

## **Traditional Costumes as Librarians' Uniforms for Work at Public Libraries of Yogyakarta, Indonesia**

**Atin Istiarni**

Librarian, Universitas Muhammadiyah Magelang, Indonesia

[atinistiarni@staff.ummgl.ac.id](mailto:atinistiarni@staff.ummgl.ac.id)

**Ida Fajar Priyanto**

Center for Southeast Asian Social Studies, Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

[Idafp75@gmail.com](mailto:Idafp75@gmail.com)



Copyright © 2018 by **Atin Istiarni** and **Ida Fajar Priyanto**. This work is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

---

### **Abstract**

*Indonesia is a country that is rich in culture and traditions and therefore, there are a lot of traditional costumes for various cultural activities. As one of the provinces in Indonesia, Yogyakarta is culturally rich. Yogyakarta is also the only province with a king as governor. However, due to the daily activities and works, nowadays people seldom wear those traditional costumes.*

*Being aware of the situation and was concerned with the possibility of the disappearance of traditional costumes, the governor finally passed regulation Number 87 concerning with the traditional costumes to be worn for work on certain day every month. This regulation also affects librarians to wear traditional costumes when serving users. This study was aimed at finding out the librarians' view of traditional costumes for work in the library. It was also aimed at finding out if traditional costumes affect their performance in the Public library. This was a descriptive analytic study on traditional costumes for work at the Public Libraries of Yogyakarta. Out of 172 librarians in the study showed that the majority of librarians felt convenient and proud to wear the traditional costumes and only 5 percent of them felt inconvenient. The library users were also impressed with the librarians' costumes and they even inquire the librarians about the traditional costumes they worn.*

**Keywords:** *librarians, Yogyakarta, public library*

---

## **Introduction**

The wealth and diversity of the Indonesian culture are well-known both in Indonesia and overseas. Various arts and traditions exist from the ethnics and tribes such as traditional food, language, traditional costumes and so forth. Every ethnic has its own characteristics of local and traditional culture and preservation of the tradition plays an important role. Preservation is important due to the advancement of information technology that has changed the way people live, in that the tradition will continue, while technology has changed people. The ease of access to information enables people to get information from just anywhere in the world and they may learn and adapt to a new tradition from different part of the world and therefore they may forget that they also have their tradition and culture. Although change in the way people live is unavoidable, but keeping people aware of and making them preserve the existing culture and tradition are necessary. Preserving culture and tradition is important because young people may inherit them in the future. Based on this idea, some provinces in Indonesia start to re-introduce and revive traditions and culture. In addition, local authorities also deal with policies and regulations concerning with tradition and culture.

Local tradition is an identity of an ethnic or tribe and this shows the difference and uniqueness. The differences of one culture and another make it easier for people to recognize which culture it is. Traditional costumes are ones of the identities of a culture. Batik, songket, tenun, kebaya are examples of the traditional clothes or costumes that reflect where someone is from. Traditional costumes can be one of the media to promote as well as to preserve one culture. By wearing traditional costumes in an event or activity, people actually do promotion of traditional costumes. In fact, wearing traditional costumes can also mean preserving the tradition and culture. Yogyakarta is one of the most active and consistent provinces that promotes and preserves its culture and wearing traditional costumes at work on one Thursday every month as compulsory.

Yogyakarta has been established as Special Territory according to the Law of Republic of Indonesia No. 13, 2012 on Specialty of province of Yogyakarta. However, the function, role, tradition, culture, and all other processions are all still active and preserved. In addition, the governor of Yogyakarta Province, Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X, is also the Sultan of Yogyakarta sultanate. The people of Yogyakarta still respect Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X, who is the governor as well as the sultan and they also preserve the tradition in Yogyakarta well.

Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X issued the Governor's regulation No. 87, 2014 on the importance of wearing traditional costumes of Yogyakarta for all public workers. The regulation is aimed at strengthening the identity of Yogyakarta as a special territory. All staff of local authority of Yogyakarta, including librarians, should obey the regulation to wear traditional costumes on a certain day every month. The costumes they wear should be traditional ones from Yogyakarta, referring to the costumes worn by those working in the palace of the Sultanate of Yogyakarta and dominion of Kadipaten Paku Alaman.

