

KEBAYA

by Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia,
Singapore, Thailand



MULTINATIONAL NOMINATION OF

KEBAYA

Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand



KEBAYA:

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, TRADITIONS AND PRACTICES

Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand have jointly submitted a multinational nomination of *kebaya* to UNESCO under the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The nomination represents and celebrates our rich shared history, promotes cross-cultural understanding, and continues to be present and actively practiced by many communities across Southeast Asia.

The *kebaya* meets the definition of an intangible cultural heritage element, as it involves traditional craftsmanship skills such as embroidery and sewing techniques to make this traditional women's garment. The knowledge, skills, traditions and practices related to the *kebaya* are associated with women of all ages, backgrounds and religions from various communities. It transcends and connects these communities, who share the knowledge and skills of making and wearing the *kebaya* with one another.



01

Malaysia hosted the first workshop on the joint *kebaya* nomination in Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan, in November 2022

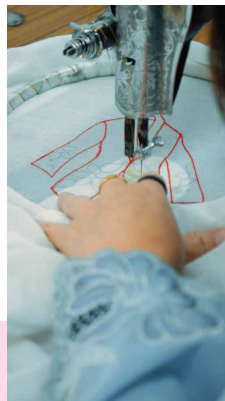


02

Indonesia hosted the second workshop on the joint *kebaya* nomination in Jakarta in February 2023



Sewed the *kebaya*



Embroidered the *kebaya*



The passing down of skills and knowledge from previous generation to the next, ensures that the *kebaya* continues to be safeguarded

KEBAYA, OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE

The *kebaya* is considered to be one of the oldest garments in Southeast Asia. Whether short or long, the *kebaya* is often the garment of choice for formal wear, ceremonial occasions, daily wear and performing arts. It represents a significant part of the cultural heritage and identity of diverse communities, and reflects the blend of cultures in Southeast Asia.



The short *kebaya* is usually worn by Peranakan women, including Nyonya and Chetti women



The Peranakan long *kebaya* is known as *baju panjang* (long blouse) or *baju belah labuh* (long split blouse). It is made from see-through voile or gauze fabric and is typically worn with a white camisole



The long *kebaya* is typically worn by Malay women throughout Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore

KEBAYA, OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE

The *kebaya* remains popular and is worn by various ethnic communities in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand including the Malay, Peranakan (Chinese, Baba Nyonya, Chetti, Kristang, Peranakan Jawi), Javanese, Eurasian, Siamese and other communities. Meanwhile, in the market, the *kebaya* continues to create economic opportunities for skilled makers and craft persons.

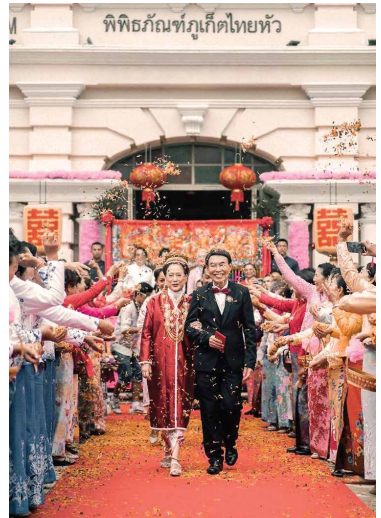


The *kebaya* is represented in film/dramas, depicting its significance in societies across time



KEBAYA, OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE

- ◀ The *kebaya* is worn in dance performances
- ◀ The *kebaya* is often chosen for weddings



- ◀ The wearing of the *kebaya* in parade during Independent Day celebrations



KEBAYA, OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE



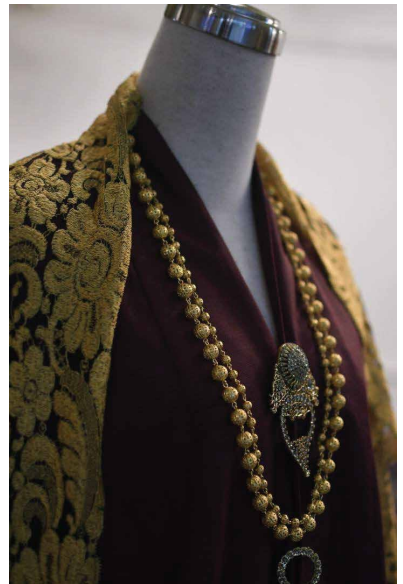
Examples of diverse styles of *kebaya*



THE MAGIC TOUCH OF *KEBAYA*

Kebaya represents an elegant and dignified way of dressing that has evolved over time with the lifestyles of Southeast Asian women. It continues to be relevant today, as the attire consistently references its historical roots while remaining open to modifications and experimentation. *Kebaya* is still widely worn today, thanks to the magical touch of local designers who have produced a variety of *kebaya* designs, ranging from simple to luxurious.

