

From Glamorous to Everyday Value: Kebaya as the Medium of Women’s Self-Expression

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Abstract (Calibri 9 Bold Center)

As a national costume of Indonesia, the Kebaya experienced a shift in its form, function, and meaning upon entering the post-reform period. This shift has impacted changing the 'classic' kebaya model, which follows the traditional pakem standard, to a 'modern' kebaya with more freedom in its design. One of the modern Kebaya styles is the 'party kebaya.' Since the 'classic' Kebaya is considered impractical, outdated, and anti-fashion, the 'party kebaya' is more preferable to be worn for various occasions such as weddings, parties, graduations, and the like. However, unfortunately, the 'party kebaya' design tends to ignore the pakem standard, so sometimes the outfit can no longer be considered the traditional 'kebaya'. In observing this phenomenon, women from kebaya associations concerned about preserving the tradition of wearing the Kebaya have introduced the 'Back to kebaya' movement to express their concern. The model of the Kebaya that they chose is the 'classic' Kebaya that could be worn for daily activities, not the fancy 'party kebaya.' This raises the question: why do these women care about preserving the tradition of wearing the Kebaya, and how do they gain attention and raise awareness from the public? This qualitative research applied the ethnographic method involving women members of various kebaya associations in Jakarta as research subjects and observing them in their activities and social media. This research was analyzed with the concept of self-expression, which is the author's interpretation of the theory of dress identity. This paper is aimed to present the novelty of the tradition of the Kebaya from an anthropology perspective, as well as understanding it from the perspective of the women who wear the Kebaya.

Keywords: classic, kebaya, party, self-expression, women

INTRODUCTION

The kebaya is known as the national Indonesian attire worn by Indonesian women since the colonial times, and during the post-independence period, as well as throughout the New Order era until now. In the New Order era, the First Lady of Indonesia became the female patron for Indonesian women in setting the fashion style, starting from their makeup, hairdo and up to the ethics of how women should present themselves and behave when wearing the kebaya. The fall of the New Order in 1998 had an impact on the absence of role models for Indonesian women in wearing the kebaya since the first ladies of the post-reform period did not often wear the kebaya as a daily dress in formal and non-formal activities. In fact, under the present administration of President Joko Widodo, the government accommodated a wider

arena for a variety of traditional outfits from various regions in Indonesia to be worn in official state events, ranging from the celebration of the Indonesian independence day and in occasions of the presidential speeches. Regional regulations were also issued that require government employees to wear traditional regional attire on certain days.

The social, cultural and political reforms in Indonesia after the collapse of the New Order government in 1998 have had a major impact on the *kebaya*. Previously, under the New Order government, regulations on wearing the *kebaya* were strictly implemented, but in the post-reform era, the *kebaya* evolved to become part of a fashion trend with almost unlimited freedom for its style that followed the consumers' taste. The *kebaya* in the hands of fashion designers became a luxurious, exclusive and expensive fashion item. People would choose the modified *kebaya* that appears 'luxurious' and tends to be 'far' from its standard style (*pakem*) since many consider the classic *kebaya* model as vintage and unattractive [1]. This trend can be seen from the warm welcome by the public for the modified *kebaya* -designed by Anne Avantie- which is

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as the *hybrid kebaya* [2]; [3]. The term *kebaya semriwing* was introduced by R.M. Soedarsono [1] as a result of the creative freedom in designing the *kebaya* using lightweight fabric. Meanwhile, others classify the design of the *kebaya* into two sub-types, namely: the traditional *kebaya* and the fashionable *kebaya* or also known as the *hybrid kebaya* which is related to fashion [3]

The *kebaya* then became a fashion product that was widely adopted by fashion designers and became a luxurious and exclusive fashion item. On the other hand, a *kebaya* that does not have the luxurious look may often invite mocking responses, such as comments 'you look like *mbok- mbok* or '*ndeso*' for women wearing this type of *kebaya*. Sariyati saw that during the reform period in 1998 [4], the *kebaya* -which in the Soeharto era experienced stagnation in terms of design- had begun to revive through the role of designers who gave rise to the term 'the *party kebaya*' because this type of *kebaya* was specially worn for party events so that the *kebaya* model became a luxurious and glamorous item. Supported by well-known public figures who wore the *kebaya* at parties, weddings and other formal occasions, the luxurious and glamorous *party kebaya* became well-accepted [5]. Meanwhile, the classic *kebaya* had become increasingly unpopular because it was considered not to suit the taste of today's market.

