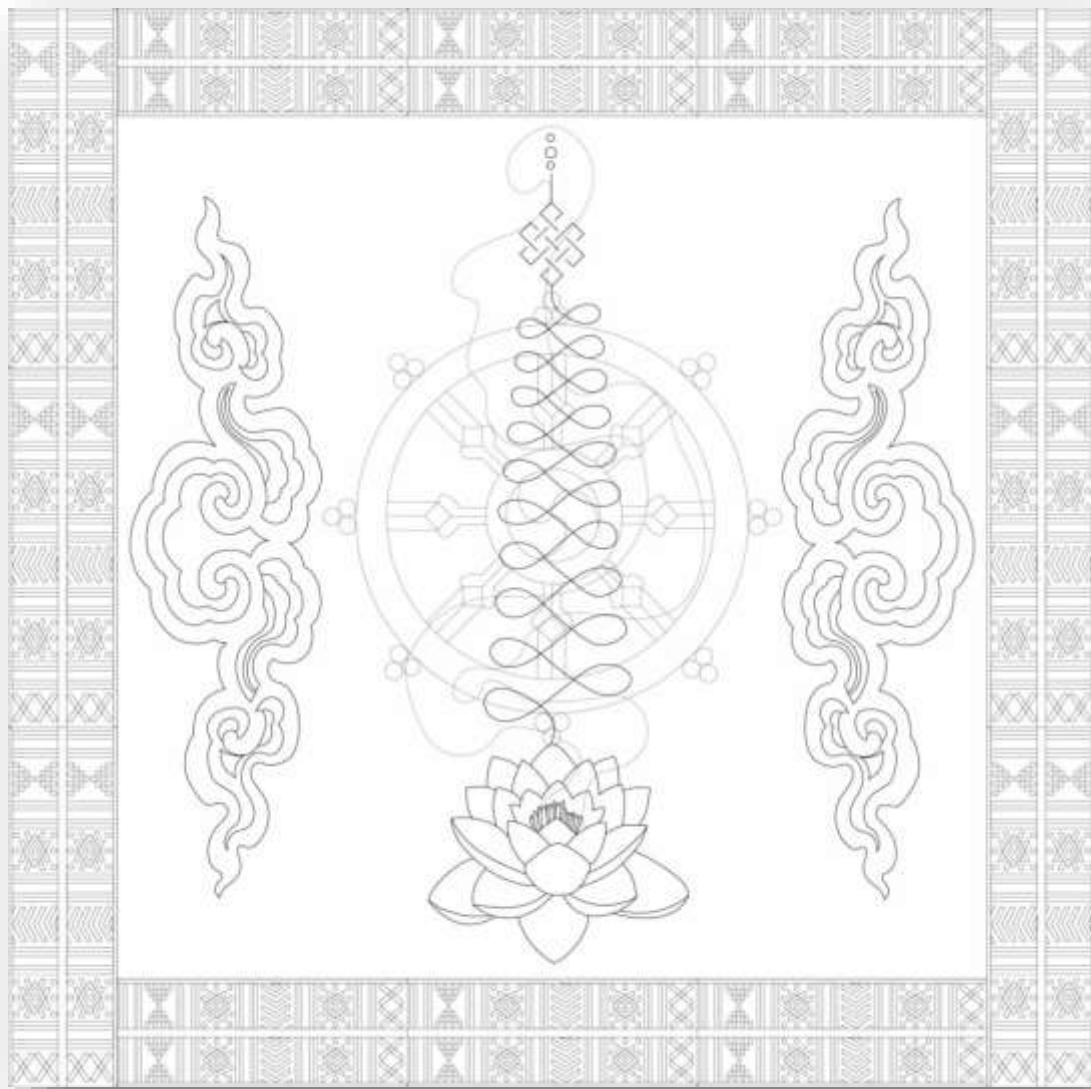


Chapter **4** RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS



Artwork created by the researcher for Sutra Santati Textile exhibition at
Delhi National Museum

Chapter IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study was undertaken with a significant objective in mind to explore into the traditional and contemporary costumes worn by the Lepcha and Bhutia communities residing in the state of Sikkim. As detailed in the previous chapter, the process of data collection for this study was comprehensive and multifaceted. Primary data was acquired through a variety of means, including interviews with families, designers, local tailors, government officials, and other key figures, alongside firsthand observations of historical garments.

Following the exhaustive data collection process, all gathered information underwent rigorous analysis, interpretation, and organization. This involved analyzing the nuances of each piece of data, identifying textiles and costume patterns and trends, and drawing insightful conclusions. The culmination of this analytical process is presented in this results and discussions chapter, where the findings are systematically laid out and thoroughly discussed.

Throughout the subsequent chapters, these findings are further elaborated upon, providing a deeper understanding of the intricacies surrounding the traditional and existing textile & costumes of the Lepcha and Bhutia communities. Each objective specific result offers valuable insights and interpretations derived from the rich tapestry of data collected, contributing to a comprehensive exploration of the study.

Findings of the study have been described under the following sub-heads:

4.1 Historical roots and origins of the Lepcha and Bhutia community, focusing on evolving relationship with textiles and costume.

4.1.1.i Lepcha Location and Homeland

4.1.1.ii Lepcha Language

4.1.1.iii Lepcha Folklore

4.1.1.iv Lepcha Religion and culture

4.1.1.v Lepcha Living Condition and Family life

4.1.1.vi Textiles and Clothing Pattern of Lepcha's

4.1.2.i Bhutia Location and Homeland

4.1.2.ii Bhutia Language

4.1.2.iii Bhutia Folklore

4.1.2.iv Bhutia Religion and Culture

4.1.3.v Bhutia Living Conditions and Family Life

4.1.2. vi Textile and Clothing Pattern of Bhutia's

4.1.3. Chogyal Period

4.2 Documentation of the traditional textiles and costumes of the Lepcha and Bhutia.

4.2.1 Lepcha traditional textiles and costumes

4.2.2 Bhutia traditional textiles and costumes

4.3 Changes in traditional textiles and costumes across generations.

4.3.1 Technological advances in tools and techniques

4.3.2 Social customs

4.3.3 Cultural changes

4.4 Analysis of the traditional costumes: Lepcha and Bhutia Costumes Construction and Styles

4.5.i. Revamping Cuts and Styles: Crafting a Contemporary Capsule Collection.

4.5. ii. Development of design catalogue

4.1 Historical roots and origins of the Lepcha and Bhutia community, focusing on evolving relationship with textiles and costume.

The data related to the origin, history and development of the Lepcha and Bhutia communities and their textiles was collected by analysis of content through secondary sources (articles, newspapers, popular magazines, blogs and historic books). Data for this study was collected extensively through diverse range of sources, including notes, biographies, state papers, government archives, as well as primary information gathered through interviews, observations, and meticulous field notes. Sikkim's recorded history started in the seventeenth century.



Plate 4.1: Bhutias of Darjeeling 1860

Source:<https://sikkim-historyhunter.blogspot.com/2012/03/old-photographs-from-sikkim-darjeeling.html>

Limbu Chronicles, Lepcha folklore, Tibetan literature and traditions are often employed to explain historical events since actual documents are lacking. In 1981, the Census of India noted that relying on allegories and prophecies for documentation was not effective. The Lepchas are believed to be the original inhabitants of Sikkim. While some believe that they might have migrated from Assam and Upper Burma in the east, others think they came from *Kailasa*, a hilly mountain in Tibet. **Gorer (1996)** had a different opinion. He believed that the Lepchas were mongoloid people and the only inhabitants of the Himalayas on the southern and eastern slopes of Mount Kanchenjunga. The word 'Lepcha' was derived from a Nepali word '*lap-che*,' which means 'the nonsense talkers.' However, originally, the Lepchas called themselves '*Rong*' or '*Rong-pa*,' which means people living in ravines. Before being overshadowed by the Tibetans, the Lepchas were organized by Turve, who was titled '*Punu*' or king. Lepcha kingship ended after the fourth successor of Turve, and thereafter, a respected old man elected by society guided the Lepchas. Before the infiltration of other tribes and communities in Sikkim, the Lepchas lived a lifestyle marked by a high degree of mobility, subsisting on roots, tubers, fishing, and hunting. Their agricultural knowledge was limited to shifting cultivation or slash and burn method of rotational cultivation of rice, maize, and millet. They believed in animism and lived completely in harmony with nature. (**Gorer, 1996**)

Prior to the seventeenth century, migrating Tibetans dominated Sikkim, marginalizing the Lepchas and Limboos culturally and economically. Tibetan graziers, lamas, traders, and peasants settled in Sikkim, and Khye Bumsa, a Bhutia chieftain, formed a 'blood-brotherhood' with Lepcha chief Tho-Kung-tek. The Lepchas later accepted the Tibetans' superiority, referring to them as 'Bar-fung-mo,' which means "flowing from the high." In 1642, Phunshong Namgyal was crowned Sikkim's first religious and temporal monarch. The monks awarded him the title "Chogyal", which means "king who rules in righteousness." The Lepchas and the Bhutias formed a pact in which the former recognized the latter as the spiritual and secular ruler of the Sikkim kingdom. Phuntsong Namgyal divided Sikkim into twelve districts, each under a Lepcha district chief or dzongpen. The Bhutias (**Plate 4.1**) established their supremacy over the Lepchas through symbolic surrender of lands. Gradually, the Lepchas were converted to Lamaism and pushed back towards Nepal and India. Cultural, social and economic domination over the Lepchas by Bhutias was accomplished between the early fifteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century. It was observed that the Lepchas had intermarried with the Tibetans and Nepalese, losing all traces of tribal consciousness, probably except in the Talung valley of Dzongu where the entry and settlement of any other communities were strictly prohibited by law. (**Chakrabarti, n.d.**)

Despite its remote location in the southern highlands of the Himalayas, the Indian state of Sikkim has always been a hub of cultural interaction. Numerous changes have been sparked by interactions between Sikkim's local populations and foreign forces. Since ancient times, the Lepchas, an ethnic group native to the region in and surrounding Sikkim, have been affected by these events and have become accustomed to them. These events, which can be seen as the catalysts for Sikkim's and the Lepchas modernity, have been linked to the progressive erasure or alteration of Lepcha culture (**Bentley, 2007**). The modernization, industrialization, and urbanization Sikkim is undergoing could have additional impact on Lepchaculture. Less than 25% of Sikkim's population today is Lepcha, and while analyzing the community's traditional culture, both Lepcha and Western writers have referred to the Lepchas as a vanishing tribe. (**Bentley, 2007 & Foning, 2000**)

The Lepcha and Bhutia communities are indigenous ethnic groups primarily found in the north-eastern region of India, particularly in the state of Sikkim, and also in parts of

Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet. These communities have a rich history and unique cultural traditions, including their textiles.

4.1.1.i Lepcha Location and Homeland

The elevation of the Lepcha region varies, ranging from 230 meters (750 feet) in the Sikkim basin to Kanchenjunga's summit at 8,586 meters (28,168 feet) above sea level. This area is located on the southern and eastern slopes of Mt. Kanchenjunga in the eastern Himalayas, and it includes sections of western Bhutan and Nepal. Population estimates for the Lepcha population vary greatly, with some sources estimating roughly 50,000 people and others estimating up to 85,000 in western Bhutan alone. Given the 'Lepchas' status of the "Vanishing Tribe". The River Teesta and its tributaries shape the terrain, carving steep-sided valleys separated by rough hills that rise northward to the high peaks of the Himalayas. Settlements and cultivated land are primarily located between 1,070 m and 2,285 m (3,500-7,500 ft) above the hot, humid river basins. The average temperature in this region is from 4.4°C to 30°C (40°F-86°F). From June to September, the area receives practically continuous rainfall, while snow covers the ground year-round at elevations above 2,440 meters (8,000 feet).

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/lepchas>)

Various theories regarding the origin of the Lepchas as discussed by **Molommu, S. P. (2018)** in his study, as presented by different authors.

There have been theories put up that suggest the Lepchas originated in China, but rare data is still harder to get. Their mongoloid features imply a potential relationship to Tai clans from the border between China and Indochina. Supporting this idea is the Lepchas' self-designation as "Mutanchi Rong," which is evocative of the Tai king "Mao-Tai-Ching-Rong". Furthermore, some researchers highlighted linguistic and theological differences that may indicate an earlier settlement from Southern Tibet. This view is also supported by historian **Chemjong (1966)**, well-known for his research on the Kirats of Nepal. He distinguishes between Khamba Lepchas from the north and Rong Lepchas from the southern Chinese province of Unan. These resemblances suggest a possible genetic connection between these tribes, who may have been companions in their historical explorations of new territories.

- Furthermore, **White, 1909** highlights cultural and customs similarities between the Lepchas and various tribes from Northeast India, such as the Nishi, Adi, Apa-Tani, Miri, and Mismi. For example, the Meitei word "Khurum-jari" in Manipur is quite similar to the Lepcha word "Kham-ri," which is used for greeting. It was observed that there was a significant physical difference between the Lepchas and Tibetans or Chinese, noting the Lepchas smaller stature, finer features, pronounced cheekbones, flat faces, stocky legs, and slender wrists. In contrast, Tibetans from across the Himalayas are typically taller, stronger, and possess Tartar-type features. The theory proposing that the Lepchas originated from Assam and Burma is supported by writers like **White, 1909**. He argues that the Lepchas likely migrated along the foothills of the Himalayas, rather than crossing the formidable mountain range.
- According to the research conducted by **Chemjong, 1966**, a renowned figure in Kirat People's history, the Lepchas are theorized to have descended from "Mung Moorong" and his followers. **Chemjong, 1966** suggests that these ancestors migrated to Sikkim from southern China, traversing through Assam and Burma. He proposes that the present-day Lepcha population is a blend of three distinct racial groups. Firstly, a group arrived in Sikkim from the west, possibly originating from Elam in southern Persia. Settling in eastern Nepal, they were known as the Ellamu or Arramu.
- Second, the Khamba Lepchas migrated to the region from the north. They originally hailed from Kham in Tibet. And third, with Mung Moorong as their head, the Rong Lepchas migrated across northern Burma from Unan in China (specifically from Nam Maw and Tai Tombe Nam Gam Tembe of Mon Wan), and met the other two groups near eastern Nepal. The three sections came together and mixed near eastern Nepal to form what is known as Rong or Mutanchi Rong. Thus according to this theory, the Lepcha community was formed by a network of inter-mixing and migrations.

One report by **Tamlong, 2008** suggests that the Lepchas may be one of the lost tribes of Israel. He has concluded this by a comparative study of folklore and biblical narration. For example, the great floods and construction of the stairway to heaven at Daramden in Lepcha folklore, seem to be linked with the Tower of Babel and biblical floods, whereas Illam and Araot hlo, Sadam in Lepcha names have synonymic place-names Ararat and Sidon respectively in old Testaments.

There is a prehistoric Tibeto-Burmese migration of other tribes or races, which was the basis for the theory that Lepchas derived from Indo-European and English phrases. The bulk of

modern Tibetans are thought to have arrived in their homeland only in the seventeenth century, and before they encountered Lepchas, their literature became non-extensive, according to historical data. Through marriage relationships with Lepchas, Tibetans strove to sever their ties to Mother India, which resulted in the destruction of texts under their ownership. The theory is oversimplified and does not take into consideration different situations.

- Various scholars and historians, like **Tshering, 1961,** & **Dozey, 2011,** suggest that the Lepchas could be the original inhabitants of the region, challenging notions of their migration. The history of Sikkim and the Darjeeling hills is often intertwined with that of the Lepchas, evident from the name "Sikkim," which suggests their prominence. Ancient texts like Chunakh-Aakhen mention Lepcha kings residing in the Kanchenjunga basin as early as the 4th century.

- **Dozey, 2011** describes them as the "aborigines" of the land, possessing all hill territory in areas like Sikkim and Darjeeling. **Gorer, 1938,** highlights the uncertainty surrounding the Lepchas' origin but acknowledges their deep-rooted connection to the mountainous landscape. The hills, mountains, and streams in the region bear Lepcha names, indicating their long-standing association with the land. European settlers recognize the Lepchas' extensive knowledge of flora and fauna, indicating their intimate connection with the natural environment. This indigenous knowledge underscores their historical presence and adaptation to the region's ecosystems. (**Molommu, 2018**)

The Lepcha clans trace their lineage to the 108 ancestors who liberated the community from Tibetan invader LasoMong. They are recognized as the indigenous tribe of Sikkim and consider themselves autochthones of the region. They identify as "*Rong*" or "*Rongkup*" and are referred to as "Rong-pa" by Tibetans and Bhutanese. The Lepchas' legend is significant due to their unique history and personal preferences. (**Gurung, 2011**)

4.1.1.ii Lepcha Language

The Lepcha language, also called as Rongring, it was believed that language originated from the Tibeto-Burman (**Plate 4.2**) language family and was sometimes categorized within the Naga group.

This language also utilizes an alphabet derived from the Tibetan script by King Chador of Sikkim around the late 17th or early 18th centuries, aiming to facilitate the reading of Buddhist scriptures by the Lepcha community. However, few Lepchas were observed communicating fluent in Nepali. (<https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/lepchas>)

Lepcha language is considered as one of the oldest language and as regards to present status of Lepcha language and dialect, it was good to note that the language and dialect was still being spoken by the members of the community. Lepchas are fluent in their mother tongue. Besides this, Lepcha language is also one of the recognised language in Sikkim State and taught in government schools. According to researchers' observations, it was a matter of pride that the bulletin "Sikkim Herald" was being published in the Lepcha language. Additionally, an All India Radio Programme in the Lepcha Language (Gangtok) is also being relayed.

As per the 60 year old *amma* (mother) at lingdong in North Sikkim, the Lepcha script is different from that of Tibetan but it is a branch of Tibetan language. This language is very rich in vocabulary related to the flora and fauna of Sikkim. Literature available on Lepcha language is very limited. Although there are few books written on poetry and folks fables. The Lepcha language is the most ancient, richest, most developed and the most beautiful among shrubs, plant, insect, animal etc. Also, vocabulary of astronomy, astrology, Biology and Zoology are to be found in the Lepcha language.

