

# DYNAMICS OF INDONESIA KEBAYA REVIEWED FROM PERSPEKTIF OF ART HISTORICAL SOSIOLOGY PIERRE BOURDIEU

**Dewa Ayu Putu Leliana Sari, I Gede Mugi Raharja, Nyoman Dewi  
Pebryani, A.A Ngr. Anom Mayun K.T**

Assistant Professor, Indonesian Institut of The Arts Bali, Denpasar-Bali, Indonesia.  
*dewaayuputulelianasari@gmail.com*

Professor, Indonesian Institut of The Arts Bali, Denpasar-Bali, Indonesia.. *mugi5763@yahoo.co.id*

Assistant Professor, Indonesian Institut of The Arts Bali, Denpasar-Bali, Indonesia *dewipebryani@isi-dps.ac.id*

Assistant Professor, Indonesian Institut of The Arts Bali, Denpasar-Bali, Indonesia. *anommayuna3@gmail.com*

## Abstract

*The purpose of this study is to find out the dynamics of Indonesian kebaya reviewed from the perspective of the sociologist of art history Pierre Bourdieu. The scope of this study is the general coverage of the dynamics of the development of kebaya in Indonesia, not specifically the year, but only the outline, where the review is in the form of habitus, agents, arenas, and capital. This research uses qualitative research, which library research that uses books and other literature as the main object. The type of qualitative research is research that produces information in the form of notes and descriptive data contained in the text being studied. Key concepts in Bourdieu's thinking that are relevant to kebaya are Habitus, Capital, and Arena. 1) Habitus: A way of thinking, acting, and feeling that is formed from a person's social experience. This habitus is manifested in the choice of clothing style, including the selection of kebaya. 2) Capital: Resources owned by a person, such as economic, social, and cultural. This capital influences the choice of kebaya and how others interpret kebaya, 3) Arena: A social space where various forms of capital compete and are at stake. The fashion world, including kebaya, is an arena where individuals interact and display their capital. Looking at the kebaya through Bourdieu's lens, we can understand that this traditional clothing is not just a fashion but also a reflection of social and cultural complexity. A person's choice of kebaya cannot be separated from the influence of habitus, capital, and the social arena in which they live.*

**Keywords:** Dynamics, Indonesian Kebaya, Pierre Bourdieu

## INTRODUCTION

According to an online news site, World fashion trends are **skyrocketing** in Indonesia. Fashion is one of the leading creative economy subsectors. Various models and types of clothing continue to emerge, which **fashion lovers warmly and enthusiastically welcome**. [1] To improve the creative economy subsector, creative fashion industry players continue to develop fashion trends in Indonesia.

Clothing style is believed also to reflect one's personality. In Indonesia, fashion trends continue to develop day by day. Development occurs due to the presence of talented local fashion designers who are never short of ideas for creating the latest clothing models to attract market interest. [2]

Fashion trends will always change, changes that go hand in hand with the times, but sustainable fashion, which is sustainable, will continue to be carried out by players in the fashion industry. One example of sustainable fashion is slow fashion, which is a term that describes a sustainable and conscious approach to fashion production and consumption. Kebaya can be classified as slow fashion. Because of that, kebaya has been a regional fashion model since our ancestors, and it has **an exceptional**/benchmark or package in design.

Kebaya, which the Indonesian people have long known as national dress, has become a cultural display of the Indonesian nation, worn at various formal events such as graduations, weddings, parties, and official state events. [3] The phenomenon of kebaya today has experienced a transformation in its design lines, in line with the success of several designers in raising the image of kebaya to a higher level with the complexity of ornamentation, aesthetics and functional shifts whose meanings have developed from the function and meaning of kebaya in the past.

