

# THE TRANSFORMATION OF BESKAP DESIGN ELEMENTS IN THE WORKS OF INDONESIAN FASHION DESIGNERS

Kezia Clarissa Langi<sup>1\*</sup>; Grace Caroline<sup>2</sup>; Amanda Marisa<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1-3</sup>Maranatha Christian University  
Bandung, Indonesia 40164

<sup>1</sup>kezia.cl@art.maranatha.edu; <sup>2</sup>grace.cs@art.maranatha.edu; <sup>3</sup>marissamaharibe@gmail.com

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## ABSTRACT

*This study investigates how Indonesian fashion designers incorporate elements from the beskap, a traditional Javanese shirt, into their collections. The beskap holds significant cultural importance in Indonesia and was created as a symbol of status, blending Javanese and European design features. In recent years, a growing interest in Indonesian traditional fashion has led designers to draw inspiration from the beskap for their contemporary designs. To explore this trend, this study analyzes 58 garments from three Indonesian fashion brands: KRATON, Wilsen Willim, and House of Radinindra. This study uses a design-based research method that includes image analysis, literature review, and field research conducted at the Karaton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat and Pura Mangkunegaran. The analysis focuses on several design features, including silhouette, collar, closure, garment length, sleeve length, back design, and materials. The findings reveal that key features retained in contemporary adaptations include tailored silhouettes (64%), high collars (81%), button closures (90%), elongated sleeves (83%), and distinct back openings (76%). This study concludes that these structural elements are essential for preserving cultural identity in modern fashion, serving as a reference for designers who wish to globalize traditional Indonesian clothing.*

**Keywords:** beskap, design transformation, fashion design elements, Indonesian fashion design

## INTRODUCTION

The clothing in Indonesia has undergone significant transformations over the centuries, reflecting the rich evolution of its civilization. This evolution has been influenced by both local traditions and foreign cultures (Langi et al., 2020). For example, the incorporation of European elements into Javanese royal attire during the early 1800s showcases a process of cultural adaptation and transformation (Yulisaksono et al., 2023). The Westernization of keraton clothing is a fascinating reflection of cultural developments in Indonesia. Furthermore, the processes of globalization and modernization continue to shape societies worldwide, resulting in the influence of traditional cultures and clothing on foreign cultures (Agista et al., 2019; Prianti, 2018; Ramadhani et al., 2023).

The structural uniqueness and symbolism of

these garments make them significant subjects for design-based inquiry. Recently, the global fashion industry has seen a revival of interest in transforming keraton royal court clothing, primarily through beskap. Designers and businesses are integrating cultural history with modern aesthetics.

Beskap is a traditional Javanese garment that men have historically worn. It is characterized by its fitted design, elaborate details, and deep cultural significance. The term "beskap" originates from the Dutch word "*beschaafd*," meaning "civilized" or "cultured" (Susanto et al., 2024). This connection suggests that the beskap embodies the refined image of urban society, in contrast to the more rustic image of rural society. Consequently, the Mangkunegaran ruler, who wore a beskap, was viewed as more cultured and on par with Westerners.

Beskap is classified based on the status of

its intended user. The types of beskap, ranked from high to low status, include Beskap Sikepan, Krowok, Langenharjan, and Landung. Beskap Sikepan is worn by individuals with the title Kanjeng Raden Mas Haryo (KRMH) up to Kanjeng Raden Haryo Tumenggung (KRHT). It consists of two garments: an inner white shirt called *rangkepan*, which features a straight collar and button closure extending to the neck, and an outer black shirt that remains unbuttoned (see Figure 1a) (Kamilah & Abdullah, 2023). Beskap Krowok is designed for individuals at the regent level, particularly those with the title Kanjeng Raden Tumenggung (KRT) and lower. This style features a curved shape known as *krowokan* and includes buttons, called *kenop* or *canthel*, that extend to the neck (see Figure 2) (Pradipta, 2022).