Some places of the region have Lepcha names. The present Sikkim and the territories it lost to neighbouring countries were called by Lepchas. 'Ne Mayel Renjyong-Lyang'. (or in short it was called 'Renjyong').

ཀ	ཁ	ག	ང	ཅ	ཆ	ཇ	ཉ	ཀྱ	ཀྲ	ཀླ	ཀྴ	ཀྵ	ཀྶ	ཀྷ	ཀྸ	ཀྐྵ
[ʔw]	[ko]	[kʰo]	[ɔ]	[ɔɔ]	[o]	[oʰ]	[ɔ]	kk	kkh	gg	ggh	cc	cch	ll	llh	llh
ཀྲ	ཀླ	ཀྴ	ཀྵ	ཀྶ	ཀྷ	ཀྸ	ཀྐྵ	nyc	nych	nyj	nyjh	ll	llh	dd	ddh	ddh
[ʔw]	[ɔ]	[tʰo]	[do]	[ɔ]	[ɔ]	[pʰo]	[ɔ]	nt	nd	ll	llh	dd	ddh	ddh	nt	nh
ཀྱ	ཀྲ	ཀླ	ཀྴ	ཀྵ	ཀྶ	ཀྷ	ཀྸ	nd	ndh	mm	pp	pph	bb	bbh	cc	cc
[ʔw]	[vʌ]	[ʂ]	[o]	[vʌ]	[kʰo]	[gʰo]	[pʰo]	cc	cc	cc	cc	cc	cc	cc	cc	cc
ཀྱ	ཀྲ	ཀླ	ཀྴ	ཀྵ	ཀྶ	ཀྷ	ཀྸ	mb	mbh	mm	ss	ll	ll	ll	ll	ll
[ʔw]	[ʂ]	[mʌ]	[hʌ]	[p]	[tʰo]	[dʰo]										

Plate 4.2 : Lepcha and Burmese scripts

Source: <https://www.omniglot.com/writing/lepcha.htm>,
<https://www.omniglot.com/writing/burmese.htm>

The Lepcha language is unique in its phonetic richness, yet literature on it remains sparse. Despite lacking historical records of their arrival in Sikkim, the Lepcha community still speaks and writes their language, which remains prevalent among them. **Bradley (1997)** and **Gravers (2007)** observed that the Lepcha language shares similarities with other mid-hill tribes of South Asia, particularly in cultural practices and knowledge. Notably, the Lepcha script displays affinities with the Burmese language, with some alphabets resembling vertically placed Burmese characters. The Lepcha script, also known as Rong script, is characterized by sharp, pointed strokes. While historical accounts suggest Tibetan or 18th-century origins for the script, conclusive evidence is lacking. Nonetheless, studies by **Hodgson (1820)** and **Waterhouse (2004)** the Lepcha community in Sikkim speaks and writes the Lepcha language which has a very rich set of phonemes. Some characters resemble Burmese script, and it's somewhat similar to other tribes in South Asia. Few historical accounts suggest that there is inadequate conclusive data about the origin of Tibetan script in the 18th century. (**Pradhan, 2021**)

4.1.1.iii Lepcha Folklore

‘In the beginning, there was nothing but vast emptiness on earth and in the sky. Itbu-moo, the Mother Creator, shaped the mountains, the rivers, and the lakes. But something was missing. Why did her creation feel empty? So, taking a fresh ball of snow, she created the first man... and then the first woman. These became the chief deities of the Lepchas’. – Yishey Doma .

As per the oral narratives, Aa-Ect-Sung is the creation story of Lepcha traditional mythology, and it takes over thirty days and nights to give a full account of it. The great Kanchenjunga mountain was created by Lord Eetboo-deyboo Rum and its powerful brother, Matli Pano, where Kanchenjunga happened to be the elder brother, according to the legend. But the creation was so awful that at first it was uninhabitable, as the whole world was lying in water. For their protection, Lord Eetboo-deyboo Rum was concerned about humanity. He worked out a plan that Matli Pano lay inside the earth, and Kanchenjunga stood above him and moved from place to place to direct his movements. How the creation of man, the god as he molds a man, the Fudong thing, was created by moulding from the pure snow from Kanchenjunga and breathed life into him. To ease his loneliness was created Nongyong Nyu a woman, to be his companion. First, they stayed as siblings in Nye Mayel Kyong near Kanchenjunga, but they defied the divine decree that prohibited physical relations before maturity had been attained. For this reason, they were banished to the ordinary world where they became the first parents of the Lepcha people. (Jha, 2015). Lepcha mythology tells that there was Itbu-mu the Mother-Creator, who created earth, heavens, and all life forms. She sculpted mountains, lakes, and beasts alike until the creation of human beings. The first man was Fudong-thing, an individual made of pure snow on top of Mt Kanchenjunga, given life. In order to make his loneliness end, Itbu-mu created a mate, Nuzong Nyu, from his bone marrow. Though destined to live as brother and sister, Fudong-thing and Nuzong Nyu had an incestuous relationship that bore the progenitors of the Lepcha, thought of as devils and evil spirits. When the gods found out, they were cast out from heaven and made to stay among humans. They went on to give birth and become the ancestors of the Lepcha. (<https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/lepchas>). A very interesting fable, according to the local community and their traditional origin of the Lepcha marriage, throws light on the tradition and practices around marriage among them. Scholars suggest that Tarbongthing was a young Lepcha boy who was setting up a bird trap for his meal. The birds fell in the pit, but much to his dismay, Narip Naom was guarding the birds, who freed them from being the prey out of his heart full of compassion for the rights of the birds to live freely. So smitten was Tarbongthing by both her beauty and spirit that he expressed his wish to marry her. Narip Naom agreed but only on condition that Tarbongthing seek permission from her mother and uncle, Tace-Tanye Moo-Nyoo, in Sakyong.

When Tarbongthing got back home, he went to Sakyong with his maternal uncle to ask for permission to get marry. He then went to his mother for assistance. In accordance with Lepcha marital customs and traditions, Narip Naom's family accepted the proposal but set down several restrictions. The first Lepcha marriage ceremony was solemnized and the customary regulations of Lepcha marriage were established when Tarbongthing and his uncle consented to satisfy all requirements. The deeply ingrained cultural traditions and customs of the Lepcha community, where marriages are blessed with songs to celebrate the new bride, are reflected in this folktale.

It reads as:

Hâaey. . . . !

Let the bride and groom live long
Like the Himalayas standing strong.
Let them flower and fruit
With bright sunshine on them,
In this world.

Like the love of Teesta and Rangeet
Let them flow together forever, and
Let their love endure for all time.

Hâaey. !

Into the laps of groom's parents,
The jewel bride is entrusted,
Amid uncles, aunts and relatives as witnesses.

Let the jewel bride shine,
Let her bring the light to this house
From this day onwards.

Hâaey. !

On completion of the marriage vows and blessings, on the union of these two, Let the young boys and girls dance, sing and play together, to celebrate the wedding with joy and delight.

Interviews revealed that the origin of Lepcha clans (**Plate 4.3**) is steeped in mythological tales, where Lepchas fought alongside Tamsangthing against the devil Laso-Mung-Pano and emerged victorious. After slaying the devil, they moved to a place called Tarkaol Tam-E-



Plate 4.3: Lepcha man cutting nettle stem

Picture courtesy: John. Z. Lepcha personal collection

Tam, which became known as the Valley of Deliverance. Tamsangthing then bestowed titles upon the Lepchas based on their roles in the war, and their descendants came to be known by these titles, thus giving rise to the clans within the Lepcha community.

These are as below.

1. The Lepcha prayed to God Eetboo-Deyboo were called Mallamu.
2. The Lepcha who plucked all the teeth of the demon were called Lukshongmu.
3. The man who pierced the eye of monster were called Simakmu
4. The Lepcha who cut the body of the monster were known as Suthungmu
5. The man who threw dust at the eyes of the monster in war were called Sadaamgnu
6. The man who prepared the swords for the work were called Korvommu
7. The man who made the string of the bow were called Brimu
8. The person who supply food for the soldier were called Jeribu
9. The person who served Lepcha leaders during war were called Ademmu
10. The Lepcha who make the bow and arrow were called Frenthatimu. (Jha, 2015)

4.1.1.iv Lepcha Religion and culture

In the life of Lepchas, animism goes side by side with Buddhism and was nourished by their traditional beliefs—the Mun religion. Rituals conducted by a mun, or a male priest, were done to please or drive away moong, the cause of illnesses and misfortune, for this some sort of sacrifices or the mun religious mediators were used. Although the Lepchas recognize many gods and good spirits, there was little periodic worship. The Mun practices were based on the foundations of lamaistic Buddhism, brought from Tibet about 1641. Though acknowledging the elements, such as rituals and mythology, the Lepchas still continue their own rights, refusing to believe that asceticism and personal atonement were their spiritual requirements. In daily religious life, the mun was generally more important than the lama, although ceremonies from both traditions frequently take place at the same time. Some describe Lepcha religion as 'animistic Buddhism,' because of its distinctive admixture of animistic and Buddhist elements (<https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/lepchas>)

For Lepchas, Dzongu holds profound significance as their sacred homeland, where they believe their race originated under the care of Mother Nature, with Mount Kanchenjunga revered as their mother mountain. This belief in Dzongu's sanctity transcends mere religious

affiliation, as Lepchas practice Buddhism, Christianity, and to a lesser extent, Hinduism. It's a cultural legacy predating colonial influences, rooted in their ancestral reverence for nature, which they term as nature-worship.

Despite embracing Buddhism since its beginning by the Bhutias from Tibet in the 13th century, Lepchas in Dzongu and other regions of Sikkim maintained their traditional nature worship rituals and beliefs. These rituals coexist harmoniously with Buddhist teachings, reflecting their deep-seated love and gratitude towards nature for sustaining life through provisions like food, medicine, and spiritual support. Many of their festivals and prayers are dedicated to honoring the gifts to nature. **(Little, 2008)**

The impact of Buddhism on the cultural heritage of the Lepchas raises concerns regarding the preservation of their traditional practices, especially those of the Lepcha ritual specialists. Though Buddhism calls for cremation followed by reincarnation, the Lepcha tradition leans towards the old-style burials to ensure that the soul's journey remains continuous. There has been a reduced experience in traditional burials as modernization keeps advancing. Thus, there is a revival of its demand for its practice by the Lepcha ritual specialists.

The traditional healing practices among the Lepcha are based on indigenous knowledge and prosper under the Lamaistic faith. Mun and Bong thing **(Plate 4.4)** priests hold a significant place. In conducting sacred rituals and as traditional healers, dealing with the diseases caused by natural and supernatural forces. Introduced in the 17th century, Lamaism is an amalgamation of Mahayana Buddhism, Tantric Hinduism, and Tibetan Bon religion; Lamaist ethics were based on beliefs about individual destiny and the atonement of sin.

Lepchas maintain a deep connection with nature, to the extent of revering the benevolent and vicious spirits that inhabit the natural world. One respondent warned during fieldwork not to pluck or eat fruits from just about anyone's garden, as these are guarded by spirits that the owners get to choose



Plate 4.4 Lepcha Bongthing (priest) performs Chyu Rum Faat prayers, in honour of the mountain god.

Source: Singh et al., 2017

4.1.1.v Lepcha Living Condition and Family life

Water came from streams, waterfalls, or springs. Most villages had a gompa for Buddhist worship; often, the surrounding landscape was decorated by prayer flags. Villages were linked by tracks running over the mountains, not by roads. Houses were rectangular in plan, featuring circular or rectangular straw roofs. The floors, elevated about 1 meter above ground level, were typically wooden, with space underneath utilized for keeping domestic animals. Thatched walls covered in clay formed the structure, crafted without the use of nails or screws. **(Plate 4.5) (Plate 4.6) (Plate 4.7)** Usually, a house comprised three rooms: a bedroom, guest room, and kitchen or storage area. Basic furnishings such as low wooden stools or padded wooden benches were common. Water was sourced from streams, waterfalls, or natural reservoirs **(Plate 4.8)**. Most villages boasted a gompa for Buddhist worship, with prayer flags adorning the landscape **(Plate 4.9)**.

Lepchas are organized into patrilineal clans called ptso. According to my respondents, there is no rule against marriage within the ptso. Members of a clan can be identified primarily

through patrilineal descent. The basic unit of clan organization is the village. The members of most clans are named after themselves. Uncle figures were critically important as matchmakers and in marriage negotiation. The boy was usually 16 and the girl, 14. While the ceremonies of betrothal were going on, the boy more often than not stayed with the girl's family. The muns and lamas decided the wedding day which, like the betrothal date, had to be an auspicious one. Divorce or separation was very rare. That too happened because of the incompatibility of the husband and wife or if the wife refused to fulfill her responsibilities. Historians and anthropologists still argue on the actual origin of the Lepcha people. However, they were said to have been part of the Himalayan region for very many years and have close relationships with its forests and ecosystem. The Lepcha's textiles are known to be very good in design and structure, which is their conventional weaving. They produce textiles for clothing, blankets, and other uses from natural fibers like nettle, cotton, and wool. Lepcha women are usually master weavers, passing down their knowledge and techniques from generation to generation (**Gorer, G 1967**)



Plate 4.5 Lepcha Traditional Home converted into museum at Nampridang , North Sikkim **Plate 4.6 Lepcha traditional Home, lingthim, Dzongu, North Sikkim.**



Plate 4.7 Lepcha man carrying bamboo basket coming out of their traditional house

Source: Singh et al., 2017



Plate 4.8 Natural reservoirs, Lingdong, North Sikkim.



Plate 4.9 Gompa (Monastery), North Sikkim



Plate: 4.10 Dried grains in Lepcha traditional Kitchen, Lingthem, North Sikkim

4.1.1.vi Textiles and Clothing Pattern of Lepcha's

The Lepcha community was believed to be one of the oldest indigenous groups in the Himalayan region. Their history can be traced back to ancient times, and their culture and language were distinct from those of their neighbouring communities.

Lepcha food and cuisines was characterized by the use of fermented dishes. Their cuisine was mild and did not contain such spices. It was observed that they used to have kitchens in the traditional setup. With open 'chullas' (stove) and sun-dried millets, corns and other cereals and pulses was a usual sight among the Lepcha community. (Plate 4.10)

Lepchas (Plate 4.11) were recognized by contemporary anthropologists as the earliest settlers in the region between the western Rangit and eastern Teesta rivers, surrounded by the hills and peaks of Mount Kanchenjunga. While modern borders divide their indigenous territory between Sikkim and Darjeeling, the Lepcha population extends into eastern Nepal, South-western Bhutan, and parts of Tibet. The tribe, established by the eighth century CE, likely interacted with neighboring communities like the *Limboo* and *Mangar* tribes during early cultural development.



Plate 4.11: Indigenous Lepcha tribe

Picture Courtesy: Archive section, Department of Culture, Government of Sikkim.

Picture donated by Royal anthropological society London possibly during 70s or 80s

The Lepchas, constituting less than 25% of Sikkim's population, have faced changes due to historical events, including interactions with foreign forces. The establishment of the Chogyal kingdom in the seventeenth century marked a shift, leading to the acceptance of Bhutia culture, Buddhism, and changes in clothing practices. Through the old photographs it was also observed that the British influence during the nineteenth century had further impacted Lepcha textiles, introducing new weaving techniques and materials.

The British had also encouraged Nepali immigration, altering Sikkim's demographics and cultural backdrop. The Chogyals regained autonomy towards the end of British rule, and after India's annexation of Sikkim in 1975, urbanization and industrialization accelerated, transforming the cultural dynamics. (Faulkner, 2021). This major shifts to various governing authorities in the region and cultural exchange showed how the textiles and costumes travelled in the region.

As per the interviews within the community it was also revealed that a movement within the community had also emerged, in order to preserve Lepcha culture and its tradition, due to modernization community was facing a cultural loss. Although modern Lepcha textiles frequently deviate from what the Lepchas define as the traditional textile. The modifications in Lepcha textiles, along with the acknowledged effects of the various forces of cultural exchange and modernization on Lepcha culture, show a balance of elements associated with tradition and elements associated with cultural change and modernity within Lepcha textiles. Lepcha textiles were still accepted as components of traditional Lepcha culture because weaving was a visual art, the interaction between tradition and change may be seen in both the production and the aesthetics of current Lepcha textiles. This defies the idea that modernity and tradition are mutually exclusive.

Additionally, the crafts became physical representations of the Lepchas legacy, which was saturated by both traits, as a result of the interactions between modernity and tradition inside the textiles. Available literatures on Lepcha culture is quite homogeneous and rather I should say constrained. As reviewed Lepcha cultural development, its rebirth, and loss were established and examined in a wide range of researches and documentations; nonetheless, there is a dearth of thorough literature on Lepcha textiles. The knowledge gap about Lepcha weaving, how they started weaving, when they started , what were the traditional motifs back then and how the Lepchas' traditional culture was reflected in contemporary Lepcha textiles. Few researchers had documented by investigating how these textiles reflect both the realities of cultural change and contemporary modernization (Faulkner, 2021). It's important to understand cultural revivals and amalgamation of tradition and change which manifests in their contemporary textiles over a period of time. Evolutionary Shifts and cultural interchanges in the history of Sikkim helped in understanding the decorative and formal development of Lepcha textiles. Visual analysis of old photographs collected from culture department also showed a group of men from the lepcha community, wearing traditional

lepcha *thokro* made with locally available yarns like *sisnu* (nettle). This was a draped garment and was wrap over one shoulder as shown in (**Plate 4.12**)

As the curiosity increased and I gone further in depth research, I came across the fact that Lepchas and their home country have undergone various changes that almost completely hide the past beneath a veneer of the present. The Lepchas regular wear of contemporary, Western-style clothing, which is a monument to both their years under British colonial control and the growing trend of industrialization and globalization of the Lepchas' homeland. This could be possibly one of the reasons why they chose to adapt to the contemporary definition of clothing, or as they mentioned Indian clothing. The use of non-Lepcha fashion, such as sarees and textiles and traditional attire adopted from neighbouring regions like Bhutan, Tibet, and Nepal came much later. This showed a further indication that cultural dispersion began before modern times. While the adoption of contemporary shapes, manufacturing techniques, and materials demonstrates the influence of the current age on textiles, the integration of imported textile features within Lepcha textiles illustrates the community's effects of centuries of cultural interchange.