The simple design of the kebaya, which is not too trendy or follows fashion changes, prevents the kebaya from going out of fashion quickly. In this way, the consumption of fabric needs is reduced. A kebaya can represent

various types of clothing in multiple activities. However, along with the development of the times, the kebaya is part of Indonesian fashion that has faced significant changes. The kebaya has changed not only in its form but the changes felt by the kebaya are also intertwined in terms of its use and value. The changes it experiences cannot be separated from the habitus of its producers and consumers and the capital that dominates in an arena. With Bourdieu's thinking, it can be seen how the kebaya, in a society, is placed as an art object and appreciated as capital that struggles in an arena.

Bourdieu is a famous philosopher born on August 1, 1930, and was committed as a 'public intellectual' until the end of his life. His main ideas consist of "habitus", "capital", "field" or "arena", and "symbolic violence." Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" is known for its novelty that can overcome the dualism between individuals and society, structure and agents, objectivism and subjectivism, genetic structuralism or structuralist constructivism. Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" can also be used to analyze the mechanism of domination. In his view, domination is no longer observed only from external and internal consequences. Bourdieu's thinking also builds a sociological view in various fields such as economics, culture, politics, and art by paying attention to the symbolic dimension not discussed in the classical sociological tradition of Karl Marx and developing Weber's sociological approach in explaining the theory of domination mechanisms. However, Bourdieu's thinking is not free from various criticisms, for example, the use of a language style that is difficult to understand, as well as the use of analogies in the concepts of "habitus" and "domain" which are considered to be too focused on determinism so that they reduce reality and ignore other dimensions in life.

The arena of cultural production has three productions that are produced, namely material objects (paintings/literature with all their sensory qualities), creators (with all their historical backgrounds and cultural arenas), and the values of legitimacy that exist within (and in the stretch) of objects due to the status of their creators and external forces. The external forces that I mean are critics/curators as reviewers, pedagogical institutions as the ones who lay down laws, art institutions as containers (both friends and enemies) for artists, and museums as containers for object legitimacy, all of which can legitimize in the art arena (and indirectly the arena of power).

Based on the above, there are several terms that we need to master. First, the arena of power that dominates the art arena. An arena is a structured space with its own rules of functioning, and power relations encompass various arenas such as politics, economics, culture, etc. [4] Each arena has its relative autonomy and is interrelated with each other. The relationship between arenas creates dominated and dominating arenas because changes in the positions of agents in them always provide the possibility of shifting arena power, thus giving birth to an arena of power.

The art arena is dominated by a more powerful arena, which influences it. However, it has relative autonomy that can reject the influence of the arena of power, although it is not entirely free from domination. Bourdieu calls this autonomous arena *coin de folie* (corner of madness) in which agents participate in domination, a contradictory structure. They occupy a dominant position in the dominant class. Artists as agents of the art arena, according to Bourdieu, occupy a precarious position that predestines them to experience objective and objective uncertainty: the image sent back to them by others, especially those who dominate in the arena of power - also in the art arena itself, namely the party that legitimizes the value of a work - is marked by the ambivalence that all societies create because they are opponents of general classifications, or in short, have a dual status between the role of the powerful and the role of disruptors of social illusions. Bourdieu also categorizes artists in this arena as dominant-minus-money class individuals, or what he terms parents rich (poor relatives), but this is difficult for us to include considering that now there are many individuals wealthy in economic capital who are deliberately attracted to the art arena. Second, all elements that form and are involved in the art arena. These elements are classified: (1) the large universe or arena (already described above) that encompasses everything, the real universe, where the accumulation of certain forms of capital occurs, as well as where power relations take place; (2) parties, institutions or individuals, who have the artistic competence to give legitimacy to creations and creators; (3) parties, communities or individuals, who become consumers without having an artistic background; (4) works of art, namely all cultural objects that meet the requirements that the object can be called a work of art (actually in this section Bourdieu embraces it more widely, namely involving the name of the creator, the name of a new concept, the name of a school of thought, whatever it is as long as it can become a sign so that it can be used as a symbolic item); and (5) artists, as creators of creations.

