

KEBAYA ENCIM: A REPRESENTATION OF TRANSCULTURAL AESTHETICS, PAST AND PRESENT

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Abstract

In the 15th or 16th century, Indonesian ladies wore kebaya. Prior to 1600, the kebaya was considered a distinctive outfit exclusive to the island of Java's nobles. The kebaya, during its development, was favoured by the entire populace, particularly among Java's female farmers. Female farmers continued to wear the traditional kebaya in Javanese farming communities to this day, especially the elderly women. Farmers typically wore kebaya, which was fabricated from simple materials. Chinese immigrants to the island of Java forced them to alter their method of dressing, which is known by the Betawi people as kebaya encim. Kebaya is the traditional attire of Java. The word "kebaya" has evolved into a generic descriptor of being and a component of a burgeoning cultural identity since the turn of the twentieth century. In this study, kebaya encim – which is associated with the cultural identity of the people in Batavia – will be scrutinised. The research methodology rendered use of hermeneutic studies that are based on studies in design, history, and sociology. Descriptive qualitative research was employed in data analysis procedures, and it was gathered through library sources namely books, previous studies, research journals, papers, and websites. To ensure that it is in accordance with the facts of its growth, process and meaning (subject viewpoint) were more concentrated and utilized as a guide. The study's findings indicated that the kebaya encim garment represents the identity of the community that wears it. Other factors delineated that the design, colour, and aesthetic components of kebaya encim have symbolic importance derived from the mingling of indigenous culture with Chinese culture in Indonesia. The role that clothing plays in people's lives may be demonstrated in research findings that kebaya encim is a cultural identity. The use of kebaya encim is not just restricted to a particular cultural identity or community of people; it may also serve as a symbol of urban society's conservation efforts.

Keywords: *Kebaya encim, Cross Culture and Identity*

Introduction

The word "*kebaya*" was stated as the costume of the Javanese people at that period in the notes taken by Thomas Stamford Raffles, the Governor of the Dutch East Indies, and later published in *History of Java* (1817). The Majapahit Kingdom, which ruled until 1389, was where the earliest form of kebaya was claimed to have originated. Empresses and concubines wore this garment to cover their bodies, which were otherwise only covered by *kemban*. The *kemban* was the predominant attire during the time. When Islam spread throughout the archipelago, *keraton* (palace) women started wearing additional clothing in the shape of what was now known as a kebaya to hide their body. In its later stages of development, the kebaya evolved into the voluminous clothing – made of velvet, silk, or lace embellished with brooches and the equivalent of long-written batik fabric – worn by Javanese court ladies in the 15th century. Regular folks also wore kebaya, usually made of softer materials like cotton or batik with elaborate designs. It emphasised that this kebaya *encim* had already been worn by European women in Batavia (now Jakarta) before the Chinese extensively wore it.

Kebaya *encim* originally had a long model, but over time, different changes were made to the model and design, transforming it into what it is today. This encouraged people of Chinese heritage to start wearing kebaya. However, Chinese ladies designed kebaya with bolder and more variegated hues to set them apart from Dutch apparel. In addition, Dutch women were not allowed to wear kebaya at the time due to an order from the Queen of the Netherlands. The goal of this ban was to distinguish the Indians from the Dutch by their clothing. The Dutch women eventually ceased wearing them, while the Chinese have continued to wear the outfit up to this day. As the traditional ethnic Chinese attire, kebaya *encim* has gained more recognition.¹

Many Chinese immigrants took native Batavian women as wives when the city was under Dutch rule. These women subsequently began designing kebaya with lucky-related patterns. With the advancement of garment colour technology, they started using hues like red, yellow, orange, and green that were tailored to the lucky hues of the Chinese people. The Chinese nation in the archipelago at the time was split into two groups: Chinese and *Peranakan* Chinese. The Dutch government at the time placed a premium on clothing. Politically speaking, the Dutch were divided because they were so terrified of their greater numbers. The Dutch, on the other hand, genuinely required them as intermediaries for their interests in the archipelago.²

¹ https://www.adira.co.id/sahabatlokal/article_short/metalink/kebaya-encim. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

² <https://historia.id/kultur/articles/kebaya-encim-busana-tradisional-betawi-yang-melintasi-zaman-wJ7o/page/1>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

According to the recognized standard of the Indonesian people, clothing and kebaya make up the national dress of Indonesia. The majority of Indonesian women wore this cloth and kebaya historically in all parts of the Republic of Indonesia, including Java, Sumatra, Bali, Madura, Maluku, and Kalimantan. Ever since the time of R.A. Kartini, R.Dewi Sartika – the Dutch colonial era – this cloth and kebaya had been worn as conventional attire so that indigenous and non-indigenous girls and women could be easily distinguished because they typically dressed differently. While girls or women wore skirts and blouses, *bebe*, or dresses, indigenous women wore cloth and kebaya.³