Data collected from various sources revealed that Lepcha traditional textiles and clothing patterns showcase elaborate geometric designs infused with symbols and motifs drawn from nature and their cultural legacy. These intricate patterns are significantly featured in their woven fabrics, which serve as the foundation for crafting various garments such as shawls, and wraps. Lepcha women known for their mastery in weaving, especially for weaving on backstrap looms. The use of vibrant hues, reflecting their distinct cultural heritage. Traditional Lepcha attire frequently incorporates tribal motifs and an embellishment, showcasing their profound textile legacy. However, it is difficult to say when the first textile piece was woven by using natural *sisnu* (nettle) fiber.

The clothing styles of the Lepcha community underwent a significant change which was influenced by Tibetan culture. The arrival of Tibetan migrants and British settlers showed a notable shifts which occurred in the choice of fabrics and patterns used by them for their traditional attire. These changes reflected the dynamic nature of cultural exchange within the Lepcha society. This showed how external influences shaped their clothing preferences over time. These changes were clearly visible in the old photographic records.

It was also clearly visible in the old photographic records that Lepcha women embellish themselves with a diverse array of ornaments, including silver hoops or rings worn in the ears, necklaces crafted from gold, silver, semiprecious stones, or even silver coins, as well as charm boxes and small idols. In contemporary times, a considerable number of Lepchas, particularly women, have opted for Bhutia style of clothing, gradually abandoning their indigenous attire.



Plate 12: Old picture of Lepcha Woman and Man in their traditional draped attire

Picture Courtesy : Archive section, Culture department, Gangtok, Sikkim.



Plate 4.13: Men and women from Lepcha and Bhutia community wearing traditional costume

Source: Peter Dekker, Mandarin Mansion

<https://archive.mandarinmansion.com/swords-himalayan-kingdom-sikkim>

The image (**Plate 4.13**) depicts men from the Lepcha and Bhutia communities adorned in their traditional attire. The focal point of this picture is the manner in which they wore their clothing and the way they carried their knives. These knives, known for their weight and balanced design facilitating efficient cutting and chopping, were worn in various styles: on the left hip (in the native style), on the right hip (in the Bhutanese style), or diagonally in the front (in the Tibetan style). This diverse range of wearing styles reflects the cultural influences that the Lepcha community has drawn from.

Thus we can conclude that Lepcha textiles function as a conceptual time machine that may visually transport one through Lepcha history as well as a reflection of current Lepcha culture as a result of the two qualities interplay in Lepcha weaving and garment culture.

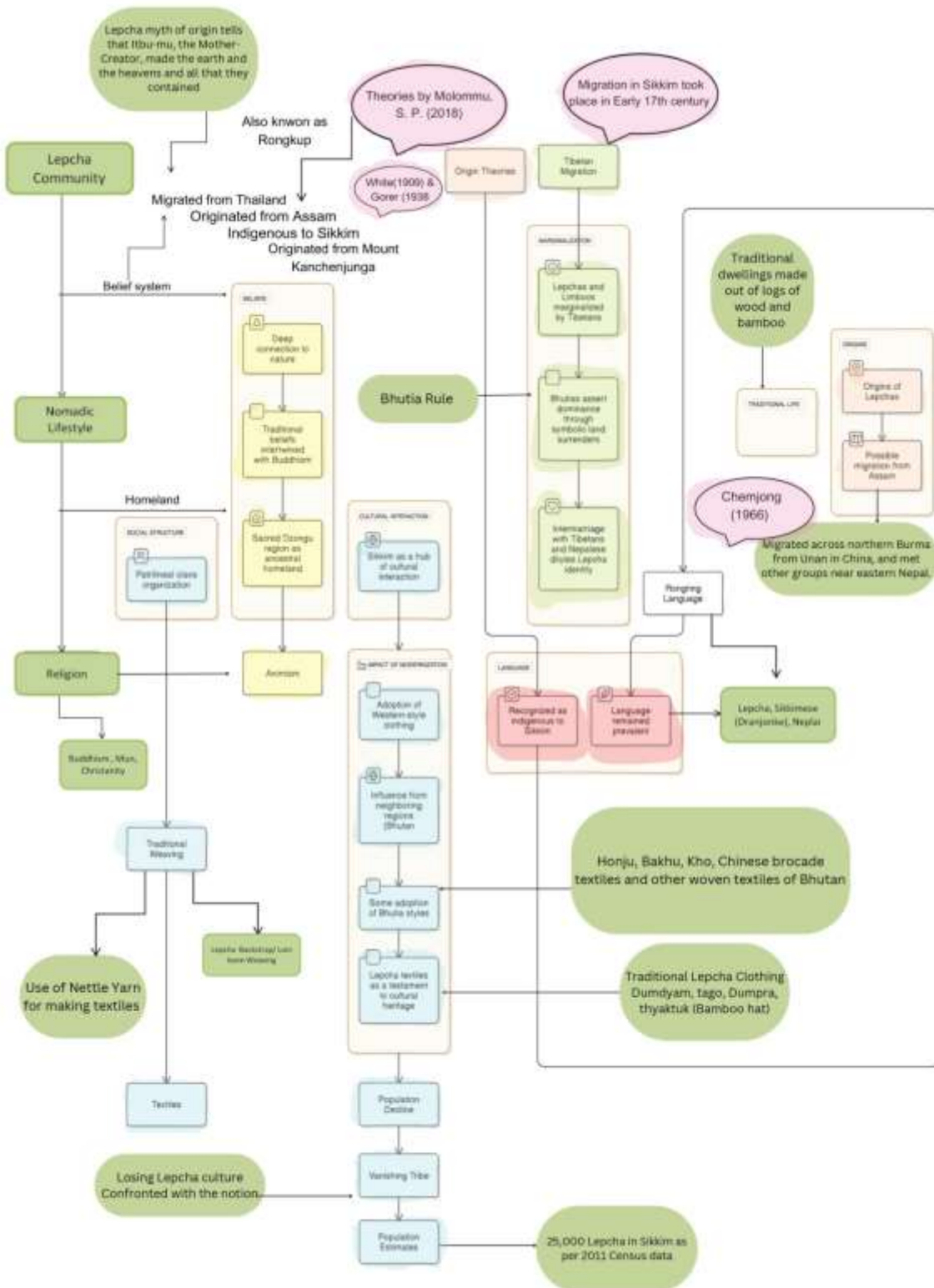


Figure 4.3 Historical roots of Lepcha (Brief Summary)

4.1.2.i Bhutia Location and Homeland

The term "Bhutia" originates from "*Bhot*," indicating Tibet, the ancestral homeland of the Bhutias of Sikkim. Migration of the Bhutias to Sikkim likely started in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Old photographic records and written chogyal history of the royals Maharaja Thutop Namgyal and Maharani Yashi Doma Namgyal (**Plate 4.14**) supported this perspective, showing that migration occurred continuously through various routes, primarily from the northern and western passes of Sikkim.



Plate 4.14 Maharani Yashi Doma Namgyal

Source: Archive section, Culture department, Gangtok, Sikkim

According to a widespread narrative in Sikkim, religious conflicts between the Yellow-Hat-Sect (*Gelukpas*) and the Red-Hat-Sect (*Nyngmapas*) in Tibet encouraged many followers of the Red-Hat-Sect, led by Khye Bhumsa, to flee Tibet after their defeat. They found refuge in the Chumbi Valley, an integral part of Sikkim at that time. A "blood-brotherhood" pact was forged at Kabi between the Lepcha and Bhutia communities, facilitating Bhutia settlement in various regions of Sikkim (**Plate 4.24**). Kabi Lungchok is the historical site located 17

kilometres away from Gangtok on the Northern Highway. One can witness the stone pillars which mark the location where the treaty was signed back in times.

As per the locals, realizing their uncertain future in Tibet, they established Chumbi Valley as their permanent residence and gradually expanded to other parts of Sikkim. These early Tibetan settlers were presently known as *Dezongpa* or *Lhori*, while those who migrated in the twentieth century, particularly after the Chinese occupation of Tibet, were commonly referred to as Tibetans. Over time, the distinction between these groups has blurred, largely due to the widespread use of the comprehensive term "Bhutia" in the Scheduled Tribes Orders of 1978.

Gurung, S. K. (2011).

It was believed that the Bhutia people inhabit a narrow stretch of mountainous terrain along the southern slopes of the Himalayas. This region spread from the eastern Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, through Nepal, to the northern mountainous states of India, and even extends to the mountains and plateaus of Ladakh and Kashmir. Though precise population figures for the Bhutia community were challenging to ascertain, their numbers were estimated to exceed 1 million. Notably, they constitute a significant portion of Bhutan's population, making up approximately 50%, which amounts to around 400,000 individuals. Additionally, Bhutias form minority groups in both Nepal and India, with an estimated population of 200,000 in each country. Despite the difficulties in accurately quantifying their population, the Bhutia people play an integral role in the cultural fabric of the Himalayan region. To the north lie the primary Himalayan ranges, boasting peaks towering beyond 7,600 meters (25,000 feet) above sea level. However, Bhutia communities thrive in regions situated at altitudes reaching up to approximately 4,500 meters (15,000 feet). These settlements were nestled within valleys sculpted by streams that flow in a south westward route. Winters in these elevated areas were harsh, prompting the Bhutia to relocate to lower valleys during this season. (<https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/bhutia>)



Plate 4.24: Kabi Lungchok (Historical site where the "blood-brotherhood" pact was forged), North Sikkim.

4.1.2.ii Bhutia Language

In the past, the Sikkimese Bhutia language primarily served as a spoken dialect, while Tibetan was utilized for literary, cultural, and educational pursuits, and even served as the official language of Sikkim before its merger. Official government communications, including the publication of the 'Sikkim Herald,' were conducted in Tibetan. Since 1975, concerted efforts have been made to elevate Sikkimese Bhutia to the status of a district language in Sikkim. By 1977, it was officially recognized as the state's language. Social-cultural organizations like the Bhutia Kay-Rab-Yargay Tsonpo, established in 1983, was dedicated to preserving and developing Bhutia culture, tradition, religion, language, and literature. The association has organized numerous seminars, workshops, and meetings aimed at promoting the Bhutia language and preserving their rich cultural heritage. These initiatives, contribute significantly to the conservation and promotion of Bhutia identity and language in Sikkim. **Gurung, S. K. (2011).**

According to (**Bhutia, 2016**) The Bhutia community of Sikkim possesses its unique language known as "Lhokay" or "Denjong ki Lhokay." Distinguishing itself from Tibetan and Bhutanese languages, Lhokay shares some similarities in vocabulary. It serves as the primary dialect within the Bhutia community, extensively used in their homes and interactions. Despite their proficiency in Lhokay, Bhutias are adept at speaking other languages such as Lepcha, Nepali, Hindi, Bengali, and English. Prior to 1977, Tibetan was the official language utilized in schools and offices. However, after the reorganization of ethnic languages in 1977,

Bhutia, Lepcha, and Limboo were designated as the official languages of Sikkim. This transition saw the adoption of Lhokay as the official Bhutia language, facilitated by the adoption of Thumi Samboda's Tibetan scripts adapted for Bhutia. Several Bhutia pioneers, notably Sri Norden Tshering and Sri Pema Rinzing Bhutia, played pivotal roles in shaping and promoting the Bhutia language. Their efforts included the creation of grammar books, stories, poems, and educational materials for Bhutia language students across various educational levels. Notably, in 2016, a significant milestone was achieved when Bhutia language and literature were introduced at the MA level in Sikkim University, marking a remarkable advancement for Bhutia language and culture.

Listed below are several manuscripts written in the Bhutia language, which encompass three distinct forms.: 1. Humay (Capital) 2. Huchay (Small) 3. Khuk (Shorthand)

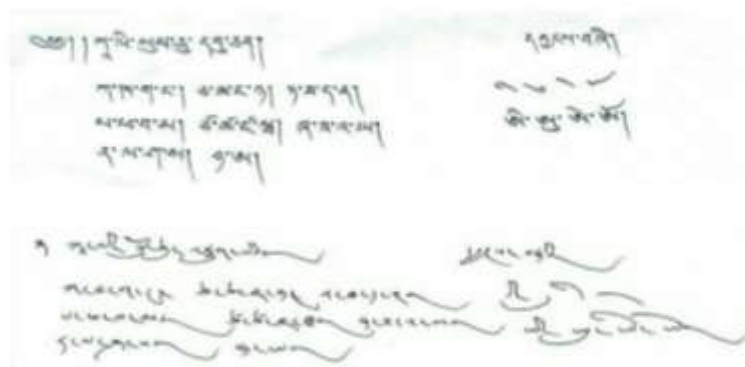


Plate 4.15 Bhutia script

The Bhutia language and script (**Plate 4.15**) belongs to the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. During field visits and data collection period researcher came across that in Uttarakhand, the dialects spoken by Bhutia communities fall within the Central Bhutia group, which includes variations like Rankas, Chaudansi, and Darmi. Interestingly, certain Bhutia groups, such as the Joharis in Pithoragarh district, have adopted the languages of their southern neighbours, sometimes forgetting their own dialects. Despite this, Bhutia communities across the board exhibit multilingualism, with proficiency in Tibetan, local hill (Pahari) dialects, Hindi, and, of course, their native tongue. (<https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/bhutia>)

4.1.2.iii Folklore of Bhutia

The rich folklore among the Bhutias community talk about their origins, culture, and traditions. These are often filled with supernatural beings, gods, and heroes. Bhutia folktales are filled with complex web of stories of humankind and nature. Their mythology was filled with tales around their ancestral deities and local gods. These stories enlighten about the connections between those divine characters and men, in which they carry out acts of kindness or punishment besides the rituals that need to be performed.

The most famous tale among the Bhutia was that about Guru Dongmar Lake, which was located in North Sikkim. This lake has quite a spiritual significance for the Bhutia community. According to the tale, it got its name from Guru Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche, the Buddhist saint who visited the region in the 8th century. As the tale goes, during his visit, Guru Padmasambhava found the lake remained completely frozen for most of the years. The locals called upon him to help them it was believed that after touching a small section of the lake, it never froze again, solving the water problem for the locals.

4.1.2.iv Bhutia Religion and Culture

Religion plays a central part in the lives of Bhutia's. At the monasteries, lamas (Buddhist monks) perform symbolic gestures called "mudras" and create cosmic diagrams known as "mandalas" during special occasions. Considered as potent incantations, lamas chant sacred mantras, believing in their transformative power. They adhere to the Eightfold Path, comprising right view, thought, conduct, speech, livelihood, action, and meditation, which leads to liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth. This form of Buddhism, belonging to the Nyingma sect, integrates the fundamental teachings of Gautama Buddha with elements of tantric tradition, known as the "greater vehicle" or "Mahayana." In Lachung, religion infuses every aspect of life for the Bhutias, shaping even the smallest actions and gestures.



Plate 4.16 Monks perform Degyed Serkyem – a golden drink offering to the eight classes of protectors– inside a prayer chamber of a Bhutia house.

Source: Singh et al., 2017

The majority of the Sikkimese Bhutia community adheres to Lamaist Buddhism, with Bodhisattva being their principal deity. However, there has been a noticeable increase in sympathizers of Christianity in recent years. In addition to Bodhisattva, they worship various guardian deities, including local, family, and village deities, as well as Mount Kanchenjunga.

Their place of worship was the monastery or Gumpa, where the Bhutia lama, their spiritual leader, conducts customary rituals (**Plate 4.16**) (**Plate 4.17**) (**Plate 4.18**). While their primary concentration historically has been in the north district, particularly in Lachen and Lachung villages, they have become the largest tribe numerically in the East district, notably in Gangtok, in recent times. **Gurung, S. K. (2011).**



Plate 4.17: The new Buddhist Pemiongchi Monastery showing head lama at the centre.1909

Picture Courtesy: Archive section, Culture department, Gangtok, Sikkim

In the Central Himalayas, religious affiliations among Bhutia groups vary. While the Bhutia predominantly follow Buddhism, other communities practice a blend of Lamaistic Buddhism, Hinduism, and animism. Data collection revealed that some Bhutia groups, like the Johari Bhutia, have adopted Hindu customs and enlist the services of Brahmins for puja rituals dedicated to Hindu deities. Among the pantheon of revered figures, Gabala, the god of trade, holds significant prominence alongside Hindu deities like Mahadev (Shiva) and Nanda Devi. One can witness Hindu temples as one explore tourist destinations in Sikkim. Additionally, Bhutia communities have their own distinct gods such as Saai and Laandey, as well as clan deities. Ancestor veneration holds great importance in Bhutia culture, and beliefs in ghosts and spirits are prevalent. In times of adversity, a magician-priest is called upon to identify the source of trouble through possession and prescribe appropriate rites or sacrifices to appease the offended deity or spirit, thereby restoring harmony within the community .**Lama (1994)**



Plate 4.18: Group of lamas in elaborate costumes & head-dress, Sikkim, Ancestors of Tholung Family, sitting second and third from left.

Picture Courtesy: Archive section, Culture department, Gangtok, Sikkim

The Bhutia community celebrates two significant festivals with deep cultural and spiritual significance. Sonam Losoong, known as the farmers' New Year, is a time for farmers to pause their agricultural activities after the harvest. They offer the first fruits of their labor to the gods, seeking forgiveness, protection, and prosperity for the coming year. This festival is a moment of gratitude for the blessings of a fruitful harvest and an opportunity to reflect on the past year's achievements.

