

## Anthropology of Arts: An Analysis of Sambalpuri Textile in Odisha

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### Abstract

This paper specifies propositions to explain the occurrence of Anthropology of Arts specifically Sambalpuri Ikat Textile in Odisha. It focuses one specific category of antecedents- Sambalpuri Ikat textile - Technique, Motifs and Designs and method of production of Ikat in Odisha. It covers five broad aspects work-related to Sambalpuri Ikat Textile in Odisha. These are History of Ikat Technique in Odisha , Specific Motifs and designs, weavers and their Background, Ikat Technique used for weaving Sambalpuri Fabrics, Uniqueness of Sambalpuri Fabrics. It specifies an integrated model that provides a comprehensive representation of Sambalpuri Ikat Textile in Odisha.

**Keywords:** Ikat Technique; Motifs and Designs; Methods of Production.

### Introduction

The anthropology of art studies and analyses the wide range of material objects produced by people around the world. These are considered not merely as aesthetic objects but are understood to play a wider role in people's lives, for instance in their beliefs and rituals. The materials studied include sculpture, masks, paintings, textiles, baskets, pots, weapons, and the human body itself. Anthropologists are interested in the symbolic meanings encoded in such objects, as well as in the materials and techniques used to produce them (Dr. Jeremy Coote). This paper examines Anthropology of Arts specifically Sambalpuri Ikat Textile in Odisha. Anthropologist (Aryan M. Divan) has noted that the anthropology of art is the exploration of art objects within culture and the anthropological approach to art in general. While existing research has focused mostly on Anthropology of Arts; Specifically Sambalpuri Ikat

Textile in Odisha. It specifies in Article from a print journal that the term '*ikat*' stems from the Malay Indonesian expression '*mangikat*', meaning to bind, knot or wind around. Ikat, known as tie and dye textile design. Some experts are of the opinion that the technology came from far eastern countries but actually the name was given to the technique by Indonesians. But study reveals that it started and developed in India also at least in certain clusters like Orissa, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh and up to certain extent in north, east and north eastern India. Ikat is equivalent of the Indian Bandhana (Art and Culture, 2014). This paper addresses this gap in the existing research on Anthropology of Arts by specifying Sambalpuri Ikat Textile in Odisha. It covers five broad aspects work-related to Sambalpuri Ikat Textile in Odisha. These are History of Ikat Technique in Odisha, Specific Motifs and designs, weavers and their Background, Ikat Technique used for weaving Sambalpuri Fabrics, Uniqueness of Sambalpuri Fabrics. It depicts an integrated model

that incorporates the relationships specified in these five propositions. This paper is organized as follows.

It first provides a review of the existing research specifics of the concept of Textile. It then points out the art of spinning and weaving in Neolithic times. It then reviews the existing specifications of Textile Heritage in India.

The word textile is derived from the Latin word *textile*, 'woven' and root word *textere*, "to weave" (Joseph, 1977). A great advance occurred when the art of spinning and weaving became known in Neolithic times. By the beginning of the Bronze Age, woven fabrics from "*fibres*" such as linen, silk and wool were in common use. The Egyptians produced finely woven Linen cloth in the era 2000 BC. Remains of the swiss lake dwellings, discovered in 1854, provided direct evidence of flax fibres used for weaving (Landi and Hall, 1979). India can boast of a rich and varied textile heritage. The first literary reference to textiles is seen in Rig Veda, the oldest of the four Vedas.

The fact that a host of rich textiles were used in further corroborated by the two eminent Indian epics, Viz., Ramayana and Mahabharata. A great advance The spinning of cotton in india dates back to 3000 BC. And the depiction of richly decorated garments in sculptures of Mauryan and Gupta ages as well as Ajanta caves bear testimony to the fact that India has a diverse textile tradition. There has been a close association between textiles and ritualistic events from ancient times (Sekhri, 2011).

This present study is purely based on secondary level data, more on theoretical concepts and analysis.

## Discussion

Odisha has a distinctive identity for its pieces of Arts. Weaving as a technique is probably 5000 years old and usually co-related with the first settled life of early man during the Neolithic-Chalcolithic period. Odisha has been famous for its Ikat or Bandha or tie and dye textile and other Non Ikat handloom products. Odisha handloom products include Single Ikat, Double Ikat and Non-Ikat techniques with products in cotton, silk, tassar fabrics.

### *History of Bandha Technique in Odisha*

The Ikat (Bandha) technique in Orissa is commonly known as "**BANDHA**". According to history, this culture came to India before 5000 BC (By Rig VEDA 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). The cotton fabrics are also in use by the

peoples of Sind Dynasty of 3000 B.C.