The making of *kebaya* involves specific skills and knowledge, including preparation, design, fabrics selection, cutting, and adding accompaniments, as well as various sewing and embroidery techniques. Traditionally, these skills and knowledge were transmitted informally from mothers to daughters, but over time, men were also involved. Formal training is now provided in schools, workshops and classes by craft practitioners. There are many talented female and male designers, craftspersons and experts in *kebaya* from different communities.



THE MAGIC TOUCH OF *KEBAYA*

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

Farhanna Pura

NA FORRER

Driven by a deep reverence for Bruneian Malay heritage, the empowering ethos of Power Dressing, Farhanna Pura launched her demi-couture brand, NA FORRÉR (pronounced Na - For - Rare), in 2010. Based in the tropical oasis of Brunei Darussalam, NA FORRÉR merges tradition with modernity. The brand is created with the modern muse in mind—a woman who embodies both class and edginess. She is a muse, a connoisseur of art who appreciates the luxury of tailored pieces.



THE MAGIC TOUCH OF *KEBAYA*

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

Efah Emran

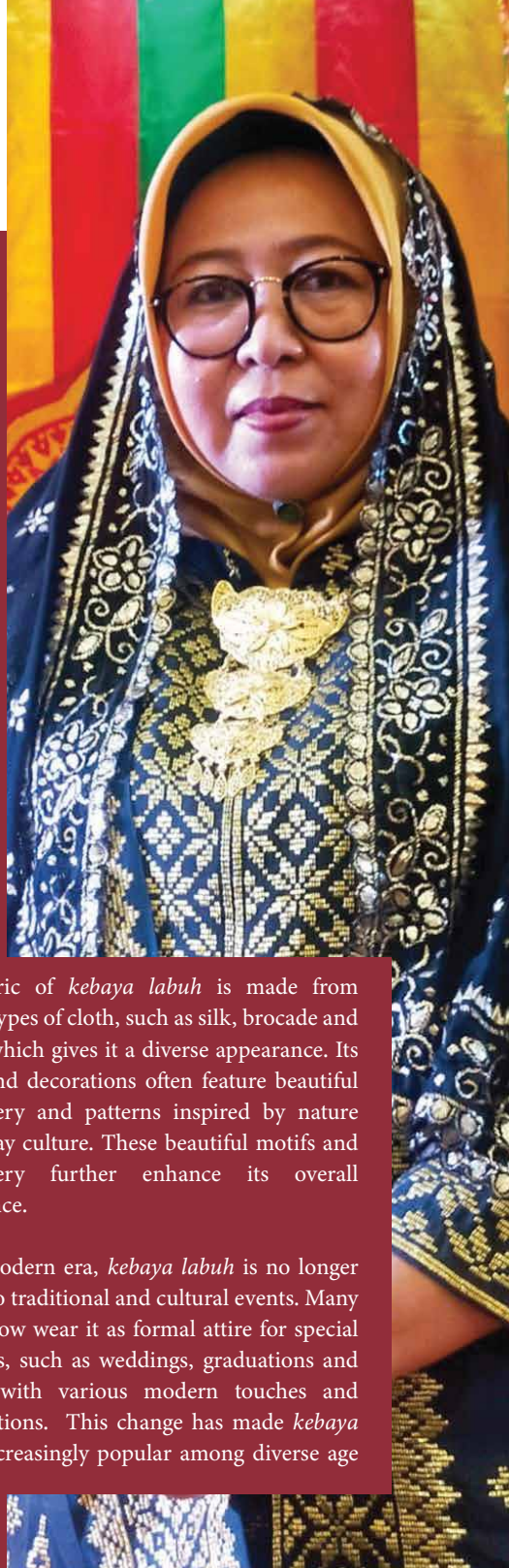
LITTLE DAYANG

Founded by Efah Emran, an experienced fashion designer and entrepreneur, LITTLE DAYANG has been a prominent name in the fabric and bespoke couture business for nearly a decade. Besides providing exquisite, custom-crafted designs, LITTLE DAYANG is also dedicated to nurturing local talent. The brand empowers aspiring fashion designers from Brunei Darussalam by providing comprehensive consultations and services, along with its high-quality bespoke couture offerings.