Pang Lhabsol is another important ritual festival where the Bhutias worship Khangchendzonga or Dzonga, the mountain deity revered as the protector and god of fortune. During Pang Lhabsol, elaborate mask dances such as Pangtoed Chham or warrior dances are performed in monasteries across Pemayangtse, Tsuklakhang, Ralang, Rabong, and Thangu. These dances are not only visually stunning but also serve as acts of devotion, honoring the divine presence in the majestic mountains and seeking blessings for the community's well-being and prosperity (**Plate 4.19**).



Plate 4.19: The dancer representing Yabdue, a personification of a mountain near Teesta, performs a dance as a dancer representing Dzonga in North Sikkim

Picture Courtesy : John .Z .Lepcha, North Sikkim

Another important and notable object in Bhutia culture is '*torma*'.(Plate 4.20) The Bhutia people were employ *tormas* as ritual sculptures through which they make offerings to different divinities according to their religious orientation. Most of the commonly used *tormas* were made out of roasted barley flour and butter, items that form a very important part of the Himalayan diet, as offerings to the deities. *Torma* was a function that humans can engage in by means of projecting or 'throwing' a prayer or command to a deity and receiving a response through the use of lu ransom torma (ludzong) and ritualized medicine (lutor). *Tormas* should be beautiful art objects and tasty foods for divinities and humans that are very effective tools to perform their functions, such as protection, Buddhist insight, tantric rituals, good luck on auspicious holidays.



Plate 4.20: Torma

4.1.2.v Bhutia Living Conditions and Family Life

Bhutia customs bear the indelible imprint of Tibetan culture, a legacy stemming from the days of robust Tibetan trade. During this era, Bhutias came into contact with Tibetan lamas and imbibed their teachings. One distinctive practice is the construction of "Mana Walls," stone barriers adorned with the sacred Buddhist mantra Om Mani Padme Hum, believed to safeguard villages and their inhabitants from malevolent spirits and adversity. The Bhutias also draw inspiration from the Tibetan dragon symbol, often incorporating it into their crafts. Like many communities in the Himalayas, Bhutias cherish their tradition of folk songs, with the mountains serving as a recurring motif. Dancing holds a cherished place in Bhutia culture, with both genders actively participating. Certain dances are integral to wedding ceremonies, while others enliven evening festivities during Rang-Bang gatherings. **Lama (1994)**

4.1.2.vi Textile and Clothing Pattern of Bhutia's

As per the data collected through literature review the term 'Bhutia originates from the Nepali language, meaning the people of Tibet. They were of Tibetan origin, migrating to southern Tibet in the thirteenth century, settling in places like Chumbi Valley and Kham. They referred to themselves as '*Lhopos*' or '*Lhorees*,' signifying dwellers of the southward and early inhabitants of Greater Sikkim. Descending from Kye_Bum_Sa, they formed distinct lineages,

with Lingserpa becoming "Beb_Tsan_Gyat" (8 Clans). Other Bhutia tribes and settlers from Bhutan, like *Butsawopa*, *Lagdingpa*, *Botpas*, *Gyengyap*, *Gorongpas*, *Topas*, *Sharpas*, *Barphung_putsos*, and *Adenphutos*, settled in Sikkim. Despite being Buddhist and distinct from other communities, Bhutias converted indigenous Lepcha people, leading to cultural assimilation. 'Bhutia' in Nepali means the original habitat of Tibet since the 13th century, recognized as a Scheduled Tribe in the Indian Constitution (**Bhutia & Misra , 2017**).

During Sikkim's monarchy, Bhutias had a traditional legal system called "*Dzumsa*," led by a village headman or 'Pipon.' Lachungpas and Lachenpas had their *Dzumsa*. The term 'Bhutia' echo their place of habitation, like *Drukpas*, *Chumbipas*, *Dhophapas*, and *Tromopas or Domu-pas*. On the other hand *Bhutia* textiles were known for their cozy baggy silhouettes and complex patterns. According to the data collected it was revealed that the Bhutia community uses natural fibers like wool and silk to make textiles, much like the Lepcha community does. The traditional clothing worn by Bhutia women frequently contains '*Bakhu*,' and they are talented weavers. It was found that much of the textiles is imported in the region. Silk brocade or Chinese brocade, is the common textiles which was widely used by the Bhutia community.

Both the Lepcha and Bhutia communities have a deep cultural connection with their textiles, which frequently serve as a source of cultural transmission and preservation in addition to being used for apparel. These textiles not only serve a practical purpose but also have strong symbolic value, representing the deeply ingrained customs and spirituality of these native Himalayan communities (**Bandana, 1995**).

In the Bhutia community, clothing serves as a distinct marker of identity, helping to differentiate between individuals within the group. Both men and women wear a traditional garment called "*kho*," known as "*Po-kho*" for men and "*mo-kho*" for women. Traditionally, women complement the *kho* with a loose-sleeved blouse called "*honju*," secured at the waist with a long cloth belt known as "*keru*." The use of a "*pangden*" (apron) by women signifies their marital status, with unmarried women refraining from wearing it. Additionally, unmarried women adorn a Tibetan kingashambo cap. Male attire typically consists of a double high-necked shirt called "*Wonthatsi*" paired with a "*bakhu*" and a Chinese *thurishampo* cap. The choice of fabric varies according to individuals' economic standing, ranging from simple cotton to luxurious silk ("*kochen*"). There are no restrictions on the type of material worn, allowing individuals to express their preferences freely. Bhutia women

have a penchant for gold jewelry, often adorning themselves with traditional accessories such as the "*khau*" necklace, "dew" bangles, and "zhuku" rings during weddings and other significant occasions. Lot of Similarity with Tibetan costumes can be seen since the community is migrated from the said region according to old historical records and photographs collected, studied and documented (**Plate 4.21**).



Plate 4.21 Tibetan (Bhutia) Lady wearing lhasa style of dress 1890

Picture Courtesy: Archive section, Culture department, Gangtok, Sikkim

There were various crafts like carpet weaving, wood carving and *Thangka* making which was also practiced by Bhutia community. As the society has evolved artists from other cultures were also taking keen interest in learning the crafts which was once known to be done by Bhutias. Carpet weaving, a traditional craft of Sikkim predominantly carried out by Bhutia women, involves the initial creation of a taan, or frame, from cotton yarn tailored to specific dimensions. Following a design drawn on graph paper, the weaving process begins, utilizing wooden hammers called "flag" to beat the woven wool into place. Once weaving was completed, the carpet undergoes various processes. These intricately woven carpets find utility in covering various surfaces such as sofas, beds, walls, and chairs. (**Sharma & Borthakur, 2010**)

Wood carving, an ancient art form shared by both the Lepchas and Bhutias of Sikkim, utilizes select woods like *Cedrela toona* Roxb (tooni), *Juglans regia* Linn. (okhar), and *Michelia champaca* Linn. (chap). Initially, a piece of wood is shaped and seasoned, after which fine chisels and tools were employed to carve intricate designs. The carved pieces was then assembled and prepared for coating or painting. Notable among the wood-carved products of Sikkim was Chokse (folding tables), bagschok (center tables), table lamps, sofa seats, and screen partitions.

Thangkas (**Plate 4.22**), religious scrolls found in both monasteries and Buddhist households, serve as visual representations of Lord Buddha, Goddess Doma (Tara), or Guru Padmasambhava. Crafted by skilled artisans known as Lharips, thanka painting involves stretching rough cotton on a frame and smoothing it with a mixture of chalk and glue before painting. Stone colors, vegetable dyes, and primary colors like red and yellow was predominantly used, symbolizing various spiritual concepts such as knowledge, depth, purity, and infinity. (Sharma & Borthakur, 2010)



Plate 4.22 Thangka Painting
Source: Gyaltzen Zimba
personal Collection

It has been observed that the Bhutia community's journey from Tibet to Sikkim has not only shaped their geographical landscape but also deeply influenced their cultural practices, including textile traditions and clothing preferences. As they traversed through Tibet, they absorbed elements of Tibetan culture, which was reflected in their textile designs and patterns. This historical connection has fostered a shared aesthetic between the Bhutias and Tibetans, evident in the intricate silk textures used for their shirts and robes, as well as the woolen fabrics employed for *pangden* (apron).

The trade relations with China have made the textile heritage of Bhutias even richer. Textile and other goods were exchanged through trade routes to Tibet and China, leading to a unique mix of cultural motifs and designs. This exchange marks the history of Bhutia textiles, with Chinese influence still evident in majority of the patterns and motifs which were being used. After the settlement of the Bhutia community in Sikkim, these rich cultural traditions that

have since stayed on and kept growing. The Bhutias, dispersed geographically, have thus been seen to maintain a strong sense of cultural continuity by retaining and adjusting to their new surroundings in textile practices. Today, Bhutia textiles represent the cultural heritage as well as the testimony to the age-old affinity that lasts even today, created by centuries of trade and migration

4.1.3 Chogyal Period

Chogyals played a significant role in shaping and defining Bhutia textile culture in the State. Historical records regarding ancient Sikkim were scant, with only references to the earliest inhabitants, the Lepcha people, and the reign of the Chogyals, lasting approximately 330-332 years. Much of the region's ancient history remains veiled in obscurity, with present knowledge often drawn from legend, myth, and oral traditions passed down through generations. Sikkim was governed by the Chogyals of the Namgyal clan from Tibet, who established political control over the region after arriving in the 1400s.

The title "*Chogyal*," meaning "*Dharma Raja*" or "Religious king," denoted a special class of rulers with both temporal and spiritual authority. According to Sikkim history, the reign of the *Chogyals* was prophesied by Guru Rinpoche Padmasambhava, an ancient Tantric Buddhist leader. It was believed that Guru Rinpoche predicted the convergence of three lamas from different directions at Yuksum, who would then designate a religious head to govern Sikkim. Consequently, Chogyal Phuntsok Namgyal was ceremoniously crowned as Sikkim's inaugural ruler in the significant event of 1962.

The chronology of Chogyals of Sikkim (1642-1975)

1. Phuntsog Namgyal
2. Tensung Namgyal
3. Chador Namgyal
4. Guyrmed Namgyal
5. Phuntsog Namgyal ii
6. Tenzing Namgyal
7. Tsugphud Namgyal
8. Sidkeong Namgyal
9. Thutob Namgyal
10. Sidkeong Tulku Namgyal (**Plate 4.23**)
11. Tashi Namgyal
12. Palden Thondup Namgyal. (**Bhutia, 2016**)



Plate 4.23: Old photograph of Sidkeong Tulku Namgyal

Picture Courtesy: Archive section, Culture department, Gangtok, Sikkim

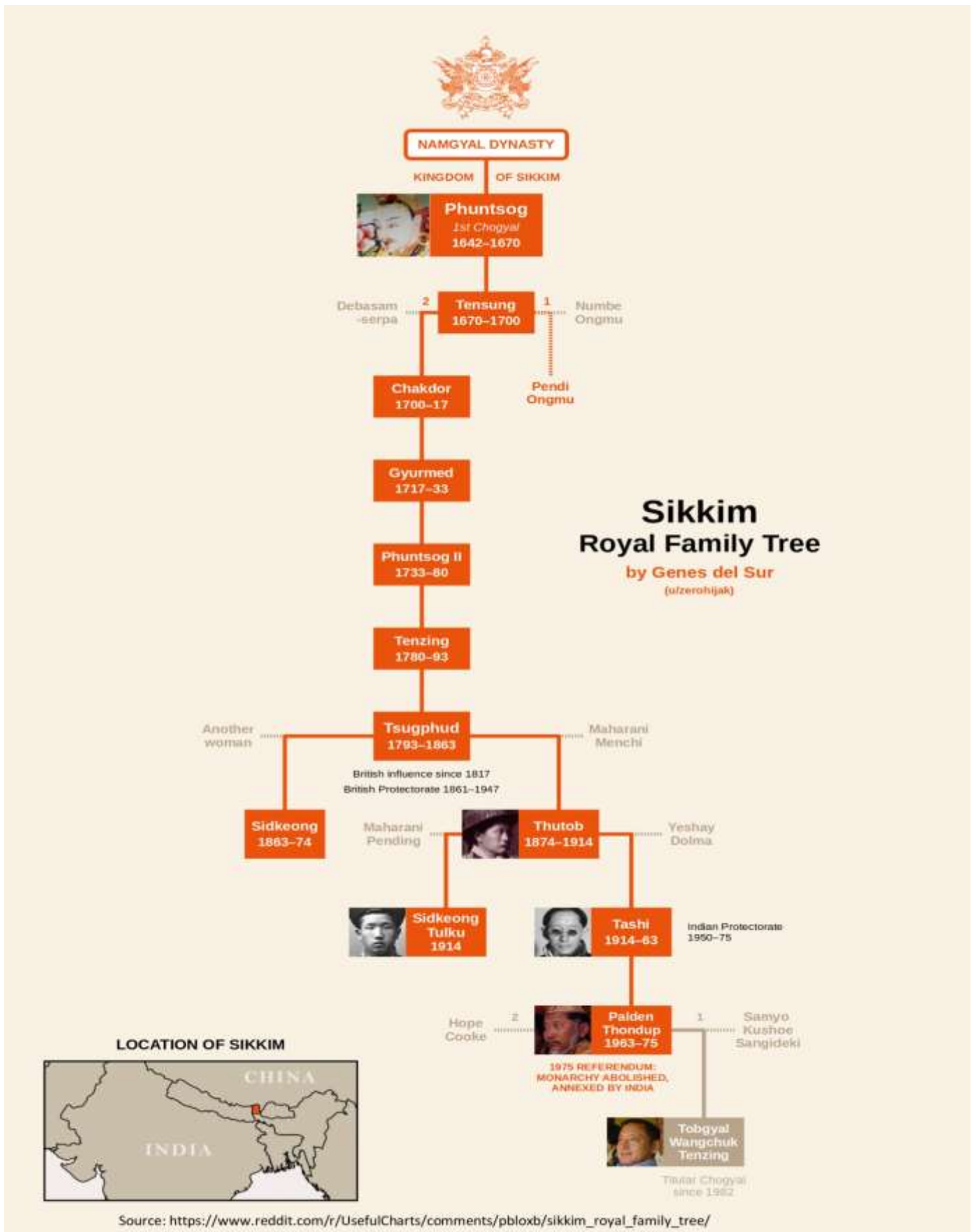
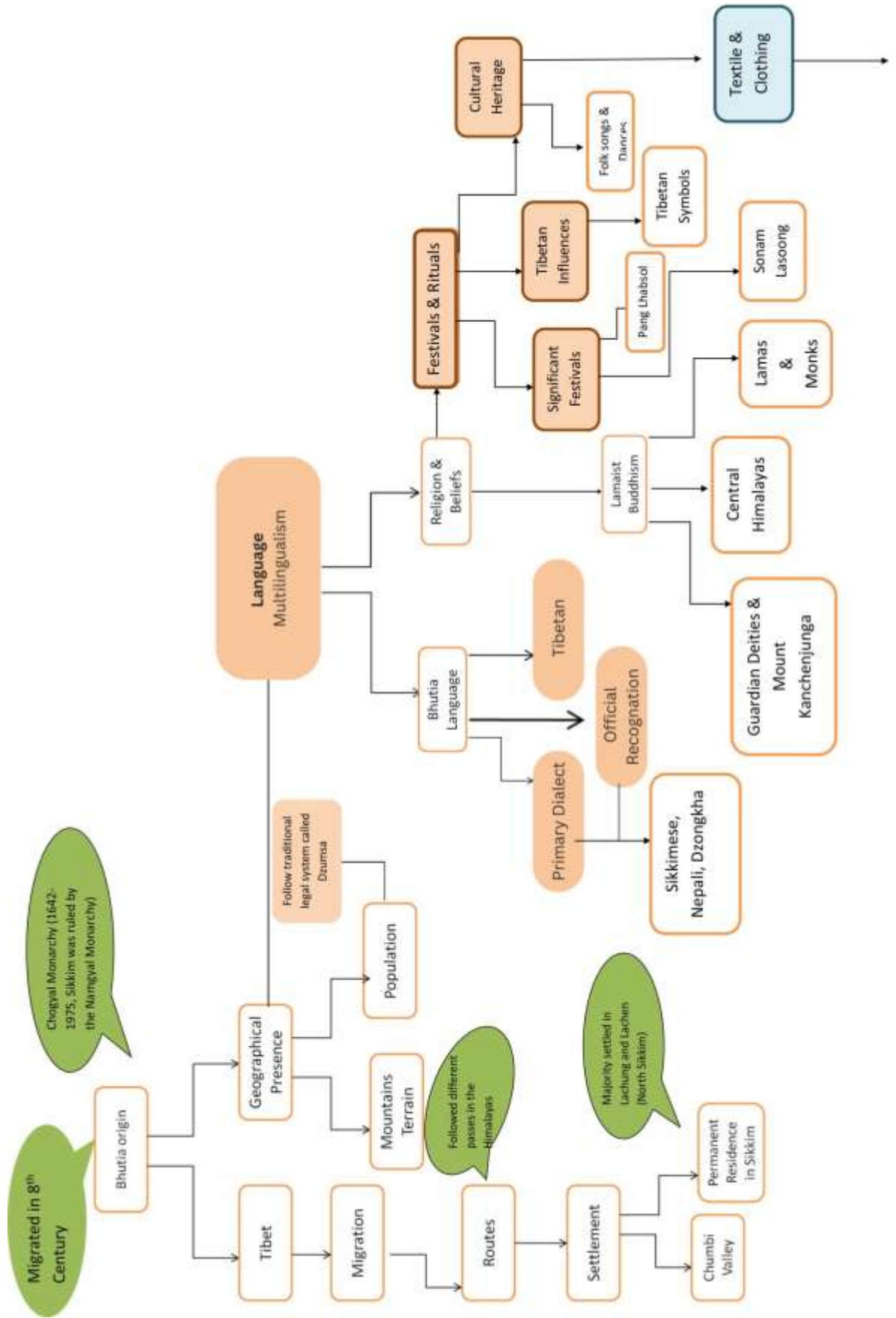