In Odisha there are 18 major Handloom clusters are available but the term Ikat (Bandha) as well as the fabrics of Orissa have their base in Nuapatna in coastal region and Bargarh, Sonepur & Boudh (western Orissa) which are famous for both single and double Ikat with striking colour combination, traditional motifs, typical design with fine curves, gives it an unique place in the field of art. The tie & dye fabrics of Orissa in much finer and superior than that of Andhra Pradesh and other State where the designs are of geometrical patterns and the weaving is more difficult to achieve the perfect outline of the figure as compared to geometrical figures related to A.P. which is not so difficult to weave for figures with curved outlines. So the cost of Orissa Ikat fabrics becomes higher. On the other hand, it results in creations, which in itself are pieces of art.

### *Specific Motif and Design of Ikat in Odisha*

The main intricacy lies in tying of the threads to bring them into the form of tied & dyed yarn to be used for designing/figuring. Which makes it different from other tie & dye fabric produced in different states. In Orissa Ikat designs take the form of horizontal shapes and motifs and mainly like lion, elephant, deer, horse, swan, duck, tiger, fish, tortoise, snake as well as creepers, conch and flowers like lotus, lily, wheels, rudrakshya and kumbha etc. also the handloom motifs in use resemble the pattern from the rock carving, temple structure, tribal Art & Chita (jhoti) tradition of Odisha. One of the most popular motifs used in the Ikat fabrics of Nuapatna area is the elephant particularly in "*khandua*" used by the brides at marriage ceremony, large & small Stars, Deers, Parrot, Nabagunjar, Lotus, Creeper, Kumbha, Conch, Wheels and Danti are motifs of Orissa Ikat in general. In "*Saktapar*" saree with its double Ikat check board pattern and brocaded border of the "**Rudraksha**" bead compositions have greatly increased in complicity from relatively simple beginnings as the century have progressed.

Designs of Orissa Ikat are inspired by various sources like architecture, mythology, religion, painting, folk art and other textiles which have been interpreted in this technique, making it exclusive and different from other Ikat fabrics of the country. Orissa Ikat reflects the essence of the traditional way of life; the loom is part of her poetic tradition and folklore. The skill and knowledge imbibed over the generations has given an unparalleled depth range, strength and vigour. Today Orissa Ikat retains its pride of place as unique and exquisite creations.

Though Orissa Ikat rooted in custom and tradition, these products cater to the needs of a vast and diverse cultural panorama. These products are unique creations, aesthetic, yet functional.

### *Weavers & Their Background*

The Bhulia (Meher), Costa, Debanga, Rangani, Sarbak, Guin, Gouda community are famous for the weaving of Ikat Fabrics in the state. Bhulia community was assumed to be migrated from the state of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh & Gujarat in the early part of 16<sup>th</sup> Century. The Ikat fabrics i.e. "Bandha of Orissa has a district native identity. Handloom is an important cottage industry in Odisha. The handloom product of Odisha has got its recognition in & outside the country for their highly artistic design, colour combination and exquisiteness. Also handloom is the second largest employment potential in the State, being next to agriculture. It has a special significance in providing employment to a family as a whole, as women & children are engaged in preparatory work for design & weaving. As per 1987 Census, there were about 1,19,065 looms with 4,15,261 weavers in the State.

### *Bhulia ( Mehar) Community in Sambalpur Cluster*

It is learnt from an inscription dating back to 600 BC found in Khandagiri that Utkala (Orissa) had reached in the art of weaving a high place not only in India but also in the World. Orissa handlooms have a rich tradition and the history of handlooms is part of the progress of Indian civilization. The district is noted for 'Tie & Dye' weaving in cotton and tassar silk bringing out most artistic designs from the loom almost like magic with the help of formulae which have passed down from father to son for generations. It is believed that this art migrated to western Orissa along with the Bhulia community who fled North India in 1194 A.D. accompanying the queen "Padmabati of Sambalpur" where it flourished under the royal patronage and was used for the fabrication of silk fabrics for the royal wardrobe.

### *Ikat technique Used for Weaving Sambalpuri Fabrics*

The general name of Sambalpuri Handloom is due to the fact that in the pre-Independence period the entire belt of western Orissa producing the Ikat or Tie and dye fabrics was under the old Sambalpur district. But actually the present Sambalpuri district does not have Ikat textile production centres in large numbers and the production is very less in comparison with the present district of Bargarh,

Balangir, Sonapur, Boudh, Nuapada, Kalahandi. But the name "Sambalpuri" is generally applied to the Handloom products of the western district in the mind of common man.