Amidst the freedom movement and the image of luxury that had influenced the style of the *kebaya*, there has been a growing concern from fashion designers on preserving the standard style (*pakem*) of the *kebaya* as a traditional costume and national attire. One of the designers, namely, Andre Frankie, as quoted from Tempo.co [6] had organized a *kebaya* fashion show that was inspired by the *kebaya* worn by Mrs. Tien Soeharto, the former First Lady in the New Order era who was famous for consistently wearing the traditional Javanese style of the *kebaya* in all occasions.

Other *kebaya* communities -mostly consisting of women who were concerned about the fading tradition of wearing the *kebaya*- had emerged in Jakarta. Their main concern was that apparently more people prefer to wear modern clothing rather than the *kebaya* so if this phenomenon is not attended to, it may potentially lead to the disappearance of all traditional costumes of Indonesia, and not just the *kebaya*. Women from several *kebaya* communities have been campaigning 'back to tradition' through various activities to promote the *kebaya* in public spaces

and social media and have used 'nationalism' as the key phrase for their tagline in their activities. That '*kebaya*' and 'nationalism' are unified symbols of Indonesian women, therefore, those who wear the *kebaya* are considered to be women who love their nation and their country. By using this narrative in their activities, it is hoped that more people, especially women, would appreciate the *kebaya* (again).

RESEARCH METHODS

The subjects of my research are women associated with various *kebaya* communities that served as a link to access these individuals to become research samples. The identity of the research subjects and the name of the *kebaya* communities in which they are associated with, are disguised to uphold the code of ethics in anthropology science. These women are predominantly aged 35 years and above and are from the middle and upper middle class, with various backgrounds such as housewives, employees and retirees who live in the greater Jakarta area.

This research method applies a qualitative approach in fieldwork ethnography (conventional) and virtual ethnography. Cook and Crang in *Doing Ethnographies* [7] as a conventional ethnographic method stated that research is built with the aim to understand the '*world view*' and '*way of life*' of a society in the context of its daily life, behavior and by using the participant observation method. To ensure the effectiveness of a research, there are three processes that researchers should carry out, namely (1) access the research subjects (2) live/work with them to understand their point of views and way of life (3) exit or move away from the area of the research subjects to rewrite the data and information on their 'culture'.

The data can be categorized into text data and visual data. In using the visual data, I applied the visual ethnographic method, which according to Pink [8] was able to support the production and interpretation of image/photo visualizations that are part of a research in visual anthropology. Pink also stated that the images/photographs that are part of the ethnographic method are inseparable from the personal identity, narrative, lifestyle, culture and the society, and in fact, it covers their everyday life. The virtual method is a way of collecting data by observing the activities of research subjects through their social media accounts ranging from their photo uploads (visual) and their writings (texts).

This research was analyzed with the concept of self-expression which is the author's further interpretation of the theory of dress identity. The understanding of identity in clothing is argued by Eicher and Roach-Higgins in *Dress and Identity* [9] through the elaboration of the function of clothing as a means of effective communication for people in their social interactions and has an effect on the formation of their own identity in social structures especially in terms of kinship, economy, religion and politics, not to forget also the influence of technology and the prevailing moral values of the society. Marzel and Stiebel in *Dress and Ideology* [10] agree on the perspective of clothing that is often worn by a person to express their identity, for example their gender, social status, age, profession and others. Marzel and Stiebel cite the arguments of Susan Kaiser [11] "*There are two important functions to clothes in nonverbal communication. First, they help us to negotiate identities, as we present our situated identities or roles, moods, values, and attitudes to one another. Second, they help us to define situations, that is, to socially construct the basis for our interactions.*"

Identity statement through clothing may be another avenue for self-expressing statements. Self-expression through clothing is not only a desire to appear visually through the beauty of materials, style, ornaments or colors, but it also concerns the desire to express something through clothing, for example wanting to display a feminine impression, independent, or representing social class.

