

## ***Kebaya Janggan* and Emotional Narrative: *Sanggit* Reinterpretation of Traditional Costume in *Gadis Kretek***

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### **Abstract**

Film costumes shape and support the characters portrayed and play a crucial role in building cultural meanings and symbols for the characters and the film. Dasiyah's costume in the original series *Gadis Kretek* is particularly intriguing for study due to its unique traditional *kebaya*, distinct from the other characters, and its distinctive use of form and color. This research aims to analyze the traditional *kebaya* worn by Dasiyah in the original series *Gadis Kretek*. This study employs a qualitative method with an intrinsic case study approach. Data were obtained from the original series *Gadis Kretek* and literature relevant to the research topic. Data collection was conducted through observation and literature review. Interpretative analysis utilizing the concept of *sanggit* is applied to examine the traditional *kebaya* worn by Dasiyah. The findings indicate that *kebaya janggan* and the colors chosen can support and depict Dasiyah's emotional state and the shifts in her emotions. The reinterpretation of *kebaya janggan* through the *sanggit* concept demonstrates how traditional art values can be adapted with a modern touch, creating new meanings relevant to storytelling. The costume Dasiyah wore in *Gadis Kretek* also serves to reintroduce *kebaya janggan* as one of Indonesia's traditional *kebaya*s to a broader audience, particularly the younger generation.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The use of traditional *kebaya* as costumes in Indonesian films holds profound significance for the continuation of Indonesian culture through the utilization of technology. This phenomenon commemorates and further develops *kebaya* as a national identity of Indonesia, which has been officially recognized as a national dress since the 1978 workshop in Jakarta [1]. On one hand, *kebaya* is reintroduced to the broader public through film media. On the other hand, *kebaya*, a style and trend in current Indonesian society, has become a source of reference and inspiration for filmmaking. As expressed by *kebaya* advocate Atie Nitiasmoro, film, as a creative industry, supports and synergizes with the *kebaya* movement. For instance, the *kebaya janggan*, previously unfamiliar to the public, gained widespread popularity after being worn by Dian Sastro in the *Gadis Kretek* series [2]. Using *kebaya* as a costume can shape and influence cultural values and symbols for both the wearer and the film audience. Therefore, traditional and contemporary *kebaya*, as the

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national attire, not only constitute an integral part of Indonesian society but also serves as a cultural representation of the nation [3] and a bridge between tradition and modern lifestyles [4].

Traditional *kebaya* is used as a costume concept in the original series *Gadis Kretek* to depict Indonesian women within the spatial and time setting of the homemade kretek industry in the 1960s. *Kebaya* is a traditional Indonesian women's attire [5]. Almost all female characters use traditional *kebaya*. However, one role named Dasiyah consistently wears traditional *kebaya* with two dominant colors throughout the series. This *kebaya* also differs in form from those worn by other characters. Discussing the function of costumes in films or original series clarifies character identity, social status, and historical and cultural contexts [6]. Costumes are also one of the elements of *mise en scene* that shapes the entire film, playing a causal role in the narrative, acting as motifs, reinforcing characterization, and tracing shifts in attitude [7], [8]. Therefore, the costume worn by Dasiyah becomes an interesting phenomenon to study in-depth concerning the filmmakers' reinterpretation using idioms inherent in traditional *kebaya*.

A literature review conducted since 2021 found 22 articles using costumes as material objects. The most significant percentage discussed costumes from the perspective of information technology, as done by Fei Jing and Yu Gui [9], Iryna Poluchovich et al. [10], Junmin Huang and Xiang Li [11], and Hong Lee and Mi Sung-Yum [12]. Jing and Gui focus on writing about the integration of computer-aided design (CAD) in costume design. Poluchovich explores innovative clothing technology in dance costumes using mobile applications. Huang and Li discuss the need for innovation in traditional garment design methods to enhance competitiveness and adaptability. At the same time, Lee and Sung-Yum develop an adaptive web design for fashion from the Musinsa platform to serve Generation MZ consumers. These four articles significantly contribute to integrating technology and art in nurturing talent, enhancing services, and developing the needs of costume design. Although all four articles focus on costumes as material objects, they do not address the cultural implications of traditional clothing in modern media. Instead, they concentrate more on the context of utilizing information technology for skill development and sustainability.