The use of cloth and kebaya has inadvertently come to be associated with Indonesian women's attire since it is usual for women to wear them in many parts of the country. For formal occasions, a shawl, slippers, and hairstyle in a Javanese or Sundanese bun are added to the dress and kebaya. Long batik fabrics go well with short kebaya that end just below the hips or reach the hips, whereas sarongs are typically worn more often with long kebaya that end at the knees. In reality, the national costume consists of a long batik fabric paired with a short kebaya that falls at or just below the hips.⁴

Thus, Indonesian women's national dress typically is clothing and kebaya that reach their hips or just below them, along with shawls, Sundanese or Javanese buns resembling these buns, and slippers. The men, meanwhile, dress in suits, attributed with head caps and shoes. The national dress of Indonesian women is made up of a fabric and a kebaya, which means that the cloth is created from the kaftan and the kebaya from the fundamental shape of the wrap dress, respectively. This kebaya is made of a batik fabric that is 1.25 metres long and 2.25 metres wide. It is wrapped around the waist, with the width falling to the ankles and getting narrower toward the bottom.

After using the long batik fabric to its full potential, one can either cover it with a long torso, use *setagen* first, then a long torso, use simply a *stagen*, or also cover it with an *angkin*. Wearing a kebaya is deemed ready after using batik fabric. Use slippers in place of shoes to create the look of kebaya attire. For the purpose of wearing this batik fabric practically, there is already a material that can be made to the user's size without being cut, allowing the wearer to simply tuck it in like a skirt. The limitation of this clothing's fit to the size of the wearer or another individual of similar size is a negative. The limitation of this garment's fit means that it can only be worn by that person's size or by someone of a similar size.

³ Riyanto, Arifah A. 2003. Teori Busana. Bandung: YAPEMDO, pg.76.

⁴ Ibid.pg.77.

Research Methods

The research methodology employed a hermeneutic study that is based on historical, sociological, and design studies. Hermeneutics derives its name etymologically from the Greek verb *hermeneia*, which means to interpret or translate. Hermeneutics is the name for a method of interpreting events and comprehension, and assigning particular meanings to signs or symbols that are regarded as texts. The researcher served as the primary instrument, data collection strategies were carried out in a triangulation (combined) manner, data analysis is of an inductive nature, and the findings of qualitative research emphasise the meaning of generalisation. This study also implemented a qualitative approach with descriptive methods.

Discussion

History of Kebaya

On the island of Java, kebaya commenced being recognized as a particular outfit by the descendants of the monarchs in the 1500s. In 1800, superior clothing materials like velvet, various kinds of silk, and other exquisite fabrics started to appear, coinciding with the reign of the Dutch East Indies government. Taking the place of straightforward woven cotton (*mori fabric*), international textile trade routes were starting to become more crowded.

The wearing of kebaya clothing at the period was determined by social class. The kebaya used by the royal family and nobles were composed of lace, velvet, or silk. Women of Dutch or foreign ancestry dressed in cotton kebaya with shorter shapes and cuts. Other European descendants living in Indonesia at the period also wore a kebaya made of fine cotton with lace trim on the hem, although the common people typically wore kebaya made of everyday cotton or inexpensive woven fabrics.

Women of Chinese and Dutch ancestry also frequently wore kebaya around 1900, in addition to native Javanese. The kebaya *encim* and the kebaya *kutu baru* were the two styles of kebaya that were most frequently worn. Women of Chinese heritage often wore kebaya called “encim”, which were typically embroidered and embellished. The kebaya *kutu baru* was a short, patterned tunic-style kebaya that was full of vibrant patterns. The length of the kebaya *kutu baru* had previously reached the wearer’s ankles, but it had altered through time.

The Malay Archipelago has adopted the word “kebaya” as a popular word and attire from the beginning of the 20th century, and it was disseminated through media like newspapers and magazines. In Malaysia and Indonesia, kebaya had a different impact and joined a burgeoning nationalist symbolism. Judi Achjadi, a textile historian, denotes that “fabric and kebaya are the clothing worn by most Indonesian women and have persisted since 1976”.

Currently, it is the preferred outfit for women in Indonesia's political elite. It was also firmly embedded in the Baba Malay language of this era within the *Peranakan* society, and by the end of the 20th century; it was revered as a *Peranakan* cultural icon.⁵

Dutch ladies in Indonesia enjoyed wearing batik sarongs and kebaya for leisure in the early 20th century. The body edge of the kebaya was always made of simple white cotton, and the collar and cuffs were embellished with lace embroidery. As time went on, Dutch women gradually stopped donning this lovely kebaya, and starting in the 1930s, mixed-race Chinese women began wearing it on occasion.

