

Kebaya Setengah Tiang: Minang Cultural Identity in a Traditional Costume of Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Migration is one of the certain phenomena happened toward mankind, travelling enough distance from one place to another in the means of survival. In a modern era, the identity of the people within society could no longer be separated from their past journeys, and not to mention: the Minangkabaus. The Minangkabaus referred to a group of people inhabiting the upper western part of Sumatra, which were also identified as the Minang people. They gained much fame for becoming the most renowned community with diasporic culture to all over Nusantara. Malaysia was one of the destinations for this diaspora community, and then further installing themselves within the community resided in Negeri Sembilan, where Minang tradition was embraced as the narrative of origin of the state. Traditional foods, dances, games, and clothes became the agents of cultural transmission, as we were keen on discussing about *Kebaya Setengah Tiang* in this article, as one of Negeri Sembilan's traditional costumes. It was an adaptation product, based on the assimilation process between the diaspora and local community. As for the Minang characteristic, we could see how the kebaya had *tengkuluk* (headdress). This study would try to elaborate the connection between the Minang people's cultural identity and its embodiment in *Kebaya Setengah Tiang*, as well as to understand the meaning of such assimilation process. Through extensive critics and interpretation in the method of historical writing, this research would explore the process of borrowing, adapting, and embedding meanings in *Kebaya Setengah Tiang*. Moreover, this research would rely on the use of collective memory to discover the ancestral linkage carried by the Minangkabau ethnic group who travelled to the Malay Peninsula area.

Keywords: *Kebaya setengah tiang, Negeri Sembilan, Minangkabau diaspora, identity, collective memory.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Minangkabaus was one of the well-known ethnic groups in Nusantara, adopting migration process as their second nature. Migration had been practiced within the group since a long time ago, and therefore acquired as a habitual process for them in developing the community to date. The word "*rantau*" (noun) and "*merantau*" (verb) referred to the Minangkabaus directly, and simply translated into the word "migration" or "to migrate". However, it seemed to be an oversimplification of the literal meaning of both words because the word *merantau* had deeper meaning and could be dissected within various points of view. In sociology, the term of *merantau* was consisted of six principal elements: (1) parting off with a hometown; (2) in his/her own accord; (3) for a long or short period of time; (4) with the intention to make living, study, or gain experience; (5) homecoming; and (6) a way to manifest *merantau* as entrenched culture [1].

Those six principal elements allowed this research to define what *merantau* as a concept was, as well as to differentiate the term with the other concept of migration, especially on its ties to the concept of migration of the people from Java to outside of Java. Even though the Javanese people could be found in almost all areas outside of Java, it seemed that they were lacking of *merantau* tradition, identified by the intensity and the principle of their diaspora. The third element, which mentioned how migration was seen as an act of free will, was unique to the Minangkabaus. Their diaspora to all across Nusantara was prompted by both the intention to make living and the passion for adventure, allowing them to embrace larger opportunities [1].

Merantau was also considered as a symbol of the mindset and thought process of the Minangkabaus. In general, most of them often dealt with or fight against unpleasant condition. Therefore, *merantau* was a medium of resistance for the Minangkabaus in fulfilling

duties and achieving greatness, so that they would have never believe in such thing as bad luck or unfortunate fate [2].

In a certain degree of individual mobility, they managed to reach various place, areas, or country in all over the world. It was recorded that the Minangkabaus had been accustomed to take long journey, such as to African east coast to meet the Malay communities in Madagascar [3]. The Malay Peninsula area was one of the frequently visited areas by the Minangkabaus during the heyday of various Malay kingdoms, outside of Sumatra. However, the definite years of the Minangkabaus' arrival in the peninsula was still unknown, although some research noted that their first visit happened between the late 11th century and early 12th century. The Minangkabaus arrived at Temasik Island (Temasek or today's Singapore). One of these research based on *tambo*, a historical or a work of literature recording the narrative of origins of the Minangkabaus, mentioning how they travelled across the peninsula area, reaching Riau and Negeri Sembilan as their farthest [4].

The arrival of the Minangkabaus in the Malay Peninsula gave leverage to the local political, social, and cultural aspect. What the Minangkabaus brought to the Malay world affected Negeri Sembilan the most. The cultural transmission, as an example, was particularly seamless and integrated to the whole life aspect of the people in Negeri Sembilan. We could find cultural similarities between Minang and Negeri Sembilan in the traditional cuisine, dances, as well as dresses. There were at least three varieties of traditional dress in Negeri Sembilan with heavy influence from Minang culture; the traditional wedding dress/attire, *Baju Kurung Ibu Soko*, and *Kebaya Setengah Tiang*, which were recognized by Malaysian Department of Culture and Arts (*Jabatan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian Negara/JKKN*) as the exclusive dress of Negeri Sembilan [5].