### *Description*

The range of products produced by the Sambalpuri Tie & Dye is large. The products are well embellished sarees, dress material (both cotton & silk), Home finishing like door and window curtain, bed cover and bed spreads, table cloth, stoles, upholstery etc.

- *Saree*

Sambalpuri saree is a traditionally woven Ikat saree Orissa. There are different types of Sambalpuri tie & dye saree; cotton saree, silk saree, silk and cotton mixed (Bapta), coarse cotton saree. Sambalpuri 'satapai' saree. This is the oldest form of sambalpuri tie & dye. It has double ikat chequer board pattern and brocaded border of 'rudraksha' bead compositions. In fact Sambalpuri cotton saree have a smooth finish and a distinctly original border and palu. Many traditional motifs like fish, conch shell, birds, animals and other floral designs are woven in fabrics. The Imperial Gazette observes "the flower bordered sarees of sambalpu are called Phulia; and peculiar to the district are sarees known as 'hansabali bordered' or striped with fantastic animal designs. These hansabalies are the most artistic product of the Central Province (Imperial Gazette, Govt. Of India, pp. 199-200)".

- *Wall Hanging*

The wall hanging is one of the modern products of Sambalpuri tie and dye. The size of the wall hanging varies according to the design natured in the mind of the skilled weaver. Each design of wall hangings is woven with a central theme. The theme is expressed in terms of motifs used in that particular design arranged in a decorative pattern. The name of the few designs are like 'Arkshetra', 'Sankha shetra', 'Sri Kshetra'. 'Soura Kala' etc.

- *Individual Bed Sheet, Bed Cover, Pillow Cover/ Coordinate Set*

Specification: Bedsheets are woven for different sizes with different specification. Colour: The colour range varies from very bright colour combinations to sober as well. Variety: There are two varieties of this with respect to quality. One is made of coarse cotton other is smoother and fine one. Design: mostly curves,

checks and floral patterns are woven, Saptapad/ Saktapar of big sizes is used in bedsheets and bed covers.

as smooth and well finished design and material are included in export quality door curtain (parda) and coordinates set.

