

UNDERSTANDING THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS OF TAIPA WEAVING IN SOROWAKO, SOUTH SULAWESI: FROM TRADITIONAL HERITAGE TO CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL EXPRESSION

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Abstract

Taipa Weaving is a cultural heritage of the Sorowako community, East Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi, which embodies historical, social, and cultural values through its distinctive motifs. However, the complexity of traditional motifs often limits public understanding and recognition of the cultural meanings they represent. This study aims to examine the transformation of Taipa Weaving motifs as an effort to enhance public understanding and recognition of the cultural values embedded within them. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed through observation, documentation, and interviews with local weavers and cultural practitioners. The findings reveal that Taipa Weaving motifs are derived from various local cultural artifacts, including pottery ornaments, stone engravings, traditional tools, and natural elements. These visual sources have undergone processes of simplification, stylization, and repetition, resulting in motifs that are more structured, recognizable, and suitable for textile applications while preserving their original cultural meanings. The transformation process reflects a form of cultural adaptation that enables local cultural values to remain relevant and accessible to contemporary society. The study concludes that motif transformation contributes to strengthening public recognition of Taipa Weaving and supports the preservation of Sorowako's cultural identity through more communicative visual representations.

Keywords: *Taipa Weaving; Cultural Identity; Motif Transformation.*

INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage constitutes an essential component of a community's identity, representing values, knowledge, history, and ways of life that are transmitted across generations. As a country characterized by rich cultural diversity, Indonesia possesses various forms of cultural heritage that contribute to preserving local identities while strengthening national cultural diversity. However, the rapid development of globalization and modernization has significantly influenced how communities perceive and practice traditional cultures. Cultural transformation has therefore emerged as a form of adaptation that enables cultural traditions to remain relevant and sustainable amid ongoing social change (Fauzan, 2025).

One form of cultural heritage with strong historical and cultural significance is the weaving tradition. Weaving serves not only as a textile product but also as a medium for preserving local knowledge, cultural identity, and collective values within

a community. Through its motifs, colors, and production techniques, woven textiles record historical narratives and reflect the worldview of the communities that create them. Therefore, the preservation of traditional weaving extends beyond maintaining its physical form and includes safeguarding the cultural values embedded within it (Hidayani, 2024).

Numerous studies have shown that traditional weaving has undergone significant development in response to changing societal needs. It is no longer viewed solely as ceremonial attire or ritual equipment but has evolved into a component of the creative industry and a form of contemporary cultural expression. This evolution demonstrates that culture is dynamic and continuously adapts to remain relevant within contemporary society (Karomah, 2024).

One local cultural heritage that continues to survive today is Taipa Weaving, originating from Sorowako, East Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi. Taipa Weaving possesses distinctive visual characteristics through the use of geometric motifs inspired by the natural environment and the daily lives of local communities. These motifs function not only as aesthetic elements but also as symbolic representations of cultural identity, social values, and local knowledge embedded within the Sorowako community. Consequently, Taipa motifs can be understood as a form of visual communication that connects the community to its cultural heritage.

Despite its cultural significance, public understanding of the meanings embedded in traditional motifs has gradually changed. Globalization has intensified interactions with external cultures, influencing patterns of cultural consumption, particularly among younger generations. As a result, many local cultural symbols that were once easily recognized have begun to lose their context and significance within modern society (Ramadhani et al., 2025).

Within the field of visual culture studies, motifs are regarded as important elements that communicate cultural messages and identities. Beyond their aesthetic value, motifs function as visual media that convey the values, history, and philosophies of a particular community. Therefore, as societies undergo social transformation, motifs may also experience changes as a form of cultural adaptation, enabling the cultural messages they embody to remain understandable and relevant to broader audiences (Ramadhani et al., 2025).

Motif transformation can take various forms, including the simplification of visual elements, the development of new patterns, and the reinterpretation of cultural symbols without eliminating their fundamental meanings. Such processes allow cultural heritage to remain relevant and recognizable within contemporary society. In this context, motif transformation should not be perceived as the loss of tradition but rather as a negotiation between cultural preservation and adaptation to changing social conditions (Susanto, 2025).