This article particularly discussed about *Kebaya Setengah Tiang* as the most unique traditional dress from Negeri Sembilan, for it had combined various elements from overlapping cultural influence within the peninsular area of Southeast Asia. The influence came from Minang culture was obvious enough to be identified in the dress. Therefore, through this article, we tried to elaborate the identity of the Minangkabaus with its development along with the ever-expanding concept of *merantau*. The identity was believed to be preserved up until today, blending in with other identities in Negeri Sembilan and working an assimilation process up.

Previous studies found on *Kebaya Setengah Tiang* mainly focused on the pattern of migration of the Minangkabaus to Negeri Sembilan, but least of these studies focused on the development of Minang culture and identities within the dress as one of example of cultural objects. Zed wrote about the relations between the Minangkabaus and Negeri Sembilan in *Hubungan*

Minangkabau dengan Negeri Sembilan [3], while Omar and Nelmawarni researched on the *rantau* culture of the Minangkabaus in the Malay Peninsula in "Negeri Sembilan: Rantau Minangkabau di Semenanjung Tanah Melayu" [4]. Peletz titled "Comparative Perspective on Kinship and Cultural Identity in Negeri Sembilan" [6], as well as a specific study on the social changes in Rembau, Negeri Sembilan in Ibrahim's work titled "Social Changes in Rembau" [7]. Most of the researches found were keen on the matter of local tradition of Negeri Sembilan and issues evolving around it. Moreover, we also found the work of De Jong titled "Islam versus Adat in Negeri Sembilan (Malaya)" [8] and Gullick titled "Law and the Adat Perpatih A Problem from Jelebu" [9].

According to such literature study, we barely found a research taking *Kebaya Setengah Tiang* up as its main discussion, in regards to the discovery of recent issues on the Minangkabaus identity. Therefore, this research meant to give an up-to-date analysis on *Kebaya Setengah Tiang* as a medium of cultural interconnectedness through the lens of historians.

The result of the Minang and Negeri Sembilan cross-culture was a hybrid culture, breed within a complex manner. The result of the influence of Minang culture to Negeri Sembilan was obvious and considerable. According to Nordholt, the crossing process came from three steps of identity reproduction, which were selective borrowing, mutual adaptation, and rearrangements of meaning [10].

An attire, or traditional dress as discussed in this paper, should not be seen as merely a cover of human naked body, because there were so much more meanings in a piece of clothing we wore on our bodies. We acknowledged that to be worn as a cover on the body was the basic function of clothing, but mankind had it modified through the course of history to the point where it was adjusted to the local climate and weather, and even conformed with the sociocultural needs of the people in communities. That way, clothing could have cultural meaning embedded to them, embodying the belief system, moral and values, as well as aesthetics embraced by the people wearing it. It also acted as a medium of communication, as clothing was able to present differing personalities or characteristics available in the society. Patterns and style were chosen to signify self, differing self from the other, and building an image that we desired others to perceive or interacted with [11].

Hence, traditional dress as a part of clothing for humans to wear and identify themselves was not merely a cover or shield of flesh and skin. It signified certain sociocultural values that it had been recognized as one of the traditional identity of the people in a particular community or society in general. The people wore traditional dresses while projecting their cultural identity as an element embedded in the clothing. In context of this research, the people of Negeri Sembilan understood this

creation and projection of meaning, which were carried out through Nordholt's notion on identity reproduction. They selectively borrowed a component out of the vast and prominent Minang culture, adapted through a series of assimilation process, and rearranged the meaning to meet their comprehension of what a culture could do to a tradition. Then, they discovered the Kebaya Setengah Tiang. Thus, the remaining question is: how far would the Minang culture and identity represent in the Kebaya Setengah Tiang of Negeri Sembilan? In which we were seek to elaborate in the next part of the article.

2. METHODS AND LIMITATION

This article was based on the search and analysis of historical sources, which were then interpreted to produce historical explanations related to events and processes that took place against individuals or groups of people in a society, in which depends on the determined context of particular space and time limitation. This research utilized textual sources that could be accessed on a limited basis, due to restrictions imposed by the government during pandemic. Thus, this article relied on literature studies and reviews of previous writings related to the Minangkabau diaspora and the significance of traditional dresses in the Malay world, among others through books and journal articles. This article was based on the then collected sources to construct historical writing that applies heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The development of this article had also been projected further, one of which was the upcoming field research – with online focus group discussion as the alternative, to obtain the latest data through the collection of oral history belonged in the collective memory of the people of Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia.