Figure 1 Example of (a) Beskap Sikepan worn by Paku Buwono X (Wereldmuseum, Item No. RV-A5-3-26) and (b) Mangkoenagoro IV wearing Beskap Langenharjan



Figure 2 Back side of beskap Krowok (Documentation of Keraton Surakarta)

Beskap Langenharjan was innovated directly by the Keraton Leader. At the inauguration of the Langenharjo Pesanggrahan in 1871, K.G.P.A.A. Mangkoenagoro IV introduced this style, which is a streamlined version of the Western "rookie" tuxedo. It features a truncated tail, a rear opening for a *keris*, and is made from premium batik cloth instead of trousers. Accessories such as the blangkon and bow tie complement this ensemble, which reflects

royal heritage and continues to be worn by Javanese grooms as wedding attire (see Figure 1b) (Kamilah & Abdullah, 2023; Wardhana & Pradita, 2022). Beskap Landung is a more functional style that usually does not include the *keris* or a rear opening. It is designed for comfort and ease of wear over extended periods of time. This type of beskap is typically worn during *midodareni* activities, which take place the day before the wedding ceremony. The design is characterized by lateral buttons (see Figure 3) (Kamilah & Abdullah, 2023).



Figure 3 Beskap Landung (Wereldmuseum, Item No. RV-4434-3)

After Indonesia gained its independence, the social hierarchy within the palace underwent significant changes. The royal attire was modified for practical reasons, and the palace's role shifted from being a center of government to one of cultural significance. Nevertheless, it continues to serve as an important source of Javanese culture (Soedibyo, 2003). As a result, garments can now be designed and worn by a wider community. However, certain sacred symbols associated with the king, such as the parang batik motif, remain prohibited for public use.

Beskap has become a symbol of cultural pride and craftsmanship, influencing an increasing number of local fashion brands in Indonesia and abroad as the global fashion industry continues to evolve. The phenomenon of '*berkain*'—the practice of incorporating traditional Indonesian kain (textile) into daily attire—has gained popularity in Indonesia, particularly among the communities of Swaragembira and Remaja Nusantara since 2017 (Nafisa Aninda & Yan Yan Sunarya, 2023). This style reflects current fashion trends while simultaneously serving as a form of resistance and adaptability to global influences, uniquely and innovatively. Indonesian youth embody a synthesis of traditional elements and contemporary fashion, creating a new identity infused with cultural values in their everyday lives.

In 2023, the drama series "Gadis Kretek" premiered on Netflix and quickly gained international acclaim, winning an award at the 2024 Seoul International Drama Awards. The storyline and cast captured viewers' hearts, but the fashion showcased in the series also attracted significant attention. The Kebaya Janggan worn by the main character gained particular popularity, garnering 13.5 million views

under the hashtag *#kebayajanggan* (Triantoro et al., 2024). This surge in popularity has inspired individuals to repurpose traditional clothing, prompting the fashion industry to recreate these outfits with a modern twist.

Today, beskap has evolved beyond its traditional roots, inspiring contemporary fashion designers to reinterpret and adapt its essence for modern audiences. It is important to research the development of contemporary fashion trends promoted by local designers, including the KRATON brand by Auguste Soesastro, Wilsen Willim's eponymous label, and House of Radinindra. These local brands consistently present innovative works that redefine Indonesian clothing for the international market by thoroughly exploring all elements of traditional attire, particularly the structure of the beskap.

Previous research has explored traditional design aspects through various fashion design elements, focusing on different cultures and their approaches. Notably, cultural attire such as the Korean Hanbok and traditional Chinese clothing has been examined. Min (2015) conducted a study on Korean cultural expression as reflected in the design components of three Korean fashion designers. This study revealed that these designers predominantly use traditional Korean colors in their work, followed by form and texture, while line is the least utilized design element. In alignment with this study, Song et al. (2023) investigate the design expression of "Chinese-style" costumes in the context of globalization. The distinctive elements of Chinese costumes include their silhouettes, colors, fabrics, and craftsmanship, which convey symbolic meanings related to function, culture, and emotion. These elements are vital in the creation of new fashion designs that incorporate Chinese philosophy.

The silhouette serves as the foundation for the shape of garments and significantly influences how clothing is perceived overall. Zhang et al. (2020) used the Fuzzy c-means clustering method to analyze traditional Chinese clothes based on their silhouettes. Similar to the beskap, traditional Chinese clothing has experienced transformations in silhouette—shifting from A-line to X-line and H-line—due to Western influences. This study highlights that examining the shape of traditional garments is as important as studying their color, historical context, and cultural significance.

This study was also inspired by numerous past studies on traditional clothing, particularly the kebaya. Chunli et al. (2024) examine the design elements of the Kebaya Nyonya in Penang. They focus on aspects such as color, pattern, structure, and technique to analyze the most significant aesthetic features of the kebaya. Designers should recognize these distinctive elements to enhance the kebaya's market appeal. Additionally, Audita et al. (2023) explored the fashion development process of traditional garments, specifically the kebaya. Their research outlines four phases in the process of globalizing the kebaya, highlighting the integration of tradition with contemporary fashion.

