Asean Handicraft Promotion and Development Association
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Breathtaking
Fatumnasi textiles express cultural vibrancy

Textiles are important expressions of culture and status in Indonesia and the people of West Timor produce an extensive variety. The traditional textiles of the remote village of Fatumnasi stand apart from others, thanks to their vibrant colors and original tapestry weaving techniques. Weaving is traditionally seen as a prerequisite skill for women, who learn from their mothers and grandmothers beginning at the age of 12, to prove they can help support the family. The income produced by traditional textiles is particularly important during “the hungry season” when dry weather proves subsistence agriculture impossible. Though these textiles are worn daily, there are now only 15 weavers in the Fatumnasi community as women increasingly pursue employment beyond the village and island.

The weavers of Fatumnasi hand-weave their textiles from commercially produced yarns. Plain weave and discontinuous warp-wrapping weave textiles are made on backstrap looms, which are fashioned from materials available in the village. Tapestry weave textiles are woven on fixed looms. The variety of colors and intricate patterns are achieved through great effort—a sarong with discontinued warp wrap takes three to five months to complete, while a tapestry weave sash or shawl takes a month. As is common across many weaving villages, the weavers of Fatumnasi come together to form a cooperative, not only for support but as a means of collective marketing.

As with many other traditional folk arts, weaving skills are being lost as younger generations seek work outside of their villages. The weavers of Fatumnasi hope that the recognition their crafts receive at local and international festivals will encourage young women to return to this tradition, and to hand down the techniques and knowledge of motifs and designs to ensure this important part of their culture remains intact.