical heritage of the area and has a high value in the global market due to its intricate hand-made production process, which showcases its aesthetic value (Prastika, 2022; Nur Lailatul Maulidiyah & Syafii, 2023). Troso Village is among 12 villages in the Pecangaan sub-district, located 15 km south of Jepara's central city. Many ikat weaving craft centers are established in Troso, and almost every roadside features production sites or showrooms, as a significant part of the village population works as ikat weaving craftsmen (Joko Triyono, 2020; Ismanto, 2016; Sarwono et al., 2023).

2.0 Literature Review

The study conducted by Alamsyah (2014) examined the geographical location of Troso Village as a center of textile production, as well as demographic aspects such as population size, livelihoods, and the village's economic conditions. In addition, the research highlighted the historical development of Troso weaving, from the use of traditional looms like "gedok" to non-machine looms (ATBM). Initially, Troso textiles were used for personal purposes but eventually evolved into an industrial commodity. The study also identified the fluctuations in the development of the textile industry in Troso Village, along with the key supporting factors that played a vital role in the industry's sustainability.

Meanwhile, the research by Asshofi and Mukti (2018) expanded the discussion on Troso Village as both a textile industry hub and a tourist destination. The study explored various aspects of the village, including the educational levels of the residents, the types of textile products produced, the production process, marketing strategies, and the impact of the textile industry on the village's economy. The research emphasized the significant role the textile industry played in influencing the economic development of Troso Village.

Through these two studies, it became evident that Troso Village had substantial economic potential, both in terms of its textile history and traditions, as well as its influence on the tourism and trade sectors.

3.0 Methodology

The study, conducted in Troso, Pecangaan, Central Java, Indonesia, aims to explore the historical and current changes in Troso's ikat weaving culture, including its origins and survival strategies. Using a social science approach with qualitative methods, the research focuses on understanding phenomena through direct interaction and symbolic interpretation. Qualitative research involves studying natural backgrounds with the goal of interpreting phenomena that occur, employing various existing methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Chariri, 2009; Walidin, Saifullah & Tabrani, 2015; Muhammad Rijal Fadli, 2021). By integrating history, social sciences, and anthropology, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive view of the cultural development and social changes in Troso's ikat weaving tradition.

4.0 Findings

The Troso weaving culture survives and develops due to two factors: internal and external. The internal factors include the economy, tradition, adaptation, and compromise, while the external factors involve support from the government, both personally and institutionally, from the grassroots level to the upper levels of the district, province, and even the country.

The Troso culture endures because the Troso community transforms Troso weaving from a clothing necessity into a trade commodity that enriches their lives. The use of woven fabric for religious activities and rituals makes the Troso community not only creators but also users of their own culture. Furthermore, due to industrial needs, the Troso community adapts to production technology, marketing technology, and prevailing fashion trends. The Troso community, open in its production, adjusts to the behaviors and characteristics of its workers, where the industry prioritizes results over the production process. Additionally, the Troso industry is not resistant to external motifs. On the other hand, external factors such as government regulations regarding the use of woven fabric clearly expand the market share for Troso village woven products, leading to the advancement of the Troso weaving industry. When the industry operates alongside culture, that culture undoubtedly finds it easier to endure.

5.0 Discussion

5.1 History of Weaving Troso

Troso weaving is estimated to have begun around the 17th century during the Islamization of the Mataram Kingdom. Dutch sources confirm that weaving existed since the Dutch East Indies era and continued through the Japanese era, the Old Order, the New Order, and the Reform era (Alamsyah, 2014). Some believe that Troso ikat weaving was introduced alongside the Islamization of the Mataram Kingdom (Azkiyyah, 2019; Ivana Felicia, 2015).

Initially, Troso weaving was a local necessity initiated by Ki Senu and Nyi Senu to meet the needs of Gunardi Singorojo, a scholar spreading Islam in the village (Putri, FF, Widjanarko, D., & Syamwil, R., 2018; Alamsah, 2013; Hamdan Bahalwan, 2021; Rafida Salma et al., 2022). Early Troso weaving motifs included the lompong leaf, pine, and Mantingan gate motifs (Alamsyah & Maziyah S., 2013;

Ivana, Felicia, 2015; Ulumuddin & Sulistiyawati, 2018; Lailatul Maulidiyah & Syafii, 2023; Muhamad Fadhil Indra, 2023). However, in the 1960s, these motifs declined in production due to lack of demand. Nowadays, many ikat motifs are well-known in Troso ikat weaving.

5.2 Troso From Clothing to Economic and Industrial Commodity

Troso ikat weaving initially served personal clothing needs but developed into an economic activity along with increased production (Hendro G, 2000; Felicia Ivana, 2015). In the 1960s, this crop became the main source of livelihood for many people, although local demand limited the market (Alamsah, 2014). The 1970s presented challenges due to limited market reach, leading to local bankruptcies. However, an important collaboration with Balinese craftsmen in the late 1970s, initiated by Kusen, expanded Troso's market significantly. This partnership, as well as the implementation of new motifs inspired by Eastern Indonesian styles, is helping Troso ikat weaving grow rapidly throughout Indonesia and internationally. Despite experiencing setbacks due to the Asian financial crisis in 1997, Troso weavers managed to expand their market to Europe, Malaysia, Singapore, and Italy between 1996 and 2014, thanks to innovations in weaving and market strategies (Alamsyah, 2014; Intikaroh, 2018).