3. THEORETICAL APPROACH

The term “culture” was defined as a whole way of life that belonged to a particular group of people. It was also further explained implicitly that culture was learned and shared among the society, as argued by Linton [12]: “The culture of a society is the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation.”

On the other hand, identity could be etymologically described as a condition or a circumstance involving the same or similar pattern, element, and characteristic between two or more subjects/objects. Identity could also be understood as similarities found within individuals in a group. The concept of identity was tightly linked with cultural notions; as a matter of fact that identity could be developed through culture, or subculture, where a person took part or participate in a collective space.

Frosh [13] discovered that culture generated identity that was embedded to a person or individual within a group, as he elaborated:

“Theories in sophisticated, yet advanced, sociology and psychology emphasized that the identity of an individual was entirely multiplied and potentially diluted. It (identity) was constructed through experiences, coded linguistically. In the development of self-identity, people referred to the resources that are culturally available in their immediate social networks and in society as a whole. The process of identity construction was significantly influenced by contradictions, as well as dispositions of the sociocultural environment, which were surrounding the identity relentlessly.”

Cultural identity was a set of characteristics or features that was acquired and acknowledged by a group of people. The limitation of this identity was recognizable when we compared one characteristic to another. This also meant that in order to fully understand the establishment and development of a cultural identity, we could start examining the values, feelings, ways and orientations of thinking, as well as motives underlying these all, instead of empirically assess physical appearance or biological traits.

Another thing about cultural identity was that it could be interpreted as a distinctive component to eventually distinguish a group of people from the other groups available. Each group, community, or even a nation should have had its own cultural identity that was different from the others. At last, cultural identity belonged to each unit exclusively because of the uniqueness it held in. Therefore, cultural identity became a social construct that was expressed through various representations and noticed by other's perceptions because it showed specific signifiers, such as taste, belief, attitude, and lifestyle.

Clothing was one of the ways human would communicate to other human, as it was highlighted by Umberto Eco that we utilized various medium of communication in a lifetime. Through the uses of clothing, we developed the ability to convey a message or to transmit certain persona. Self-identity was generated through wearing pieces of cloth, as well as social class and the sophistication of a culture we decided to embrace.

Danesi expressed his idea of how clothing could be defined as a sign that amplify the primary signification of body within cultural context [14]. Clothing was more than just a cover or protection of human flesh and skin, but also a system of signs with interconnecting network with other systems of signs amongst society. Through this interconnecting network in the system of signs, we managed to transmit messages that exuded the information we want other to perceive, such as attitude, social status, belief, political inclination, and many more.

Later on, clothing was a concrete instance of a cultural amalgamation, in which clothing was the linking chain of self-identity to the more communal identity outside of self. Clothing was a language of self-expression, while in some cases it could be a symbol of greater aspirations, such as nationality and religion [15].

Kebaya Setengah Tiang was one of many examples that we could gather on the cultural identity of the people of Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. The traditional dress was the result of a striving cultural adaptation process as a part of the system of signs transmitted by the people to let their identities be known, as well as to make attachments between each self-identity to the communal identity. The communal identity reflected the narrative of origins and the ancestral value that had been preserved in the collective memory of the people living in Negeri Sembilan.

Every community had their own set of values that was deeply rooted to the traditions that have been passed down from one generation to the other. Kebaya Setengah Tiang was a cultural object, or we could also say a cultural product, that was full of values and was eligible to be bequeathed to the next generation. A collective memory was an important element to ensure the eligibility of the cultural product to be preserved and further passed down.

However, the traditional group in the whole Southeast Asian region could also understand collective memories as the source of knowledge, identity, and tradition of a culture, all of which were mostly orally transmitted. It had a power to unite people into a group, as well as to set difference that pull people apart into numbers of group. In Negeri Sembilan, collective memory became a rewarding component that served the people's need for identity and attachment to a particular group.

4. THE MIGRATION OF THE MINANGKABAU TO NEGERI SEMBILAN

During the 15th and 16th century, the migration of the Minangkabaus to the Malay Peninsula area was getting more and more frequent. To begin with, the migration followed the rapid growth of gold trading from Minangkabau to Malacca. In the following centuries, the trade commodity had shifted from gold to pepper, which then caused the people arriving from Minangkabau established settlements in Malacca. From Malacca, they reached other areas in the peninsula and started exploring more settlements. One of their destinations was an area in the north of Malacca, Negeri Sembilan [3].