The relationship between cultural capital, artwork, artists, production arenas and all their elements provides a similar view of understanding the relationship between artwork texts and the context surrounding them. It can even offer the opportunity to understand the relationship between texts. Bourdieu presents a sociological, psychological and anthropological way of thinking (in the context of involvement) to understand every artwork more deeply without being fooled by the latent influence of academies, institutions, museums, or the views of *la vie en rose* or *en noir*.

Understanding what is explained above, from the art arena to cultural capital, referring to the concept offered by Pierre Bourdieu, will make it easier to understand the text and context of art production (and consumption). Therefore, the author concludes by quoting Bourdieu, "Every artwork is made twice, first by its creator and second by its observer."

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research is qualitative research, is a library research that uses books and other literature as the main object. This research, from the beginning until the end, was only conducted in the library. This library research discusses several theories that are reviewed[5]. The type of qualitative research is research that produces information in the form of notes and descriptive data contained in the text being studied. With qualitative research, descriptive analysis needs to be carried out. The descriptive analysis method provides a clear, objective, systematic, analytical, and critical description and explanation.

Research that focuses on collecting and analyzing data from various written sources such as books, journals, articles, documents, and other sources relevant to the research topic. This method is very useful for digging up a deep understanding of a particular phenomenon or issue by analyzing data qualitatively, namely by looking for meaning, patterns, and relationships between various concepts and ideas.

Main Characteristics:

1. Qualitative Data: Focuses on descriptive, narrative, and interpretive data.
2. Data Sources: Comes from various written sources, both primary and secondary.
3. Data Analysis: Using qualitative analysis techniques such as coding, categorization, and theme to find patterns and meaning.
4. Subjective Interpretation: Researchers play an active role in interpreting data based on their understanding and perspective.

## FINDINGS

Kebaya etymologically comes from the Arabic word 'abaya', which means clothing. Kebaya is a traditional blouse Indonesian women wear with sarongs, batik, or other conventional knitted clothing. Kebaya has an interesting origin. Denys Lombard explained the question of kebaya originated in Arabic. He is a historian who studies Javanese culture. Some note that kebaya was introduced in Portuguese. When the Portuguese landed in Southeast Asia, kebaya referred to the top or blouse Indonesian women wore in the 15th and 16th centuries AD. Many argue that kebaya is related to women's tunic clothing during the Ming Dynasty in China. Kebaya arrived in the archipelago after a large-scale migration from China.



Figure 1. Kebaya Encim, a kebaya worn by Chinese women and their descendants in Indonesia  
Source: [6] (Kuncoroputri et al., 2023)

During the Dutch colonial period, kebaya was used as the official dress for European women. At that time, kebaya only used mori woven material. In the 19th century, kebaya became everyday clothing for all social classes. Both Javanese and Dutch peranakan women.

Kebaya was once the mandatory clothing for Dutch women who came to the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). In addition, kebaya also experienced a decline in status during the Japanese occupation. At that time, kebaya was associated with clothing worn by native prisoners and forced labourers. During independence, kebaya and

batik cloth became symbols of struggle and nationalism. The value and status of kebaya rose again and they were used as clothing for official and state events.

Kebaya has the meaning of charming, attractive, beautiful and enchanting. Apart from the history of the rise and fall of kebaya's popularity, the development of kebaya is very varied. Now, kebaya is not only being developed as formal clothing. Many designers have made breakthroughs by combining kebaya with more casual bottoms, accessories, or motifs.

Kebaya is also not always associated with clothing for mothers. Kebaya has been widely used by teenagers as well.

Modern kebaya models produced on the market in the 2000s were short flat-topped kebaya models, asymmetrical side-slit kebayas, open-topped kebayas, medium-length open-topped kebayas, half-open-topped round kebayas, stacked asymmetrical kebayas, side-slit kebayas, and open-topped round kebayas. At the same time, the accessories that are usually added to modern kebayas are sequins, embroidery, and stones.