Furthermore, an article using costumes as one of the variables to analyze traditional elements in the TV drama *Love Between Fairy and Devil* was written by Ruijun Li. This article discusses the TV drama *Love Between Fairy and Devil*, which is considered to restore the beautiful oriental fantasy world and helps reshape the visual imagination of the audience about classical Chinese mythology, conveying the unique charm of traditional Chinese culture to the audience and promoting traditional culture globally [13]. The focus and theories differ, although they share the theme of costumes reintroducing culture. Ruijun Li uses costumes as one variable, whereas this article discusses costumes using the *sanggit* concept as an analytical tool. Other articles examine costumes from different perspectives, such as the work by Soelistyowati et al. [14], which focuses on changes in the forms of traditional costumes in Madurese weddings. At the same time, Nanda, Ihwanudin, and Yunus [15] discuss renting *kebaya* costumes from the perspective of Islamic economic law.

Discussing costumes in real life or audiovisual media is a unique and engaging topic. Costumes attached to humans serve various functions and meanings. As the literature review indicates, the discussion of costumes worn by characters in the original series using the *sanggit* concept has not been explored before. Therefore, the *sanggit* concept is highly relevant to this study, as it allows for an in-depth examination of how traditional attire is adapted within modern narrative frameworks, preserving cultural values while simultaneously challenging their traditional interpretations. This factor demonstrates the

originality of the topic in this article. This original approach deepens our understanding of costume design as a cultural and narrative tool.

The expressive use of traditional idioms within a thematic frame is an application of the *sanggit* reinterpretation concept [16]. *Sanggit* is the interpretation of an individual or artist (puppeteer) of a pre-existing work [17]. Based on the concept of Nusantara Aesthetics, the phenomenon of traditional *kebaya* elements as a costume concept with new crafting in the mise en scène space of the original series is the result of *sanggit*. The means, *sanggit* is the result of the filmmaker's creativity and freedom through interpretation and reinterpretation in utilizing traditional *kebaya* as a film character costume [18]. Reproducing meaning through costumes is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon. Costumes in films or original series function not only to build characters but also to trigger trends in the fashion world [19]. Traditional garments such as the *kebaya*, when featured as costumes in the original series, can reintroduce these garments, preserve them, create trends, and strengthen the characters within the story. Therefore, using traditional *kebaya* as the costume for Dasiyah's character in the original series *Gadis Kretek* presents an intriguing issue for analysis. The use of traditional *kebaya* as a costume within a modern narrative like an original series (*Gadis Kretek*) is examined in this study using the *sanggit* concept to comprehensively explain how traditional *kebaya* functions as a costume that supports characterization, enhances the storyline, and reintroduces traditional attire.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs an interpretive qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study [20], focusing on the costume of Dasiyah's character in the original series *Gadis Kretek*, which is streamed on Netflix [21]. The focus on the costume choices worn by the character Dasiyah serves as the parameter or bounded unit related to the research topic [22]. This method is chosen to deeply explore the reinterpretation of the *kebaya janggan* within the cultural and narrative context defined by the series. This study applies purposive sampling by selecting the character Dasiyah as the primary subject, based on her consistent and symbolically significant use of *kebaya janggan* across multiple series episodes. This research aims to understand how the *kebaya* costume worn by Dasiyah supports character development, reflects emotional states, and reinterprets traditional *kebaya* within the cultural context of the original series *Gadis Kretek*.

Primary data were obtained through in-depth observation of the characters and costumes Dasiyah wore in the original series *Gadis Kretek*. Observations were made on all episodes where Dasiyah appears, noting details about the type, color, and changes in the costumes worn. This observation also includes scene analysis, where the costume plays an important role in supporting character depiction and narrative. The observations were conducted at least twice for each episode [23]. The first focused on elements of the plot, characterization of Dasiyah, emotional influence, ideas or themes, and the use of *kebaya janggan* by Dasiyah's character. In this research, the subsequent observations concentrated on the "how" and "why" aspects of using *kebaya janggan*, along with the type and color changes in each plot. Primary data is supplemented with relevant literature studies to obtain supporting data and concepts necessary for analysis and conclusion drawing. The literature used includes theories of costumes in films, the *sanggit* concept [7], [16], and media coverage related to material objects and social media from filmmakers containing information relevant to the research data needs—for instance, Instagram posts from filmmakers that outline the concepts related to the material objects being studied. The data obtained were then analyzed using interpretive analysis methods.

Interpretive analysis is used to convey and formulate observed realities and transform aspects that are difficult to understand into something comprehensible for others [24].