The Minangkabaus who did *merantau* to the Malay Peninsula were departing from *Lima Puluh Kota* and *Tanah Datar* in Minangkabau, West Sumatra. In their place of origin, they had access to great rivers flowing to the orifice in the eastern coast of Sumatera. They set sail to cross the Malacca Strait to the peninsula area,

establishing a new space of life in Negeri Sembilan. Their arrival to Negeri Sembilan influenced the name of the tribes in the area, for there were twelve tribes with names derived from the name of districts in Minangkabau, such as Batuhampar, Payakumbuh, Mungkal, Tiga Nenek, Seri Melenggang (Simalanggang), Seri Lamak, Batu Belang, Tiga Batu, and Tanah Datar. Other than these twelve tribes, there were three more tribes consisted of half-Minang and half-Malay individuals due to the mixed marriage between the Minangkabaus and the locals, which were Biduanda, Anak Acheh, and Anak Melaka. To this day, there were nineteen tribes living side by side in Negeri Sembilan [3]

The name "Negeri Sembilan" also came from a configuration installed by the Minangkabaus in the area. These settled foreigners came and established *nagari* or village in a long period of time. According to the *tambo*, they made some houses (*taratak*) in a small area named *kampung*. One *kampung* grew into more *kampungs*, and then established as *dusun*. Some *dusuns* grew bigger and evolved into *kuto*, before eventually became a *nagari* with the whole traditionally operated small-state administration [4].

Nine *nagaris* were established, and therefore became the name of the area. The word "Negeri" came from "nagari", which translated into state (smaller state, in comparison with the current definition of what a state is), while the word "Sembilan" in Malay meant nine in English. The nine *nagaris* were Jelebu, Inas, Johol, Rembau, Sungai Ujong, Tampin, Jempol, Ulu Muar, and Gunung Pasir. Each *nagari* had different background of development, and therefore progressing on its own from time to time. However, there was a law called *Adat Perpatih* as a tie that bound the nine *nagaris*, led and oversaw by the *Undang*, or a group of *Datuk* (elders) who led each of the nine *nagaris* [3].

Politically, Negeri Sembilan did not have a sole or single leader until the end of the 18th century. The political administration over Negeri Sembilan transferred from one authority to another from time to time. Once, Negeri Sembilan belonged to or under the authority of Malacca, but then shifted after the conquest of Portugues of Malacca. At last, Negeri Sembilan became a part of Johor Sultanate, as the sultanate was the legitimate heir of Malacca's throne at that time. Only by the end of the 18th century, Negeri Sembilan was allowed to appoint its own king, which came from Minangkabau. As it was recorded within locals' collective memory [3]:

"Beraja ke Johor, bertali ke Siak, bertuan ke Minangkabau."

[Trans.]

“(Seek) the king to Johor, (seek) the affiliation to Siak, (seek) the lord to Minangkabau.”

In 1721, Negeri Sembilan were consisted of a small number of villages, led by the elders and under the recognized sovereignty from the Sultan of Johor. This showed how Zed’s elaboration from the collective memory entangled with the relationship Negeri Sembilan had with Johor, Siak, and Minangkabau. Siak was included in the configuration because in order to reach Negeri Sembilan, the Minangkabaus had to travel across Siak before crossing the Malacca Strait. To seek lordship in Minangkabau interpreted as the effort of the people in Negeri Sembilan to glorify the role of Minang leaders who helped establish Negeri Sembilan. At the same period, the conflict between Johor and Bugis had caused the Buginese, led by Daeng Kamboja, to rule over the peninsula area, including Negeri Sembilan as the vassal state of Johor. The elders of Negeri Sembilan rejected Daeng Kamboja’s rule over them, and then requested protection from Johor. The elders asked Sultan Abdul Jalil IV who was the Sultan of Johor at that time to allow them to invite a prince from Minangkabau who was believed to be able to expel the Buginese out of Negeri Sembilan, and Johor as well. Sultan Abdul Jalil IV explained how he was unable to do so, and therefore the elders asked permission to summon a prince from Minangkabau to be inaugurated as the king of Negeri Sembilan [1].

In 1773, the King Melewar from the Palace of Pagaruyung, succeeded his predecessor to become the ruler of Negeri Sembilan. He managed to apply Minangkabau’s customary law in the area, as well as expelling the Buginese out of Negeri Sembilan. There were at least three other kings who ruled Negeri Sembilan before the inauguration of King Melewar, namely King Kasah, King Adil, and King Khatib, but they had no success in alleviating the Buginese’s control over Negeri Sembilan. After the death of King Melewar in 1795, King Hitam (1795-1808) and King Lenggang (1808-1824) from the Palace of Pagaruyung were also summoned to continue Negeri Sembilan’s sovereignty over the domination imposed by the buginese through Johor and Selangor. King Lenggang arrived a year before the downfall of the Palace of Pagaruyung. His son, King Radin, who became the Yang Dipertuan Besar Negeri Sembilan, then succeeded him. King Radin’s descendants were the permanent heir (based on heredity) of Negeri Sembilan up to this day.