Furthermore, the sustainability of cultural heritage is strongly influenced by community involvement as both cultural practitioners and inheritors. Communities play a vital role in preserving, interpreting, and transmitting cultural values to future generations. In the context of traditional weaving, the transmission of knowledge and cultural meanings often occurs through continuous social practices within weaving communities (Prasadja & Singgalen, 2025).

Although numerous studies have examined traditional weaving from the perspectives of cultural preservation, creative industries, and community empowerment, research specifically addressing the transformation of Taipa Weaving motifs as a means of enhancing public understanding and recognition of the cultural values they embody remains limited. Most existing studies focus primarily on production processes and product development, while discussions concerning motif transformation as a medium of cultural communication have received relatively little attention.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine the transformation of Taipa Weaving motifs as an effort to enhance public understanding and recognition of the cultural values embedded within them. This research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the forms of motif transformation that have occurred and their contribution to strengthening public appreciation of Taipa Weaving as a local cultural heritage with significant historical, social, and cultural value.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the transformation of Taipa Weaving motifs in Sorowako, South Sulawesi. A qualitative method was selected because it allows for an in-depth exploration of cultural meanings, visual characteristics, and the transformation processes embedded within traditional weaving motifs. According to (Creswell, 2018), qualitative research is particularly suitable for understanding social and cultural phenomena from the perspectives of the individuals and communities involved.

The study focused on Taipa Weaving as a form of local cultural heritage that reflects the identity and cultural values of the Sorowako community. The research investigated how traditional motifs have transformed over time and how these transformations contribute to improving public understanding and recognition of the cultural meanings represented in the motifs.

Data were collected through three primary techniques: observation, documentation, and semi-structured interviews. Observation was conducted to identify the visual characteristics of Taipa Weaving motifs and to examine existing motif variations. Documentation involved collecting photographs, archives, design records, and other visual materials related to both traditional and transformed motifs. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with local weavers, cultural practitioners,

community leaders, and individuals involved in the preservation and development of Taipa Weaving. These interviews provided insights into the cultural meanings of the motifs, the reasons behind their transformation, and community perceptions regarding the adaptation process.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework proposed by (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis involved several stages, including data familiarization, coding, theme identification, theme review, and interpretation. Visual analysis was also employed to compare traditional and transformed motifs in terms of form, composition, symbolism, and cultural representation. This approach enabled the identification of patterns of transformation and their relationship to cultural communication and public understanding.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, data triangulation was applied by comparing information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Source triangulation was also conducted by involving multiple informants with different backgrounds, including artisans, cultural experts, and community members. This process helped enhance the validity and reliability of the research findings.

Through this methodological approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Taipa Weaving motifs have transformed and how such transformations contribute to increasing public recognition and appreciation of the cultural values embedded within this local cultural heritage.











RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Transformation of Taipa Weaving Motifs

The findings reveal that Taipa Weaving motifs are derived from various cultural artifacts found in Sorowako, East Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi. These artifacts include pottery ornaments, prehistoric stone engravings, traditional tools, and other visual elements embedded in the daily lives of local communities. Through a process of simplification, stylization, and pattern repetition, these cultural elements were transformed into textile motifs while preserving their visual identity and cultural significance.

The transformation process demonstrates that Taipa Weaving motifs were not created merely as decorative elements but as cultural representations that connect contemporary society with its ancestral heritage. Visual forms originally found on pottery, stone carvings, and traditional objects were adapted into structured and repetitive patterns that are suitable for weaving techniques. As a result, the transformed motifs became more recognizable and visually coherent while maintaining their symbolic meanings.

Table 1. Transformation of Taipa Weaving Motifs

No.	Cultural Visual Source	Form of Transformation	Motif Characteristics	Cultural Meaning
1.	Ancient pottery ornaments 	Simplification of carved patterns into repetitive geometric forms 	Repetitive line and oval motifs	Represents the relationship between the community and its ancestral heritage
2	Prehistoric stone engravings 	Stylization into symmetrical patterns 	Geometric motifs with repetitive compositions	Symbolizes cultural continuity and local identity
3	Traditional tools 	Adaptation of physical forms into decorative textile elements 	Linear and vertical motifs	Reflects the daily activities and livelihood of the Sorowako community
4	Local flora motifs 	Simplification of organic forms into decorative patterns 	Petal-shaped and curved motifs	Symbolizes the relationship between humans and nature
5	Local cultural ornaments 	Repetition and development of visual patterns 	Symmetrical repetitive motifs	Represents social cohesion and cultural continuity

