

Cultural Transformation and Hybridity in the Evolution of Bali Kebaya Design

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the evolution of Balinese kebaya design as a representation of cultural transformation and hybridity amidst modernization and globalization. Kebaya, a traditional blouse for Indonesian women, has shifted from everyday wear to formal wear. The development of technology and communication has driven significant changes in kebaya design, giving rise to contemporary kebaya that is more adaptive to an active and attractive modern lifestyle. However, modernization brings challenges in maintaining the traditional values of kebaya, raising concerns about the loss of cultural identity. The purpose of this study is to analyze the evolution of Balinese kebaya design based on the theory of cultural transformation and hybridity in an effort to preserve cultural heritage. The method used is descriptive qualitative, with data collection through literature studies, observations, and interviews. The results of the study indicate that the evolution of Balinese kebaya is a clear manifestation of cultural transformation. Cultural transformation can be seen from the shift in the function of kebaya from everyday wear to diverse fashion clothing, with modifications in shape, material, and style that are not bound by traditional rules, reflecting the shift in community values. Hybridity is reflected in the combination of new materials such as velvet, silk, and lace from global influences, as well as the combination of traditional techniques with modern technology. Contemporary kebaya, with its collar and sleeve variations, and the use of modern materials, shows local and global elements interacting, creating a new, dynamic, and relevant cultural expression. This hybridity is seen as an adaptive strategy to maintain the relevance of cultural heritage in the modern era, without losing its cultural roots. Further research is recommended to explore the economic impact of contemporary kebaya on local craftsmen and the fashion industry in Bali, as well as analyzing the perception of the younger generation towards the use of traditional versus contemporary kebaya.

KEYWORDS

Balinese, Kebaya, Contemporary, Cultural, Transformation

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INTRODUCTION

Kebaya etymologically comes from Arabic, namely abaya, which means clothing. Kebaya is a traditional blouse worn by Indonesian women (Fitria & Wahyuningsih, 2019). In ancient times, before independence, kebaya was everyday clothing throughout Indonesia. Kebaya is a blouse/top with a characteristic opening at the front which is combined with a bottom in the form of traditional Indonesian cloth (Kusumadewi & Jerusalem, 2023). Kebaya is known as national clothing and is a cultural display of the Indonesian nation. Kebaya is considered a representation of graceful and gentle Indonesian women. The psychological character of kebaya is a symbol of the friendliness, gentleness and patience of Indonesian women (Suciati, 2020).

The development of kebaya in Bali has developed along with the development of technology and communication. Kebaya is part of Indonesian fashion that has undergone significant changes, technological developments have introduced various fashion trends that have driven the development of kebaya and the changes that have occurred cannot be separated from consumer demand (Sariyati, 2013). The development of the era can change the form of traditional clothing (Elpalina, Agustina, Azis, & Syukri, 2023). The advancement of technology changes the views and mindsets of increasingly modern society, kebaya develops following an active and attractive modern lifestyle (Nagata & Sunarya, 2023). Kebaya has developed into a part of fashion that is used to express self-identity. From the kingdom era to the present, kebaya designs have continued to adapt to the form of the era (Fitria & Wahyuningsih, 2019). However, in the era of modernization, Balinese kebaya designs face various challenges. Globalization has brought major changes to fashion design, changing the way clothes are made, distributed, and consumed (Arumsari, 2012). Globalization, industrialization, and the emergence of very fast fashion trends require kebaya to adapt in order to remain relevant. One of the main challenges is maintaining the traditional values of kebaya. The rapid pace of globalization, industrialization, and the emergence of fast-moving fashion trends require kebaya to continue to adapt in order to remain relevant. One of the crucial challenges is maintaining the traditional values inherent in kebaya. However, globalization also poses challenges for the preservation of kebaya. In the past, kebaya was often worn in everyday life, but now it is only used for formal events or special occasions. The rapid flow of information and fashion trends can obscure the meaning and philosophy contained in every detail of the kebaya. Concerns arise that the kebaya will lose its identity.

Nowadays, designers are competing to develop kebaya and provide a more diverse appearance to the kebaya. Contemporary kebaya is a kebaya with a pattern shape that is no longer absolute like the original kebaya (Fitria & Wahyuningsih, 2019). Contemporary kebaya is not worn in a traditional context so it is free from conventions. The development of contemporary kebaya follows the lifestyle of today's women who are more active and attractive. Contemporary kebaya has a freer visualization than traditional kebaya (Triyanto & Sabatari, 2020).