The migrants or the settled foreigners from Minangkabau, whether they were settled permanently or taking a round-trip between Minangkabau and Negeri Sembilan, had given significant influence toward the life-aspects of the people inhabiting Negeri Sembilan. They helped with land clearing for agricultural activities, as well as establishing trading networks to advance the

economic sector and the capability of the locals. In the cultural aspect, the Minangkabaus had brought various traditions along with their diasporic journey to the peninsula, all of which were still preserved dearly. For example, we could still find the musical instrument of Minangkabau origin, which was *Caklempong* (also known as *Taklempong* in West Sumatra), the traditional Piring Dance (*Tari Piring*, a dance whom dancer swung two small plates in both of their palms), the Negeri Sembilan variation of Rendang, as well as traditional dress of Kebaya Setengah Tiang. The following part of the article would discuss about how the traditional Minang dress could arrive at Negeri Sembilan. The discussion would lead us to the understanding of the narrative of origins of the Minangkabaus in Negeri Sembilan, who started as nomads at first.

5. THE TRADITIONAL DRESS OF THE MINANGKABAU

Traditional dresses were central to the performances carried out during ceremonial events in West Sumatra, because these dresses showcased a number of meaningful cultural messages. There were certain rules to wear the dresses, such as on what occasion should we wore Kebaya Setengah Tiang or which dress were for elders only, and others. These rules were usually taught orally from one generation to the other [16].

One of the imminent rule was about the designation of these traditional dresses among the people in the whole village of Negeri Sembilan. The Minangkabaus who chose to settle in to the local community of Negeri Sembilan acknowledged two main areas of settlement: *luhak* and *rantau*. *Luhak* was a term to identify the place of origin, while *rantau* was used to describe the destined area. Several *luhak* known to them were *Luhak Tanah Datar*, *Luhak Lima Puluh Kota*, and *Luhak Agam* [16]. This inferred to the fact that these people migrating from Minangkabau was coming from these three areas, especially the first two mentioned, because they had convenient access to them.

In this case, *luhak* as the place of origin of the settled foreigners also determined the variation showcased on the traditional dresses. The basic elements of the dresses might be quite similar or even the same, but there was still a slight of variations. The examples of differing variations could be seen in the dress for *Penghulu* (*Ninik Mamak*/the Chief) and the *Bundo Kandang* dress. Other variations included daily attire for elderly and young people in general [16].

Penghulu is the leader of the tribe. He managed the people belonged to his tribe, which were basically his own close kin. In the Minang language, *Penghulu* was an occupation that was recognized with the word *Ninik Mamak*. Some of the notable elements of *Penghulu*’s dress were a headdress called *saluak* or *destar*, a loosely

fitted black blouse, a trouser, a sash called *cawek*, a cotton sarong-like shawl called *kciak*, and a ceremonial knife or *keris*. Some other tribes would use a staff and *songket* sarong to cover the upper leg area [16].

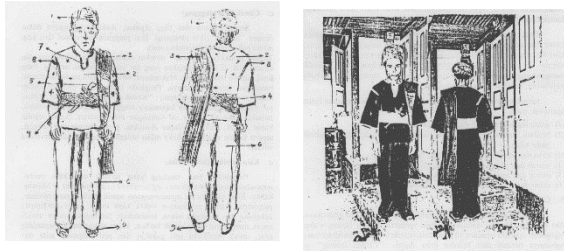


Figure 1. The traditional dress for Penghulu of Batipuh Village, Tanah Datar Regency, West Sumatra

Moving on to the Bundo Kandung dress for women who were considered as prudent members of their tribe. These women, the Bundo Kandung, held the role as advisers whenever the tribe had to deal with inconvenient matters. Not all women in Minangkabau were advisers and therefore not all women were allowed to wear the dresses. The tribe often trusted these women to keep most heirlooms and other precious items owned by the tribe [16].

The Bundo Kandung dress also had particular elements attached to it, such as a headdress called *tengkuluk tanduk* or *tengkuluk ikat*, a long blouse called *baju kurung*, a piece of sarong that was wore as the skirt, and a sash-like shawl that was wore across the shoulder and chest area. They combined this fine traditional dress with gold earrings, necklaces, and bangles.