Kebaya models from 2013 to the present are made to resemble party dresses. Long kebaya cuts that touch the ground, or short ones that are then combined with flared skirts like Western fashion in the 20s. There are also kebayas for young people, namely kebayas with ruffle cuts at the waist. The use of velvet fabric is also being looked at again by the market to display the glory of this fabric in the past. In addition, to answer the desires of the Indonesian market today, where many consumers wear the hijab, kebayas are made more closed. For sequin accessories, embroidery and also stones are still in demand by the market, they have become an inseparable part of the kebaya.

Kebaya in Bourdieu's Eyes, a prominent sociologist, offers an interesting perspective on understanding social phenomena such as fashion, including kebaya. He sees clothing not only as a material object but also as a symbol that reflects a person's social position, power, and taste. Key concepts in Bourdieu's thinking that are relevant to kebaya are Habitus, Capital, and Arena. 1) Habitus: A way of thinking, acting, and feeling that is formed from a person's social experience. This habitus is manifested in the choice of clothing style, including the selection of kebaya. 2) Capital: Resources owned by a person, such as economic, social, and cultural. This capital influences the choice of kebaya and how others interpret kebaya, 3) Arena: A social space where various forms of capital compete and are at stake. The fashion world, including kebaya, is an arena where individuals interact and display their capital.

Kebaya as a Symbol of Social as a Class Marker: The type of fabric, embroidery details, and accessories used on kebaya often become markers of social class. For example, Kebaya with silk material and intricate hand embroidery is associated with the upper class. Kebaya as an Expression of Power: The choice of kebaya can also reflect one's power within a social group. For example, a community leader might choose a kebaya with traditional motifs to assert their cultural identity and position. Kebaya as Cultural Capital: One's ability to choose and combine kebaya appropriately can be considered cultural capital. It shows knowledge of manners, fashion history, and aesthetic taste.

Changes in Kebaya in Modern Context, Kebaya as a Commodity: In the era of globalization, kebaya has become a widely traded commodity. Mass production and more modern designs have changed the symbolic value of kebaya. Kebaya as Identity: On the other hand, kebaya has also experienced revitalization as a symbol of national and cultural identity. Many young designers are creating contemporary interpretations of kebaya.

#### **a. Habitus**

The concept of habitus in Bourdieu's thinking is intended as an alternative to the solution offered by subjectivism and a response to the philosophy of odd actions ala structuralism which reduces agents to only carriers or basic conscious expressions. Habitus is the logic of the game, an instant feeling that urges agents to play a role and react in specific situations with a method that cannot always be calculated in advance and not just conscious compliance with the rules.

Habitus is a system of dispositions that are durable and can be transferred, structured structures that are assumed to originate in use as structuring structures as principles that give birth to and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their results without assuming any conscious effort to achieve certain goals. (Bourdieu, 2010)

Habitus is in the minds of agents; areas are outside their minds. The concept of habitus (Routine) is a mental or cognitive structure that agents use to experience social life. Habitus is a product of history produced by people or groups that produce actions of people or groups according to patterns produced by history. As everyday clothes and uniforms for women, kebaya looks simple. The materials used generally are cotton for everyday use in the lower class, velvet and silk for women from the upper middle class. As everyday clothes, there are no additional accessories or accents in kebaya. On the other hand, for uniforms or formal activities, a shawl and pin/brooch are usually added to the chest.

The emergence of these designers gave new life to the kebaya. Reformation gave them space to express themselves freely so that designers could create the form of kebaya that was previously considered stiff and old-fashioned into beautiful clothes. Currently, kebaya appears in various variations; some show kebaya with very different cuts in terms of neckline cuts, very long bottom cuts, sleeves with multiple shapes, a combination of fabrics on the sleeves that are built stacked, and others. Some look like kebaya from the past but are given

slightly different accents because fashion is indeed like a revolving midi, always repeating and varying with old styles and models. Fashion will always return more or less in the same form.