THE MAGIC TOUCH OF *KEBAYA* INDONESIA

Raja Suzana Fitri
INDERA SAKTI CULTURAL FOUNDATION



Raja Suzana Fitri, born on Penyengat Island in the Riau Islands Province, is actively involved in various cultural and literary activities in the region. Her interest in the legacy of Malay heritage, particularly in the *kebaya*, is expressed through her writing, which features traditional Malay *kebaya* patterns that once thrived in the past, such as *kebaya labuh*, *Pesak Enam*, *Belah Bentan*, and *Gunting Jubah*, which are also variants of *kebaya* found in the Riau Islands. Active as a *kebaya* maestro, she owns a collection of traditional Malay *kebayas* that are decades old, with one of the oldest being the *Kebaya Engku Puteri Raja Hamidah* from around 1830.

The fabric of *kebaya labuh* is made from various types of cloth, such as silk, brocade and cotton, which gives it a diverse appearance. Its motifs and decorations often feature beautiful embroidery and patterns inspired by nature and Malay culture. These beautiful motifs and embroidery further enhance its overall appearance.

In the modern era, *kebaya labuh* is no longer limited to traditional and cultural events. Many people now wear it as formal attire for special occasions, such as weddings, graduations and parties, with various modern touches and modifications. This change has made *kebaya labuh* increasingly popular among diverse age groups.

THE MAGIC TOUCH OF *KEBAYA*

INDONESIA

Mellyana Anggraini
SANGGAR LEMBAYUNG

Mellyana Anggraini's passion for the *kebaya* was inherited from her parents, who were both artists. Her interest in history, traditional textiles and performing arts drives her to preserve and immortalize moments through these mediums, which are closely tied to Malay culture. Almost all Malay traditional ceremonies involve traditional clothing, such as *baju kurung* and *kebaya labuh*, which are crucial for showcasing artistic works.

Mellyana strives to introduce *kebayas* and other traditional attire complemented by accessories like shawls, stacked brooches, and more. Besides traditional *kebaya labuh*, she also focuses on developing designs with more ethnic and contemporary touches to make them appealing to all ages. Through these efforts, she hopes that the younger generation will inherit the values embodied in *kebaya labuh*.



THE MAGIC TOUCH OF *KEBAYA*

INDONESIA

Vielga Wennida

ROEMAH *KEBAYA* VIELGA

Vielga Wennida is the owner of a women's fashion company that emphasizes quality, craftsmanship, and up-to-date trends. Roemah *Kebaya* Vielga was founded in 2011, driven by her passion and commitment to actively preserve the art of traditional embroidery. This decorative art is created through fine, detailed, and beautiful manual stitching, which is synonymous with intricate skill.

Roemah *Kebaya* Vielga prioritizes Indonesian women's clothing featuring a modern *kebaya* style, combined with fine embroidery and beautiful colour combinations, giving a fresh, cheerful, and elegant impression to the wearer. It also makes it easier to find matching bottoms or dresses for the wearer.

Roemah *Kebaya* Vielga's collection includes various *kebaya* models, such as *kebaya encim*, *bolero kebaya*, *long kebaya (gamis)*. Roemah *Kebaya* Vielga's collection includes various *kebaya* models, such as *kebaya encim*. One notable piece from Roemah *Kebaya* Vielga's collection is the *Kebaya Kerancang*, a traditional *Betawi kebaya* that combines modern contemporary cuts. Their *kebaya* collection has been featured in several national and international fashion shows, including *Istana Berkebaya*, held in August 2023 at Merdeka Palace, Jakarta.



THE MAGIC TOUCH OF KEBAYA

MALAYSIA

Lim Yu Lin

ANG ENG NYONYA KEBAYA

Established in 1955, Ang Eng was founded by Yu Lin's maternal grandmother, the late Madam Lim Wah Choon (1924-1998), in Pekan Cina, Alor Setar. The business later expanded to Kuala Lumpur and Singapore by her daughters in the late 1970s. Yu Lin is the third generation of Ang Eng. She graduated from LaSalle International Fashion School in 1995 and worked for Club 21 fashion retail lines for seven years before taking over the Ang Eng business in 2003. She became influenced by both her grandmother and mother as she frequently accompanied them on sourcing trips and customers meetings. In 2003, while they were still operating their shop in Ampang Park, Yu Lin and her mother had the opportunity to present a *Nyonya kebaya* collection at KL Fashion Week, organized by The Star Publication. Under her mother's supervision, Yu Lin successfully opened additional shops in Suria KLCC (from 2008 to 2014), Great Eastern Mall (from 2003 to 2021), and Bibik Closet in KLIA (from 2012 to 2013).