Figure 4.4 Family Tree of Namgyal Dynasty



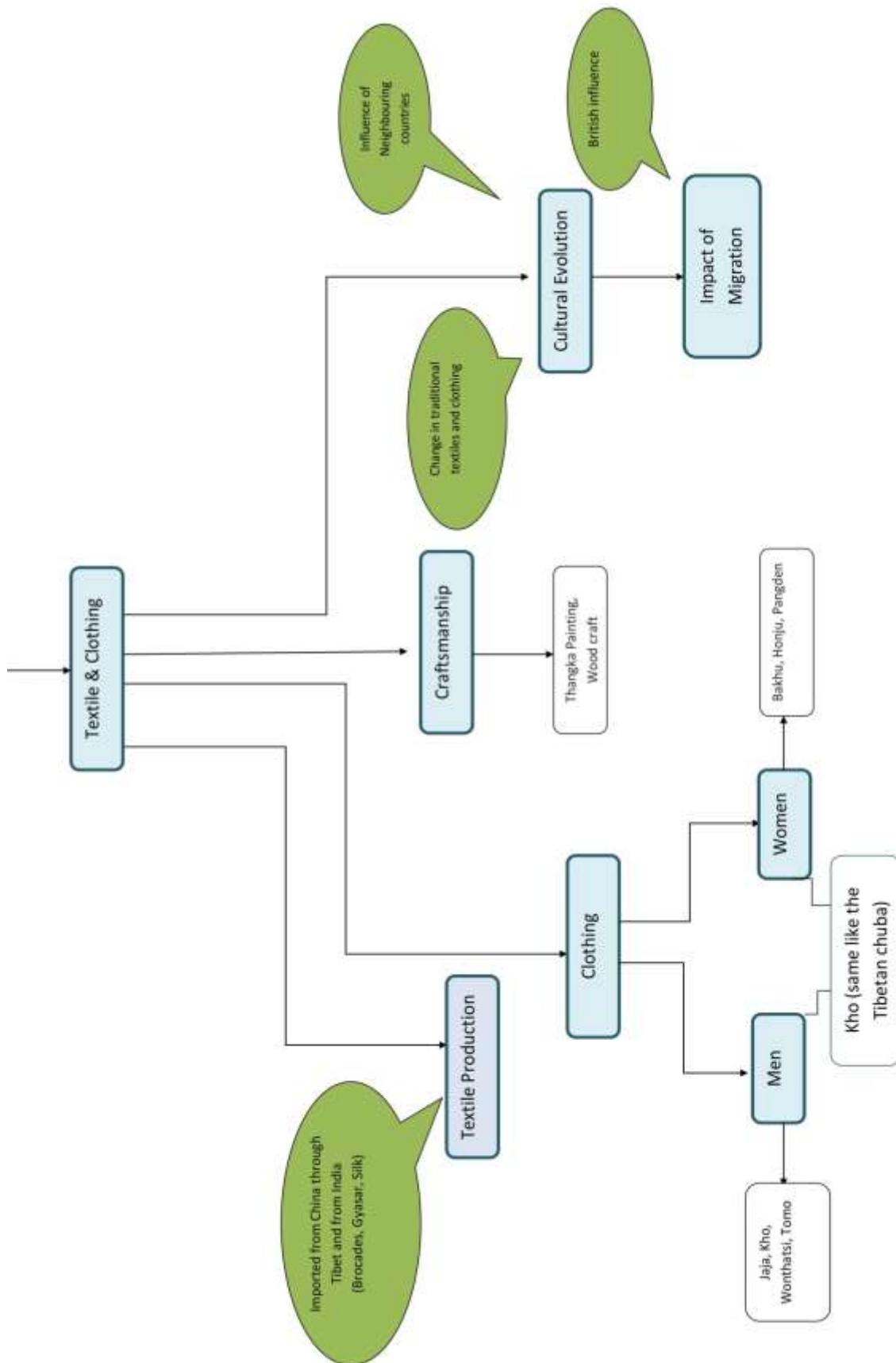


Figure 4.5 Historical roots of Bhutia's (Brief summary)

4.2 Documentation of the traditional Textiles & Costumes of the Lepcha and Bhutia.

The traditional textiles originating from the Lepcha and Bhutia communities of Sikkim exhibit discernible characteristics that manifest their distinct cultural identities, historical narratives, and artistic legacies. Through meticulous observation, several salient features of these traditional textiles have been identified.

4.2.1 Lepcha Traditional Textiles and Costumes:

The Lepchas constitute the oldest, ancient settlers of a region that stretches from the western Rangit River to the eastern Teesta River, characterized by its rich biodiversity and luxuriant verdant greenery. Their ancestral territory covers present-day Sikkim and the Darjeeling district of West Bengal, as well as eastern Nepal, southwestern Bhutan, and certain areas of Tibet. The tribe's endurance in their ancestral lands attributed to their profound ecological knowledge and harmonious relationship with nature, which enabled them to sustain themselves amidst environmental challenges. Lepcha tribe presently found in Sikkim was dated back to the eighth century A.D and was unquestionably the only known permanent settlers of the region since time immemorial. This cultural, identity, and craftsmanship speaks of their traditional textiles. The Lepcha community use to weave simple nettle textiles, on their back-strap looms, or loin looms. The use of cotton and vegetable dyes was common before the seventeenth century. Different girdles to cross-body, bags and large pieces of cloth for attire and practical uses. Clothing was constructed by draping these fabrics over the body and securing them with a shoulder knot perhaps pinned with bamboo a pin, which indeed was quite a reflection of their hunter-gatherer heritage and resourcefulness to their environment. Although no ancient examples of these textiles and equipment still exist, back-strap looms and other contemporary textiles that were made from those ancient traditions can be found in existence today. A representation of the oral history that created them is illustrated through contemporary textiles from ancient traditions.

Findings of the study revealed some key characteristics and features of Lepcha traditional textiles:

I. Traditional Textiles

Natural Fibers:

Lepcha textiles were primarily created from natural fibers such as *Sisnu* (nettle), cotton, silk, and wool. These materials were sourced locally and depicted the strong relationship between the Lepcha people and their natural environment. These fibers were sourced locally and

processed by hand. As per the oral narratives the Lepchas used to wear animal pelts, but they found that textiles made from Himalayan nettle (*sisnu*) **Plate 4.25** were better for them. These nettle fabrics are strong and light, unlike animal skins, which are heavy and can make it hard to move around in Sikkim's environment. The Lepchas probably made these textiles not just for art but also to help them live comfortably in Sikkim.

Situated in the North district of Sikkim state, Dzongu serves as a designated reserve for the Lepcha community, renowned for their innate connection to nature and extensive traditional knowledge spanning biodiversity, medicine, and food (**Gorer, 2005**). However, the ethnic identity of the Lepcha tribe, along with their invaluable repository of traditional wisdom, faces significant threats from modernization in the region (**Foning, 2003**). Among their vast knowledge, Lepchas possess expertise in utilizing the nettle (***Girardinia diversifolia***) plant renowned for its fine and silky fiber extracted from the stem, which is utilized in crafting coarse fabrics, ropes, and twine.



Plate 4.25 : Nettle (*Sisnu*) Plant

Additionally, the plant's edible and medicinal properties have been documented extensively elsewhere (**Ghimeray et al., 2010**) (**Uprety et al., 2016**).

The hollow cores of nettle filaments naturally trap air, providing insulation that can be adjusted by twisting the fibers to block the cores before weaving. This allowed the Lepchas to create nettle clothing suitable for various temperatures of Sikkim. Nettle (*sisnu*) is readily available on the higher altitude throughout Sikkim and its surroundings, making it accessible wherever the Lepchas traveled in the region. Therefore, nettle textiles are fundamental to Lepcha weaving traditions, reflecting their origins as hunter-gatherers in a challenging environment.

It has been observed that while some neighboring communities, such as the Nepalis, Bhutanese, and Limboos, also historically used nettle, it was likely for similar practical purposes rather than cultural exchange. According to Lepcha oral history, pre-modern Lepchas produced simple nettle textiles on handmade backstrap looms. These textiles included girdles, cross-body bags, and large cloths used for clothing and practical purposes. Such textiles were crucial for the Lepchas during that period.

Lepcha men and women fashioned garments by wrapping the fabric around their bodies and securing it to their shoulders, often with a bamboo pin. These garments served dual purposes, providing clothing during the day and doubling as blankets at night, showcasing the Lepchas' adaptability in their environment. Although historical examples and evidence of these tools and products was scarce, researcher tried to gather information through oral histories, it was observed that backstrap looms and similar textiles were still in use.

Furthermore, garments continue to be worn in traditional ways, as passed down through oral history. Therefore, contemporary textiles rooted in generational traditions are a reflection of the oral narratives from which they originate.

During data collection time in the field, researcher was presented with the unique opportunity to engage in a nettle fiber extraction process. This involved the meticulous process of extracting fibers from a particular source. It was a hands-on experience that allowed the researcher to delve into the intricacies of fiber extraction techniques.

It was believed that that the fabric made out of nettle was hard to wear and tear which was perfect for these woodland dwellers and helped them to keep themselves warm. *Sisnu* (nettle) is the natural fiber, native to the Himalayan belt used by the local weavers of Lepcha community long before the cotton or wild silk was used. *Sisnu* plant grows to the height of about 3meters with a 5-point leaves, entire plant including the stem and leaves are covered with sting which makes it difficult to pluck or peel with bare hands from the forest.

Researcher had also visited the Directorate of handloom and handicraft in north Sikkim, where she had interacted with the weavers and found some interesting facts about the nettle yarn extraction process. As mentioned by 59 years old Kanchung Lepcha from Lingdong, Dzongu, North Sikkim, who started practicing handloom weaving when she was just 15, that this fiber was used by local weavers long before silk and cotton. She also shared that contemporary weavers seldom work with nettle; they instead choose a wide assortment of other hand spun or machine spun yarns because of easy availability plus less time consuming.

She also mentioned that the most suitable time for harvesting of *sisnu* plant is during the end of the monsoon season in the month of August and goes on until December when the plant is mature and begins to flower. She also shared that only thick mature stem is collected as the peeling of bark is easy as compared to immature stem.

Another weaver Ongkit lepcha who works with Amu Sakchum S.H.G (**Plate 4.27**) in Noom, Upper Dzongu who is presently working with nettle fiber shared valuable information regarding the extraction process of nettle fiber. Correct selection of nettle plant is very important for fiber extraction and making process. The stem of the mature plant is collected and leaves and sting etc are cleaned from the stem with the help of the *ban* (knife) (**Plate 4.26**) which is traditionally carried in waist band by Lepcha men and then the stem is peeled out straightaway. Peeled bark is collected and folded properly and tied in a neat bunch in order to make sure that it does not get entangled. After the collection the barks are left to be dried completely under the sun, it takes around three to four weeks for them to dry completely. Once it is dried the rough outer cover is removed with the help of an animal rib bone. The process is known as shredding where one end of the fiber or a group of bark peel is fixed between the toe and finger next to it and the rest is rubbed and stretched tightly in an upward direction with the animal rib bone. After that fibers are separated with the help of nails and kept in groups for the spinning process. Spinning is done with the help of a hand tool known as *kafer (takli)* (spindle) however now a day's spinning wheel is used. The fineness of yarns depends upon the spinning skills of the spinner and also the fiber quality. Once the yarn is ready it is boiled with wood ash to make it softer, boiling also helps in the final cleaning of the fiber which removes the unwanted matter from it. Later it is washed with clean cold water in streams and then left for complete drying under the sun.



Plate 4.26: Banpok (Lepcha knife)

In an interview with Ongkit Lepcha (**Plate 4.28**) who was a master weaver from Amu Sakchun NGO in Dzongu, The National Institute of Himalayan Environment organized a technical training program for local artisans in the Dzongu area of North Sikkim. According to her during this program, detailed steps involved in the nettle fiber extraction process were explained. According to her she was selected as a local expert to train selected 15 self-motivated members of woman Self Help Groups (SHGs) from Lingdem, Laven, Ruklu and Kayem villages of Dzongu. Training took place in two phases in December 2018 and March 2019 (**Plate 4.29**). As per Ongkit Lepcha the process of making nettle plant based products involves three major steps: 1. making of nettle fibre; 2. making of yarn from nettle fibre and 3. fabric making followed by several other steps as given below:

Step	Steps in Nettle fibre production
First	Cultivation (Not started in Sikkim), Collect from the Higher altitude which is wildly grown.
Second	Harvesting
Third	Retting
Fourth	Drying
Fifth	Separation of Fibers:
Sixth	Cleaning and Sorting:
Seventh	Spinning
Eighth	Weaving



Plate 4.27: Amu Suckchum NGO, Noom, Upper Dzongu



Plate 4.28: Researcher with Master Weaver Ongkit Lepcha



Plate 4.29: Master weaver Ongkit Lepcha with Other weavers in Noom

Picture Courtesy: Ongkit Lepcha, Noom, North Sikkim

Step1: The process of making nettle fiber (Plate 4.30) (Plate 4.31)

1. **Stem Harvesting:** Semi-matured stems of the nettle plant were typically harvested for this process, usually once a year. In the Himalayan region, nettle plants begin to grow between July and August and are ready for collection between October and January. However, in Sikkim, harvesting mostly occurs during October and November.
2. **Peeling off the Bark:** Within two days of harvesting, the outer green covering, or bark (approximately 2-3 mm thick), is peeled off from the stems. These peeled stems are then wrapped and stored in bundles.
3. **Drying:** The stripped green bark bundles are sun-dried for 2-3 days, sometimes extended to a week depending on sunlight availability. The bark turns greenish-brown in color and becomes breakable.
4. **Degumming:** Degumming is a method used to remove heavily coated, non-cellulosic gummy material from the cellulose part of the plant fibers. Traditionally, the dried bark is boiled with wood ash (1:1 ratio) for 4 hours for degumming. Alternatively, dried bark can be boiled with soap (1:1 ratio).
5. **Toughing and Washing:** Boiled bark is toughed or beaten with a wooden paddle to remove the remaining bark from the fibers. This is followed by washing the fibers with water. The process may be repeated until creamy white fibers are obtained. Local water sources such as streams or springs are typically used for fiber washing.
6. **Fiber Smoothening:** To smoothen and open the fibers, they are dipped in an emulsion of locally available white soil (micaceous clay) and then dried for one week. The adhering white soil is removed before making yarn by beating with small wooden paddles. This treatment prevents fibers from sticking together and facilitates separation during spinning. Alternatively, the use of caustic soda (NaOH) in fiber smoothening can result in softened, crimped fibers with improved inter-fiber cohesion, enhancing spinnability and enabling the production of better yarns suitable for making apparel fabric.

Step 2: Yarn Production

Yarn refers to a linear arrangement of fibers formed into a continuous strand, possessing textile-like characteristics such as good tensile strength and high pliability (Goswami et al., 1977). Traditionally, the process of making yarn was laborious and

involved hand-spinning smooth fibers using a *takli*, also known as a hand spindle or weaver's reel.

In this method, one end of the fiber bundle is held with the toes while the other end is secured under or around the arm.

With gentle tension, the fibers are carefully separated and wrapped around the waist of the spinner, who operates the *takli*. The *takli* consists of two main parts: the , typically made of wood, and the shaft, usually made of bamboo. The skill of the spinner largely determines the fineness and quality of the yarn, while the thickness of the yarn can be controlled by the spinner during the process.



Plate 4.30 : Fabric made out of Nettle fiber

Source: Procured from Karma Sonam personal collection, Gangtok, East Sikkim.

Step 3: Fabric making Fabrics of nettle yarn are mainly made using two ways

i) Knitting ii) Weaving

In addition to nettle (*Sisnu*), the Lepchas of Sikkim also utilize cotton, wool, and silk fibers in their traditional practices. These diverse fibers play essential roles in crafting various textiles and garments that are integral to Lepcha culture and heritage. Cotton, known for its softness and breathability, is often used to create comfortable and lightweight clothing suitable for everyday wear in Sikkim's temperate climate.

Wool, prized for its warmth and durability, is particularly valued during the colder months, providing insulation against the chilly mountain weather. Lepchas skillfully weave wool into blankets, shawls, and outerwear, ensuring both functionality and aesthetic appeal in their attire.

Silk, renowned for its luxurious texture and sheen, adds a touch of elegance to Lepcha textiles. Whether incorporated into intricate embroidery or used as the main fabric for special occasion garments, silk enhances the beauty and sophistication of traditional Lepcha attire.

By incorporating a variety of fibers into their textile traditions, the Lepchas demonstrate their resourcefulness and adaptability, creating garments that not only reflect their cultural identity but also cater to their practical needs in the diverse landscape of Sikkim.



Source:file:///C:/Users/garvi/Downloads/HimalDoc_NettlePlantGirardinia_diversifoliafibreExtractionandyarnmaking_TechnicalManual%20(2).pdf

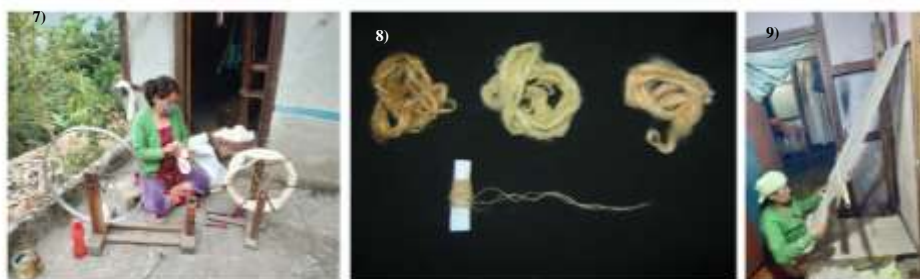


Plate 4.31: Nettle fiber extraction Process.

Picture Courtesy: Personal collection of Ongkit Lepcha

1) Stem Harvesting	2) Peeling of the bark
3) Drying	4) Degumming
5) Toughing and washing	6) Fibre smoothening
7) Making yarn from fibre	8) Nettle yarn ready for weaving
9) Ongkit Lepcha weaving nettle yarn on Back strap loom	

Nettle fabric has a coarse yarn count (Warp: 1.6 Ne, Weft: 1.7 Ne) with a loose weave (EPI: 29, PPI: 8). The yarn converts to Warp: 3322 Denier (369 Tex) and Weft: 3126 Denier (347 Tex).