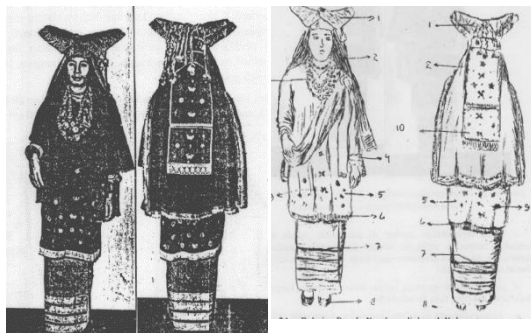


Figure 2. The Bundo Kandung dress from Payakumbuh Village in Lima Puluh Kota Regency

Other than the two mentioned above, they also had daily attires for the elders and the young people that were consisted of similar elements. Both had a headdress called *tengkuluk* (a more common version of *tengkuluk* of the Bundo Kandung dress), an over the knee-length *baju kurung*, and a sarong as the skirt. The headdress for this daily attire was made of a cotton scarf wrapped around the head with both scarf ends facing back, while

the sarong could be from the *songket*, velvet, or batik cloth, as seen on the figure below:

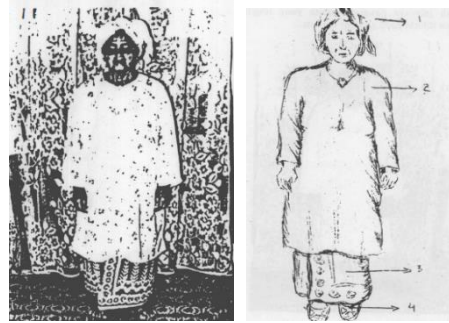


Figure 3. The daily attire of the elder women (not the Bundo Kandung) in Minangkabau

And for the younger women, the elements were quite similar. The only difference were the additional accessories, such as *panyiaram* necklace, *rago-rago* necklace, or just as simple as a set of beads necklace. The additional accessories gave a social leverage to those who wore it, because the use of accessories signified the socioeconomical status of the woman. Also, it was obvious that the daily attire of the young women had more patterns than the previous one, as we could see on the figure below:

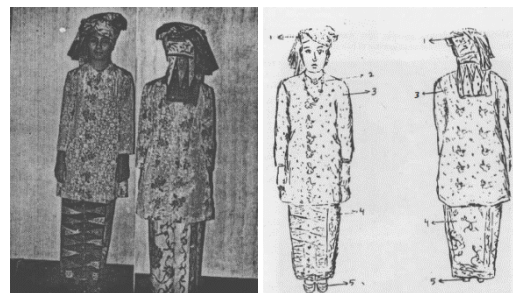


Figure 4. The daily attire of the younger women (not the Bundo Kandung) in Minangkabau

6. KEBAYA SETENGAH TIANG AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE MINANG CULTURE

One of the purposes of migration was to transmit the cultural value. This purpose manifested in a quite robust manner as it became the rationale of the Minangkabaus' act of *merantau*. The fundamental purpose of *Merantau*, or later could be translated as wandering, was not to move or settle in permanently, but more of a temporary stay to recover the peace and stability in their place of origin. For this reason, the communication between the wanderers (or *perantau*) and their place of origin should be maintained simultaneously. They brought supplies, as well as cultural values from the place of origin to the destined area of migration, to create a cultural channel in order to introduce their origins and indigenous identity.

They had gone through the process of channeling, which were adaptation and orientation, to the local culture [1].

The adaptation and orientation we discussed in this article were when the Minangkabaus migrating to Negeri Sembilan experienced a prolonged maturing process. The political influence of the Minangkabaus became a lot more dominant after the appointment of King Melewar as the ruler of Negeri Sembilan. More and more people from Minangkabau arrived in Negeri Sembilan, to the point where the area was identified as the main destination for Minang migration in the peninsular area. Negeri Sembilan also became closely tied to Minangkabau. The practice of Adat Perpatih was an example of how the Minangkabau had influenced Negeri Sembilan both politically and socially. It gave certain leverage on how Undang and Yang Dipertuan Besar Negeri Sembilan were chosen, and introduced Negeri Sembilan to a strongly rooted matrilineal system in the social life of the Minangkabaus.

Adat Perpatih, or the matrilineal tradition was the tradition that maintained the succession line based on the lineage of the mothers in the community, which had been already adjusted to the Malay community in Negeri Sembilan before the introduction of English Common Law. Therefore, it meant that Adat Perpatih had become integral with Negeri Sembilan since year of 1066. The official website of the Kingdom of Negeri Sembilan mentioned a narrative on how Adat Perpatih was introduced to the area. It was a set of traditional law and measurements, originated from the social system that was believed and carried out by the Minangkabaus in Sumatra, who travelled across the Strait of Malacca to reach Malay Peninsula in the 17th century, or exactly the year of 1613 [17]. However, Adat Perpatih practiced in Negeri Sembilan was the modified version of the original one, because the system or the traditio had to be adjusted further to be accepted as a synergistic set of rule that matched the sociocultural condition applied within the society inhabiting Negeri Sembilan, including the tribes in the innermost part of the area.