The history of kebaya began with the clothes often worn by Malay women. There were two types of provenance ideas for the baju kebaya. The word "kebaya" is derived from the Arabic word "habaya", which denotes a long dress with a slit in the front. Second, according to a different theory, the Portuguese carried the kebaya to Malacca, where it had been worn for a very long time. The cut and manner of wearing it changed slightly between *Peranakan* Chinese women and Malay women, who both wore it. This Chinese women's kebaya was eventually known as kebaya *encim*.⁶

Sarongs and kebaya *encim* were common among Chinese *Peranakan* women in Jakarta during the 1950s, especially among the older generation, but they are now quite uncommon. The resurgence of kebaya, particularly kebaya with a delightful and youthful appearance, such as kebaya *encim*, had happened in the 1970s, although at the time the general public thought it was a component of the modern fashion business. This implies that the kebaya *encim* will remain in Indonesian fashion for a longer period of time while traditional fashion has vanished.⁷

Classification of Kebaya

Kebaya is a long-sleeved shirt (top) that is worn over clothing or sarongs that partially encloses the body. *Kebaya* extends from the hips up to the knees. Short kebayas can be fashioned from floral or plain cotton, silk, lace, or synthetic materials. Organdy and striated fabrics as well as white fine cotton with lace trimmings can also be used. In floral lace or embroidered voile, the long kebaya looks particularly alluring.⁸

⁵ Peter Lee.2014. *Sarong Kebaya: Peranakan Fashion In An Interconnected World 1500-1950*. Singapore: Asean Civilisation Museum.pg.27.

⁶ <http://repository.unsada.ac.id/1896/3/BAB%20II.pdf>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁷ Judi Achjadi, & Asmoro Damais. 2015. *Kebaya Encim, Sebuah Fenomena Di Dunia Fesyen Tradisional Indonesia*. Jakarta: Department of Tourism and Culture of the Greater Jakarta. pg.56.

⁸ Judi Achjadi. 1986. *Indonesia Women's Costumes*. Jakarta: Djambatan,pg.3.

The community acknowledges two types of kebaya, namely kebaya *kutu baru* and kebaya *encim*. Kebaya *kutu baru* is a kind of kebaya with details relating to the folds on the left and right chest, bef or cloth covering on the chest. The kebaya *kutu baru* is indigenous Indonesian clothing that is thought to have come from Central Java. The word “encim” refers to a style of kebaya that originated in Chinese fashion. The body and sleeve ends of this kebaya type, which lacks a bef, are embellished with lace or embroidery.

Kebaya *sulam* – kebaya with embroidery skills – is the most recent improvement on the kebaya form, which is still in use today. Kebaya *sulam* makes embroidery the primary aesthetic focus as opposed to kebaya *biku*, which also uses embroidery techniques to enhance printed voile as the fundamental material. The hemline (stitching along the lower end of the kebaya), lapels (stitching at the bottom of the collar), lower front panels (stitching at the bottom of the kebaya), sleeves (stitching at the bottom sleeves), and back of the garment are typically where embroidery (decoration with embroidery techniques) is seen on kebaya *sulam* (seam on the back which is located at the bottom of the kebaya). Fashion designers who understood the potential of the kebaya *encim* revived the image of the kebaya *encim* in the 1970s.

Kebaya *encim* has evolved over the decades in terms of design, colour, and fabric thickness due to the periods and conditions in Indonesia. Kartini’s kebaya, kebaya *encim*, Balinese kebaya, kebaya *kutu baru*, and Javanese kebaya are some of the varieties of kebaya found in Indonesia. Every kebaya has unique qualities. However, the kebaya has changed significantly over the years, just like the fashion industry. The guidelines for donning a kebaya *encim* started to change and adapt with the times and the dynamics of culture. In 1990s, many young individuals paired kebaya with common skirts, even jeans.⁹

Cultural Aspect of Kebaya

The subtle hints indicate a community’s cultural intersection. Ladies in *Peranakan* society, who frequently interact socially with powerful European and Eurasian women, were the first to dress in this new fashion. The Dutch language school, which a number of *Peranakan* girls attended with the aid of European sponsors – usually family friends – provided another venue for engagement. In another effect of contact with the Dutch, some young girls from Javanese aristocratic families also donned European-style kebaya at the turn of the century. For instance, Kartini, who is credited with helping to establish women’s rights in Indonesia, was conceived into an aristocratic Javanese family. Despite being extremely shy as a young woman, she learned Dutch and, like her sister, occasionally wore long batik clothing and the chic lace kebaya.¹⁰

⁹ <http://repository.unsada.ac.id/1896/3/BAB%20II.pdf>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

¹⁰ Peter Lee.2014. *Sarong Kebaya: Peranakan Fashion In An Interconnected World 1500-1950*. Singapore: Asean Civilisation Museum.pg.253

Peranakan women, who prevailed in social worlds divided by nationalistic and cultural barriers, nonetheless managed to bridge these barriers by dressing in appropriate costumes for each cultural world. The evolution of *Peranakan* fashion was accelerated by two motives: urgency and artistic self-presentation. Following its development through the fashion preferences of various influential *Peranakan* ladies may see a wide spectrum of reactions. In images of *Peranakan* women taken in the first half of the 20th century, it was possible to see the transition from the long dress to the sarong and kebaya, with modernity through European fashion.¹¹

Another aspect of this transition was the absence of the customary fashion arbitrators, such as royal courts and journals, as dress trends spread throughout the Indies. One of the practical factors that contributed to the sarong kebaya's undeniable allure was that European clothes were not designed to withstand the heat and humidity of the tropics, therefore women who lived in the Indies naturally developed their own strategies based on European designs.