Ian W. King developed the definition of clothing from Eicher and Roach-Higgins which states, "...an assemblage of body modifications and/or supplements displayed by a person in communicating with other human beings," interpreted to be, "*firstly: communication. How we dress our bodies can communicate with others; The second: aspect of the definition (and this perhaps more from implicit than explicitly stated) is intentionality. The choice of dress provides evidence of an intentional communication rather than simply a product of random choice* [12]. King's opinion confirms that the purpose of a person wearing and combining clothes, accessories, shoes, hairdressing, tattoos, makeup and others is to declare who the individual is.

Malcom Barnard [13] who reviewed clothing from the concept of communication states that clothing is an individualistic expression, showing social status, including how clothing becomes a

tool for 'recreation' so that it can create pleasure as well as function as a tool for enjoyment.

Thus, self-expression becomes part of the process of identifying a person as *the self*, and in terms of the *kebaya*, women who wear the *kebaya* consider the *kebaya* as a medium to express themselves in a unique identity, namely the identity of Indonesian women wearing the *kebaya* within the current context. This means that the current style of *kebaya* is different from the style of women from the earlier generation because the character, background and perspective of women from the previous generation are different from those of the modern women today.

Data Collection Methods

With respect to the research needs, all the names of the communities and the names of the women who were the subjects of this study will not be disclosed. Through qualitative research methods, the data were collected through the following techniques: 1) Direct observation in the field, namely in-depth interviews of research subjects, building rapport and fostering closer friendship relations to build trust with the research subjects. Interviews were conducted in three ways, namely using recording devices, messaging applications and electronic letters. 2) Participative observation i.e. observing, through immersion (by wearing the *kebaya* and the *kain* cloth) and following their activities and day-to-day method. 3) Indirect observation, namely observing texts and visuals in their social media accounts. 4) Literature studies by taking data from mass media, books, articles, scientific journals and interviews with fashion designers, fashion observers and academics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The definition of *kebaya* has evolved along with its historical dynamics as a traditional dress in Indonesia even though its origin is still under debate. Despite the dissenting opinions that the *kebaya* originated from either Islamic, European or Chinese influences, the notion of the *kebaya* itself is no less important. The *Kamus Mode* (Fashion Dictionary) [14] defines the *kebaya* as a traditional Indonesian women's clothing in the form of an upper garment with a long-sleeved blouse and an opening in the front. The length of the torso of the *kebaya* may be short or long, the types of *kebaya* may consist of the Dutch *Kebaya*, the Chinese *Kebaya*, the Encim *Kebaya*, the *Kartini Kebaya*, the *Kutubaru Kebaya* and the *Long Kebaya*. The *Kamus Tata Busana* (Fashion

Dictionary) [15] defines *kebaya* as a traditional Indonesian clothing that generally uses brocade material combined with a batik cloth as the lower garment. The variety of *kebaya* models consists of: the *Kebaya Bali*, *Kebaya Encim*, *Kebaya Jawa*, *Kebaya Kartini*, *Kebaya Kutubaru*. Biranul Anas in *Traditional Clothing* [16]; see also Maulana [17]; states that there are three *kebaya* styles, namely *Javanese Kebaya*, *Peranakan Kebaya* and *European/Indo Kebaya*. The *Kebaya* based on the research by Judi Achjadi [18] is a long-sleeved blouse that is worn on the outside of the *kain* cloth or the sarong worn as the lower garment that covers the lower half of the body. According to Judi, the length of the *kebaya* varies from short *kebaya* made of floral or plain patterned cotton, silk, brocade, *lurik* or *organdi*, to long *kebaya* with brocade material, voile floral or nylon patterns with embroidery. Didiet Maulana [17] states that the variety of *kebaya* does not refer to its geographic origin but rather its form, namely; the *Kebaya Pendek* (Short *Kebaya*), *Kebaya Panjang* (Long *Kebaya*), *Kebaya Kutubaru* and *Kebaya Kartini*.