Contemporary kebaya can be seen as a solution to concerns about the loss of relevance of cultural heritage. Efforts to preserve kebaya through contemporary design are the right step to preserve Indonesia's cultural heritage. Thus, it is interesting to study more deeply the evolution of Balinese kebaya design representing cultural transformation and hybridity, so this study aims to analyze the evolution of Balinese kebaya design based on the theory of cultural transformation and hybridity in an effort to preserve Indonesian cultural heritage.

METHOD

The method used is a descriptive qualitative approach to deeply understand the development of the evolution of Balinese kebaya design through the theory of cultural transformation and hybridity. Data collection techniques use literature studies, observations, and interviews. Literature studies are conducted by reviewing various literature related to kebaya and the evolution of Balinese kebaya design. Observation techniques are used to directly observe the evolution of Balinese kebaya design including design, materials, how to wear it, and combinations with modern elements. The interview was conducted with Tjokorda Abinanda Sukawati, a Balinese designer and fashion academic whose work focuses on promoting Balinese local wisdom. Tjok Abi is also the Chairperson of APPMI Bali (Association of Indonesian Fashion Designers and Entrepreneurs).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Development of Balinese Kebaya Essay

The development of kebaya in Bali began with the arrival of the Dutch between 1919-1931. Previously, kebaya was only known among the royal court, ordinary people carried out their daily activities without using upper body coverings. People use upper and lower *kamen* coverings when performing prayer rituals at Hindu holy places such as temples or merajan. However, there were various protests against Balinese women who appeared without wearing upper clothes. Along with the development of the era and the influence of Dutch colonialism, kebaya then became a fashionable

dress among women in Bali. Kebaya has been legitimized by custom as a form of cultural identity (Dewi, Kebayantini, & Ranteallo, 2015). Kebaya itself has become a clothing necessity that is still thick and often used in Bali, especially during major Hindu holidays (Dewanti, 2023). Balinese kebaya has distinctive characteristics with 7/8 or 3/4 sleeve lengths, slightly flared bottoms and triangular or tapered beffs, and the use of a shawl wrapped around the waist as a complementary accent to the outfit.



Figure 1. Balinese women's clothing in 1933

Source : https://www.instagram.com/sejarahbali/p/DFyzZ8MyVp0/?locale=ru&hl=am-et&img_index=1

1) Balinese kebaya before the 1950s

Balinese kebaya during this period were designed to be worn in various traditional/religious ceremonies. Balinese kebaya were designed according to the rules of *pakem*. Balinese kebaya during this period were made of mori cloth combined with traditional cloth bottoms such as *ikat* woven cloth and *sogket*. The kebaya models during this period were the *kutu baru* and *kartini* kebaya models. Traditional Balinese kebaya have a looser design and are closed. The kebaya is equipped with traditional accessories such as a shawl, chest covering (*angkin*), and a gold belt. The making of Balinese kebaya during this period was done manually, using hand sewing techniques.



Figure 2. Balinese Kebaya 1950s

Source : https://www.instagram.com/sejarahbali/p/DFyzZ8MyVp0/?locale=ru&hl=am-et&img_index=1

2) Balinese kebaya from the 1950s to the 1980s

Balinese kebaya began to experience several changes along with the entry of global influences, especially from the international fashion world. The entry of Europeans, especially the Dutch, into Indonesia also influenced kebaya designs at that time by introducing variations in textile materials such as velvet, silk, and lace. Expensive materials such as silk and velvet were used for wedding

kebaya among the royal family and Dutch women (Nagata & Sunarya, 2023). Although traditional techniques are still used, kebaya making increasingly uses sewing machines, which speeds up the production process and allows kebaya to be produced in larger quantities in a short time. However, some traditional elements, such as hand embroidery, are still maintained in kebaya designs to maintain quality and a luxurious impression.



Figure 3. Balinese Kebaya 1980s

Source : https://www.instagram.com/sejarahbali/p/DFyzZ8MyVp0/?locale=ru&hl=am-et&img_index=1

3) Balinese Kebaya in the 1990s to 2000s

After the reformation in 1998 that hit the democratic system in Indonesia, it has been able to bring about major changes in society. Kebaya as one of the cultural products of Indonesian women's clothing has experienced developments in form, function, and meaning. Kebaya appeared with a modern touch, such as the work of Anne Avantie and other designers. In the 2000s, kebaya was popular with a new look that emerged and designers designed contemporary kebaya with various fabrics, motifs, accessories, and detailed sequin applications. Balinese kebaya experienced significant modernization, both in design, materials, and how to use them. Contemporary Balinese kebaya began to use more varied materials, such as satin, brocade, and organza fabrics.