Different circumstances occurred in the Indies. Wealthy European and Eurasian women in the Dutch colonies were able to combine functional batik sarongs and lace kebaya in ways that made them not only acceptable but also trendy within the rigidly prescribed framework of nineteenth-century colonial life. The colonial lifestyle spread from the cities to the vast plantations that covered the islands of the archipelago as the Dutch promoted industry and agriculture. Europeans worked at every level of the economy, from soldiers, horsemen, clerks, and governesses to entertainers, businessmen, landowners, and high government officials. Class and race continued to rule life in the Dutch East Indies, and colonial laws gradually affirmed these social constructs. In reality, however, the popular Dutch East Indies urban culture ran counter to these laws, which people across the spectrum of society continued to violate throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, numerous European languages were being used by tourists to describe the sarong kebaya. Women started donning what has been called the kebaya, a straightforward cotton garment that ranges in length from the hip to the knee and is worn without the corset necessary for Western design. It was frequently plain white. This part of the costume was likely the most offensive to European visitors because it appeared impolite.

The kebaya was embellished with lace down the robe's hem and on the sleeves, fastened together by silver or gold pins, and occasionally included rows of tiny buttons. The oldest lace kebaya, dating from the third quarter of the nineteenth century, was made similarly to the kebaya or *baju panjang* of the eighteenth century in that both the front and back were sewn from the same piece of fabric.

¹¹ Ibid.hlm.254

When formal Western attire was dressed for supper, up until 5.30 p.m., sailors aboard ships traversing the archipelago continued to wear their sarongs and kebaya. After dinner, women would put back on their kebaya. The Dutch women's publication suggested buying at least three dozen kebaya and at least twelve batik sarongs, both of which were available in Dutch stores, for women relocating to the Indies. In 1896, women visiting the Dutch colonies were advised by J. M. J. Catenius-van der Meijden to pack a wardrobe that included six sleeping sarongs, two to three tidy sarongs, six sleeping kebaya, twelve bras, and eighteen camisoles. Interestingly, he warned his readers not to wear the sarong kebaya on board, and that the costume might only be worn by married women at home in the morning; the expensive ones were suitable for meeting female guests at that time.¹²

Function of Kebaya

At this period, the Indies' social inequalities will be challenged by the adoption of the lace sarong kebaya and European clothing. However, despite being incorrect, the sarong *kebaya* will always be regarded as an authentic costume. The sarong *kebaya* is a great option for most *Peranakan* women and respectable attire, despite some people believing it to be improper for Chinese women.

The kebaya was accented with a straightforward *broderie anglaise hem* (buttonholes sewed into the embroidery), or it might be pleated. Materials were always white or occasionally a light shade of cream that were chosen from the best cotton kinds. Despite the fact that the kebaya and sarong could be highly expensive, the style was very casual for modern European tastes. The rejection of persons who dressed in this fashion to adhere to the standards of European taste and their inability to influence them were therefore two of the most striking characteristics of this style. Both the sarong and the kebaya started to take on a more form-fitting appearance at the end of the nineteenth century. The kebaya was shortened to the hips, which gave women the opportunity to show off their batik, and had more elaborate handwork. The traditional sleeve gussets were gone, although the front and back of the garment were still a single piece of cloth. Fashion and individuality were expressed not in the construction of garments, but in the development and use of a wide range of embroidery and sewing techniques. The kebaya was decorated with multiple rows of narrow lace or embroidered inserts or borders (with two straight edges) and end lace or border embroidery (with one straight edge and one scalloped edge). *Peranakan* women began wearing the tightly fitting kebaya in the early twentieth century, while wealthy mothers continued to wear the looser kebaya in a variety of fabrics, including organdy and silk.

¹² Peter Lee.2014. *Sarong Kebaya: Peranakan Fashion In An Interconnected World 1500-1950*. Singapore: Asean Civilisation Museum.pg.175.