Fabrics (Hand-woven/ Synthetic):

Lepcha textiles traditionally embraced hand-woven fabrics, crafted through time-honored techniques passed down through generations. These textiles, encompassing Lepcha weave

fabric, silk, and cotton, were predominantly produced on simple, locally-made loom looms. Given the cold climate of Sikkim, materials such as wool and felt were commonly employed, alongside some synthetic machine-made fabrics.

However, it's notable that alongside the natural and sustainable handwoven fabrics, the community also incorporates synthetic materials. Additionally, fabrics are imported from various Indian states to Sikkim. This includes silk and heavy brocades sourced from China via Tibet, as well as fabrics like silk from Assam and other northeastern regions of India.

Notably, Lepcha women often prefer draping silk fabrics for "*dum-dyam*" (**Plate 4.32**) sourced primarily from Assam and other northeastern states of India. Renowned for their unique traditional attire, both men and women wear long robe-like garments. Women wore the "*dum-dyam*," a draped garment similar to a sari, secured at the waist with a

belt called "*Naamrek*." Whereas Lepcha men wear the "*dum-praa*," which serves dual purposes: as attire during the day and as a blanket at night.

The "*dum-praa*," which is also known as "*Thokroah*" (**Plate 4.33, Plate 4.2.34**) bears a striking resemblance to the medieval dress worn by the Romans and Greeks. It features pins that fasten the loose garment at both shoulders, allowing for unrestricted movement of the shoulders and arms. This diverse range of fabrics reflects the rich cultural heritage and trading connections of the Lepcha community, blending traditional craftsmanship with influences from neighboring regions.



Plate 4.32: Lepcha women wearing traditional *dum-dyam*

Picture courtesy: John. Z. Lepcha personal collection, North Sikkim.



Plate 4.33: Dum-praa weaving



Plate 4.34: Dum – praa' fabric

Source: Researchers Personal Collection

Colors: Lepcha textiles were known for their vibrant and earthy color palette. Traditionally, they often used natural dyes derived from plants, roots, and minerals to achieve these colors. Common colors included red, yellow, green, and brown. But nowadays, due to less availability and a diminished interest in the dye extraction process, weavers have been switching to chemical dyes.

Traditionally all the handlooms were dyed with natural dyes which were easily available to them locally. They majorly relied upon the natural source for dye extraction (vegetable dyes) and colouring their traditional clothes, shawls, hats etc. and woolen yarn for weaving. They used different parts of various plants and shrubs such as roots, barks, fruits, leaves and vines to produced different colours.

In earlier times, people utilized different parts of various plants and shrubs, including roots, barks, fruits, leaves, and vines, to extract natural dyes. Locally sourced materials such as madder (*majito*), walnut, *chucha*, *halhalay*, and *shungay* were commonly used for this purpose (**Table1**). While this traditional practice continues, there has been a shift towards the use of chemical dyes in recent years to achieve more consistent colors.

However, with the growing popularity of organic products, there has been a resurgence of interest in vegetable dyes. These dyes offer a natural and sustainable alternative, appealing to consumers who prioritize environmentally friendly options. As a

result, vegetable dyes are regaining popularity as a choice for dyeing textiles and other materials. Today natural dyes have again taken over and have become popular and its products also have niche market.

S.No	Local Name	Botanical Name	Part of a plant	Colour
1.	Chucha	Rhubarb	Roots	Golden yellow
2.	Cho/Majito/Madder	Rubia Cordifolia	Vine	Red
3.	Shungay	Symplocos Racemosa	Leaves	Yellow
4.	Taga/ Okher/Walnut	Juglan Regia	Bark, fruit	Brown
5.	Halhale	Rumex Nepalisis	Leaves and Root	Green Dye

Table 4.1: Various Natural Dye

Sources: Directorate of Handloom and Handicraft, Gangtok.



Plate 4.35: Sample of yarns dyed in Natural Dye from Directorate of Handicraft and Handloom, Gangtok, East Sikkim.

Historically, yarns were colored using dyes derived from locally available natural sources, such as flowers, bark, and herbs. While wool is still commonly dyed with vegetable dyes (**Plate 4.35**), synthetically dyed yarns are more popular today. However, weavers typically do not dye the yarn themselves. Chemically dyed threads offer a more vibrant color range compared to vegetable-dyed threads.

The customary color palette of traditional Lepcha textiles (**Plate 4.36**) includes various earthy tones such as browns, greens, and yellows, reflecting the natural hues found in their environment.

White, blue, red, black, orange, and green are prominently utilized colors in Lepcha culture, each holding significant cultural importance.

- **White:** Traditional Lepcha textiles trace their origins to fabrics woven from bleached nettle fibers, establishing white as the foundational color in Lepcha textile tradition. White symbolizes perfection and purity according to Lepcha beliefs.
- **Blue:** Reportedly, blue was the inaugural pigment introduced into the traditional Lepcha textile color palette. It holds significance as the first color used in Lepcha textiles, alongside white, thus forming the original color scheme. The Lepcha community associates blue with wisdom and progress, likely due to its historical precedence in their textile tradition.
- **Red:** Lepchas attribute vitality and energy to the color red, one of the earliest hues employed in dyeing Lepcha textiles. Occasionally, shades like maroon or magenta are substituted for true red.
- **Black:** Black is intertwined with concepts of nobility and pride in Lepcha culture, representing one of the earliest colors utilized in Lepcha textiles.
- **Orange:** Symbolizing good fortune, orange holds cultural significance among the Lepcha people.
- **Green:** Green, synonymous with nature, embodies harmony and serenity.

Following the introduction of color, the Lepchas initiated the adornment of their textiles with intricate designs. Initially, their textiles featured decorations comprising vertical stripes of different widths.

Collections of vertical stripes of color, known as *aa-shyer*, hold no inherent symbolic meaning but are instead infused with the auspicious properties associated with the colors used. Historically, the term "*aa-shyer*" denoted bands of color arranged according to the traditional Lepcha color sequence: black, white, blue, red, orange, green, black, white. However, modern textiles may deviate from this traditional arrangement.

In contemporary times, synthetic and vibrant hues have become dominant in the Lepcha textile market. Weavers now offer customized yarn colors tailored to the preferences and choices of customers. This shift towards synthetic and bright colors reflects evolving consumer tastes and demands, as well as the flexibility of weavers to adapt to changing market trends (**Plate 4.37**). By providing personalized color options, weavers ensure that their textiles not only meet the aesthetic preferences of their clientele but also remain relevant

and appealing in today's dynamic market place. While Lepcha weavers may occasionally deviate from this traditional palette to accommodate artistic expression and consumer preferences, such variations are also influenced by governmental initiatives aimed at diversifying product offerings. Nevertheless, many colors favored by Lepcha weavers remain deeply rooted in Lepcha cultural beliefs. (Faulkner, et al 2021).



Plate 4.36: Traditional *Dumpraa*



Plate 4.37: Contemporary *Dumpraa*

Motifs:

The Lepchas have their own traditional motifs, each carrying significant cultural significance associated with their tribe. Like many ethnic groups, these motifs draw inspiration from nature and the surrounding environment, often featuring elements such as flowers, leaves, and trees.

In the past, Lepcha textiles were primarily characterized by simple two or three-color stripes without the use of traditional '*dum-pra*'/'*Thokroah*' (a draped garment worn by males) motifs. However, as time progressed, Lepchas were introduced to a variety of motifs, all inspired by nature animal and geometric designs can be seen all of which held cultural significance. These motifs added a new dimension to Lepcha textiles, incorporating vibrant colors and intricate designs. The emergence of these decorations likely coincided with the process of modernization.

Natural Elements: Lepcha motifs often depict various elements from nature, such as flowers (Plate 4.45), leaves, trees, and animals. These motifs symbolize the close relationship between the Lepcha community and their natural surroundings.

Geometric Patterns: Traditional Lepcha textiles also feature intricate geometric patterns, including squares, triangles, diamonds, and chevrons. These geometric motifs are often arranged in repeating patterns to create visually captivating designs.

Cultural Symbols: Many Lepcha motifs carry cultural significance, representing elements of Lepcha mythology, folklore, and spirituality. These symbols may include mythical creatures, religious symbols, and ancestral motifs passed down through generations.

Auspicious Symbols: Certain motifs in Lepcha textiles are considered auspicious and are believed to bring good luck, prosperity, and protection to the wearer. These auspicious symbols may include the sun, moon, stars, and other celestial elements.

Color Symbolism: Colors play a significant role in Lepcha motifs, with each color carrying its own symbolic meaning. For example, red may symbolize vitality and strength, while blue may represent tranquility and harmony. The combination of colors in Lepcha textiles is carefully chosen to convey specific meanings and intentions.

Among the traditional motifs embraced by the Lepchas are *Tungblyok* (X-shaped pattern), *Tungbrik* (Diamond-shaped pattern), *Sumok* (patterns resembling the Lepcha hat *SumokThyaaktuk*), *Tungtoskor* (arrow motif), *Vajra*, and *Erungi* (Buddhist religious symbol). These motifs hold significance for the Lepcha community and contribute to the rich cultural heritage reflected in their textiles.

To introduce these motifs, weavers utilized an extra weft technique, employing a stitch known as '*phoolkanta*' to lift the warps. These motifs were typically crafted in bright colors, including red, yellow, green, and blue, adding vibrancy and depth to the textile designs.

There was a wide believe that each of these motifs holds a connection to Lepcha origins, mythology, history, ancestral environment, or other cultural traditions. As a result, these designs often draw inspiration from nature and serve as stylized representations of Lepcha culture and heritage. Typically, within one vertical band of motifs, a variety of conventional designs can be found, repeated throughout the fabric. In addition to traditional motifs, simple and universal patterns such as stripes and dots are also present, alongside there are motifs which are borrowed from cultures beyond traditional Lepcha influences. According to **Faulkner & Rama Mohan (2021)** the *swastika*, for instance, has been a part of Lepcha

textiles since before Sikkim's annexation. Additionally, decorations in Lepcha textiles sometimes bear resemblance to those found in Bhutanese textiles. This has led to instances where Lepchas seeking traditional Lepcha textiles mistakenly purchase Bhutanese textiles instead.

Here is a detailed description of the motifs commonly seen in the traditional handwoven textiles of the Lepcha:

1. **Akup/Subok:** This pattern holds a significant place in Lepcha culture, often woven into their bamboo-crafted *SumokThyaak-Tuk*, an ancient craft unique to the Lepcha community (**Plate 4.42**) These headgears, fashioned from bamboo, have long served as protective gear worn by Lepcha men. In historical context, they were even part of the official attire for the Chogyal's royal Lepcha soldiers and guards (**Plate 4.78**). When this pattern adorns textiles, it's a direct nod to the *Sumok Thyaak-Tuk*, imbuing the fabric with symbolic protective qualities. This motif's longevity is owed to its deep-rooted connection to history and the *Sumok Thyaak-Tuk* tradition. Comprised of two triangles, each crafted from stacked squares, positioned facing one another on separate strips, the design likely harkens back to the Lepchas' historical reliance on arrows for hunting and warfare. (**Faulkner & Rama Mohan, 2021**)
2. **Poo-Chak:** Traditionally, this motif consists of five horizontal stripes of varying thickness (**Plate 4.51**). It symbolizes bamboo, a plant indigenous to Sikkim and deeply integrated into Lepcha culture. Bamboo holds significance in various aspects of Lepcha life, including cuisine, rituals, crafts, tools, and construction. Even now people of lepcha community depend heavily on bamboo for making articles of daily use. Bamboo shoots form an important item of their food. It has been observed that in many rural areas, it is consider as their children. This importance of bamboo finds its place in this pattern.
3. **Sumok:** This motif, integrated into the *SumokThyaak-Tuk*, shares qualities with the *Akup/Subok* pattern, serving as its inverse counterpart. Often, Sumok and *Akup/Subok* motifs are woven in continuous blocks, creating diamond shapes where the designs blend seamlessly. However, this isn't always the case (**Plate 4.51**.)

4. ***Tsulot-Tyet***: Depicting three arrows, this motif pays homage to the Lepchas' hunting heritage, symbolizing the arrow tips crucial for sustenance and combat. As explained by Jorden lepcha, few decades back, subsisted on forest products and the food obtained from hunting and fishing. The bow with arrows was the one tool which was majorly used for this purpose and that's how it find place in the pattern of traditional hand-woven textile of lepchas.
5. ***Tungblyok***: Representing a butterfly, traditionally composed of nine squares, this X-shaped pattern highlights the rich diversity of butterflies and moths inhabiting the Lepcha homeland, reflecting the community's deep connection with these creatures **(Plate 4.2.50) (Plate Plate 4.51)**.
6. ***Tungbrik***: This motif, resembling a diamond or rough circle, symbolizes insects. The Lepcha land teems with various species of insects and arachnids, each with its unique name in the Lepcha language, showcasing the community's intricate knowledge and relationship with the insect world **(Plate 4.48)**.
7. ***Tungtoskor***: Comprising several narrow arrows pointing left, this motif draws inspiration from fern leaves abundant in the Lepcha homeland. Ferns hold cultural significance in Lepcha folklore and traditional culinary practices **(Plate 4.51)**.
8. ***Aa-shyer***: A group of thin strips of different colours.



Plate 4.38: Women extracting nettle fiber from nettle stem in North Sikkim

Picture Courtesy: Ongkit Lepcha , Amu Sukchum NGO, Noom, North Sikkim.



Plate 4.39: Lepcha Traditional *Dumpraa*



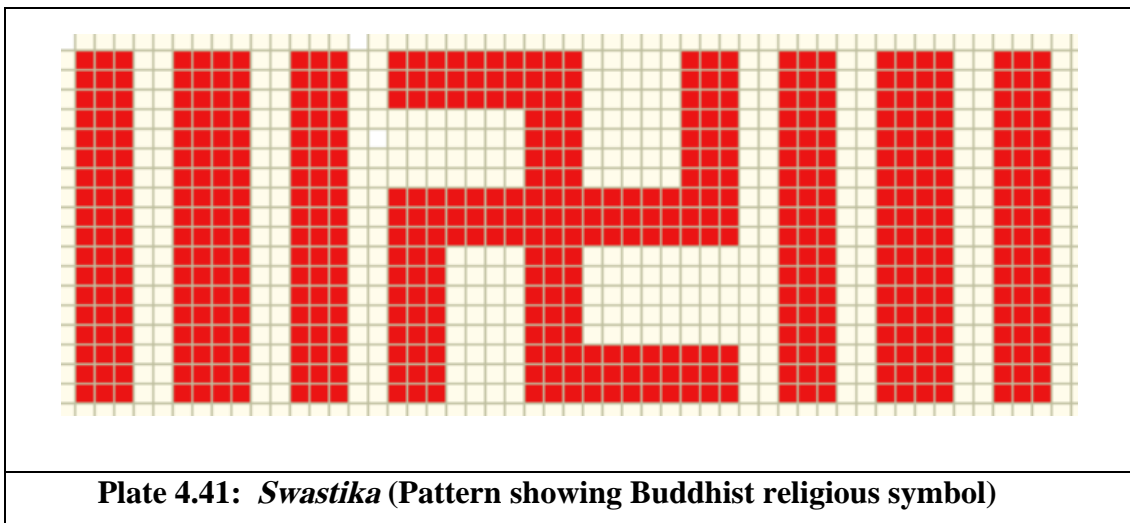
**Plate 4.40 : 80 year old *Dumpraa* fabric procured form Bhutan.
Measurement :Length 2and half meter X width 36 Inches
Source: Lhasa House , Sikkim. (Motifs are similar to Bhutanese textiles)**

A lot of similarity was seen between lepcha traditional textile and Bhutanese Traditional Textiles. As Bhutan's weaving tradition is also renowned for its vibrant hues, intricate patterns, and distinct techniques. According to few authors and documentary makers like

Shah.S (2023), natural fibers like cotton, silk, and yak hair are commonly employed in weaving just similar to Lepcha textile in Sikkim. Different regions in Bhutan utilize various materials to craft their signature textiles: Trongsa uses cotton and nettles, Bumthang uses sheep wool, and the highlands favor yak hair. Silk and raw silk (bura) are prevalent across many districts, with colors derived from both chemical and natural sources, including vegetable and herbal dyes, and it has been observed that similar practice is also followed in Sikkim.