This study emphasizes the collaboration between designers and their clients in creating kebaya, as well as the independent design processes utilized by designers who craft kebaya on their own.

Previous research shows that most traditional costumes studied are related to female attire. Investigating design elements is crucial for developing a fashion collection. The more distinctive the elements, the more impactful the outcomes of the collection will be.

There is limited research on how beskap is expressed through fashion. This study is crucial for Indonesian society, especially for fashion students and Indonesian designers, as it aims to promote and serve as a reference for creating contemporary fashion collections that incorporate traditional elements, specifically the beskap. As a result, more innovative designs are likely to emerge in the future.

## METHODS

This study employs a design-based research methodology. Data collection involved both literature reviews and field observations. The literature review focused on European influence in the fashion of the Solo Palace and the classification of beskap, drawing from books and academic journals. Field visits were conducted at Karaton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat and Pura Mangkunegaran from June 26 to June 30, 2024. The costumes of both the Karaton Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat and Pura Mangkunegaran were documented through exhibits of clothing collections, as well as paintings and portraits displayed in museums and public spaces.

This study aims to examine the characteristics of fashion designs influenced by the beskap, based on an analysis of 58 design samples featured in three collections from local brands. These collections include the "Evolution Revolution" collection by KRATON, which was unveiled at Plaza Indonesia Men's Fashion Week 2024; the "Dulu, Kini, Nanti" collection, a collaboration between Wilsen Willim and Batik Keris at Plaza Indonesia Fashion Week 2024; and the "Enggal" collection by House of Radinindra at Indonesia Fashion Week 2024. These three collections were chosen because they best represent the current fashion image and aesthetic that are influenced by traditional Indonesian culture. Out of the 58 designs, 29 are from KRATON, 19 from Wilsen Willim, and nine from House of Radinindra. Each design within these collections was evaluated and quantified using numerical metrics, incorporating both traditional and modern elements.

A visual analysis framework was employed to classify both traditional and modern design traits across seven key elements: silhouette, collar, closure, garment length, sleeve length, back design, and material. We created tables to present frequency distributions and percentage breakdowns for comparative analysis.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Design elements significantly influence the overall visual appearance of clothing. Researchers commonly use a framework consisting of five key elements to analyze traditional clothing: structure, textile, motif, color, and accessories (Hong, 2023; Sorger & Seivewright, 2021; Yen & Hsu, 2017). This study will examine the shape, structure, and detail of Beskap Sikepan, Landung, and Krowok. These beskap were selected as the primary inspiration for the collection of three Indonesian designers in this study.

The beskap is a traditional formal Javanese jacket worn by men. This garment is chosen based on the wearer's status or the specific occasion. The beskap is commonly worn during traditional ceremonies such as weddings and cultural events. The moral and spiritual values embodied in Javanese clothing can enhance the spiritual lives of the community. These values are universal and relevant not only to the Javanese people but to humanity as a whole. This clothing serves as a guide and a pathway toward physical and spiritual safety and happiness (Soedibyo, 2003).

The beskap silhouette is elongated and tailored, reflecting the discipline and self-control of the Javanese people. Its body-fitting design symbolizes the wearer's dignity, promoting a poised and composed posture in all situations. The straight and clean lines of the beskap represent honesty and integrity, while its short, waist-length cut embodies humility and practicality. Additionally, the high neck of the beskap signifies discipline, modesty, and respectability, which are key traits valued in Javanese society (see Figures 4 and 5).

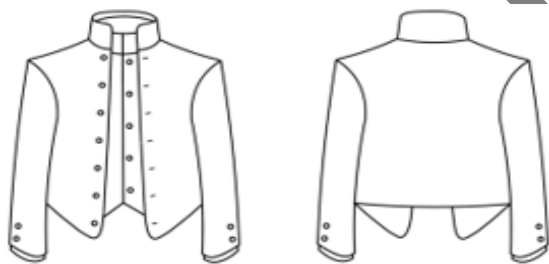


Figure 4 Flat sketch of Beskap Sikepan



Figure 5 Flat sketch of Beskap Krowok

According to KBBI (2016), a beskap is defined as a short jacket featuring a high neck, long sleeves, and buttons at the top and on the left side. This

definition accurately describes the Beskap Landung. The front of the beskap is designed asymmetrically, with fabric overlapping where the buttons are attached (see Figures 6 and 7).