There are many books that have reviewed the *kebaya*, including: *Chic in Kebaya* by Ria Pentasari [19] who highlighted the history of the *kebaya* synastic, with the contemporary *kebaya* design under the category of luxurious and formal *kebaya*. Edward Hutabarat in *Busana Nasional Indonesia* (Indonesian National Dress) [20] explained the concept and the complete standard of the Indonesian national dress that must be worn (*dress code*) in various events. This book featured the *kebaya*, the *baju kurung* and the modified national dress made for Indonesian women, while the national outfit for men is a buttoned suit jacket and the Indonesian batik shirt or the woven cloth shirt. Judi Achjadi and Asmoro Darmais in the book *Kebaya Encim: Sebuah Fenomena Di Dunia Fesyen Tradisional Indonesia* (The *Encim Kebaya*: A Phenomenon in the World of Indonesian Traditional Fashion) [21] reviewed the general historical aspect of the *kebaya* and further converged it to the history of the *kebaya encim* starting from the acculturation process of the Chinese culture with the local culture of Indonesians. The people developed their own culture in the form of a mixed culture including the women who started to wear clothes which resembled long-sleeved outer jackets in the early 20th century, known as the '*Kebaya Encim*'.

The *kebaya* during the New Order period did not undergo much change, so it was less attractive to the younger generation, and was generally

worn by older women in certain occasions such as official gatherings and traditional events [4]. Only a few would wear the *kebaya*, for example around the 1970s, some women started to wear the *kebaya* without the traditional hairdo bun [1]. In the 1980s, the traditional *kebaya* model began to evolve to have a more modern and innovative look with additional accessories such as shawls worn over the *kebaya* with similar patterns of the batik cloth that is worn as the lower garment. Embroidery, sequins and beads on the *kebaya* were added, then the sleeves appeared in various models such as puffed sleeves, pleated or tulip shaped sleeves, while the batik cloth or sarong worn under the *kebaya* was not only limited to have pleats in the front part, but it could also be arranged in a volant or drapery style [22]. Sonny Muchlisson [23], a fashion practitioner and academician, said in interviews that Prayudi was the first designer to promote the modified *kebaya* using organdie fabric and introduced the 'bell-shaped' sleeves. Prayudi was also the personal fashion designer for the former First Lady, Siti Hartinah Soeharto who was a patron for women wearing the *kebaya*. At that time, the model of the *kebaya* with the *kutubaru* was updated by giving it a different touch from the style during Soekarno's era which was characterized by the long shawl on the left shoulder pinned with a brooch.

After the collapse of the New Order, the traditional (classical) *kebaya* model became less popular and was replaced by the modern *kebaya* that experienced further modification to meet the market taste. In the past era, the traditional *kebaya* was usually made from velvet fabric, cotton or silk, but then today's modern *kebaya* may use more diverse fabrics such as satin, lace, pineapple fiber, banana fiber, which are sometimes also added with various ornaments such as lace, embroidery, pleats, piline, quilt, and sparkling materials such as sequins, crystals, metals, beads that give a luxurious look in Triyanto [1]; Sariyati [4]; Karyaningsih [24]. The modern modified *kebaya* is worn for different types of functions, such as weddings and other celebrations. However, since these types of *kebaya* are specially tailored only for special events, with a unique model and fine quality cut, using expensive fabrics, the *kebaya* has become an expensive and luxurious fashion item. In addition, the glamorous *kebaya* is favored because of the influence from public figures such as Indonesian film actresses, singers, the wives of public officials, business women, socialites who

wear the expensive party *kebaya* for various events, including the beauty pageant for Putri Indonesia, the weddings of celebrities and other important occasions [5]. The category of the modernized *kebaya* of the 2000s include the short-length straight cut *kebaya* model, the side-split asymmetrical *kebaya*, the open-ended medium length *kebaya*, half-open-ended round cut *kebaya*, the asymmetrical layered *kebaya*, the side-ended *kebaya* and the open-ended round *kebaya*, the long *kebaya* touching the ground or the short *kebaya* combined with a puffy skirt, also a *kebaya* with pleats around the waist added with sequin accessories, embroidery, and gems [4].