Figure 4. Balinese Kebaya 1991

Source : https://www.instagram.com/sejarahbali/p/DFyzZ8MyVp0/?locale=ru&hl=am-et&img_index=1

4) Balinese Kebaya from the 2010s to the present

Balinese kebaya has undergone a significant transformation, mainly triggered by the rapid development of technology and the increasingly strong current of globalization. Globalization has had a significant impact on the socio-cultural changes of Balinese society, affecting various aspects of life. In its development, kebaya designs have shown quite progressive innovation, for example through the emergence of modified kebaya with short sleeves above the elbow, as well as a preference for kebaya materials that tend to have a certain level of transparency. In this era, contemporary Balinese kebaya is characterized by the selection of materials that are more directed towards modern and easily obtained types of fabric, such as lace, satin, and crepe (soft textured fabric with a slightly wavy and wrinkled surface). There are several forms of modification to contemporary kebaya such as modifications to the shape of the collar and modifications to the shape of the sleeves to display a more modern impression.



Figure 5. Balinese Kebaya from 2010 to present

Source : <https://www.instagram.com/umahkebayabali/?locale=ru&hl=am-et>

2. Cultural Transformation in Balinese Kebaya Design

The theory of cultural transformation explains that culture changes profoundly in response to social, economic, or technological change. Transformation is the movement or shift of something in another or new direction without changing the structure contained therein, even though its new form has undergone changes (Ramadhani & Nelmira, 2023). Cultural transformation can occur naturally because it is triggered by the phenomenon of modernization. Cultural transformation is a form of preserving local wisdom (local genius) in a particular society with the main goal that the culture does not become extinct due to the current of global culture (Ali, 2017).

Cultural transformation is theoretically interpreted as a process of continuous dialogue between local culture, donor culture, to a certain stage forming a synthesis process with various forms that will produce a stable final cultural format. The process of dialogue, synthesis, and the form of the final format is preceded by the process of inculturation and acculturation (Ismawati, 2016). Transformation or inheritance is a transfer of knowledge because in principle it includes the process of transferring competence from the first generation to the next generation (Jazuli, 2011). Transformation is a change by maintaining the continuity of previous concepts (Wahyudi, 2013). As time progresses, progress over time can change the form, function, and meaning of traditional clothing (Putri, Nayla; Suci, 2024). The evolution of Balinese kebaya design represents a cultural transformation. Cultural transformation can be seen from the evolution of the design and function of the kebaya from everyday clothing to diverse fashion clothing. The development of traditional kebaya into contemporary kebaya is one part of cultural transformation (Nagata & Sunarya, 2023). Structural changes can be seen in the modification of the shape, material, and style of the kebaya that is not bound by traditional rules. This change reflects a shift in values in society. Contemporary

kebaya is a symbol of the active and dynamic lifestyle of modern women, showing that kebaya can adapt to social change.

The evolutionary transformation of Balinese kebaya design was triggered by various factors, including globalization and modernization. The influence of international fashion trends drove innovation in kebaya design, while changes in Balinese women's lifestyles created a demand for more practical and versatile clothing. After the social stratification of the kebaya was eliminated, the form of the kebaya collar variation between the upper, middle and lower classes merged and all levels of society wore kebaya variations regardless of social class (Nagata & Sunarya, 2023). In addition, the loss of social stratification allowed the kebaya to be accessible to all levels of society, resulting in a wider and more inclusive variety of designs. These factors contributed to a fundamental change in the way the kebaya was viewed and worn

The process of evolutionary transformation of Balinese kebaya design involved innovation in design, new ideas through social media and the fashion industry making the kebaya part of modern fashion styles. The emergence of designers who dare to experiment with kebaya designs shows that this change has become part of the social norm. The kebaya is no longer considered a rigid traditional dress, but through contemporary kebaya it becomes a fashionable and relevant fashion choice.

There are several challenges in the process of accepting contemporary kebaya. One of them is the concern about the loss of traditional values contained in the kebaya. The process of cultural transformation does not always run smoothly and often results in criticism, conflict, or even deviation from the results that have been achieved. However, cultural change can also bring improvements to cultural heritage and increase its values. According to Tjokorda Abhinanda Sukawati as a kebaya designer and academic in an interview, modifying the kebaya towards a more modern design is not an act of destroying the core values of the kebaya. On the contrary, the main purpose of this adjustment is to make the kebaya relevant and more attractive to modern society and as an effort to preserve the kebaya. Culture is closely related to people's lives, so that every change in a culture is in line with changes in people's lives. Contemporary kebaya is part of the cultural transformation caused by modernization.