Kebaya Encim and Identity

Baba and *Encim*'s clothing was influenced by a number of cultures, including China, Malaysia, Indonesia, England, and the Netherlands. *Encim*'s attire in particular was influenced by the *baju panjang*, a loose-fitting long-sleeved garment worn by Malay women that was worn to the knee. A batik sarong-style skirt was worn to match the blouse. A white cotton long-sleeved shirt that served as an undershirt was also available. What is meant by *baju kurung*? *Baju kurung* was fabricated of opaque material, has a slit on the neck, and is brooch-pinned. Up until the end of the 19th century, mixed-race women in Batavia typically wore the *baju kurung*. This shirt was also worn by *cokek* (a female singer of *Gambang Kromong*) when singing songs and dancing at *Gambang Kromong* performances.¹³

Despite the fact that the word “kebaya” was popular in modern Malay and Indonesian and has been connected to national dress in Malaysia and Indonesia since the second half of the 20th century, historical data suggested that it was only recently introduced into these languages. The word did not appear to have been used in written materials before the twentieth century and was not found in Malay or Javanese literature. The term “kebaya” was absent from the list of Malay words from the sixteenth century in Chinese and Italian that was previously mentioned.¹⁴

Kebaya originally referred to a lengthy robe worn by women. The name, however, later evolved to designate to a shorter, rimmed version of the robe worn by women, which will be covered in later chapters. Dutch literature from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries about the Indies frequently mentions this attire. The basic spelling of the bed mentioned above (*cabaya*), as well as *kabia* and, of course, *kebaya*, are all found in English sources.

The word *kebaya* did not exist in any Malay literary sources, despite being present in several writings from the Portuguese and Dutch colonial periods. One of its earliest records can be found in a mentary word list created in 1791 and held at Leiden University in Betawi Malay (a Batavian dialect). This depicted the influence of Dutch colonial culture or Pasar Malay; new garments were also included in the same terminology. Originating unmistakably in Europe: *beskat* (vest), *underok* (skirt, derived from the Dutch skirt), and *col* (camisole).

The earliest documented uses of long robes in Peninsular Malaysia were as synonyms. Early manuscripts like the *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* described the “*jubah*” the robe, another lengthy Islamic gown (probably 1380s). The phrase “*baju panjang*” (long robe), historically used by

¹³ <http://repository.unsada.ac.id/1896/3/BAB%20II.pdf>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

¹⁴ Peter Lee.2014. *Sarong Kebaya: Peranakan Fashion In An Interconnected World 1500-1950*. Singapore: Asean Civilisation Museum.pg.25.

Singaporeans and *Peranakan* Chinese to refer to the kebaya. It also served as a collective noun for the long garment popular in Malacca and some of Sumatra. A kebaya variant was known in Java, but once more, the Dutch colonial era was when the language first adopted it. Royals in Yogyakarta and Surakarta wore specific variations of it, such as the kebaya *tangkepan*, for court rituals, visited to the homes of Dutch relatives and government officials, and public occasions. Kebaya, which was exclusively known on the island as “baju”, did not belong in the Balinese language.

Details and Ornamentation of Kebaya *Encim*

The kebaya *encim* distinguishes apart from other kebayas due to its embroidery. Although most of the kebaya *encim* with very exquisite embroidery were manufactured using standard sewing machines, from the beginning until about the 1920s, the embroidery was made by hand while adhering to European embroidery patterns. Kebaya *encim* is unique because of the embroidery, which features beautiful arrangements of orchids, roses, chrysanthemums, and other flowers, as well as families of rabbits, chickens, ducks, geese, peacocks, even mice, clusters of spiders on nets, butterflies, tennis rackets for tennis enthusiasts, hot air balloons, and many other animals. In Chinese iconography, these images frequently carried significant meanings pertaining to fertility and happiness.¹⁵



Picture 1. Kebaya encim

Source: <https://id.pinterest.com/pin/4996249577112053/>

¹⁵ Judi Achjadi, & Asmoro Damais. 2015. *Kebaya Encim, Sebuah Fenomena Di Dunia Fesyen Tradisional Indonesia*. Department of Tourism and Culture of The Greater Jakarta.pg.33



Picture 2. Kebaya encim

Source: <https://bergaya.id/kebaya-encim/>

In *Peranakan* culture, motifs are a form of depiction that has meaning and significance. *Peranakans* are happy with the use of motifs and ornamental elements which are often a form of their belief in something, for example a certain motif can give a good meaning, but if it is used incorrectly it can have a negative effect.



Picture 3. Kebaya encim

Source: <https://id.pinterest.com/pin/23081016832568472/>



Picture 4. Kebaya encim

Source: The Nyonya Kebaya, A Century Of Straits Chinese Costume. pg.21

Variety of *Kebaya Encim*

Kebaya encim was immensely well liked in Batavia, especially among the Chinese population. This is demonstrated by the fact that many people wear this attire during major events like Chinese New Year or *Cap Go Meh*. The majority of them make use of prominent hues like red, gold, and yellow, which stand for glory. *Kebaya encim* must be meticulously crafted during the manufacturing process to obtain flawless embroidery. In order to better highlight the wearer's body curves, the silhouette or shape must fit the body (be slim fit). Additionally, the material must be sturdy in order to prevent pattern breakage and easy thread ripping.¹⁶

Kebaya kerancang is an official Betawi dress that must be worn at weddings by the mothers of the two brides-to-be. Another name for this designer kebaya is *encim*. *Kebaya kerancang* has a philosophy as a symbol of beauty, maturity, joy and association that follows the wisdom, rules, and demands of the ancestors. The goal is to maintain the elegance and honour of women.