Moreover, the familiarization of the customary law of the Minangkabaus was also explained further by De Jong as the dynastic myth, which referred to the tale of a man from Negeri Sembilan who was looking for a new king to reign over the traditional monarchy in his homeland to the Palace of Pagaruyung in West Sumatra [17]. He travelled all the way to West Sumatra during the occupancy of Johor in Negeri Sembilan, which Negeri Sembilan was one of the vassal areas of Johor. At the same time, Johor was dealing with a tough situation with the invasion of Raja Kecil from Siak. Johor was later gaining confidence from the support given by the Five Opu Daeng of Bugis, South Sulawesi, putting Negeri Sembilan under both Johor and Bugis in the state of what De Jong addressed as powerless passivity. Nevertheless, Negeri Sembilan was consisted of a number of

matrilineal clans with no central government administering them all. This was considered to be a rather feeble unity instead of mutually coexisting tribes and states that could be compromised if there was austere cohesion. One internal conflict would trigger these clans to fall apart. This was later caused the man from Negeri Sembilan to look after the king at the Palace of Pagaruyung, for he believed that Minangkabau was the place of his origins, as well as the people in his homeland. Hence, he met King Melewar who later became the *Maharaja Negeri Sembilan from Minangkabau*.

The Adat Perpatih in Negeri Sembilan had been gone through at least three modifications, all of which were *Undang-undang Nan Tigo* (the Three Laws), *Adat Tarik Baleh*, and *Adat Tuah Disakato*. A notable nobleman, who went by the name Datuk Perpatih Nan Sabatang, mapped out the matrilineal system as the juxtaposition of the patrilineal system designed by Datuk Ketemenggungan prior to this. Both systems were put to practice altogether, causing the two Datuk to be at odds because both claimed to be the descendants of the Maharaja Negeri Sembilan from Minangkabau. Datuk Perpatih Nan Sabatang and Datuk Ketemenggungan caught in a dispute regarding the status of Adityawarman, the King of Minangkabau who got raised and educated in Java. Datuk Ketemenggungan believed that Adityawarman was the King of Minangkabau, while Datuk Perpatih Nan Sabatang refused to acknowledge such belief, even though he knew himself that Adityawarman had married to their sister.

Eventually, there were two competing customary law in Negeri Sembilan, which later known as *Laras Nan Dua* that was consisted of the *Koto Piliang* under Datuk Ketemenggungan, who led the monarchy in an aristocratic way, and the *Bodi Caniago* under Datuk Perpatih Nan Sabatang, who was conducting a more democratic government [18][19]. To put an end to the dispute and to start reaching a mutual consensus, both lineage systems were regulated under the same law of *Adat Tuah Disakato*. This law was described as the recent or the last phase and modification of the customary law applied to the Minangkabaus. Up to this day, Adat Tuah Disakato was also known as *Adat Alam Minangkabau*, discussing Adat Perpatih in one of the chapters it had.

More on Adat Perpatih, the law managed the relationship between humans within societies, law system, government, traditions, ownership right, land right, kinship system, balance of nature, and many other aspects of life. The customary law was constantly adjusted and recalibrated dynamically to the suit the current development. The matrilineal system in Adat Perpatih was not rigid, limited, or exclusive, as described in the literatures found by. The system was preserved well, but it was not the law that was preserving the system, but more of what Schneider identified as extended families [20].

As a matter of reflection, the cultural transmission process of Adat Perpatih to Negeri Sembilan was not as rigid as it would apply in the political sphere. Culture was meant to be fluid in order to fit the vessel. One of the fluid characteristics of culture could be seen in the design of Kebaya Setengah Tiang as the traditional dress of Negeri Sembilan, with embedded Minang characteristic. Unlike the Bundo Kanduang dress or the daily attire we had discussed prior to this chapter, Kebaya Setengah Tiang did not use baju kurung as the blouse, but the kebaya or the long-sleeved blouse with opening at the front and secured with gold brooches. The length of kebaya blouse was not as long as baju kurung, but both blouses were loosely fitted. The design of the kebaya was identical with the commonly worn clothing in both Malay and Minang culture, as could be seen from the figure below:



Figure 5. The design and clothing etiquette of Kebaya Setengah Tiang in Negeri Sembilan

There were some opinions surfacing about the similarities between baju kurung and kebaya. Baju kurung were seen as a longer version of kebaya, with no openings or buttons. Baju kurung was simply an evolution of the clothing etiquette of Minang women, in regards to the arrival of Islam in the east coast of Sumatra and the surrounding strait settlements. Islam required women to cover most of their body parts, which was called *aurat*, and to wear loose clothing to avoid showing body curves. And therefore, kebaya evolved into baju kurung [11]. The only difference between these two blouses was the front opening. However, the word “kebaya” was considered as a derivative from a word in Arabic, which was “abaya” or “kaba”. Lombard clarified the fact by explaining that the word “abaya” or “kaba” meant clothing in Arabic [21]. Kebaya was also mentioned in the record of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, the English Governor resided in Singapore, which later published as a book titled *History of Java*.