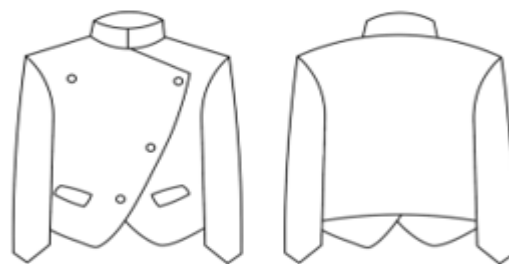


Figure 6 Flat sketch of Beskap Landung

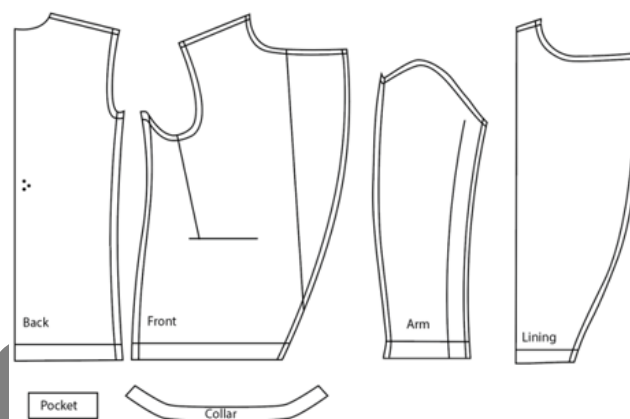


Figure 7 Pattern Drafting of Beskap Landung

The textile design components of the beskap demonstrate durability, craftsmanship, and versatility. Typically worn in formal settings, the beskap is made from various textile materials, including *beludru* (velvet), silk, lurik cloth, and wool. It is often paired with batik as the lower garment, allowing the wearer to select a specific batik motif based on the occasion. The chosen batik fabric symbolizes luxury, nobility, wealth, cultural heritage, grace, and spirituality. The characteristics of these materials reflect and acknowledge the wearer's role and status during the occasion when wearing the beskap.

The colors of the beskap are deeply rooted in Javanese culture and symbolism. Each color carries specific meanings related to Javanese morals, spirituality, and social status (Murti, 2021). In Javanese tradition, black is associated with intelligence, courage, and elegance. White signifies purity, compliance, and cleanliness. Blue is often associated with high social rank and nobility, while red is often associated with bravery and courage.

This study examines the transformation of traditional elements into modern elements in beskap, focusing on the collections of three Indonesian designers. The transformation is analyzed by measuring the frequency of occurrence of these elements to identify the distinctive characteristics of

beskap. The table below outlines the structural analysis of each design sample from the fashion collections: "The Evolution Revolution" by KRATON (see Figure

8, Table 1), "Dulu, Kini, Nanti" by Wilsen Willim (see Figure 9, Table 2), and "Enggal: The New, Artisanal" by House of Radinindra (see Figure 10, Table 3).