THE MAGIC TOUCH OF KEBAYA MALAYSIA

Lim Yu Lin
ANG ENG NYONYA KEBAYA

Besides producing traditional *Nyonya kebaya*, Yu Lin also introduced new designs such as *baju kurung*, *baju bibik* and *batik cheongsam* with *Peranakan* elements. She created kebayas with personalized designs because she believes that the *kebaya* not just a garment, but has a story to tell. Yu Lin designed inspired by Malaysian themes, such as the *Merdeka kebaya* and *kuih kebaya*. One of her latest creations features the national flowers of five countries - Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand - in conjunction with the joint nomination of the *kebaya* to UNESCO.

She has been interviewed by various media outlets, including Agence France-Press (AFP), Tatler Malaysia, NHK, TV1, TV3, and Bernama about the *Nyonya kebaya*. She has also collaborated closely with Department of National Heritage to promote the *Nyonya kebaya* by demonstrating her embroidery skills at a UNESCO conference.

Yu Lin's boutique, Ang Eng, is currently located at Lot C1-G, Dataran Palma, 68000 Ampang, Selangor.



THE MAGIC TOUCH OF *KEBAYA*

MALAYSIA

Zahalina Ab. Rahman

BAHARI ASYEK

BAHARI ASYEK was first established in 2010 by its founder, Zahalina Ab Rahman, driven by her passion for traditional Malay culture and customs. Her aim was to create a legacy of traditional Malay attire for the younger generations. The word *Bahari* in Malay refers to the essence of old heritage, customs, and culture that have gradually faded from society, while *Asyek* means to be captivated or in love. Collectively, these terms signify 'Falling in love with Malay heritage.' After leaving a local media company in 2006, Zahalina started her small-scale business by importing exclusive fabrics from cotton-producing countries.

Thus, Bahari Asyek Sdn Bhd was established in 2010, marking the beginning of Zahalina's journey into clothing design, particularly traditional Malay attire, to meet customer demands. Despite lacking a formal fashion design background, she immersed herself in creating designs that revitalized traditional garments. Her love for design and culture formed a strong foundation for her fashion pursuits.



THE MAGIC TOUCH
OF KEBAYA
MALAYSIA

Zahalina Ab. Rahman
BAHARI ASYEK



Bahari Asyek's collections stand out in the market, featuring original artistic touches and high-quality fabrics that distinguish them from local offerings. The brand's unique selling point is that the quality of its fabrics supports the value of its clothing designs. Among the designs of the *kebayas*, the *Cik Siti Wan Kembang Kebaya* is closely associated with Bahari Asyek. The design of the kebaya is inspired by the attire of the legendary Cik Siti Wan Kembang, a princess adorned in pieces of songket fabric and limar fabric draped over the shoulder to below the knee. This *kebaya* has gained significant attention among Malaysian women, especially on special occasions.

Zahalina's boutique is currently located at Emira Residence, Section 13, Shah Alam, Selangor.



THE MAGIC TOUCH OF *KEBAYA* MALAYSIA

Salikin Sidek

MAHLIGAI SALIKIN SIDEK

SALIKIN SIDEK is a fashion designer, entrepreneur, instructor, and author with extensive experience and expertise in the field of fashion, particularly in traditional attire. He began his career as a costume designer before specializing in traditional clothing. Salikin introduced his first clothing label, Sali Design & Customade, in 1991. Through the brand, he actively created costumes for movie productions, celebrity stage performances, and parade events. It was only in 2001 that the Salikin Sidek brand was developed.

He participated in Kuala Lumpur Fashion Week from 2004 to 2006 and produced many traditional *kebaya*s using local songket fabric. Additionally, Salikin published a book entitled 'Variations of Traditional Costume' which includes different types of Malay traditional clothing fashions, like the *kebaya* dress. He also teaches *kebaya* dress sewing workshops and take part in traditional fashion exhibitions at museums across Malaysia.

Salikin supplies and designs traditional Malay clothing for the National Textile Museum in Kuala Lumpur. He is also a member of the Persatuan Pencinta Tekstil Malaysia (Citra). Salikin Sidek's Boutique is currently located at Plaza RAH, Jalan Raja Abdullah, Kuala Lumpur.



THE MAGIC TOUCH OF *KEBAYA* SINGAPORE

Raymond Wong
RUMAH KIM CHOO

Raymond Wong is a Chinese Peranakan designer and embroiderer known for his craftsmanship in Peranakan *kebaya*-making. He is the co-owner of boutique Rumah Kim Choo, where he conducts classes to teach and promote the craft of Peranakan beadwork and embroidery on the *kebaya*.

Beyond training his staff at his boutique, Raymond has mentored numerous interns, including students from LASALLE College of the Arts. He has actively promoted greater appreciation of the Peranakan *kebaya* by sharing his knowledge through various platforms, including talks, forums, conventions, and interviews, both locally and internationally.