This clothing consists of kebaya and cloth. This dress is used for official purposes or travelling. In the past, it could only be worn by the *nyai*, the rich mistresses of *Tuan Blande*, because the price of this kebaya was indeed exorbitant in its day. After that came the Chinese who also adapted to wearing the local dress code by wearing this prestigious *kebaya*, which the Betawi people later, called this *kebaya* as *kebaya encim*¹⁷. The Betawi Women's Association

¹⁶ https://www.adira.co.id/sahabatlokal/article_short/metalink/kebaya-encim. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

¹⁷ According to Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), the meaning of the word *encim* is a woman of Chinese descent who is married. Another meaning of *encim* is a word of greeting to a married woman of Chinese descent.

later replaced this name with "*kebaya kerancang*"¹⁸. This *kebaya* is made in the Kartini style with the ends tapering downwards at the front 20-30 cm from the flat part at the hips. In addition, another model of this *kebaya* is in the form of the *nyak Betawi* long *kebaya*, which has a flat bottom of 3 cm to 5 cm above the knee, which is called a long *kebaya*.

Hwa (2000) asserts that the word "encim" is a term originating from South Hokkien to refer to "aunt" (father's sister's wife), but can also be used to refer to an adult woman in general. This is a new term used for a particular style of *kebaya* popularised by the *Peranakan* Chinese community in Indonesia. If the white *kebaya* is entirely the result of mixing, as stated by Peter Lee (2014), then the *kebaya encim* that is known in Indonesia is entirely a phenomenon created by Chinese *Peranakan* women in collaboration with their tailors.¹⁹

Currently, several varieties of silk, lace, natural silk, and other materials have been used to produce and modify this form of *kebaya*. Several different age groups of women wear this *kebaya*. This *kebaya* is commonly worn by young women with long skirts or pants. This has certainly grown from the original, which had a spouse made of cloth. Typically, a sarong or another long piece of clothing might serve as the *Kebaya kerancang*. These days, a scarf is typically added to this attire to finish it.

Colours of *Kebaya Encim*

Ranges of soft (pastel) hues have replaced the traditional white colour of the Chinese women's *kebaya*. The lace on their *kebaya* was swapped out for *Peranakan* Chinese women's needlework. They incorporate *kebaya* with sarongs made of coastal batik and a dash of Chinese character such as done by Oey Soen King, The Tie Siet, and Liem Siok Hien's Chinese batik artwork. Indonesian women don't dress in embroidered, white *kebayas*; instead, they wear a variety of coloured *kebayas* with designs designed in the manner of the Javanese courts. The *kebayas* of the aforementioned products take the shape of a seamless bodysuit (*coupenaad*) either just above the knee or mid-thigh length.²⁰

Native and *Peranakan* people interpret the colour white as denoting death. The *kebaya encim's* genuine history started here. The 1930s saw a large prevalence of different coloured *kebaya encim*, but never white, unless a close cousin was present. The incredible variety of the Chinese *Peranakan* *kebaya* style in Indonesia can be seen in one collector's private

¹⁸ *kerancang* comes from Sanskrit which means hollow.

¹⁹ Judi Achjadi, & Asmoro Damais. 2015. *Kebaya Encim, Sebuah Fenomena Di Dunia Fesyen Tradisional Indonesia*. Jakarta: Department of Tourism and Culture of the Greater Jakarta.pg.27.

²⁰ Alim Zaman .2002. *100 Tahun Mode di Indonesia 1901-2000*. Jakarta: Meutia Cipta Sarana.pg.12.

collection of 150 kebaya in Jakarta. From simple white mourning kebayas to elaborately embroidered cotton kebayas to garish multi-coloured nylon kebayas to beautiful Swiss voile kebayas and lace kebayas, there are many different types of kebayas available. From the armpits to the hips and just below the hips, they are all straight and hanging. The kebaya's two ends are oriented toward the front and the sleeves' ends stop slightly above the hands. This triangle shape's opening at the end is occasionally utilized to create elaborate needlework decorations.²¹



Picture 5. Kebaya Nyonya

Source: *The Nyonya Kebaya, A Century Of Straits Chinese Costume*. pg.22



Picture 6. Kebaya encim

Source: www.sejauh.com

²¹ Judi Achjadi, & Asmoro Damais. 2015. *Kebaya Encim, Sebuah Fenomena Di Dunia Fesyen Tradisional Indonesia*. Jakarta: Department of Tourism and Culture of the Greater Jakarta.pg.30.