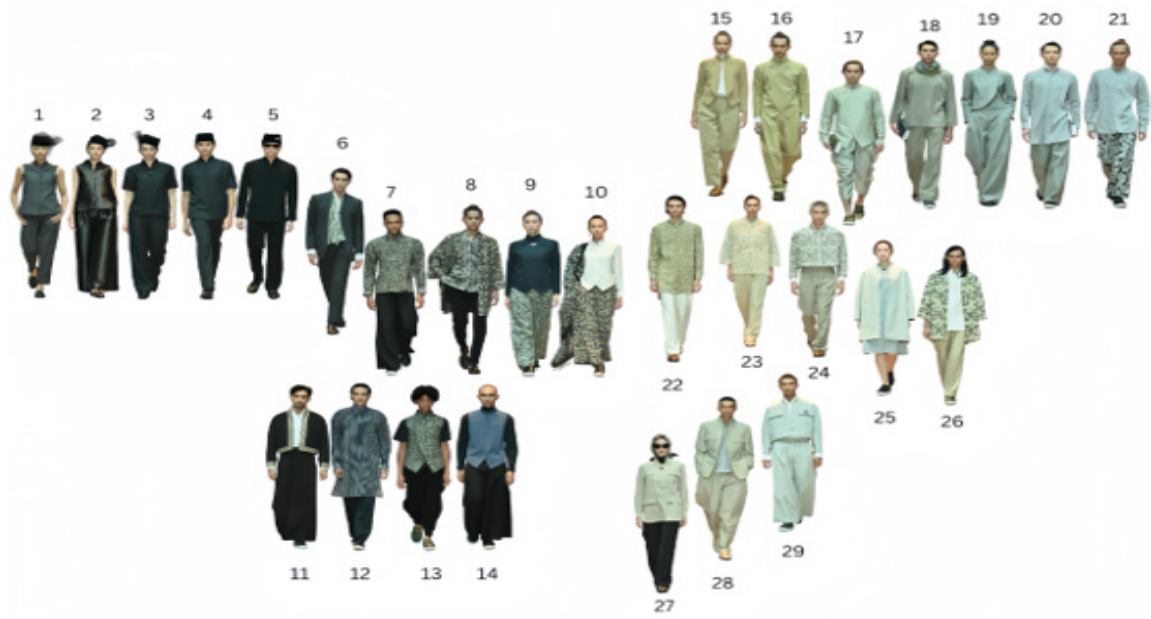


Figure 8 “The Evolution Resolution” 2024 Collection by KRATON

Table 1 Visual Analysis of “The Evolution Revolution” 2024 Collection by KRATON

Classification	Traditional		Modern	
	Type	Design No.	Type	Design No.
Silhouette	Elongated	12, 22	Loose	8, 18, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29
	Tailored	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21	Fit Body	7
12 9	High Collar	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29	Open Collar	-
			Button-Down Collar	-
			Collarless	-
Front Closure	Asymmetric	7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19	Symmetric	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29
Closure method	Button	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29	Zip-up	-
Length	Waist-length	9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19	Cropped	11, 24, 29
			Hip-length	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28
Sleeve Length	Long	5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29	Longline	12, 25
			Short	3, 4, 13
Back Closure	Open (Krowok)	9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19	Sleeveless	1, 2
	Closed	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 20, 21, 22, 24, 28, 29	Solid	7, 8, 12, 18, 23, 25, 26, 27
Material	Lurik	12	Mixed Fabrics	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29
	Velvet	11		



Figure 9 “Dulu, Kini, Nanti” 2024 Collection by Wilsen Willim

Table 2 Visual Analysis of “Dulu, Kini, Nanti” 2024 Collection by KRATON

Classification	Traditional		Modern	
	Type	Design No.	Type	Design No.
Silhouette	Elongated	12	Loose	12
	Tailored	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11	Fit Body	9
Collar	High Collar	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20	Open Collar	6
			Button-Down Collar	3
			Collarless	2
Front Closure	Asymmetric	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18	Symmetric	38
Closure method	Button	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20	Zip-up	6
Length	Waist-length	6, 9, 11, 12, 17, 19	Cropped	2, 4, 8, 15, 18
			Hip-length	1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 16
			Longline	6, 13, 20
Sleeve Length	Long	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19	Short	-
			Sleeveless	79, 10, 20
Back Closure	Open (Krowok)	2, 3, 4, 18	Solid	13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20
	Closed	1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14		
Material	Lurik	-	Mixed Fabrics	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
	Velvet	-		



Figure 10 “Enggal: The New: Artisanali” 2024 Collection by House of Radinindra

Table 3 Visual Analysis of “Enggal: The New: Artisanali” 2024 Collection by House of Radinindra

Classification	Traditional		Modern	
	Type	Design No.	Type	Design No.
Silhouette	Elongated	-	Loose	7
	Tailored	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Fit Body	8, 9
Collar	High Collar	1, 2, 3, 7	Open Collar	4, 5, 6
			Button-Down Collar	-
			Collarless	8, 9
Front Closure	Asymmetric	-	Symmetric	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Closure method	Button	3, 4, 6	Zip-up	1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9
Length	Waist-length	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	Cropped	-
			Hip-length	-
			Longline	-
Sleeve Length	Long	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	Short	-
Sleeveless	-	-	-	-
Back Closure	Open (Krowok)	-	Solid	8, 9
	Closed	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	-	-
Material	Lurik	-	Mixed Fabrics	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
	Velvet	-	-	-

Table 4 Final Visual Analysis of Collections of KRATON, Willsen Willim, and House of Radinindra

Classification	Traditional Trait	KRATON (%)	Willsen Willim (%)	Radinindra (%)	Total (%)
Silhouette	Tailored / Elongated	64	65	67	64
Collar	High Collar	100	93	67	81
Front Closure	Asymmetric	31	55	0	34,5
Closure method	Button	100	95	33	90
Length	Waist-length	24	30	100	38
Sleeve Length	Long	79	90	78	83
Back Closure	Closed / Krowok	76	85	100	76
Material	Traditional (Velvet, etc.)	7	0	0	3



The analysis of traditional beskap design elements across three Indonesian fashion brands — KRATON, Wilsen Willim, and House of Radinindra — reveals a strategic balance between cultural preservation and contemporary adaptation. One of the most consistently retained features is the silhouette, with tailored or elongated forms present in 64% of the samples examined. Designers prioritize the structural identity of the beskap, using its form to ground their modern interpretations in tradition.