3. Hybridity in the Evolution of Balinese Kebaya Design

The theory of cultural hybridity emphasizes that culture is not pure or static, but rather continues to interact and mix with other cultures. Hybridity in terms of culture can be interpreted as a combination or integration of various different cultures. Hybridity does not only focus on the mixed cultural elements, but also on how this combination forms a new cultural construction. Hybridity itself does not only focus on the construction of a combined culture (cultural mix) but also focuses on the process that describes how this combined culture is placed in the existing social space (social placement) (Firdaus, Pottu, Panduwal, Panjaitan, & Paskalina, 2023).

Hybridity in Bhabha's view is a form of cross-cultural between the dominant culture and the hegemonized culture. In another sense, hybridity can also be interpreted as resistance to the dominant culture (Sukarwo, 2017). Hybridity rejects the idea of cultural purity. Culture is always in the process of becoming and being influenced by interactions with other cultures. This hybridity also shows the power dynamics that occur in the process of globalization, where local and global elements interact and influence each other, creating new, dynamic cultural forms. Social power and relations play an important role in the formation and acceptance of hybrid cultural forms. Local traditions meet global influences, creating new forms of cultural expression that are often hybrid (Hartono & Sipayung, 2024).

In the evolution of Balinese kebaya design, the beginning of hybridity is seen in the introduction of new materials such as velvet, silk, and lace into the making of Balinese kebaya during the Dutch colonial period. Hybridity is increasingly visible in the combination of traditional manufacturing techniques and modern technology. The use of sewing and embroidery machines accelerates the production of the evolution of traditional Balinese kebaya designs towards contemporary Balinese kebaya designs, becoming the peak of hybridity. Hybridity in the evolution of Balinese kebaya also reflects the power dynamics in globalization. Adapting and combining

foreign elements with local identity, produces new forms of cultural expression that are dynamic and relevant to the times.

Contemporary kebaya is a form of resistance to the homogenization of global culture. Kebaya designers not only maintain traditional elements, but also adopt global fashion trends, creating new forms of cultural expression. Hybridity in the evolution of Balinese kebaya design is not only limited to design, but also includes the use of materials. The combination of traditional Balinese woven fabrics with modern materials such as velvet or silk creates an interesting and rich aesthetic. In addition, the modification of the shape of the kebaya collar and sleeves, which adopt Western fashion styles such as off-shoulder or puff sleeves, shows how local and global cultures interact and produce new hybrid forms. Collar variations in contemporary kebaya include; V-shaped kebaya collar, Shanghai collar, Sabrina collar, heart collar, off-shoulder collar, “U” collar, and box collar.

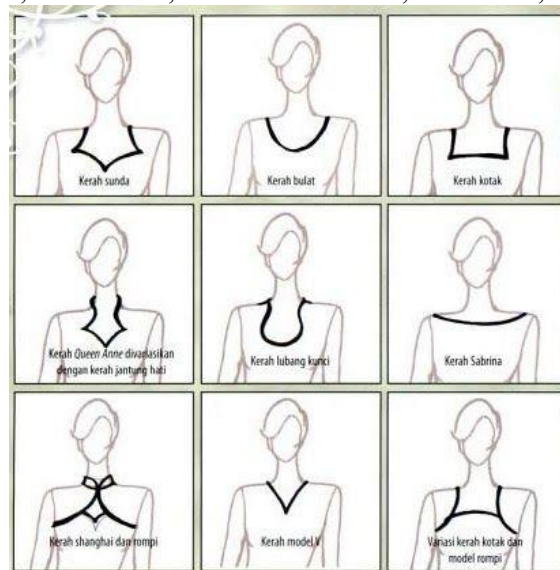


Figure 6. Types of contemporary kebaya collars

Source : <https://id.pinterest.com/pin/307792955789072252/>

Modification of sleeves on contemporary kebaya has an effect in giving a modern touch to kebaya. Several types of sleeves on clothing are now also adapted to contemporary kebaya such as puff sleeves, trumpet sleeves and quarter sleeve styles.