Interpretive analysis is applied to the identification and presentation of data to understand how the costume supports Dasiyah's character and helps portray her emotional states and transformations. The *sanggit* concept is used to understand the costume in the context of utilizing traditional art values infused with a modern touch based on the aesthetics of *sanggit* reinterpretation [16]. Interpretive analysis was conducted in stages, such as initial coding, which involved marking important elements of Dasiyah's costumes, such as the type, color, and changes in the costumes worn in each scene. Subsequently, thematic identification was carried out by looking for visual and narrative patterns emerging from using *kebaya janggan* and their connection to Dasiyah's characterization and the storyline's progression. Interpretation was performed within a cultural and narrative context to assess how the *kebaya*, originally a traditional symbol, is transformed into a new symbol representing the character's identity in the modern narrative. This analysis also considered how the *kebaya janggan* deviates from its traditional form and how modern elements are incorporated into the costume to enrich its meaning and relevance in the current context. The reinterpretation of traditional costumes involves expressing traditional idioms within a new thematic frame for Dasiyah's character. This reading aims to understand and uncover the use of Dasiyah's traditional *kebaya* in the context of value and meaning reproduction so that the orientation of traditional *kebaya* use as a costume in new crafting can be discovered and explained. Ultimately, through the application of interpretive analysis using the *sanggit* concept and traditional *kebaya*, the conclusion drawn is that the *kebaya* costume worn by Dasiyah can support character development, reflect emotional states, and reinterpret traditional *kebaya* within the context of the original series *Gadis Kretek*. In terms of its impact, cultural sustainability (using *kebaya* by modern society) can be achieved with the proper conceptual formulation of modern technology.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The costumes worn by Dasiyah include four types with 45 variations of materials, motifs, and accessories spread across five episodes of the original series *Gadis Kretek*. The upper body cover uses several kinds of traditional clothing according to the story's needs, including bridal *kebaya* complete, outer *kebaya* or brocade with *entrok*, Javanese *kebaya*, and *kebaya janggan* (the most dominant). The lower body cover entirely uses *jarik*<sup>1</sup>. For footwear, Dasiyah uses *kebaya* sandals. Makeup includes character and bridal styles. Hairstyles include bun, braid, and loose with *cekip* added to the upper back.

Additionally, several accessories frequently used include brooches, earrings, rings, and *cekip* hairpins. These costumes are used for body covering or decoration and carry multiple meanings and purposes. The primary focus of this article is the formation of character and emotional changes, as well as the reinterpretation of *kebaya janggan* using the *sanggit* concept. The following discusses the *kebaya* as a costume Dasiyah wore in the original series *Gadis Kretek*.

#### 3.1. Dasiyah's Character (Jeng Yah)

Dasiyah, often called Jeng Yah, is the eldest daughter of Idroes Moeria and Roemasia. Idroes Moeria entrusted Dasiyah with managing the Merdeka Kretek factory. She prefers activities typically done by men, such as managing and developing the factory, rather than participating in domestic tasks usually undertaken by Javanese women [25] within the spatial and temporal framework of the original series (See original series *Gadis Kretek*, Episode 2). Dasiyah has strong ambitions and determination as a sauce mixer, eventually creating the Kretek Gadis sauce (See original series *Gadis Kretek* episode 3, 2023). Dasiyah is also depicted as a woman who fears her position as factory manager will be threatened

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<sup>1</sup> The identification of *jarik* in the original series *Gadis Kretek* is hindered by the shot size, which does not clearly show the visual details of the *jarik* worn by Dasiyah in several scenes.

when Idroes Moeria begins to trust Soeraja's performance. This portrayal shows Dasiyah as an independent, intelligent woman skilled in kretek processing. Its presence reinforces that women are not complements but hold strategic positions within family and business [26].

### 3.2. *Kebaya Janggan Supporting Dasiyah's Character Formation and Emotional Changes (Jeng Yah)*

*Kebaya janggan* is a traditional *kebaya* frequently worn by Dasiyah in five episodes of the original series *Gadis Kretek*. *Kebaya janggan* is the attire of royal servants in the Yogyakarta and Surakarta Palaces. This *kebaya* resembles a surjan with side buttons covering the neck. Black is a mandatory color for royal servants. For servants of certain strata, they are allowed to use patterned materials except for brocade [27].