High collars, which symbolize modesty and respectability in Javanese culture, are present in 81% of the analyzed garments. This feature is universally included in the KRATON collection (100%) and is also widely represented in Wilsen Willim's designs (93%), and remains significant in Radinindra's work (67%). Buttoned closures, a defining aspect of the beskap's formal construction, are also prevalent, appearing in 90% of the garments. The KRATON collection and Wilsen Willim utilize them nearly to the full extent (100% and 95%, respectively). In contrast, Radinindra shows a significantly lower usage of buttoned closures at just 33%, indicating a more modernized approach to its design philosophy.

Long sleeves, traditionally associated with formality and proper attire, appear in 83% of the designs. Wilsen Willim's collection is notable in this aspect, as it features long sleeves in 90% of its garments. An analysis of the back designs reveals that 76% of the pieces maintain either a closed or a krowok style. Radinindra stands out with a 100% adherence rate to these styles, highlighting its commitment to preserving culturally significant details.

While many structural elements are well-preserved, there is a noticeable shift in the materials used. Traditional fabrics, such as velvet and lurik, comprise only 3% of the total sample, indicating a significant shift towards modern mixed fabrics, which make up 97%. This change likely reflects designers' priorities of practicality, cost, and aesthetic flexibility rather than a strict adherence to material authenticity.

Asymmetric front closures, a distinctive feature of beskap design, are present in only 34.5% of the analyzed garments. Wilsen Willim leads in this aspect with 55%, highlighting a stronger emphasis on this cultural element, while KRATON shows a moderate usage rate of 31%. Notably, Radinindra does not incorporate asymmetric closures at all. In terms of garment length, 38% of the samples maintain the traditional waist-length format. Radinindra stands out in this respect, with a 100% application of the waist-length style, compared to KRATON at 24% and Wilsen Willim at 30%.

Overall, the analysis reveals that Indonesian designers carefully select the most visually and structurally significant elements of the beskap, especially those that define its silhouette, collar, and sleeves. These components are crucial for preserving a recognizable cultural identity. Additionally, the designers demonstrate flexibility in their choices related to fabric, closure symmetry, and garment

length, which shows their willingness to innovate and appeal to contemporary audiences. The result is a thoughtful blend of heritage and modernity, allowing the beskap to evolve within global fashion trends.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study examines how Indonesian fashion designers incorporate and transform traditional beskap elements into contemporary fashion. By employing a design-based research method, we analyzed 58 garments from KRATON, Wilsen Willim, and House of Radinindra. The findings reveal that specific structural features—such as tailored silhouettes, high collars, button closures, long sleeves, and unique back openings—are consistently preserved. These elements not only maintain the cultural authenticity of the beskap but also enhance its adaptability within modern fashion contexts.

This study highlights the importance of preserving traditional design integrity while adapting to a global audience. The findings suggest that retaining essential structural elements is crucial for successfully adapting traditional attire while maintaining its cultural significance. This study serves as a valuable resource for designers, researchers, and fashion students who are interested in culturally informed design approaches.

Incorporating qualitative insights from interviews with designers, as well as exploring additional local fashion brands, will enhance the understanding of how traditional elements are integrated into modern design practices. This approach can offer a more nuanced perspective on contemporary reinterpretations of heritage in future research. By pursuing this line of inquiry, Indonesian fashion can further establish its identity on the global stage while honoring its rich cultural heritage.

**Author Contributions:** Conceived and designed the analysis (Contribute equally to the conceptual framework and study design), K. C. L., G. C., & A. M.; Collected the data (Participated in field data collection and coordination), K. C. L., G. C., & A. M.; Contributed data or analysis tools (Lead the dataset preparation and selecting analytical tools), K.C.L.; Contributed data or analysis tools (Assisted in preparing datasets and selecting analytical tools), G. C.; Contributed data or analysis tools (Assisted in preparing datasets), A. M.; Performed the analysis (Collaboratively performed statistical and thematic analysis), K. C. L., G. C., & A. M.; Wrote the paper (Co-wrote the manuscript and revised critical sections), K. C. L.; Wrote the paper (Co-wrote the manuscript), G. C.; Wrote the paper (Co-wrote the manuscript and revised critical sections), A. M.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in figshare at 10.6084/m9.figshare.29377418.



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