The fashion designer, Anne Avantie became a pioneer in introducing the luxurious *kebaya* trend through her deconstructive designs. Her *kebaya* is also referred to as the 'Hybrid *Kebaya*' because it completely transformed the classic cut of the *kebaya* and changed it into designs that were never before applied to the *kebaya* in the pre-reform period. For example, the backless *kebaya*, the non-symmetrical sleeves of the *kebaya* or the *kebaya* with various types of fabrics were introduced [3]. Despite the criticism for 'spoiling' the standard design of the *kebaya* and the many critics that have dubbed it as 'not a *kebaya*', the market actually welcomed the 'hybrid *kebaya*' openly. The enthusiasm for Anne Avantie's *kebaya* was influenced by public figures wearing the *kebaya* as models, so the *kebaya* became a popular item because it was worn by famous figures who showcased the luxurious looks of the *kebaya*. Anne Avantie's *Kebaya* reflected the expression of Indonesian women who want to look beautiful, glamorous and sensual. The identity from wearing the *kebaya* is very different from the pre-reform period (New Order) which was formerly displayed by the figure of the first lady, showing motherhood, elegance and simplicity. We can see that the identity of a woman from her clothing is influenced by politics and the shifts in social structure.

The popularity of Anne Avantie's *kebaya* gave rise to the desire of the lower-middle-class women who could not afford such *kebaya* to imitate Anne Avantie's *kebaya* but with cheaper fabrics to make it more affordable. This phenomenon introduced the term '*Kebaya Anne Avantie*'. Being able to wear the glamorous '*Kebaya Anne Avantie*', women may feel that they are part of the upper social class even if they could only wear the imitation ones.

At this point, we can understand the meaning of the "*party kebaya*" that is associated with a

luxurious and glamorous impression, that refers to *haute couture*, evening dresses, party dresses or stage costumes. These types of *kebaya* were usually made of fine fabric, giving a feminine and a sensual look as well as the impression that a beautiful *kebaya* is an ornamental and theatrical garment. The fabrics and the material used are of high quality and expensive such as silk, lace, crystal beads, sequins, and the like. The ornamentation is complicated and beautiful with workmanship techniques that involved intricate hand-made processes, ranging from embroidery techniques, embroidery stitches, full beading, fine batik and woven cloth using the ATBM weaving tools. Another aspect is the color coordination that revolved around golden, bright intensive colors and a touch of dark shades that give a luxurious and glamorous look.

However, the declining existence of the 'classic' *kebaya* was then responded by fashion designers who wanted to revive the 'spirit' of the *kebaya* and resume it to its standard "pakem". One of the designers, Andre Frankie, as quoted from Tempo.co [6], held a *kebaya* demonstration inspired by the classic *kebaya* of Siti Hartinah Soeharto, the first lady of the New Order era and named the event as: *The Charm of Mother Earth's Jasmine Strands*. The *kebaya* presented in this fashion show was the simple cut *kebaya* with the *kutubaru* model that was made of chiffon fabric, satin, velvet or brocade with floral motifs and accents, with no beads or embroidery, worn with a non-sewn, pleated, long batik cloth as the lower garment.

The concern over the changes in the *kebaya* design did not only come from fashion designers, but also from the general public, namely from women who then founded the association for *kebaya* enthusiasts in Jakarta. This association was named *Kartini Berkebaya*, initiated by Sabrina, Fatma, Dewi and Zoya who started campaigning the *kebaya* in early 2015 in public spaces such as malls, cafes, museums and so on. One of the founders, Fatma, emphasized the concern of these four women, since people rarely wear the *kebaya* other than for formal occasions, meanwhile the generation of their grandmothers used to wear the *kebaya* as a daily outfit.

In later developments, the founders of *Kartini Berkebaya* established other associations that both carried the *kebaya* as their main theme, namely: *Tiara Kebaya*, *Puteri Kebaya* and *Jakarta Kebaya*. These *kebaya* communities were quite flexible, informal and voluntary in nature, so that

their members were not officially bound and are free to join any other associations.