As seen in the 80 year old fabric which was purchased from Bhutan by one of the Lepcha Family in Sikkim (**Plate 4.40**). The textiles of Bhutan boast remarkable diversity, with unique pattern similar to Lepcha textiles. Traditional motifs such as dragons, flowers, stupas, Vajra (**Pic 4.43**), amulets, eternal knots, swastikas (**Plate 4.41**), and geometric shapes adorn these fabrics, reflecting the country's natural landscape, social customs, religious traditions, history, and mythology. These colors and patterns often carry profound cultural significance, serving as symbols of Bhutanese identity and so for lepchas of Sikkim. (<https://www.architecturaldigest.in/story/on-a-bhutan-textile-trail-discovering-the-fascinating-weaves-of-the-country/>)

Various pattern seen in Lepcha *Dumpraa/Thokro*



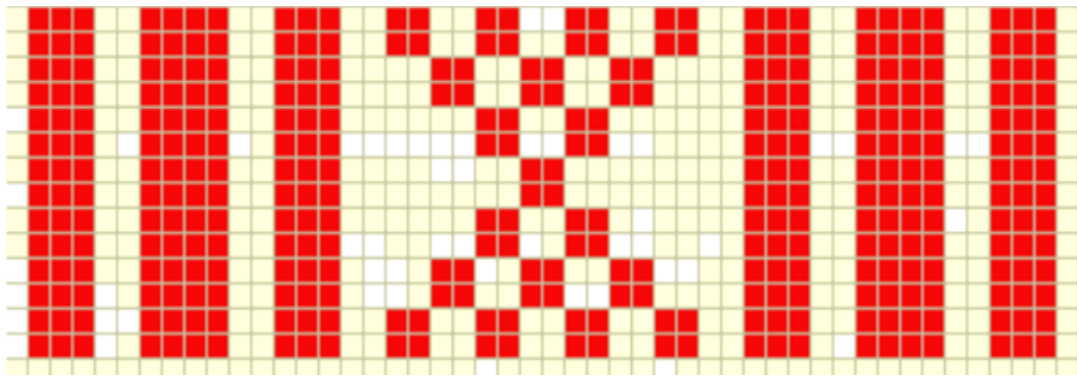


Plate 4.42: Subok:- Pattern found in *SumokThyaktuk*. It is also called *Akup* (baby in lepcha) pattern of armour

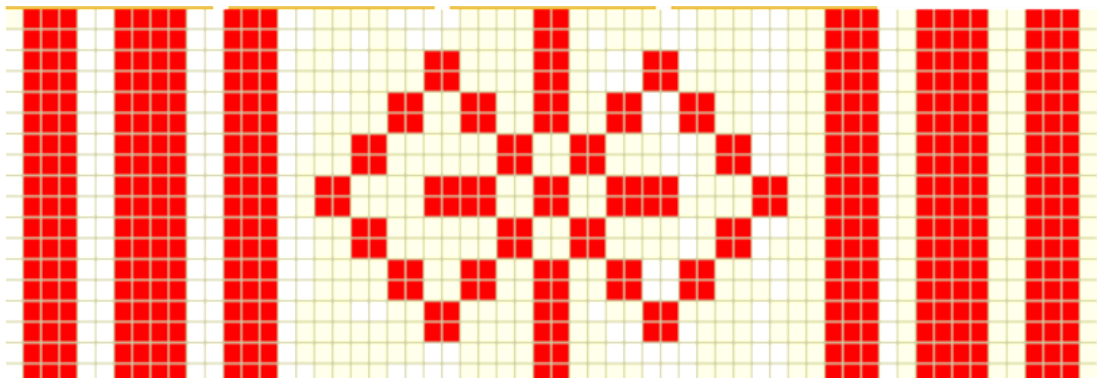


Plate 4.43: Dumbru (resembles the sacred Buddhist religious symbol Vajra or dorje)

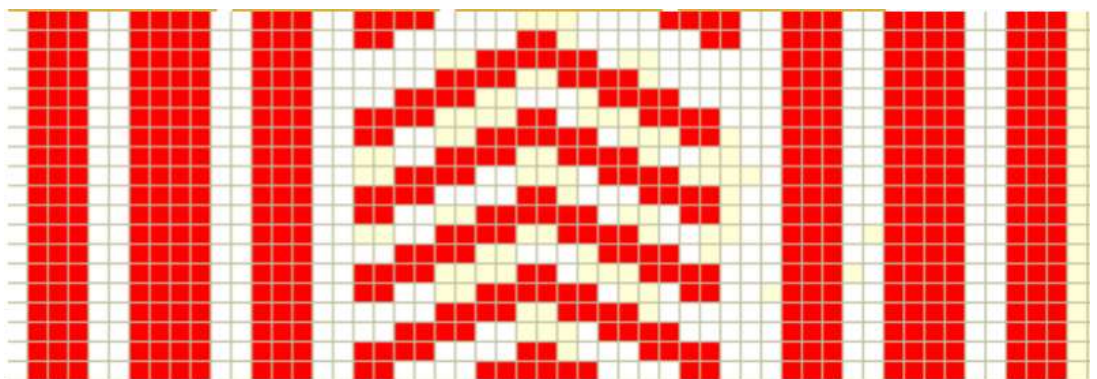


Plate 4.44: Thuntokser (Pattern symbolizing local vegetable)

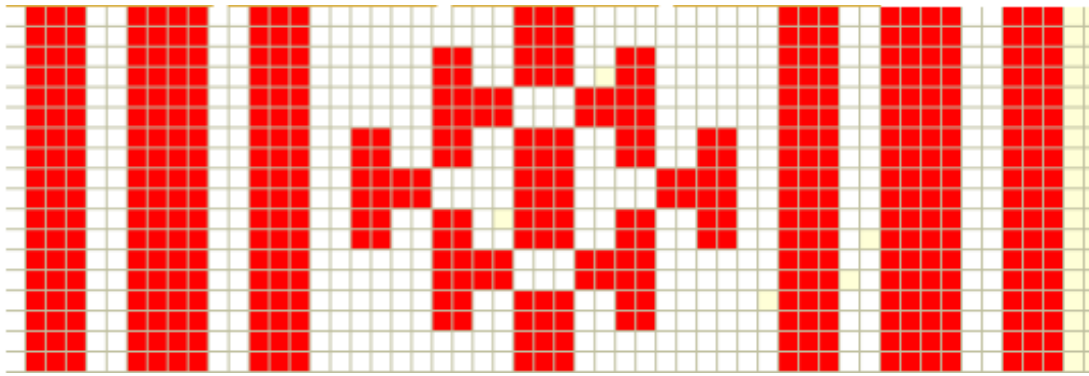


Plate 4.45: *Phool* (Flower) pattern inspired from nature

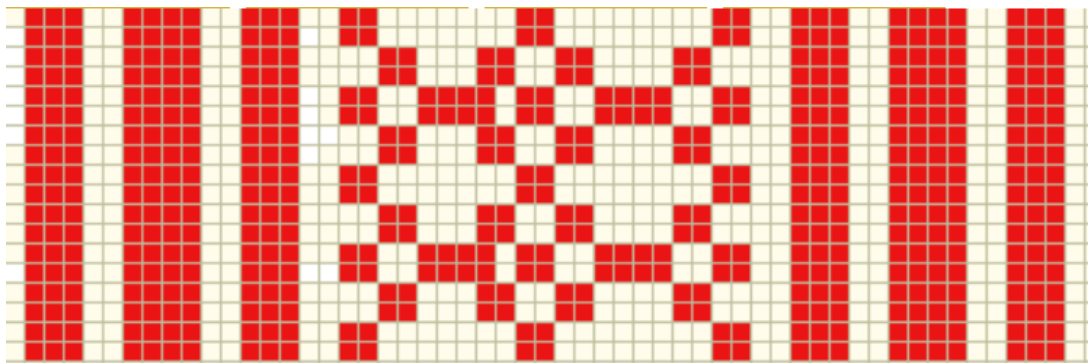


Plate 4.46: *Tungbrik*:- Pattern symbolizing stylized insects

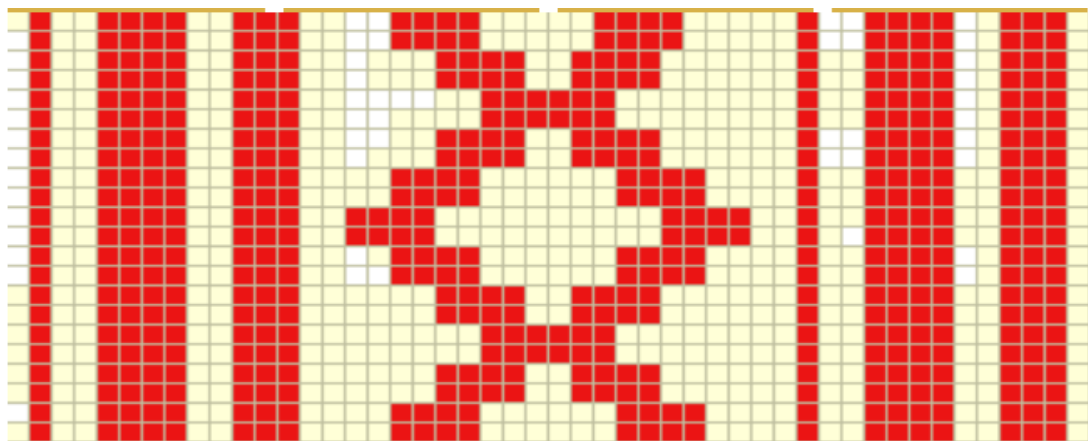


Plate 4.47: Insect motif

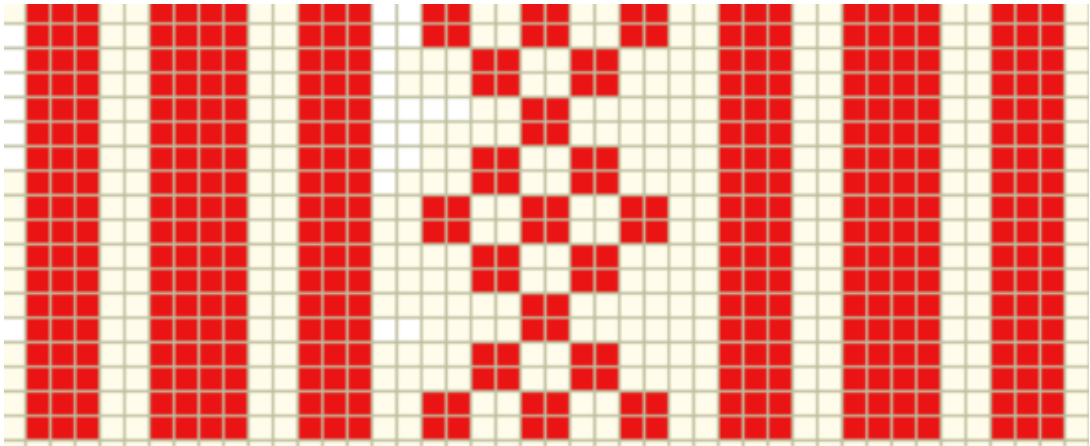


Plate 4.48:*Tungbrik*:- Pattern symbolizing stylized insects

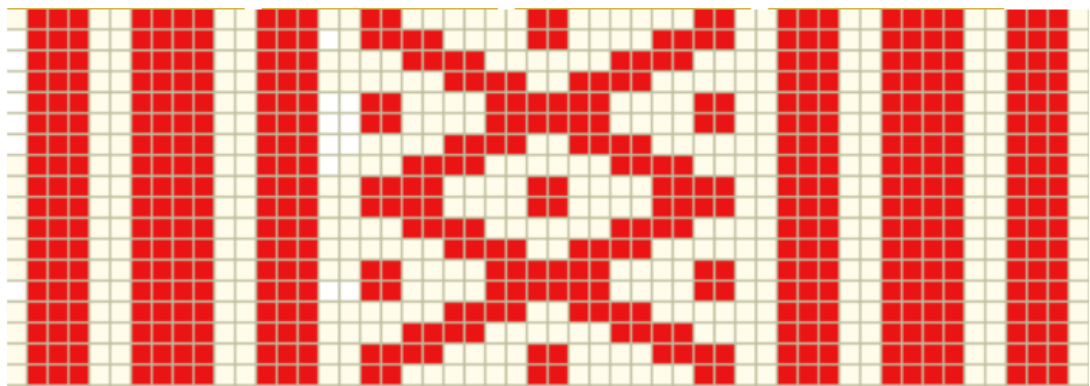


Plate 4.49 :Pattern symbolizing protection

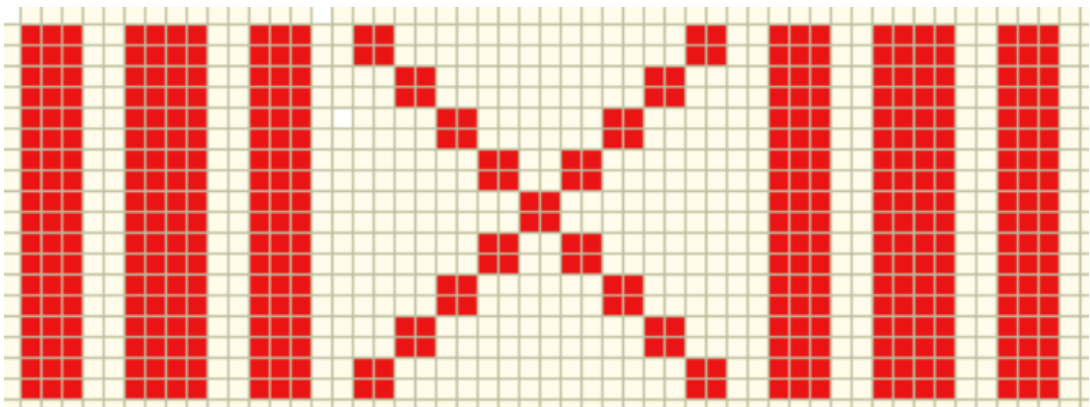


Plate 4.50: *Tungblyok*:- Pattern showing stylized butterfly.

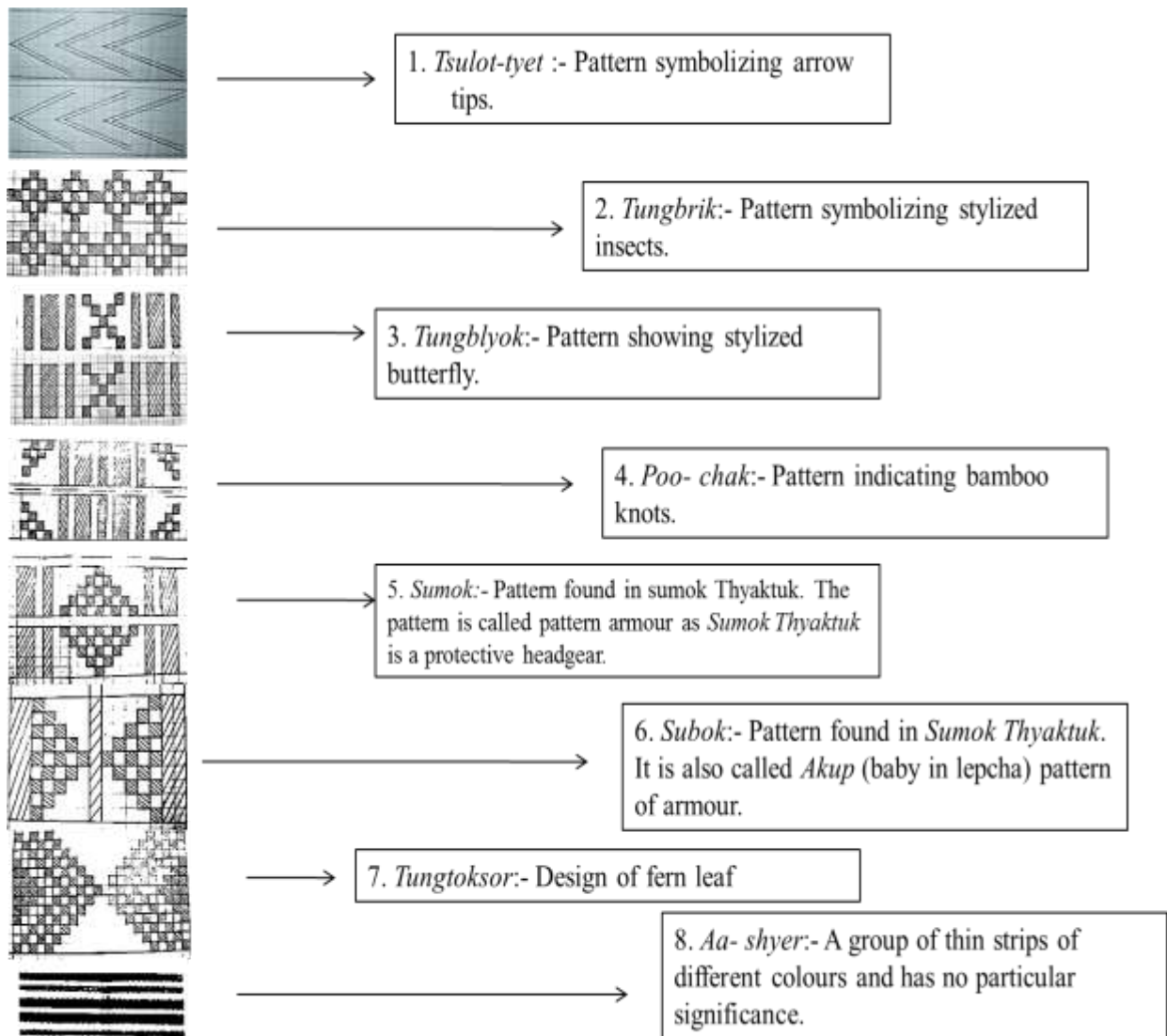


Plate 4.51: *Dum – praa(Thokroah)* with traditional motifs inspired from nature.

The Lepcha Community predominantly inhabits the Dzongu area in the northern district of Sikkim. The upper Dzongu region, due to its remote nature, has preserved the traditional art of weaving. Sakyong village, in particular, boasts many skilled weavers who continue to practice this craft. Lepcha women are known for their weaving expertise, especially in creating 'Dum - praa', a traditional men's garment. Each village in Sikkim produces 'Dum - praa' for its men, serving as both attire during the day and a blanket at night. The Directorate of Handloom and Handicraft (DHH) in Sikkim produces 'Dum - praa' in Gangtok.

While the Arts and Crafts Center in Kalimpong has a Lepcha Weaving Department that produces and supplies bags, dining table mats, etc., it curiously does not produce 'Dum - praa' for the Lepchas. The price of a 'Dum - praa' may range from Rs. 500 to 2,000, depending on its size, design, pattern, and quality. Despite the variety of Lepcha patterns used in weaving 'Dum - praa', three designs are particularly popular:

1. Tagaap: This is the oldest Lepcha floral pattern, woven with floral designs.
2. Khemchu: A scissors design pattern.
3. Tamblyoak: Based on butterfly patterns.

Additionally, 'Dum - praa' is known by three other names based on its material, make, and design:

1. Koojoo Vaadoah: The oldest type of Lepcha men's dress, made from nettle plants (Koojoo). It is light and plain-colored, occasionally featuring embroidery.
2. Thokroah: Made from thin, soft fibers, recognizable by its white base with rhythmic strips in black, red, yellow, and green, adorned with interwoven motifs.
3. Menchhyo dress: Identified by its beautiful embroidery at the top end.

Today, Koojoo Vaadoah is no longer made due to the scarcity of nettle plants and the availability of cheap cotton fibers in the market.