Source: Adam Documentation, 2026



Picture: Taipa Weaving

Source: documentation of Sorowako village, 2023

Based on the transformation process, it can be concluded that Taipa Weaving motifs represent a reinterpretation of various local cultural symbols and artifacts through the processes of simplification, stylization, and visual repetition. This transformation has resulted in motifs that are more structured, recognizable, and suitable for application in textile media while preserving the visual identity and cultural meanings embedded in their original forms. The transformation reflects a process of cultural adaptation that enables the historical, social, and cultural values of the Sorowako community to be represented through more communicative visual expressions. Therefore, Taipa Weaving functions not only as a textile product but also as a medium for cultural preservation and the representation of local identity, connecting cultural heritage from the past with contemporary society.

2. Visual Characteristics of the Transformed Motifs

The analysis indicates that the transformed Taipa Weaving motifs are predominantly characterized by geometric forms arranged in repetitive and symmetrical compositions. These characteristics are evident in the use of lines, oval shapes, curves, and decorative elements that are systematically repeated across the textile surface. The application of repetition and symmetry serves not only aesthetic purposes but also enhances motif recognition and visual clarity.

The transformation process retained the essential visual identity of the original motifs while reducing details considered overly complex. Consequently, the transformed motifs exhibit higher visual readability than their original forms. This finding suggests that motif transformation was not intended to alter the cultural meanings embedded within the motifs but rather to improve their communicative effectiveness and accessibility to broader audiences.

From a visual communication perspective, simplification functions as a strategy to increase the legibility of cultural symbols. The transformed motifs enable viewers to identify key visual elements more easily, thereby facilitating a stronger connection between the visual representation and the cultural narratives it embodies.

3. Motif Transformation as a Medium of Cultural Communication

One of the most significant findings of this study is that motif transformation functions as a medium for cultural communication. Cultural symbols originally embedded in local artifacts have been reinterpreted into simplified visual forms,

allowing contemporary audiences to recognize and understand the cultural values represented by the motifs.

The transformation process has enabled Taipa Weaving to function not only as a textile product but also as a cultural medium through which local identity is communicated and preserved. By translating complex visual forms into more accessible motifs, the weaving tradition becomes a vehicle for transmitting cultural knowledge across generations.

This finding supports Ramadhani's (2025) argument that visual symbols play a crucial role in communicating cultural values within society. In the context of Taipa Weaving, motif transformation bridges the gap between traditional cultural heritage and contemporary visual preferences. The resulting motifs are easier to recognize, interpret, and appreciate, thereby strengthening public engagement with local cultural heritage.

Furthermore, the findings align with Fauzan's (2025) perspective that cultural transformation represents a form of adaptation through which cultural traditions remain relevant in changing social environments. Rather than diminishing cultural authenticity, motif transformation demonstrates how cultural heritage can evolve while preserving its core values and identity.

4. Implications of Motif Transformation for Cultural Preservation

The transformation of Taipa Weaving motifs illustrates that cultural preservation does not necessarily require maintaining cultural expressions in their original forms. Instead, heritage preservation can be achieved through adaptive processes that retain essential cultural values while responding to contemporary social and visual contexts.

The simplification and stylization of motifs allow cultural meanings embedded in local artifacts to be reintroduced in forms that are more understandable and appealing to contemporary audiences. This adaptation contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage by ensuring that traditional symbols remain relevant and meaningful in modern society.

The findings further indicate that motif transformation contributes to increasing public recognition of Taipa Weaving as a local cultural heritage. The more communicative and visually accessible motifs facilitate a better understanding of the cultural values they represent, particularly among younger generations who may have limited exposure to traditional cultural symbols. Therefore, motif transformation can be regarded as an adaptive cultural preservation strategy that simultaneously strengthens cultural identity and enhances public awareness of Sorowako's cultural heritage.

Overall, the transformation of Taipa Weaving motifs demonstrates how traditional cultural elements can be reinterpreted and integrated into contemporary contexts without losing their symbolic meanings. Through this process, Taipa Weaving

continues to serve as both a cultural artifact and a medium for preserving and communicating local cultural values to future generations.