5.3 Make Product Derivative

The Troso ikat weaving industry has expanded its product line to not only include traditional sarongs and headbands but also clothing, uniforms and scarves (Anisah & Na'am, 2021). Recent innovations include soft, flowing goyor sarongs, barong shirts with Balinese mask designs, and SBY shirts inspired by Indonesia's fifth president (Wijanarko et al., 2017; Ambarwati, 2021; Aniskuri & Alamsyah, 2021; Putra et al., 2021). New products such as multifunctional clothing, prayer mats, shawls, headscarves, and home decoration items such as blankets and curtains have been introduced. This development strategy aims to improve existing products and introduce new products to target markets, reflecting the industry's continued growth and diversification.

5.4 Adaptation Loom Technology in Troso Ikat Weaving

Around 1935, the people of Troso Village already possessed weaving skills, using the traditional gedog loom inherited through generations (Hendro G, 2000; Azkiyyah, 2019; Lailatul Maulidiyah & Syafii, 2023). The term "gedog" comes from the sound "dhog-dhok" produced by the collision of wood during the weaving process (Widagdo J, et al., 2022). The gedog loom is typically made of wood and bamboo, using the weaver's body to adjust thread tension. Initially, weaving in Troso was only a part-time activity for personal use.

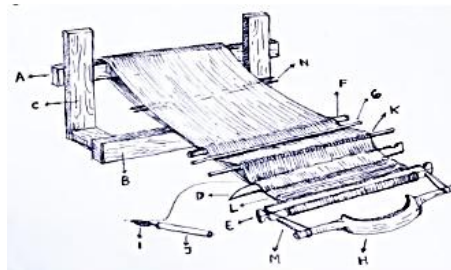


Fig. 1: Maintenance Weaving gedhok
(Source: I Komang Trisnayana, et al., 2016).

As the demand for ikat cloth increased in Troso Village, people began using the faster pancal loom in 1943 (Hendro G, 2000; Alamsah, 2014; Ivana Felicia, 2015; Asrofi & Mukti, 2018; Azkiyyah, 2019; Lailatul Maulidiyah & Syafii, 2023). This loom allowed weavers to not only meet their own needs but also to sell their products locally. In 1946, Troso weavers switched to the non-mechanized loom (ATBM), enhancing production efficiency (Ivana Felicia, 2015; Asrofi & Mukti, 2018). This handloom technology enabled the creation of fabrics from threads like cotton and silk by weaving them transversely (Handayani et al., 2019; Tri Anisih et al., 2024). The advent of handlooms, which were five times more efficient, spurred the growth of home industries specializing in ikat weaving, allowing them to fulfill orders from various regions.

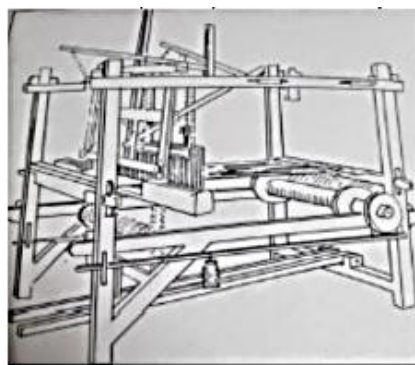


Fig. 2: Maintenance Weaving Handloom
(Source: Enie, Herlison and Koestini Karmayu, 1980; Frans Aditia Wiguna, & Erwin Putera Permana, 2019)

Until 2013, Troso ikat weaving mostly used hand looms, semi-mechanized looms, and mechanical looms, both of which speed up production (Alamsah, 2014; Rahmadani & Subandi, 2015). Initially relying on cotton, the industry expanded its materials to include rayon, polyester, and silk in the 1990s to meet growing demand. Weavers also use chemical dyes to enhance color: naphthol, a powder that requires caustic soda and diazonium salts; Indigosol, a dye that offers bright, stable color; and Remazol, a reactive dye known to be resistant to sunlight and has a wide color range (Puspita Kharisma et al., 2021).

5.5 Support from the Government

Government support has boosted Troso ikat weaving significantly. In 1980, the Governor of Central Java promoted its use for government uniforms (Khasanah et al., 2022). A 1988 mandate required civil servants to wear woven clothing on Fridays, and similar policies continued in the 2000s (Alamsah, 2014). In 2005, batik mandates increased Troso production by 100%. In 2010, the Governor recommended the use of Troso woven uniforms on Wednesdays.

5.6 Field Techniques

Troso Village weavers have adapted their techniques to meet consumer demands. Initially using only traditional weft and warp methods, they later introduced various techniques such as Dondom (1990s), Jumputan (2008), and embroidered combinations (2010). Dondom involves hand-adding decorative threads, Jumputan uses tie-dye methods with rope barriers, and embroidery adds thread-based designs (Hendro G, 2000; Gracia Veronica, 2018). Geometric motifs, such as Rangrang from East Seraya, also became popular, inspired by the local geography.

5.7 Flexible Work Systems

Initially, Troso weaving workers commuted from outside the village, incurring high transportation costs. The situation improved when local weavers started borrowing tools from businesses, reducing transportation costs and increasing their wages (Interview with Mr. Hamdi). Some workers follow a wholesale model, taking work home and submitting it weekly. Others perform specific tasks like threading or coloring, with production often done at home. The flexibility and variety of work models contribute to the sustainability of the ikat weaving industry in Troso.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The ikat weaving tradition in Troso has persisted due to its initial role in meeting local clothing needs and its subsequent evolution into an economic activity. As demand grew, Troso's weaving adapted materials and techniques, supported by government policies that enhanced production and market reach. The craft thrives because the community actively develops and markets it, preserving local wisdom while adapting to market demands. Despite this, traditional knowledge risks being lost due to insufficient conservation efforts (Borshalina, 2015; Halim et al., 2013; Khusniati et al., 2023).

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