Dasiyah appears as an independent woman with strong ambitions and determination by wearing *kebaya janggan* made of plain and patterned cotton. The use of the type and color of the *kebaya* can establish a visual identity or distinctive characteristic [28], [29], such as the design of the *kebaya janggan* collar that covers the neck, which can signify class or position within the social hierarchy [3], [30], making Dasiyah appear charismatic and authoritative. Neat bun hairstyle, character makeup, a brooch on the left chest just below the neck, and jarik make her appearance simple yet elegant. The black color of *kebaya janggan* worn by Dasiyah follows the traditional color rule in the Yogyakarta and Surakarta Palaces and signifies her strong ambitions and determination (See Figure 1 A and B). Black does not change even when splashed with various colors, and it shows the meaning that Dasiyah's ambitions and determination remain steadfast, as stated by Hagai Pakan, the makeup artist and costume designer for Dasiyah's character in the *Gadis Kretek* series, on his personal Instagram account [31].



**Figure 1.** Dasiyah's Costume  
[Source: original series *Gadis Kretek*]

The patterned cotton fabric on *kebaya janggan* worn by Dasiyah indicates she is a woman of a particular strata (See Figure 1 A, C, and E). The motifs on Javanese traditional attire, particularly in classic batik patterns, are utilized in traditional ceremonies as they embody

conceptual and ideological meanings, especially within the socio-cultural fabric of society [32]. In this context, Dasiyah is the eldest daughter of the Merdeka kretek factory owner and a woman with thoughts that are very different and revolutionary compared to most women and even men around her, like Idroes Moeria and Soeraja. Dasiyah is a woman who desires 'freedom' and has strong ambitions and determination (See original series *Gadis Kretek* episode 1, 2023).

The use of the *kebaya janggan*, which changes color from black to white, portrays Dasiyah as a strong woman who believes in hope (See Figure 1 E). However, the hope she desires continually leads to a different reality after Idroes Moeria's death and Soeraja's decision to marry Poerwanti (See original series *Gadis Kretek* episode 4, 2023). The color change in the *kebaya janggan* worn by Dasiyah marks an emotional shift from steadfastness and happiness to tragedy and uncertainty. The transition from black to white in *kebaya janggan* is not merely a personal transformation for Dasiyah but also an outward reflection of her evolving relationship with power and identity. This transition reflects changes in her relationship with her family, particularly the absence of a father and Soeraja's betrayal. This context shows how the costume is an extension of her struggle for agency in a male-dominated world. White here serves as a turning point in Dasiyah's life. The white *kebaya* also serves as a reminder of the maternal figures she loved in the factory, making Dasiyah feel at home, as stated by Hagai Pakan, the makeup artist and costume designer for Dasiyah's character in the *Gadis Kretek* series, on his personal Instagram account [31]. The color change in *kebaya janggan* from black to white supports Dasiyah's emotional transformation from steadfast to fragile and compromising, much like how white easily reflects other colors when exposed to them (See Figure 1 E).

### 3.3. Reinterpretation of Sanggit Kebaya Janggan in Dasiyah's Costume (Jeng Yah)

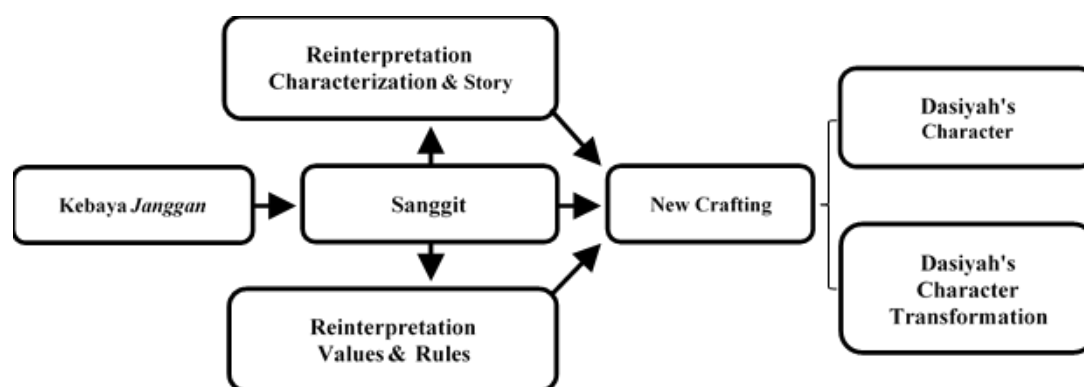
The reproduction of traditional clothing by reintroducing traditional *kebaya* as costumes in popular media such as original series on OTT platforms like Netflix can be widely viewed again and become a fashion trend today. This is similar to the impact of the costume worn by Dian Sastrowardoyo as Dasiyah, which led to orders for *kebaya janggan*. Just a week after the original series *Gadis Kretek* aired, Gielang reported receiving up to 50 orders for *kebaya* [33]. This illustrates how popular culture, through original series, combined with strong character development and the 'star power' of the actor, can influence the adoption of specific cultural items—such as the *kebaya janggan* costume in this instance.