To ensure that his craft remains accessible while maintaining its cultural essence, Raymond explores new methods and techniques like machine embroidery and digital prints. His *kebaya* pieces have also been extensively featured in various museum exhibitions, fashion shows, and arts productions, both in Singapore and internationally.

Raymond is a 2023 recipient of the National Heritage Board, Singapore's Stewards of Intangible Cultural Heritage Award, for his contributions to Peranakan beadwork and embroidery; and the Craft and Practices related to the Peranakan *kebaya*.



THE MAGIC TOUCH OF *KEBAYA* SINGAPORE

Ratianah Tahir **KEBAYA BY RATIANAH**

Ratianah Tahir, owner of the boutique *Kebaya by Ratianah*, specialises in making traditional garments such as *kebaya* and *baju kurung*, ranging from bespoke to ready-made pieces. This heritage business is located right in the heart of the historic conservation area of Kampong Gelam.

Ratianah is known for her ability to transform a simple piece of fabric into designs that flatter her customers' silhouettes and meet their preferences. By experimenting with fabrics, colours, and fit, she believes in making *kebaya* styles that are accessible to all.

Today, her daughter Putri Nadirah Hassan, helps run the store and manage customers, as well as style fashion shoots for the shop. Putri promotes *kebaya* to younger customers through social media marketing and promotion of her mother's contemporary *kebaya* designs.

To raise awareness and educate the younger generation about *kebaya*, the heritage business recently developed a series of customised *kebaya*-wearing dolls attached with a QR code to access gamified content for young children aged 2 years and older to learn about *kebaya* and Malay culture. The project was supported by the National Heritage Board, Singapore's Organisation Transformation Grant, which encourages heritage businesses to adopt transformative efforts that contributes to the long-term viability of their business.



THE MAGIC TOUCH OF *KEBAYA*

THAILAND



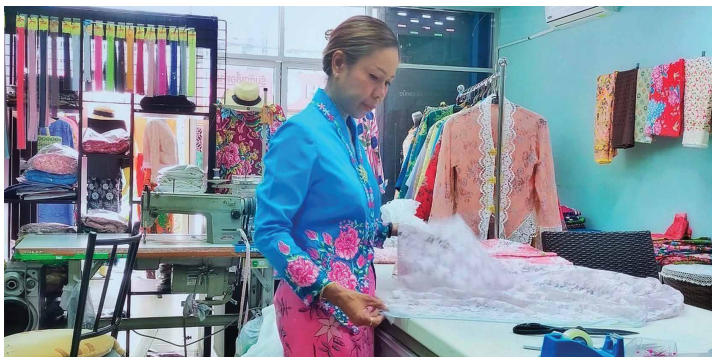
Malee Pienbamroong

Malee Pienbamroong, a local embroiderer from southern Thailand, was selecting fine pieces of clothes in her workshop



Kanjana Rakmitra

Kanjana Rakmitra, a *kebaya* designer from Phuket, was dressing a young lady who appreciated traditional style in her shop



Thanaporn Sanjamla

The Thai *kebaya* dressmaker, Thanaporn Sanjamla, was happily cutting a new *kebaya* for her longtime customer

KEBAYA AND COMMUNITIES

Various communities and groups are involved in the making and safeguarding of *kebaya* and its associated skills. These include practitioners (craftpersons and designers), *kebaya* activists, formal groups and associations representing cultural communities, business associations (e.g. those in textiles), advocates for *kebaya*, private collectors, performing arts groups that wear *kebaya*, educators in fashion design and textiles, as well as youths and students who design *kebaya* during their studies.



Programme on the *kebaya* organized by related association



The *kebaya* worn by various ethnic groups



Fashion designers are diversifying the cuts and motifs of the *kebaya* to offer a wider range of *kebaya* options in the market



The *kebaya*-making course and workshop

KEBAYA AND COMMUNITIES

The *kebaya* is worn by various communities as daily or casual wear, as well as formal attire for official events, weddings, celebrations, wakes (e.g. mourning periods), and cultural festivals, e.g. Hari Raya, Lunar New Year. Its motifs and colours reflect diverse cultures and influences, represent different meanings, and are often associated with specific occasions.



Wearing *kebaya* on special occasion



◀ 'Jom! Sarapan Berkebaya' event (wearing the *kebaya* while having breakfast)



◀ The *Kebaya* Run event



Wearing *kebaya* on daily life

KEBAYA AND COMMUNITIES



Performers dressed in *kebaya* at the closing fest of The Malay Heritage Centre, Singapore



Kebaya Competition participated by young generation



Kebaya Talk



OUR
KEBAYA
OUR
CULTURE