These associations have spread the campaign to wear the *kebaya* in public spaces and through social media such as Facebook which received rave reviews. Public space according to Jurgen Habermas [25]; see also Habermas in Kurniawan [26]; serves as an arena that can shape opinion management, carrying the aspirations of people, individuals or groups that may further develop communication relationships and establish mutual agreements. This concept of using public space shows how women -having the same concern- have taken action to form an opinion management to revive the tradition of wearing the *kebaya*, while also building communication between fellow women and the general public.

Members of these *kebaya* associations in their various activities often use the phrases 'nationalism' and 'the identity of Indonesian women' as their tag lines. Their various activities include discussions, fashion shows, seminars, parades, community social services, *kebaya* competitions, walks, group photos and hang-outs. These activities are not only organized jointly by the association but also sometimes initiated by individuals.

The meaning of '*kebaya*' and '*berkebaya*' (i.e. wearing the *kebaya*) for women from these *kebaya* communities has its own definition, namely: '*kebaya*' is only the upper garment like a blouse, while '*berkebaya*' means a unity of wearing the *kebaya* as an upper garment matched with a long cloth wrapped around the waist as the lower garment (it may be a batik cloth, woven cloth, *songket*, *lurik* and other traditional fabrics). The '*Kebaya*' in general can be combined with other types of garments worn over the lower part of the torso, for example: trousers, skirts or culottes, which also provide more freedom to modify the whole look with the current fashion trends. Meanwhile, the term '*berkebaya*' is a persistent concept (*ajeg*) of wearing the *kebaya* together with the long cloth as the lower garment, although some modifications may appear with the fashion trends (as long as it still follows the standard "*pakem*") starting from the ornamentation, maintaining the basic shape of the *kebaya* and selecting the type of fabric. For example, using the *lurik* fabric with popular colors or cotton t-shirt material that can absorb sweat, would make the *kebaya* more flexible and comfortable. Thus, the meaning of '*berkebaya*' is to wear the *kebaya* with a long cloth (*kain* or *jarik*) as the lower garment. If the '*kebaya*' is worn with

other than the *kain* cloth as the lower garment, such as skirts or pants, then it cannot be recognized as "*berkebaya*" but merely wearing an outfit inspired by the '*kebaya*'.

The *kebaya* associations aim to encourage people to wear the *kebaya* as daily wear, and Fatma argued that she wanted to promote the *kebaya* to be recognized by the public and restore its 'spirit' as in the past, when the *kebaya* was worn every day so that people would be reminded and be aware of the current phenomenon that this traditional clothing is slowly being abandoned,

"So that's one more homework for us. We want to make it clear that the kebaya is actually simple, you don't have to make it complicated 'njelimet'. Because that's what makes people reluctant to wear the "kebaya", right? Are we just going to let this happen? Of course not. So alright, maybe (we can wear the kebaya) to parties. However, the main purpose of this movement is for the kebaya to be worn everyday, not only to parties. Don't only wear the "kebaya" for Kartini celebrations. Or, only on graduation day. Or weddings. No. Our community can be better known through social movement, at least by tomorrow people may understand, if it needs to be daily so be it known. This is what we need.

Like Fatma, Dewi also wears the *kebaya* every day. Dewi is a book author as well as a former journalist. Dewi consistently wears *kebaya* in her various daily activities because she is convinced that wearing the *kebaya* every day and as often as possible would be the most effective way to promote the *kebaya*. Meanwhile, Risma is a former kindergarten teacher who rides a bicycle or motorcycle as her mode of transportation for daily activities. Risma has been consistently wearing the *kebaya* and *kain* cloth since 2014 until now for the following reasons:

"Because wearing a 'kebaya' for me is really Indonesian, the first reason is that the 'kebaya' is 'so Javanese'. Then in general, we would feel really Indonesian. Although we don't necessarily have to dress up, but it would show more of Indonesia. That's why I personally I like it. So you don't have to ask, you can just tell from the clothes that people wear."

Having experience in traveling and a profession as a *blogger*, Risma has written books on her traveling experience to various places and regions. Risma likes the simple appearance of the *kebaya* designs, namely cotton *kebaya* and *batik* or woven fabrics to wear as the lower garment. For footwear, she wears hiking sandals or

sneakers. Backpacking is one of her favorite activities. Despite wearing a hijab, Risma doesn't feel restricted when wearing the *kebaya* every day.