**b. Agent**

The agents who have popularized the kebaya until now are:

1) Fashion Designer, where the agent who produces kebaya in the fashion world in Indonesia. Anne Avantie, Dhea Panggabean, Amy Atmanto, Edward Hutabarat, and Lenny Agustin are some of the designers who have contributed to the development of kebaya in Indonesia. Among these designers, Anne Avantie's name as a kebaya designer stands out more than others. Anne Avantie even received the title of pioneer of contemporary kebaya because of her consistency in the kebaya field. She has been involved in the Indonesian fashion world for 25 years, and upper-class women have widely worn her designs.



Figure 2. Kebaya Designed by Fashion Designer Anne Avantie  
Source: [7] (Ramadhani, 2022)

2) Entertainment Actress Indonesian Artist Maudy Ayunda, who graduated from a master's program at Stanford University, United States, last June, wore a classic Kutubaru Kebaya at her graduation. The kebaya was designed with maroon *angkin* combined with fine batik tulis, the work of designer Didiet Maulana. For her accessories, Maudy wore a necklace and hair ornaments in antique gold. From the kebaya trend-bringing agent, this was also followed by other agents, both from the same social class and lower (artists become trendsetters).

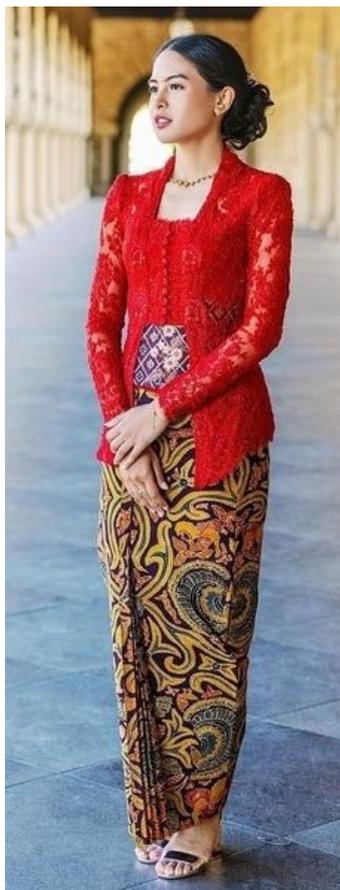


Figure 3. Indonesian Artist Maudy Ayunda wearing kebaya at graduation ceremony  
Source: [8] (Putri, 2021)

### c. Arena

The habitus of these different agents then grapple in an arena of cultural creation. About the arena, Bourdieu explains that the arena is a dynamic concept where the change of agent positions inevitably causes changes in the structure of the arena. The arena is a web analysis that establishes that each position is subjectively defined by a system of distinctive properties that pass through one position among other positions. The art arena is an arena of power as well as an arena of struggle that tends to replace or perpetuate this arena of power. The arena describes the distribution structure and the species of capital power whose ownership provides access to the special advantages that are the targets to be achieved in the arena.

Based on the sub-arena of cultural creation, designers are categorized in a limited creation arena that has autonomy over the designers. The objects made by designers are in the form of kebaya in limited quantities, either in the form of kebaya art wear or ready-to-wear. In the cultural arena, competition is often related to authority; authority based on prestige is symbolic and can give birth to ownership or an increase in economic capital.

By placing designers in the concept of this limited creation arena, it is mandatory to investigate the structure of agents (designers) in the post-reform kebaya space circle that has grown in Indonesia, especially in the bourgeoisie. To describe the struggle of agents that are intertwined in this arena, it certainly cannot be separated from the symbolic capital and cultural capital that they have. The capital owned by this agent is used to compete for expertise in designing and social recognition until there is a trend in kebaya fashion. The presence of young designers in the fashion world also creates interaction and struggle in this arena.