Wearing traditional costumes at work is a privilege. Often time librarians are seen as not attractive in the way they dress up. Librarians seldom show professional costumes due to various reasons. The Governor's regulation can be viewed as a way of introducing librarians who can dress up attractively, while preserving the tradition.

This study deals with the style of librarians at Badan Perpustakaan dan Arsip Daerah or Public Library when they wear traditional costumes at work. This is a qualitative study using descriptive analysis on the impact of traditional costumes on librarians and library users at Grhatama Pustaka Public Library of Yogyakarta. Data analysis was conducted from the interviews and literature reviews relating to traditional costumes in Yogyakarta.

## **Literature Review**

### **1. Librarian Fashion**

Attractiveness is one of the important parts to build a good image, especially in the public service sectors, such as banks, hotels, and of course, libraries. It is easily recognize if a public service institution is impressive or boring from the way the institution put the staff in the customer services. Staff at the frontline, should be friendly, caring, and paying attention to customers. Performance affects customers in judging or valuing an institution or the staff.

Fashion has been an important part in business. Often time an office or company has a dress code of formal clothes so that the company looks professional. Another office or company asks the staff to wear a uniform as an identity. On certain days, such as the independent day or another national day, the government employees should wear white shirts and dark trousers. On another day, employees in Indonesia are also required to wear Batik. Clothes or costumes are an identity and they also reflect self-description. People can recognize employees or workers from their clothes or costumes (Berek, 2014: 56).

Furthermore, Frederik (2013: 319) states that to show or hide his or her identity or to decide an identity of other people, a person may find out the costumes or clothes they wear and clothes or costumes show characteristics of an institution or company. Therefore, it is important for librarians to consider the costumes they wear at work.

Librarian's stereotype is a woman wearing glasses, cardigan, black stocking, and the like. In most libraries, they are also viewed as a person who is scolding users who talk too loud. This stereotype still exists in some libraries, especially in collection-centric libraries, as they consider libraries as sacred places to preserve books and to study seriously. In Indonesia, most libraries usually do not allow users to wear shorts, t-shirts, slippers, and the like. The librarians still consider the libraries as formal places to study. Meanwhile the librarians usually have their own dress codes. They have to wear shirts and they are not allowed to wear jeans. They consider jeans as informal clothes so they cannot wear jeans to work.

An interesting phenomenon has existed in Public Library of Yogyakarta. The librarians obey the governor's regulation and they wear traditional costumes one Thursday every month.

## **2. Indonesian Traditional Clothes**

Indonesia has 34 provinces and more than 300 ethnics who have various way of life and principles. That is reflected in the wealth of tradition and folklores throughout Indonesia. Each province may have local wisdom from one or more ethnics. The wisdom is seen from the diversity of tradition, ethnics, tribes, languages, foods, costumes, and many others. Local wisdom may be defined as local culture and tradition that reflects way of life and wisdom of life (Kemendikbud, 2016: 1). Local wisdom is an identity inherited by a community from one generation to the next. Local means limited—only valid for a certain area or an ethnic that the members have agreed. It is likely that local wisdom relates to the environment, nature, people living the area, and the habit of people.

Traditional costumes reflect a sort of local wisdom. Every province in Indonesia has its own costumes that become an identity and symbol of the province. Costumes are the most visible sign of culture. People are identified from the way they dress up.

Traditional costumes in Indonesia are inherited from one generation to the next. The characteristics of the costumes are based on the tradition in each ethnic. That is why the design, the materials, and the purposes are varied.

Traditional costumes have meaning and purposes. Traditional costumes for ethnic ceremony are different from those for attending wedding parties. There is usually an unwritten law that traditional costumes for one activity is different from that of another and there are about 259 traditional costumes in all 34 provinces in Indonesia (Kemendikbud, 2016: 41).

The most popular traditional costumes and worn by most ethnics in Indonesia are kebaya (long-sleeved blouse), batik, and songket. Formerly, kebaya and batik were traditional costumes in Java and Bali, but nowadays kebaya and batik have been common in Indonesia, only they have their own characteristics. In addition, some ethnics have more detailed and characteristics that are different from those of other ethnics. The following is an example of traditional costumes from Padang, West Sumatera for wedding.