The story of Elisa, who loves running and actively participates in marathon races, is unique. Elisha wore a *kebaya* and *kain* cloth as her marathon outfit, with running shoes and a sports hat, but not putting on sportswear. Wearing a *kebaya*, *kain* cloth, a hat and running shoes as her marathon outfit, Elisa often gained the attention of the public and fellow marathon runners. She was often asked by fellow runners to join selfi photos with them. Elisha sometimes wore the *kain-kebaya* and sneakers for certain activities, such as attending *kebaya* gatherings or *hanging out* with her friends. Elisa's style of wearing the *kebaya* is named as the '*sporty kebaya*'. Elisha once recounted people's comments regarding her appearance wearing *the kain-kebaya* and sneakers: is it not *both complicated* and weird? Usually a woman wearing the *kain-kebaya* is associated to a feminine and elegant look, and not sporty or casual. But Elisa decided not to be bothered by these comments because she liked wearing the *kebaya* in her own way.

Based on the findings from the field research, I obtained the facts that most of the members of the *kebaya* association do not necessarily wear the *kebaya* every day. However, they asserted that they participated in promoting the *kebaya* through other ways, namely by wearing the *kebaya* more frequently (but not every day) in certain activities, such as social gatherings, religious services and activities in other public spaces. They admit that they have not been strongly committed to wearing the *kebaya* as daily outfits due to various considerations, one of which is that they must comply with their office regulations (for those working) that do not allow their employees to wear the *kebaya* to work or because the office where they work has uniform rules. Meanwhile, Alia, whom I invited to talk briefly when I participated in the Jakarta *Kebaya* activities in Kemang, had other reasons:

"... No (I don't wear the kebaya daily)... I'm not mentally prepared yet. We have to have a strong mentality to wear the kebaya every day. I am still not consistent in wearing the kebaya every day."

As for Halida from Kartini Berkebaya in Bogor who likes activities in the field, she admits that she often wears the *kebaya* but the model is adjusted to her activities, namely the *kebaya* for outdoor activities that is different from the *kebaya* for indoor activities. When doing activities in the

field, Halida chooses to wear a cotton *kebaya* without a bustier, and put on sneakers or boots as her footwear.

"For example, if the event is official, I wear a bustier so that my posture is slimmer, and gives a nicer look, it's just that I can't move much and only sit tight and be sweet.... The bustier itself is suitable when wearing the kebaya which gives a luxurious feeling... "

The changes in the *kebaya* (shape, function and way of wearing it) by the women from the *kebaya* community cannot be separated from 'time' as a variable. Roach-Higgins and Eicher [9] mentioned the types and forms of clothing that communicate personal identity and the change that can be triggered by factors such as economics, fashion, technology, moral beliefs/values and so on. For example, the development of textile technology has provided a more varied choices of *kebaya* fabric. A shift in religious values have also given rise to the *kebaya hijab*. Another example, is that nowadays, women wearing the *kebaya* with sneakers is normal, while during the New Order period it was 'taboo'. It is inevitable that fashion as a trend is a function of 'time', therefore they would try to minimize the effect of 'time' by wearing the classic *kebaya* but adjusting it to the current situation and condition without taking away its 'spirit'.

In addition to making the *kebaya* as a medium for expressing themselves, the data shows that although the phrase 'nationalism' is often used as the main theme of the activities in the *kebaya* associations, their enthusiastic attitude is more dominated by the 'pleasure' they get when taking selfies and wearing *fashionable kebaya*. This is because the purpose of their existence in these activities is to to make friends, to gather and have fun. The *kebaya* is closely related to its function for pleasure as Malcom Barnard [13] points out, although it is necessary to define more specifically the meaning of pleasure and pleasure itself because each individual has a different perspective.

Halida admits that her *kebaya* organization emphasizes 'fun' so that the members are always active and enthusiastic in doing the activities,

"Actually, the organization should be fun, if it is not making people happy then we should make things like that so it's educational and shouldn't be strict. What used to be fun, should be fun, so don't regress just because there are a lot of rules, right."