The traditional *kebaya* is presented as a cinematic element, reimagined through new crafting techniques that align with character types, thereby reintroducing an old form to enhance character development and storytelling. The *kebaya janggan* worn by Dasiyah in the original series *Gadis Kretek* serves as a cinematic element to reinforce characterization. This particular *kebaya*, primarily worn by Dasiyah, results from a reinterpretation of the traditional *sanggit* style. Filmmakers strategically employ traditional idioms associated with the *kebaya janggan*, framing them expressively within Dasiyah's characterization to support the narrative [16]. Using the *kebaya janggan* as a costume for Dasiyah—a woman characterized by strong ambition and determination—dominates nearly every episode, overshadowing other costume types. While the idiomatic association of the *kebaya janggan* with royal servants is preserved in its form, notable alterations appear in the choice of fabric and color. The plain and patterned black cotton fabric is retained for episodes 1-3, whereas a shift occurs with the introduction of brocade fabric and a white color scheme in episodes 3-5.

The idiom of the *kebaya janggan* is reinterpreted through new crafting techniques to enhance Dasiyah's characterization within the narrative. Initially, the *kebaya janggan*, made from plain and patterned black cotton fabric, is featured in episodes 1-3. As discussed in

subsection 3.1, the patterned *kebaya janggan* signifies the wearer's social status or rank [27]. This idiomatic expression is then reinterpreted to support Dasiyah's role in the narrative, particularly as the youngest daughter of the factory owner and manager. In this context, the expressive use of the *Kebaya janggan* in its updated form contributes to framing Dasiyah's characterization within the storytelling framework. However, in certain instances, Dasiyah, as a Javanese woman, is still depicted as obedient to her parents' authority. This dynamic is evident in episode 3 when Idroes Moeria forbids Dasiyah from continuing her relationship with Soeraja.

Second, the *kebaya janggan*, made from patterned silk and brocade fabric in white, is featured in episodes 3-5. Traditionally, brocade fabric and white are prohibited for the *kebaya janggan* [27]. In this context, the idiom of the *kebaya janggan* is reinterpreted through new crafting techniques. This reinterpretation reflects the filmmaker's adjustment of the garment's form to signify the transformation of Dasiyah's character within the narrative—from steadfastness and happiness to tragedy and uncertainty. White, a color capable of absorbing various hues, is a pivotal turning point for Dasiyah's character. This reinterpretation results from new crafting methods aligned with the artist's reduction process [16]. In this instance, the *kebaya janggan*, made of brocade and white fabric, reinterprets the traditional *sanggit* style.



**Figure 2.** The *Sanggit* Concept Process of *Kebaya Janggan* for Dasiyah's Character and Dasiyah's Character Transformation  
[Design: Fajar Aji, 2024]

The reinterpretation of the *sanggit* concept in the *kebaya janggan* within modern media, such as the original series *Gadis Kretek*, represents an effort to reintroduce traditional Indonesian attire to domestic and global audiences [2]. From a filmic perspective, it is a narrative device that supports storytelling and enhances character development [7], [8]. However, such reinterpretation also carries the risk of cultural commodification. Incorporating traditional elements into a modern context may obscure the original meaning embedded in the *kebaya*, particularly when fashion trends or commercial objectives drive the modifications. One challenge is whether these alterations compromise authentic cultural significance in favor of visual appeal and commercial gain.

The reinterpretation of the *kebaya* and other traditional cultural elements in modern media must be undertaken with heightened awareness and care, particularly regarding their potential cultural and social impacts. Alterations in the form and application of traditional attire, such as the *kebaya*, can potentially dilute the cultural message they are intended to convey, thereby leading to a shift in meaning. Consequently, there is a pressing need for a foundation and framework for protecting, developing, utilizing, and preserving traditional culture, as outlined in Law No. 5 of 2017 on the Advancement of Indonesian Culture.