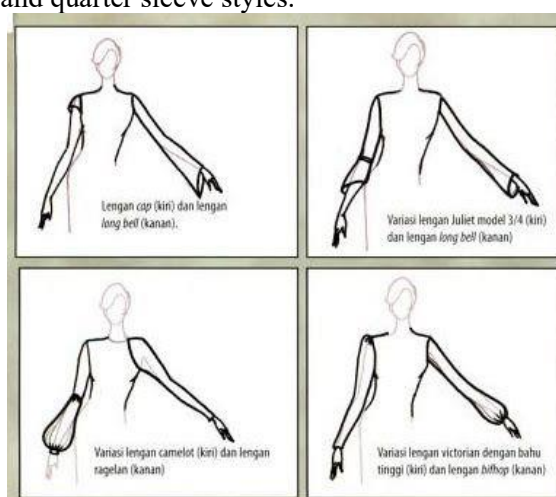


Figure 7. Types of contemporary kebaya sleeves

Source : <https://id.pinterest.com/pin/56083957832457133/>

The materials used in contemporary kebaya consist of :

- a. Lace or Brocade

Brocade has the characteristic of metallic or shiny threads woven into the fabric, often the main choice for formal or traditional clothing such as wedding dresses, kebaya, and blazers. This is because brocade tends to be heavier and stiffer than ordinary fabrics, so it can present a more luxurious and classy appearance. In contrast, lace offers a lighter and more transparent appearance, making it very suitable for lighter clothing creations such as blouses, skirts, or dresses. In addition, lace also has the ability to add a subtle feminine touch to formal wear.

b. Velvet

Velvet fabric is one type of fabric that is often used for kebaya. This fabric is made of high-quality silk thread that is tightly tied, giving it a smooth, shiny, and soft appearance. The dense and dense velvet fibers give an elegant and luxurious appearance to the kebaya.

c. Silk

Silk fabric is one type of fabric that is often used for kebaya. This fabric is made of silk fiber produced by silkworms, giving it a smooth, shiny, and luxurious appearance to the kebaya. Silk fabric is also very comfortable to wear because it is lightweight and can absorb moisture well, making it suitable for use on kebaya. Silk fabric is available in various types and patterns, such as satin, organza, crepe, and others. Each type of silk fabric has different characteristics and uses for kebaya. For example, silk satin is often used for formal kebaya and wedding events, while silk organza is suitable for kebaya with more dramatic and luxurious designs.

d. Tulle Fabric

Tulle is one type of fabric that is often used for kebaya. This fabric is made of thin thread material that is sewn into small nets that form unique and interesting patterns. Tulle gives a transparent and light appearance to the kebaya, making it suitable for use on kebaya with a more casual or modern design. Tulle fabric can be found in a variety of colors and patterns, and is often used as an accent on the kebaya such as on the neck, wrists, and ends of the shirt. This fabric gives a soft and elegant effect to the kebaya, so it is often used for formal or semi-formal events such as weddings or evening events.

e. Woven Fabric

The combination of traditional Balinese woven fabric and kebaya can produce an attractive and unique clothing appearance. Usually, woven fabric is used as a kebaya bottom or skirt, or used as a layer on the top of the kebaya such as the collar, sleeves, or shoulders. In addition to providing a beautiful appearance, the combination of traditional woven fabric and kebaya can also enrich cultural heritage and promote the beauty and uniqueness of traditional woven fabric to the world.

In cultural preservation, hybridity can be seen as an adaptive strategy to maintain the relevance of cultural heritage in the modern era. Hybridity allows kebaya to remain part of the modern lifestyle, without losing its cultural roots. Hybridity in contemporary kebaya reflects Indonesia's dynamic and adaptive cultural identity.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the evolution of Balinese kebaya design is a clear manifestation of cultural transformation and hybridity in response to the dynamics of modernization and globalization. The journey of the Balinese kebaya, from clothing that was initially limited to the royal court and for religious rituals, to becoming an integral part of the contemporary fashion industry, shows significant adaptation to changing times. This transformation is marked by innovation in design, the use of more diverse materials, and changes in the function and meaning of the kebaya in society. This study found that hybridity plays an important role in the development of contemporary Balinese kebaya. The combination of traditional Balinese elements with the influence of modern design and materials produces new forms of cultural expression that are able to bridge the gap between ancestral heritage and global tastes. Through transformation and hybridity, the Balinese kebaya is able to maintain its relevance in the modern era, attract the interest of the younger generation, and continue to be a symbol of dynamic and adaptive cultural identity amidst the flow of globalization. This study confirms that innovation and cultural fusion are important elements in maintaining the sustainability and appeal of cultural heritage in the present and the future.

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