Analysis/Discussion

The findings indicate that the transformation of Taipa Weaving motifs represents a form of cultural adaptation undertaken by the Sorowako community to sustain local cultural heritage amid ongoing social and cultural changes. Motifs derived from cultural artifacts, including pottery ornaments, stone engravings, traditional tools, and natural elements, have undergone processes of simplification and stylization before being applied to woven textiles. These transformations do not eliminate the visual identity or cultural meanings embedded within the motifs; rather, they modify the mode of representation to better align with contemporary social contexts and aesthetic preferences. This finding demonstrates that culture is not static but continuously evolves in order to maintain its relevance within society.

The transformation process has resulted in motifs that are visually simpler, more structured, and easier to recognize than their original forms. Simplification was achieved by retaining the essential visual characteristics that represent cultural identity while reducing complex details that could hinder interpretation. From a visual communication perspective, this process enhances visual readability, enabling audiences to recognize motifs more easily and understand the cultural symbols they embody. Therefore, motif transformation functions not only as a design innovation but also as a strategy for improving the effectiveness of cultural communication.

Furthermore, the study reveals that motif transformation plays a significant role in increasing public understanding and recognition of the cultural values embedded within Taipa Weaving. Although the motifs have been visually modified, they continue to maintain a strong connection to their original cultural sources, preserving their historical, social, and symbolic meanings. Through more communicative visual forms, audiences are better able to associate the motifs with the cultural artifacts and local identity from which they originate. This finding suggests that motifs serve not merely as decorative elements but also as cultural media that communicate knowledge, values, and collective memory to society.

The findings also demonstrate that motif transformation functions as an adaptive strategy for cultural preservation. In the context of increasing globalization and changing patterns of visual consumption, particularly among younger generations, motifs that are easier to understand and visually appealing can enhance public interest in local cultural heritage. The transformation process enables cultural values that were previously understood only within specific cultural groups to become more accessible to wider audiences. Consequently, motif transformation contributes not only to the sustainability of Taipa Weaving as a cultural product but also to its role as a medium for cultural education and heritage awareness.

Overall, the transformation of Taipa Weaving motifs illustrates that cultural innovation and cultural preservation can coexist. The visual modifications introduced through transformation do not diminish the cultural meanings embedded within the motifs; instead, they strengthen the ability of these motifs to communicate cultural identity to contemporary audiences. Therefore, motif transformation can be understood as a strategic effort to preserve local cultural heritage while simultaneously enhancing public appreciation, understanding, and recognition of the cultural values that form an integral part of the Sorowako community's identity.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the transformation of Taipa Weaving motifs as an effort to enhance public understanding and recognition of the cultural values embedded within them. The findings indicate that the motifs of Taipa Weaving originate from various cultural artifacts found in Sorowako, including pottery ornaments, stone engravings, traditional tools, and natural elements that reflect the local community's cultural identity. Through processes of simplification, stylization, and pattern adaptation, these cultural elements have been transformed into textile motifs that are more structured, visually coherent, and suitable for contemporary applications while preserving their essential cultural meanings.

The study further reveals that motif transformation has contributed to improving the visual readability and recognizability of Taipa Weaving motifs. By reducing complex visual details and emphasizing key symbolic elements, the transformed motifs become more accessible to broader audiences. This transformation enables the cultural values embedded within the motifs to be communicated more effectively, allowing the public to better understand and appreciate the historical, social, and cultural significance of Taipa Weaving as a local cultural heritage.

Moreover, the findings demonstrate that motif transformation functions not only as a design adaptation strategy but also as an approach to cultural preservation. Rather than diminishing cultural authenticity, the transformation process allows traditional cultural symbols to remain relevant within contemporary society. The transformed motifs serve as a medium through which cultural knowledge and local identity can be transmitted across generations, particularly to younger audiences who may have limited familiarity with traditional cultural artifacts.

In conclusion, the transformation of Taipa Weaving motifs illustrates that cultural preservation and innovation can coexist. By adapting traditional visual elements into more communicative and accessible forms, Taipa Weaving continues to serve as both a cultural artifact and a medium for cultural education. This transformation strengthens public recognition of local cultural heritage and supports

the sustainability of Sorowako's cultural identity in the face of ongoing social and cultural change.

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