Picture 7. Kebaya encim
Source: www.sejauh.com

Similar to the women's kebaya from the Dutch East Indies, kebaya *encim* was worn over a camisole or bra. Some of these were plain underwear that will be made to be seen; they would be made of white cotton, just like Dutch undergarments. On the top hem, decorative underside, floral prints, exotic birds with their beautiful plumage, phoenixes (hong), and dragons were also machine embroidered on the bras.

The main embroidered decoration was placed on the back, which could only be seen when women work in the kitchen without wearing a kebaya. The cut patterns of the bras in this collection ranged from shawl-shaped fabrics complete with buttons on the front and shoulder straps, to corset-like structures typical of early 20th-century European fashion, to modern day dresses. Chinese *Peranakan* bras, like those worn by most Indonesian women, were always buttoned and equipped with a small pocket at the front for storing cash.

Kebaya *encim* is actually not that easy to produce; the embroidery embellishments demand a lot of time and skill, and on most kebayas, it's clear where apprentice and master work is located. The depth and complexity of the motifs, as well as the standard of the embroidered lace, are directly tied to the kebaya's beauty and worth. All have been created to complement the surface texture of the voile. Combining floral, figural, and geometric designs, the kebaya's embroidery is done with a sewing machine and four basic stitches: satin stitch, straight stitch, zigzag stitch, and buttonhole stitch. The work of embroidering or making embroidery is the work of pulling threads together to produce a lace effect, done by hand and requires considerable patience and skill.

The primary benefit of employing a satin stitch on the kebaya's hem is that it keeps the fabric's edges from fraying when the spaces between the various motifs are cut to make the required lace. Additionally, they are utilised to attach the warp and weft threads left over after some of the fabric's threads have been removed. Main motifs are typically embroidered on fabrics using the satin stitch. Long strands of colourful thread are filled into the fabric by stitches to give the appearance of a solid hue. To achieve this colour block, the voile fabric must be repeatedly stitched with the needle. In order to give the embroidery a clear outline, regular running stitches are occasionally sewed around the perimeter of the main pattern.

Threads of different shades of the same colour are used to create a three-dimensional illusion. Some embroiderers use threads that change colour at certain lengths so they don't have to keep changing colour as they work. Others prefer to finish sewing in one colour before moving on to another. The finest satin stitch embroidery has a special quality, which gives paper-thin voile fabric an extraordinary texture. *Encim* calls embroidered containing ("filled") its opposite for flat embroidery. One way to gauge the quality of embroidery is to rub it gently between one's fingers whether it feels thick and heavy. Hence, a lot of work has gone into making it, adding value. Kebayas featuring such embroidery require extra needles and are consequently more expensive. Such kebaya are often reserved for exceptional events.

Kerancang embroidery (cut-work) is not too difficult, but this work is very tedious and time consuming. The zig-zag stitch is used first to hem the portion of the voile fabric where a cut is desired, both to provide reinforcement and to prevent tearing when the weaving is done later. Patches of voile fabric are then cut using small scissors or razor blades. Once the patch is removed, the embroiderer sews thread back and forth across the hole to form a noose or web. These grids and nets help to emphasise embroidery motifs. They use voile and sheer (transparent) tissue textures. The finer the stitches, the more expensive the kebaya is. Placed in beautiful motifs and detailed in its manufacture, the cut-work gives the kebaya a sensual look. It requires a confident woman to wear such clothes without feeling "exposed".

The combination of embroidery and cut makes kebaya more than just lace. This is because embroidery is an integral part of the kebaya, not just attached to it. This gives the garment its own special identity. The best embroidery is done so thoroughly and voluminously that the material falling on the body dazzles the eye and inspires the imagination. Just as a painter uses paint and a brush to create works of art on canvas, embroiderers use needles and thread to create their beautiful masterpieces on voile fabric. This is a process that cannot be easily explained in words. The creative impulse that inspires the artist can only be described by the artist himself/herself. Typically, when embroiderers get carried away

with that creative urge, they begin marathon sessions on their sewing machines, which can last up to eight hours or more. Concentration and patience are important requirements for embroiderers. There are no mistakes, just as a different painter has a different style. Likewise the embroidered artisans show individual styles in their work.

Some people are better at cutting than embroidering, and vice versa. Some people excel at both equally. While some tailors are skilled at picking the ideal colour schemes and patterns, others like the basic kebaya. To fit the size and shape of the many panels that make up the garment, the embroidery pattern is first sketched out on paper. Kebaya tailors frequently possess a sketchbook or portfolio that they either acquired from their tutor or created on their own. While some kebaya tailors draw inspiration from a pre-existing collection of motifs, others actively develop their own designs based on their expertise in the field or by compiling pictures they cut from newspapers, fashion magazines, and embroidery guides. A collection of kebaya photos that depict and replicate the new kebaya serves as another source.