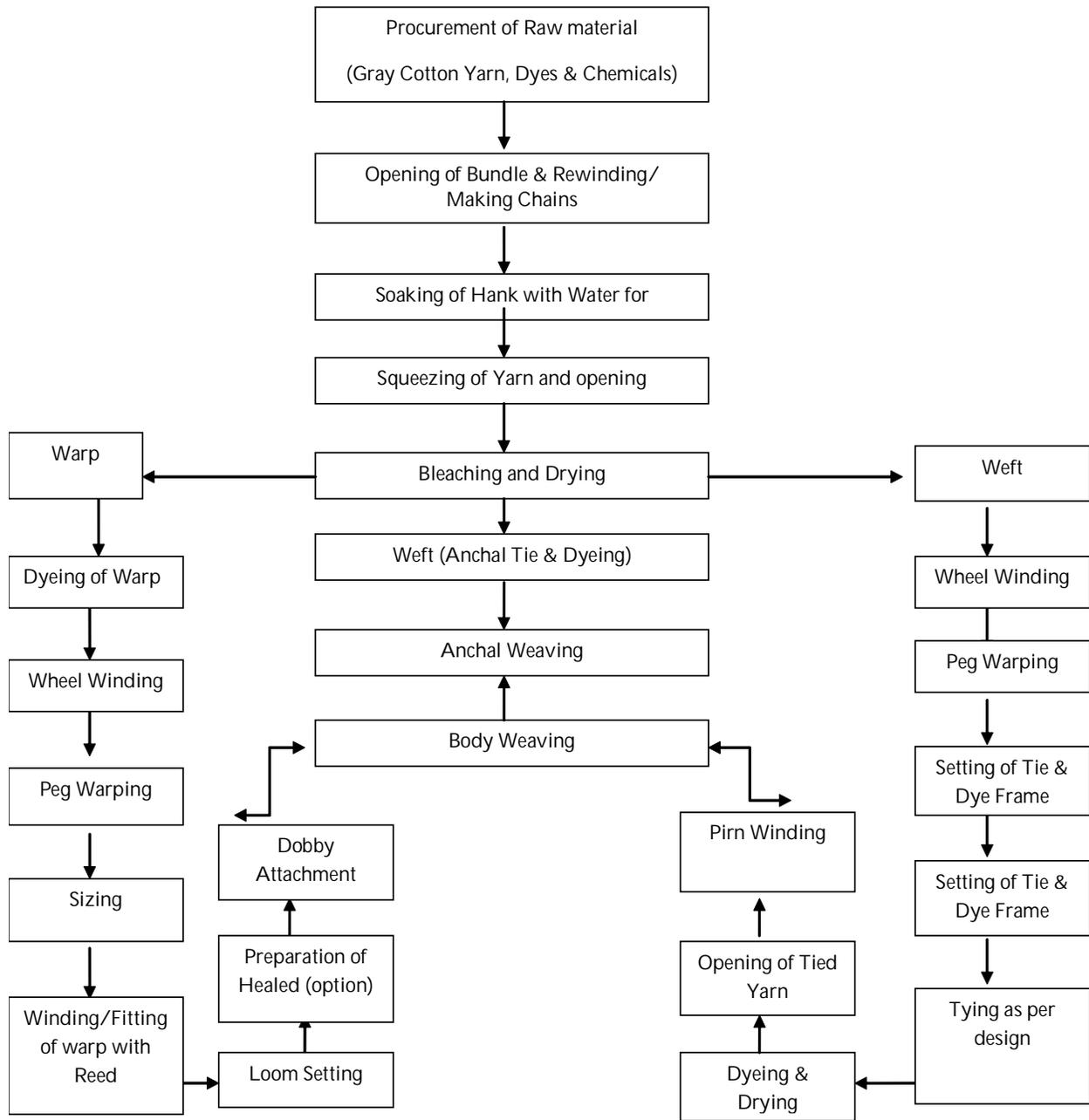
- *Door Curtain*

There are made of coarse cotton in general, where

- *Dress Material*

There are two types of dress material;

**Production Process**  
**Product-single Ikat Sambalpuri Cotton Saree**



Source: Directorate of Textiles, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.

- a. Thaan ( Long cloth)
- b. Ladies salwar suit piece, dupatta, tops material.

- *Dupatta and Others*

The dupattas ( udhni) are woven with two side boarder and pallu at the two length end. Stoles and Dupatta in both cotton and silk yarn is woven. The handkerchiefs are made with border in four sides and motifs at the centre.

- *Geographical area of Production*

In ancient time the entire western part of Orissa is known as Kosal region. The weavers are distributed throughout Bargarh, Boudh, Sonapur, Bolangir, Nuapada and Sambalpur districts and the weaver of some parts of Dhenkanal, Kalahandi, Sundargarh, Jharsuguda districts, where Meher community are residing and producing pure sambalpuri Tie & Dye. The weaver population of these areas shall be around 1, 00,000.

#### *Method of production of Sambalpuri Textile*

The technology involved is purely indigenous and local. The tie & dye technique is a work of arts, highly labour intensive and family oriented job. Production by an individual alone or with the help of hired labour is technically not feasible. The processes that are followed are as follows:

#### *Uniqueness of Sambalpuri Textile*

1. Designs are developed on the yarn using tie & dye technique and subsequently woven into saree and fabric.
2. There is multiple scope of developing designs by the use of tiled & dyed yarn without use of devices like dobby, jacquard or jalla.
3. In this tie & dye product, the designs get reflected almost identically on both the side of the fabric.
4. Sambalpuri tie and dye is not confined to geometrical design rather fine, shape artistic curvilinear design in the form of shanka (conch), phulla (flower), machha( fish), lata ( creeper), lahari, ghagra, deuli ( temple), hansha (swan), etc. the design in intricate and equisetetic in nature.
5. In double Ikat, from 5 lines to 30 lines are most

frequently used which is the tradition of Sambalpuri Style of tie & dye.

6. Grouping of threads which is a process of tie & dye technique is carried out in minimum two and maximum four threads , sometimes three-thread grouping is also adopted.
7. Figures as well as letters (Calligraphy) of any shape and colour are easily produced with full prominence and accuracy.
8. Colour yarn is also used for tie and dye, and during the process, the colour of the primary yarn is discharged/superimposed giving most fine curve line designs in the fabric which is unique.
9. The harmonious blending of colours giving out rainbow brilliance makes sambalpuri style of Ikat more appealing. The floral and animal motifs with shading effect in the designs are also unique.

This paper points out that the existing research has indicated the need for explaining the Anthropology of Arts; specifically Sambalpuri Ikat Textile in Odisha. It focussed on five broad aspects that related to sambalpuri Ikat Textile in Odisha. It specified five propositions and an integrated model depicting relationships between each of these five antecedents. These five propositions may provide a comprehensive representation of Sambalpuri Ikat Textile in Odisha.

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