Figure 1. Wedding gowns worn by bride and bridegroom in Padang, Sumatera Barat  
Sumber: <https://bit.ly/2qNNAiV>

### 3. Traditional Costumes for Works

Globalization has affected tradition and culture world-wide. Change and displacement happen in various parts of the world due to globalization. Globalization also affects traditional costumes. People may now wear clothes from other countries. Globalization is sometimes considered as threat for traditional costumes and other tradition in general. Young people may not be interested in wearing traditional costumes due to modernization. To cope with the problem that may arise and to avoid the disappearance of traditional costumes, there should be a campaign or promotion to make people aware of the traditional costumes.

Traditional costumes are good for making people aware of the existence of culture. Yogyakarta has done so. The idea came from Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X, the governor of

the province of Yogyakarta who is also the sultan of Yogyakarta's sultanate. Yogyakarta has six (6) traditional costumes worn by adults, youth, and kids. The governor issued the Governor's regulation number 87, 2014, on the need to wear traditional costumes for those working under the local authority of Yogyakarta on a certain day every month. to promote cultural heritage through traditional costumes of Yogyakarta.

The costumes for public service staff, persons-in-charge, other staff, and non-permanent staff are similar, yaitu:

**a. Male staff:**

1. Surjan clothes (*takwa*) made of lurik materials but should be plain and different type from the one worn by the palace guardians;
2. Blangkon cap of Yogyakarta style made of printed or hand-made batik;
3. Jarik (unsewn sarong) made of Batik which background is black or white;
4. Lonthong or *sabuk* made of plain satin;
5. Kamus or epek;
6. Wearing a dagger or *dhuwung*; and
7. Wearing slipper or *cenela*.



Figure 2. Traditional Costumes for Men  
Retrieve from <https://bit.ly/2F3ZgCD>

**b. Female staff:**

1. Kebaya tangkepan clothes made of lurik materials or plain one;
2. unsewn sarong (*jarik*) or batik material pleated and background black or white;
3. wearing mounted *gelung tekuk* hair without any additional accessories or hijab for moslem; and
4. Wearing slippers or *cenela*.



Figure 3. Traditional costumes for women  
Retrive from <https://bit.ly/2HE6jqQ>



Figure 4. Traditional Costumes for staff  
Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2qMdmKS>

## Discussion

Yogyakarta has been stated as a state of education. This is supported with 110 higher education institutions, 373 high schools, 420 secondary schools, and 1866 basic schools. In addition, there are some public libraries available for everyone to study. The public Library of Yogyakarta currently has a new building named Grhatama Pustaka and it was launched on 21 December 2015. This new 2.4-acre public library can accommodate up to 2,000 users. Various services are available in this public library, including reading rooms, children's library, musical performance room, and even 6D theater. There are 175 library staff aged 20-30 years old. Those library staff wear ordinary and batik uniforms. However, on a certain Thursday every month, they wear traditional costumes. Wearing traditional costumes at work is an attractive and shows a certain lifestyle of librarians. Instead of wearing thick glasses and cardigan, they wear traditional costumes. Moreover, wearing traditional costumes can be viewed as a way of promoting culture and part of cultural literacy.

Based on the interviews with the respondents, library staff at Public Library of Yogyakarta feel convenient as well as confident. Their appearance also attracts library users who are happy to see the librarians in their traditional costumes. No wonder if the librarians themselves often take pictures of themselves in traditional costumes and then they post the pictures in social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. The users also do the same thing.

One librarian posted his pictures in the social media as follows:



Figure 5. Librarians wearing traditional costumes at work at Public Library of Yogyakarta

Librarians have new experience when they wear traditional costumes at work, as they even seldom wear such costumes in everyday lives, especially young librarians and those who are from outside of Yogyakarta. Indeed, wearing traditional costumes show people that they have culture and tradition that may not exist in different parts of the world. Few librarians (5%), however, express their disinterest and feel awkward when wearing traditional costumes. This is due to the longer time spent to prepare and wear and their movement is limited when wearing traditional costumes. Indeed, they have to walk slowly when wearing traditional costumes.