In the 1950s and 1960s, tailors used to purchase embroidered stencils from sewing supply stores, some of which were hot iron transfers. Some of these stencils were made in Indonesia and intended for general stitching, which was a popular pastime for women at the time, rather than only kebaya embroidery. Books on manual embroidery and cross-stitch patterns are occasionally used as a visual aid. These books typically originated in Europe. The European-inspired themes that Kebaya tailors discovered in the books were modified to fit local preferences.

The design will be completed on drawing paper and then replicated using tracing paper. The voile fabric was then covered by the (transparent) tracing paper, which was then retraced with a fine, pointed pencil. On tracing paper, certain kebaya tailors draw their designs. Some people even directly doodle on voile. When embroiderers make the error of using indelible ink to sketch motifs and fail to cover them with stitching, it is common for traces of marks to still be evident on some vintage kebayas, including ones depicted in this book. The kebaya's embroidery ought to be as symmetrical as feasible. A balanced personality is reflected in symmetry for *encim*, as it is for all Chinese people. On the other hand, asymmetry is perceived as a sign of imbalance and discord. The aesthetic harmony of the kebaya and *baba encim* culture as a whole is violated if a design on one side of the kebaya is not entirely reflected on the other side. Asymmetrical kebayas are not something that *encim* will purchase or wear. The kebaya's embroidery must also demonstrate a deep awareness of changes in colour and tone. Contrary to paint, primary colours cannot be combined to create secondary colours in thread. To create the sense of depth, a very competent seamstress is needed because the work calls for a keen eye as well as several thread adjustments. A talented embroiderer may create lovely designs using a variety of hues, even though employing too

many colours might make a design appear cluttered.



Picture 8. Kebaya encim Woro Widyanti

Source: Author's documentation



Picture 9. Kebaya encim Woro Widyanti Source: Author's documentation

Source: Author's documentation

Most of the embroidery motifs used are floral motifs. They are also often stylized, suggesting that they are highly symbolic although the interpretation of flower symbolism differs from one person to another. This can be seen in the preferred visual style of floral motifs with a bit of Indo-European influence. Many Chinese symbols are based on the complementary principles of the Yin and Yang philosophy. Yin is cool, dark and feminine and Yang is positive, bright and masculine. These two opposing yet complementary forces form the essence of all life. If, for example, someone upsets the balance by imposing Yin, Yang will react with equal force to stabilise the balance, and vice versa. This is believed by the Chinese to be the life of the human soul, governed by the duality of Yin-Yang. Because the Yin and Yang divisions contain

an infinite number of Yin-Yang dualities, the principle is never static, only its representation.

Conclusion

Indonesian fashion is influenced by international trends. Besides, Indonesia contributes to the global fashion trend as well. Dutch women who lived in colonial areas frequently wore kebaya that was white and made of lace material, which was paired with a *coastal sarong* (batik *Hokokai*). In the past, the white kebaya – known as the kebaya *nona* – was only permitted to be worn by Europeans. But Indonesian women and men had looked stylish before the emergence of global fashion. That was made possible by the archipelago's islands' varied traditional attire. Indonesian kebaya, a traditional dress, occasionally became more stylish. In the 1920s, *Peranakan* Chinese immigrants to Batavia adopted the Dutch kebaya fashion, popularizing it among their relatives in Singapore and Malaysia.

In its development, the kebaya *encim*, which was originally white in colour, has become a pastel colour, detailed with colourful flower embroidery to match the coastal sarong (*Hokokai* batik). The kebaya style shows Indonesia's contribution to the way of dressing abroad, namely Singapore and Malacca. Indonesian kebaya pragmatically adopted fashionable trends, which were styled in length, tight fit, sleeve length, collar shape, opening position, and others. It can be said that global fashion has contributed to the appearance of the *encim* kebaya as a traditional Indonesian dress.

The study's findings demonstrated that kebaya *encim* is a uniquely Indonesian identity. Researchers that are interested in the growth of fashion in Indonesia should utilise the study's findings as a springboard for their future work. Depending on the situation, numerous organisations or individuals have studied kebaya *encim*. The findings of this study are just one of dozens or hundreds of others. Because it encompasses components of identity as both people and groups as citizens of the Indonesian nation, the study of kebaya *encim* as an Indonesian identity is crucial to advance.

According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's publication, "Policy for Preservation and Development of Culture," cultural preservation is an effort to stop the destruction or degradation of cultural heritage. The goal of cultural preservation is to sustain the high ideals of culture that are present in a tradition, despite the process of changing cultural forms. Indonesia has a reputation for having a vibrant local culture. The community is required to conserve this culture because the Indonesian people are the owners of several local cultural legacies. It can be worn on special occasions or casually every day as a sign of gratitude for helping to preserve the traditional cloth. Ultimately, it is crucial to expand the number of events aimed at educating the community regarding the use of kebaya *encim* as a symbol of identity.

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