The women who joined the *kebaya* community not only encouraged people to resume to liking

the *kebaya* but also to show the identity of women wearing the *kebaya* with confidence. They can counter the comments that say the 'classic' *kebaya* is 'ndeso' and has a non-modern impression. Social media is often used by these women to express themselves by wearing the *kebaya* and by uploading their photos in their social media. Siska admits that one of her goals in joining the *Kartini Kebaya* is because every time she wears a *kebaya* she feels beautiful, as well as because of the fun-filled activities of the *kebaya* association,

"Yes, it's more or less like that, right. First, it was fun to wear the kebaya, how good it felt. Then if you wear the kebaya alone, it would be strange. But then there is this community of women wearing the kebaya. The photos are good and most of them are young, right, but I'm not very young but I'm also not that old. It turns out that when you meet the community, it's really cool. The activities are also various, including wearing the kebaya and kain cloth but the point is that we can wear the traditional dress, the kebaya or kain cloth with the current style."

Thus, women from the *kebaya* associations have various purposes, namely: 1) to promote the *kebaya* to a wider community through their daily activities and show that in fact the *kebaya* does not restrain movement, 2) to look beautiful, unique, confident and nationalist, 3) to express herself personally, as examples, Elisa as a woman who likes sports, Risma who likes to travel, Dewi who is a book writer, 3) to make friends, feel happy and have fun.

This is their strategy to attract the attention of a wider community so that people will resume to like the *kebaya* and no longer consider the *kebaya* as old-fashioned and complicated or glamorous and expensive luxury clothing, but also to have fun by joining these associations.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, I conclude that what affects the *kebaya* is not a singular issue when it is related to the position of the *kebaya* as a national attire. The *kebaya* may serve as a different means and have different goals when faced with the dynamics of its society, especially when it is related to women who are members of the *kebaya* associations. The post-reform era has brought the *kebaya* into a very dynamic era but at the same time, it may pose the potential risk of disregarding the standard (*pakem*) *kebaya* by the Indonesian people themselves. This can be observed from the market demand (people) who

prefer the 'party' *kebaya* which is considered as luxurious, beautiful and fashionable compared to the 'classic' *kebaya* which is deemed to be anti-fashion, impractical and unattractive.

When the *kebaya* is in the realm of the women of these *kebaya* associations, I discovered the fact that by showing the *kebaya* as an everyday attire (without removing the basics), it became a strategy for the associations (especially the women's association) to promote the *kebaya* to be liked and popular again. The women of these *kebaya* associations have built the image that wearing a *kebaya* is actually practical and does not necessarily restrict one's movement. The *kebaya* also doesn't have to be luxurious, expensive and glamorous. The *kebaya* can bring pleasure, look beautiful, expand the network of friends and create a sense of happiness. Through these women, we can see the process of shifting the meaning and function of the *kebaya* which was formerly 'classical' to become 'glamorous', but then again returning to the 'classic *kebaya*' with a new meaning that is adjusted to the current needs and conditions.

The changes in the *kebaya* are subject to various factors, as argued by Roach-Higgins and Eicher who see the relationship of clothing with politics, economics, trade patterns, fashion, demographic shifts in age and racial/ethnic characteristics of consumers, and the people's concern for the conservation of natural resources, as well as the changes in technology and moral values. *"Any or all of these factors may promote or constrain change in the particular characteristics of a dress that communicates particular identities, although a phenomenon such as fashion more obviously stimulates change. Consequently, for any given individual, the types or properties of a dress that communicate certain identities may change in relation to the changes stimulated by any of these factors"* [9].

However, I acknowledge that the results of this study are not perfect and still require further development in relation to the changing social dynamics. What I found and analyzed is still within a limited scope of research subjects of adult women born in the 'glory' era of the *Kebaya* under the New Order government, who have childhood memories of the *kebaya* worn by their mothers and grandmothers. Of course, it will be interesting and requires further analysis if this research includes a younger generation (gen Z) whose memories and experiences of *kebaya* may be different. This recommendation seems worthy of

consideration as a contribution to knowledge about the *kebaya* in Indonesia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank the women from the *kebaya* associations in Jakarta for their help and generosity so that I was able to do this research and join in their inspiring activities that was full of enthusiasm and love.

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