Manufacturers who produce kebaya in large quantities enter the arena of large-scale creation. Because there is no autonomy in this arena, market forces are the ones who will determine which art objects will be made. The kebaya designs that are made are adapted to market demand, namely from the number of consumers who buy kebaya in the fashion market. In this case, the arena is located in the principle of heteronomous hierarchy, where the sales index can measure success.

### d. Modal

According to Pierre Bourdieu, there are two types of capital, namely symbolic capital and cultural capital. The symbolic capital owned by agents such as famous designers Anne Avantie, Edward Hutabarat, Amy Atmojo, and Dhea Panggabean determines the sustainability of creative practices. In the world of kebaya fashion in Indonesia, Anne Avanti's symbolic capital is more dominant compared to other designers, with the capital she

has, she has successfully created many works for 25 years in the fashion world. Many consumers from among officials and celebrities trust their appearance with kebaya created by Anne.

The cultural capital owned by designers is also an important part of the cultural arena. Anne's cultural capital in education is lower when compared to Amy Atmojo, who took a bachelor's degree in economics and law and also a design course in Sydney, because Anne is only a high school graduate and studied design autodidactically. However, these two designers have something in common, namely knowing the world of sewing since childhood from their mothers.

## CONCLUSION

Kebaya is not only a fashion product that has an Indonesian national identity. But also, kebaya, in its struggle in the cultural arena proves which class it occupies. The habitus of the agents and the capital they have makes kebaya a valuable art object. The social capital owned by kebaya will later face changes along with changes in design/model, material/fabric/textile, and the span of use. Kebaya, which was originally the pride of Indonesian women, became a simple everyday dress, until it almost lost its charm, then reappeared as a dress of great value. Kebaya changed into a symbol of luxury, glamour and elegance of an Indonesian woman. Through Bourdieu's thinking, it can be seen how a person's social status is reproduced through kebaya and how the artistic taste of people and society can change kebaya.

Looking at the kebaya through Bourdieu's lens, we can understand that this traditional clothing is not just a fashion but also a reflection of social and cultural complexity. A person's choice of kebaya cannot be separated from the influence of habitus, capital, and the social arena in which they live.

## REFERENCES

- [1] F. R. Winto, "Tren Fashion Dunia Berkembang Pesat di Indonesia," investor.id. Accessed: Jun. 25, 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://investor.id/lifestyle/274426/tren-fashion-dunia-berkembang-pesat-di-indonesia>
- [2] S. Sastro and dkk, *Kebaya Melintasi Masa*. Jakarta: PT. Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2021.
- [3] N. Trismaya, "KEBAYA DAN PEREMPUAN: SEBUAH NARASI TENTANG IDENTITAS," JSRW (Jurnal Senirupa Warna), vol. 6, no. 2, Art. no. 2, 2018, doi: 10.36806/.v6i2.95.
- [4] P. Bourdieu, *Arena Produksi Kultural: Sebuah Kajian Sosiologi Budaya*. Bantul: Kreasi Wacana, 2010.
- [5] M. Ramdhan, *Metode Penelitian*. Wonocolo: Cipta Media Nusantara, 2021.
- [6] S. D. Kuncoroputri et al., *Kreativitas dan Inovasi Dalam Seni Rupa dan Desain*. Yogyakarta: Zahir Publishing, 2023.
- [7] G. Ramadhani, "6 Fakta Menarik Anne Avantie, Dari Desainer Kebaya hingga Perhiasan Cantik Kasmaran," liputan6.com. Accessed: Jun. 26, 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://www.liputan6.com/lifestyle/read/4991943/6-fakta-menarik-anne-avantie-dari-desainer-kebaya-hingga-perhiasan-cantik-kasmaran>
- [8] C. N. Putri, "Ini Gaya Modis dan Elegan Para Artis Pakai Kebaya saat Wisuda - Semua Halaman - Parapuan," Parapuan.co. Accessed: Jun. 26, 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://www.parapuan.co/read/533032203/ini-gaya-modis-dan-elegan-para-artis-pakai-kebaya-saat-wisuda>