Meanwhile users express their positive feeling toward the librarians wearing traditional costumes. Users are attracted to the costumes and are interested in the librarians' styles. Often time, the users ask the terms of the costumes, how they feel when wearing the costumes, and why they wear the costumes.

Indeed the librarians wearing traditional costumes actually play a role in information and cultural literacy. They explain users about the costumes and other related cultural things on the one hand, and making users aware of the existence of tradition and culture within their environment.

## Conclusion

The wealth of tradition and culture in Indonesia has attracted many people both from Indonesia and overseas. However, with the emergence of information technology that enables people to get much information world-wide, local tradition and culture may be forgotten. Making

people aware of the existence of local tradition and culture is important. The regulation about traditional costumes for work was issued by the governor who is also the Sultan of Yogyakarta, Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X. the regulation is aimed at preserving the traditional costumes.

Nowadays, it is compulsory for the librarians at Public Library of Yogyakarta to wear traditional costumes on one Thursday every month. Most librarians feel happy and comfortable to wear the traditional costumes as the costumes are value-added for the library. The users also appreciate the librarians wearing traditional costumes. Librarians wearing traditional costumes displaces the stereotype of librarians who wear thick glasses and cardigan. Librarians may change their stereotypes by various ways, including traditional costumes.

## Reference

- Berek, Dominikus Isak Petrus. 2014. Fashion Sebagai Komunikasi Identitas Sub Budaya(Kajian Fenomenologis terhadap Komunitas Street Punk Semarang). *JURNAL INTERAKSI*, Vol III No. Retrieve from <http://bit.ly/2vx3T8C>, 23 April 2018.
- Kemendikbud. 2016. *Analisis Kearifan Lokal Ditinjau Dari Keragaman Budaya*. Jakarta: Pusat Data dan Statistik Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia.
- Kemendikbud. 2016. *Statistik Kebudayaan 2016*. Jakarta: Pusat Data dan Statistik Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia.
- Nordholt, Henk Schulte. 2013. *Outward Appearances: Trend, Identitas, Kepentingan*. Yogyakarta: LKiS.
- Traditional Costume of Indonesia. 300 ethnic groups with their own clothing traditions. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2Jbcujo>.
- Indonesia. 2014. Gubernur Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta: Peraturan Gubernur Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta Nomor 87 Tahun 2014 Tentang Penggunaan Pakaian Tradisional Jawa Yogyakarta Bagi Pegawai Pada Hari Tertentu Di Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta. *Peraturan Gubernur*.
- Frederick, William H. 2013. Penampilan Revolusi: Pakaian, Seragam, dan Gaya Pemuda di Jawa Timur Tahun 1945-1949. Dalam buku *Outward Appearances: Trend, Identitas, Kepentingan*. Henk Schulte Nordholt (ed). Yogyakarta: LKiS.
- Baju Adat Padang Khusus Pengantin. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2qNNAiV>

<https://bit.ly/2F3ZgCD>

Pakaian Tradisional Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2HE6jqQ>

PNS BPNB Yogyakarta berpakaian Tradisional Jawa. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2qMdmKS>

---

### *Short biographies of the authors*

**Atin Istiarni** is a Librarian University of Muhammadiyah Magelang. She finished her bachelor in Library and information science from Islamic State University Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta in 2014 and continued to master program in Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies at the same university. She currently works as a chief of library promotion and network at Library of Muhammadiyah Magelang University. She is an active member of Indonesian Academic Library Forum, and also member of Muhammadiyah 'Aisyiah academic library forum. She is currently writing a book of articles and journals collection. She also actively writes for mass media. She is a trainer of information literacy for students of Muhammadiyah University of Magelang.

**Dr. Ida FajarPriyanto** is a researcher at the Center for Southeast Asian Social Studies (CSAT-UGM) and librarian and faculty member at the Graduate School of Information and Library Management, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He graduated from University of North Texas for his PhD in Information Science and MA in information Studies, Loughborough University of Technology