Other opinions were trying to put some relations between kebaya and the clothing of Portuguese women. In Portuguese culture, there was this blouse that is very similar to kebaya, only it was an over-the-knee-length one. The earliest model accounted for this piece of clothing in Nusantara was the Sundanese kebaya [11]. Thus, this opinion led to the assumption that the kebaya in Negeri Sembilan might also get the influence from the Javanese migrants arriving in to the Malay Peninsula, or

from the conquering Portuguese in the Malacca. Regardless of which theory was correct, kebaya as a traditional dress had been acknowledged and worn by every woman in Negeri Sembilan, even up until today.

We could see two variations of kebaya nowadays, namely the regular kebaya and the knee-length kebaya. But the design of the kebaya provided us more complexions. There was Kartini kebaya, a relatively loose and long kebaya, and Kutubaru kebaya, a blouse with the length of around the hip and tight fitted to purposely show body curves [11].

Kebaya Setengah Tiang in Negeri Sembilan was an adapted version between the regular and long kebaya, because it was often a hip-length blouse that was quite similar to the daily attire of the young Minang women. The front part of the kebaya was parted in the middle, but then covered in additional folds in both sides of the parting, so that the buttons were not visible and therefore made it slightly different to the Javanese kebaya. It was also designed with a set of collar [5].

Young women put this kebaya on almost in every occasion, mostly as daily attire or to attend a wedding ceremony. They wore cotton kebaya with floral design as daily attire or to go farming, but wore brocade kebaya with songket to attend wedding ceremonies. It became a trend to wear Kebaya Setengah Tiang in the 1950s because of its versatility. Kebaya Setengah Tiang was also worn by the aristocrats in the monarchy, such as Tunku Ampuan Durah, Tunku Ampuan Khursiah, and Tunku Ampuan Najihah [5].

We could also see how the kebaya was mixed with multiple kinds of regular sarong or the more expensive and beautifully designed songket and brocade, depends on the significance and the necessity of the occasion. Another element worth to discuss was perhaps the *tengkuluk* or the headdress of Kebaya Setengah Tiang. *Tengkuluk* was an integral part of the dress and we could identify that it was compulsory for Minang women to wear *tengkuluk* because it was a way for them to wrap their hair around. Hair was considered as *aurat* in Islamic teaching, but these women were allowed to wear their *tengkuluk* in a culturally fashionable manner, which made it look similar to the Gadang house of the Minangkabau. *Tengkuluk* of the Bundo Kanduang dress had pointy edges on it that was resembling a pair of horns, but *tengkuluk* in Kebaya Setengah Tiang was less pointy, although it still resembled a pair of horns. It showed how much women owned the pride, tradition, and power in Minang culture, as well as in the Minang-Malay women in Negeri Sembilan.

7. CONCLUSION

The influence of the Minang culture upon Negeri Sembilan was brought by the settled foreigners who migrated to the Malay Peninsula area after adopting the

three processes identified by Nordholt as identity reproduction, consisting of selective borrowing, mutual adaptation, and rearrangements of meaning [11]. These three processes gave a new meaning to the way women of Negeri Sembilan dressed themselves. Kebaya Setengah Tiang was the product born out of this process, so that it was the result of identity reproduction of the assimilated Minang-Malay people in Negeri Sembilan. This process came from the extraction of the collective memory belonged to the people in Negeri Sembilan, preserving every information they remembered from time to time to transmit it to the future generations through oral tradition. Therefore, it could help our understanding about the relation, and even the network or connection, existed between the Minangkabaus and the Malay world.

The collective memory became the source of their interpretation of many cultural values molded into the elements of the dress. Specifically, we could see how tengkuluk was also used along with Kebaya Setengah Tiang, and it had much deeper meaning than just being an accessory, let alone a headdress. Tengkuluk became the symbol of the matrilineal system of the Minangkabaus. The adaptation process between Minang and Malay culture had manifested in a mutual rearrangement of meaning and showcased on how fluid the society in the cultural level could have become.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: L. Sunarti, Afriadi, N.F.L. Sari, R.S. Haghia; Methodology: N.F.L. Sari; Validation: L. Sunarti; Formal Analysis: Afriadi; Writing: L. Sunarti, Afriadi; Review and Editing: N.F.L. Sari, R.S. Haghia.

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