The utilization and development of tangible and intangible traditional arts have become inevitable in the era of internet technology. For instance, the traditional art of Dulmuluk has transitioned its performances to local television and TVRI South Sumatra, while Wayang Kulit Purwo's performances are now streamed on YouTube and other social media platforms [34]. This migration has resulted in shifts in the dynamics of traditional arts, contributing to a loss of meaning within its community of followers [34]. However, it also signifies an adaptation to the changing times. The consequence of utilizing this technology is how we ascribe new meanings to local culture, which continues to evolve globally [35]. Turning back to the discussion of the *kebaya*, it is essential to recognize that it has transformed from 1910 to 1980 due to modernization, affecting its design, proportions, decorative elements, fabric materials, and application details. This change signifies an unavoidable adaptation in response to society's cultural and social dynamics [36]. Similarly, using the *kebaya janggan* as the costume for Dasiyah's character in the original series *Gadis Kretek* reflects this process. If such changes adhere to the principles of "wise" utilization and development, it is conceivable that they can serve as efforts to protect and nurture tradition [37].

The use of the *kebaya janggan* as Dasiyah's costume is one of the visible texts among the seven texts present within the mise-en-scène, including the original text (T<sup>1</sup>), adaptation text (T<sup>2</sup>), film text (T<sup>3</sup>), director's text (T<sup>4</sup>), star's text (T<sup>5</sup>), production context or text (T<sup>6</sup>), and intertext within the text (T<sup>7</sup>). The diversity of texts within the mise-en-scène results in the films or original series not being 'faithful' to their source or creating a new mythology beyond the source material [38]. This is exemplified in the reinterpretation of the *sanggīt* style, particularly with brocade fabric and the color white in the *kebaya janggan* costume. From the standpoint of traditional cultural significance, this alteration violates the established meaning associated with the *kebaya janggan* [27]. However, in the context of filmmaking and narrative requirements, this reinterpretation becomes a creative decision, enabling filmmakers to construct a world experienced by Dasiyah and supporting the transformation of her characterization and emotional development through costume and color. While this change inevitably impacts the audience's understanding of the meaning traditionally attached to the *kebaya janggan*, which may be interpreted in various ways, the choice of fabric and color as a costume concept represents a "wise" and not excessive creative approach. Rather than being driven by fashion or commercial interests, it aligns directly with the narrative's needs and the character's development.

On the other hand, the choice of the *kebaya janggan* becomes increasingly recognized by the audience, particularly by modern viewers who may not be familiar with it, thereby facilitating their recognition of the *kebaya janggan*. This decision also contributes to introducing traditional Indonesian *kebaya* to a broader audience. *Gadis Kretek* is streamed on the Over-The-Top (OTT) platform Netflix, making it accessible to viewers globally. In the context of Dasiyah's costume in *Gadis Kretek*, using the *kebaya janggan* represents an effort to utilize and develop traditional attire. Moreover, the growing recognition of the *kebaya janggan* as a fashion trend signifies cultural development and preservation.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The use of the *kebaya janggan* as a costume in the original series *Gadis Kretek* illustrates how elements of traditional culture can be reinterpreted within the context of modern media to preserve and revitalize cultural heritage. The *kebaya janggan* worn by Dasiyah functions as a costume and an effective narrative tool that strengthens characterization and adds depth to the story. The *sanggīt* analysis demonstrates that the filmmakers successfully integrated traditional design within a modern narrative medium, ensuring cultural sustainability while retaining the essence of the past. In this context, reinterpreting the *kebaya janggan* as a costume contributes to characterization, emotional expression, and story depth. It reflects a broader cultural revival within Indonesian society, particularly

among the younger generation. However, this phenomenon also raises concerns about the commodification of tradition—does the reinterpretation of traditional attire for a contemporary media audience diminish its cultural significance? This study argues that traditional cultural values can be preserved and revitalized through original series featuring creative innovation, enriching character development and narrative while introducing the *kebaya janggan* to a broader audience, especially Indonesia's younger generation. However, this process must be undertaken with full awareness and caution regarding its potential cultural and social impacts.

Future research could explore other forms of traditional clothing from various regions of Indonesia and their roles in global media. Such studies could examine the implications of these reinterpretations, particularly regarding the role of accessories, motifs, and how these cultural symbols influence global fashion trends. Furthermore, comparative studies across different media platforms could provide deeper insights into how traditional clothing functions within various contexts and genres. Additionally, exploring other forms of traditional clothing from diverse regions in Indonesia and their roles in global media could illuminate how these garments convey cultural values and reflect contemporary identities. Ultimately, the success of the *kebaya janggan* in the original series *Gadis Kretek* serves as a compelling reminder of the media's potential to bridge the past and the present, offering new opportunities for cultural engagement and the revitalization of fashion.

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