Raw Materials: Lepchas primarily utilize cotton for crafting their garments and sheep wool for blankets. As an alternative, acrylic is increasingly being employed. Lepchas rear their own sheep for wool, supplemented by purchases from local traders. Cotton and acrylic are predominantly sourced from Gangtok, where traders procure them from Kolkata.

List of fibers used for textile and garment making:

S.No	Natural Fibers	Uses
1	<i>Sisnu</i> (Nettle)	Garments
2	Wool, Animal Hair	Garments and Accessories
3	Silk	Garments
4	Cotton	Garments



Plate 4.52: Nettle yarn

Plate 4.53: Bear Skin

Plate 4.54: Wool Yarn

Tools: The essential tools for weaving include yarns (acrylic, cotton, or wool), spindle, spinning machine, warp drum or pegs, and a loom. Specific implements used in the loin loom process comprise:

- **Front Bar:** Positioned between two loops affixed to the wall of a house, the front bar was a circular wooden rod.
- **Breast Bar:** Also circular in shape, the breast bar holds the warp between itself and the front bar.
- **Sword:** A flat wooden piece, the sword rests in the front warp, with one end blunt and the other pointed.
- **Heald Bar:** Circular and made of bamboo, the heald bar was an integral part of the weaving setup.
- **Circular Bamboo Bar:** Slightly longer than the heald bar, this circular bamboo bar follows it in the arrangement.
- **Lease Rod:** Positioned between the front bar and circular bar, the lease rod divides the warp into two sets.
- **Back Strap:** Made from either leather or cloth, the back strap features loops at both ends, which attach to notches on the front warp bar.

Most of these tools were crafted from bamboo, occasionally supplemented with wooden alternatives.

Techniques: Lepcha weavers employ various indigenous techniques, such as backstrap weaving or loin loom weaving, incorporating supplementary weft & warp technique, and resist dyeing, to create the textiles. The techniques add to the uniqueness of their fabrics.

"Back-strap loom," which is was known as girdle-back, waist, belt, stick loom or loin loom refers to any loom where the warp is stretched between a fixed object and the weaver's body. Similar looms can be found worldwide, especially in remote Asian areas such as northern Hokkaido in Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, China, Korea, Tibet, Burma, and parts of India.

Based on interviews with locals in North Sikkim and Kalimpong, it is evident that in the past, Lepcha women in villages possessed the skill to create traditional Lepcha clothing. They utilized back-strap loin looms, which featured wooden frames, to weave fabrics.

Today, this weaving technique is perpetuated through training programs organized by the Directorate of Handicraft and Handloom Department in Sikkim. The back-strap loin looms employed in these programs resemble those found in various regions of northeastern India and Bhutan.

Parts of Loin loom used by Lepcha community

- a) **TAAN:** This process involves encircling the warp yarns around wooden poles for support, known as winding. Once winding is complete, the yarns are transferred onto the loin loom. Two women are required to perform this task.
- b) **LARAWNE:** This tool is utilized to reposition the yarns, correcting any mistakes that may occur during the weaving process.
- c) **ROLL (leash rod) :** The purpose of this tool was to create patterns, particularly those of lines known as "*Pochak*" or bamboo nodes.
- d) **PHOOL DORI (pattern rod):** Essential for crafting floral patterns in the fabric.
- e) **NAAK DORI (pattern rod):** This tool is also instrumental in creating various patterns, excluding floral designs.
- f) **PHOOL UTHAO (shed rod):** Primarily used to support the phooldori by lifting the yarns, aiding in pattern formation and shed formation.
- g) **PIN (shuttle):** Functions as a bobbin for inserting the weft yarns during weaving.
- h) **CHEPNE (breast beam):** Assists in pulling the roll during the weaving process.

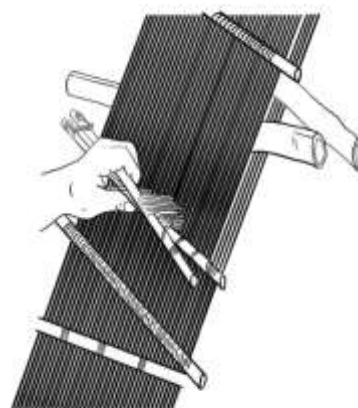


Plate 4.58: Pulling of the yarns

- i) **THOKNE (beater)**: This tool tightens and beats the warp and weft yarns together, similar to a beater.
- j) **CHALAAL (backstrap)**: Leather belt which was secured at weaver's waist to give support while weaving on loin loom.

Other parts were closing rod, foot brace, and needle.



Plate 4.55 Artisan weaving on Loin loom

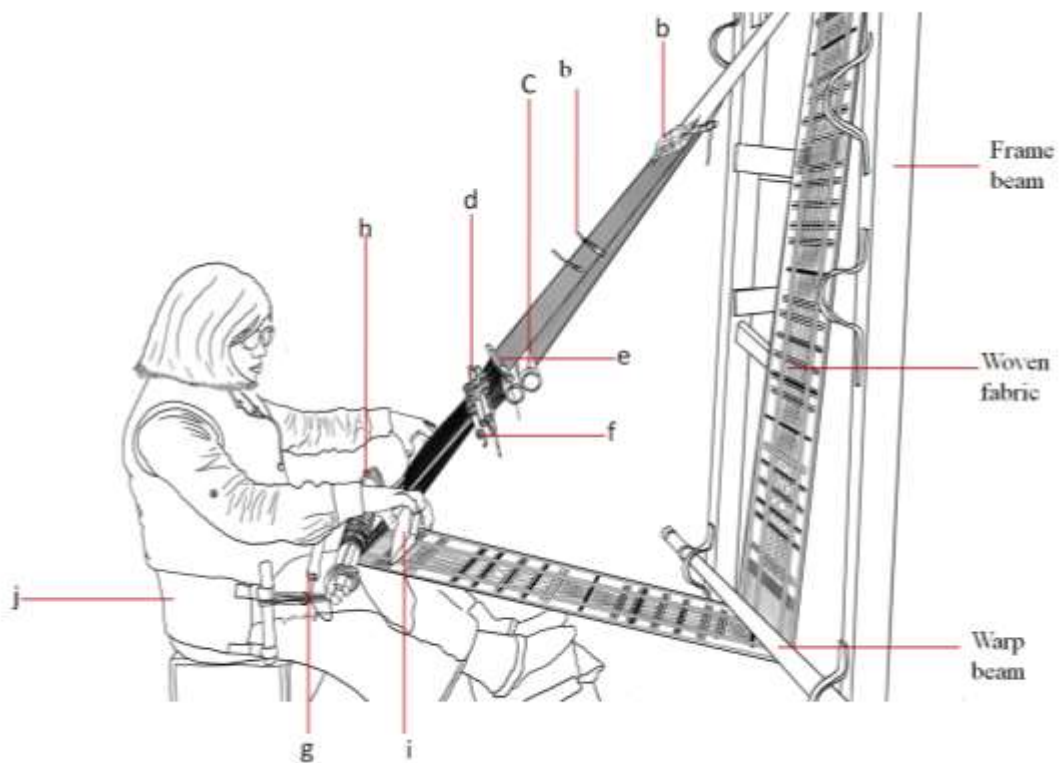


Plate 4.56: Parts of Loin Loom

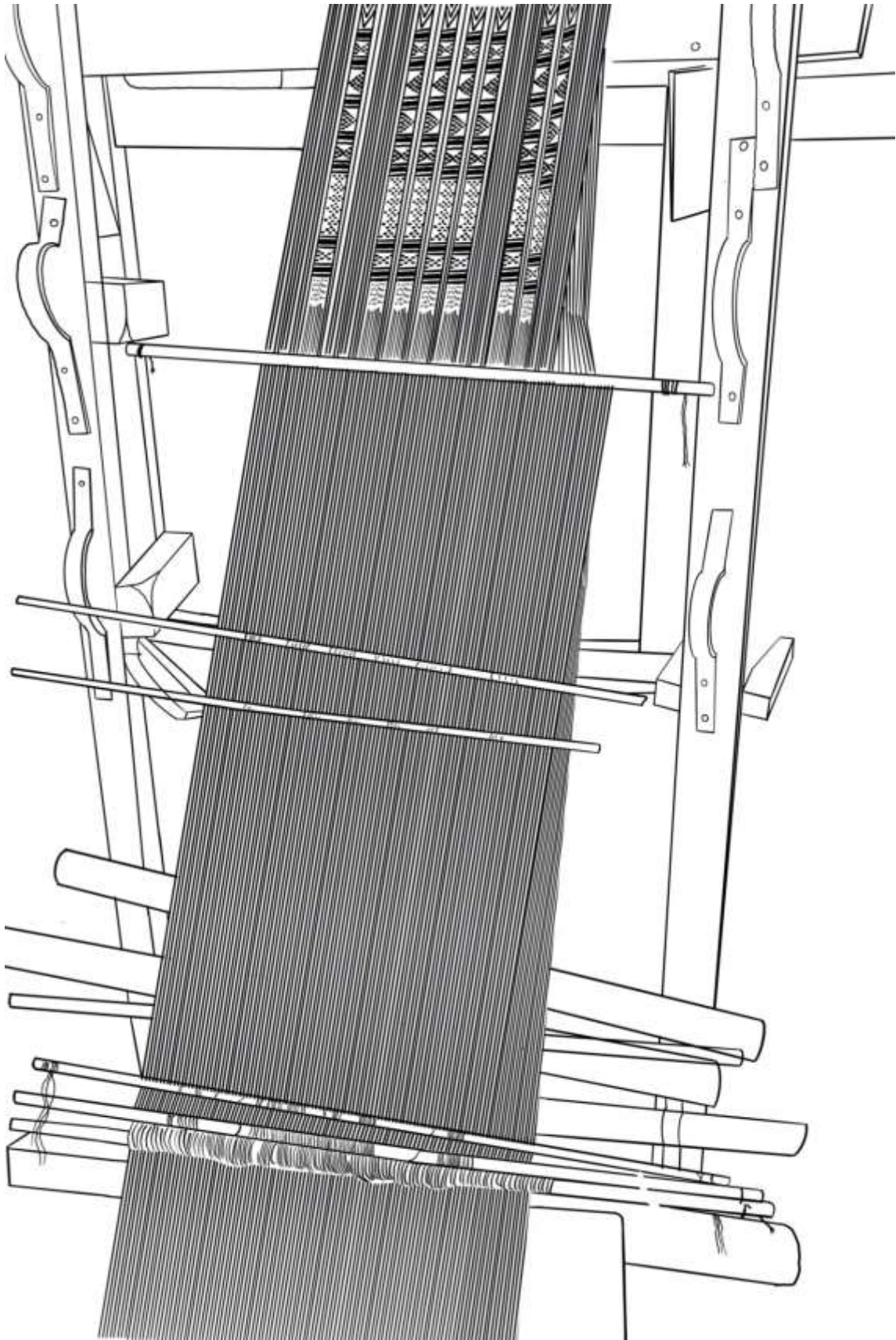


Plate 4.57: Loom close-up

Weaving Process

The loom offers endless possibilities for weaving various patterns. The weaver sits with the loom, securing the back strap and adjusting the footrest to maintain tension. Weaving on the loom involves three main motions: shedding, picking, and beating.

To begin, the weaver lifts the heddle bar with the left hand while pressing down the circular bamboo bar with the right hand. Simultaneously, the sword was placed vertically in the shed, and the weft was passed from the right side using the shuttle and picked up by the left hand. The weft was then beaten with the sword.

Subsequently, the sword is removed, and a center shed is created through which the shuttle was passed by the left hand and picked up by the right hand. The sword was then replaced to beat the weft, and the process repeats.

Initially, two bamboo splits serve as the first weft, employing the technique of plain weave with one up and one down. This process continues until the desired pattern emerges.

The weaving process entails a series of tasks typically carried out collaboratively by the weaver and an assistant.

Step 1: Begin by tying the warp yarns across the wooden poles, a process known as winding.

Step 2: Next, transfer the yarns onto the loom.

Step 3: Detangle the warp yarns by flicking them.

Step 4: Withdraw the wooden poles from the loom, which are used to support the warp yarns.

Step 5: The weaver secures herself to the loom with a leather belt (*chalaal*) worn at her waist.

Step 6: Arrange the rods on the loom according to the desired pattern.

Step 7: Plan the motifs and patterns, lifting the warp yarns selectively using a sleek wooden plank.

Step 8: Pass the weft yarns from right to left using a "Pin" (Shuttle).

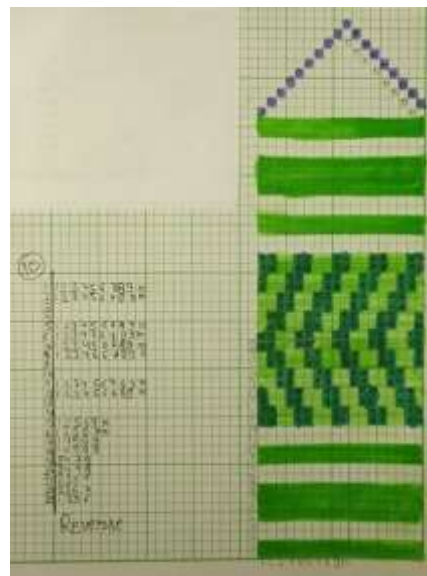
Step 9: Complete the process by sliding the tool (*Thokene*) or beater firmly over the previously inserted yarns (using the pin).

Step 10: Repeat the process by passing the weft yarns from left to right.

Step 11: Repeat step 9 and continue the entire process from this point onward.

Step 12 To conclude the weaving process of the textile, the warp yarns are woven in a plain weave to ensure that the weave remains securely locked. Additionally, in some textiles, the woven yarns are left as fringe.

Once the weaver completes the weaving, she gathers the loom into a bundle. Weaving on a loin loom is relatively more physically demanding compared to other types of frame looms. Typically, it takes about seven days for a skilled weaver to complete a three-meter-long weave. To study the woven motifs in *Thokro*, the researcher attempted to understand the lifting plan for the specific motifs created on the loin loom (**Illustration 4.1**)



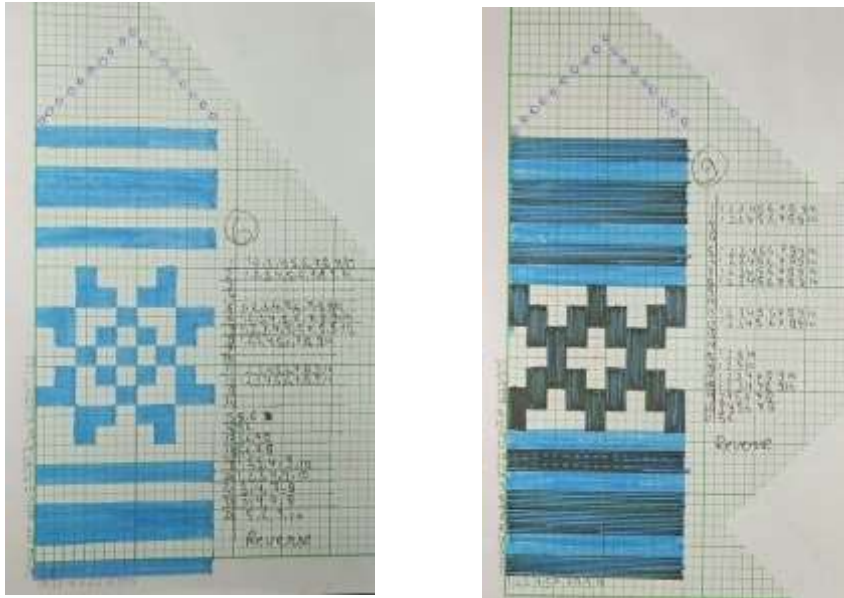


Illustration 4.1: Lifting Plans for Lepcha motifs

Contemporary Scenario:

In contemporary Lepcha textiles, recent government intervention programs have facilitated a transition to throw shuttle looms with jacquard attachments. These looms, equipped with 8 shafts and a flying shuttle, have been introduced along with comprehensive training for weavers. This initiative has significantly enhanced weaving efficiency, resulting in faster production without compromising quality

The Directorate of Handloom and Handicraft was established in Gangtok, and weavers were selected from the interiors and resettled in Gangtok with assistance. This initiative successfully revived the vanishing weaving tradition. With Gangtok as its headquarters, the government was able to open branches in many interior villages of Sikkim, particularly those where the Lepcha community is concentrated.

Weaving at Lingdong: Lingdong was a small village, situated approximately ten kilometers away from Namprikdang. DHH center at Lingdong, had 20 students and 2 instructors, center was established in 1987. The students were predominantly girls, and the minimum requirement for admission was that the girl should be above 14 years of age, unmarried, and of Sikkimese origin. A hostel was also provided for girls from nearby areas who stay there to learn weaving. The course duration was two years, after which the students receive a

certificate declaring completion of two years of training in handicraft and handloom at Lingdong. During the first year, they receive a stipend of Rs 500/-, and for the second year, a sum of Rs 550/-. This way, they earn while learning. The instructor guides them on color, motifs, patterns, style, etc. The instructor was paid Rs 5000/- and was required to have a two-year training certificate, experience, and six months of instructor training.

The dyed yarns which was used at Lingdong weaving centre was supplied from the headquarters at Gangtok. Warp was set on warping frame known as ‘Tan’ (made up of wood)

Weaving Particulars: Yarn count used- 2/20s

Weave used- Rib weave

Yarn type- Cotton

Embroidery:

According to the personal interviews conducted with the locals, the researcher came across the information that embroidery also played a significant role in Lepcha textiles. Elaborate and intricate embroidery work was often seen on clothing items like blouses, shawls, and skirts. These designs were made using colorful threads and might have incorporated motifs from nature and Lepcha mythology. Although it was mentioned in oral history, the researcher never came across any such piece in her field visits, except one in DHH museum craft gallery. However, that object didn’t have any record stating to which community it belonged.

Observations reveal a growing trend among local designers who incorporate traditional Lepcha weave motifs into their designs, often employing techniques such as *ari* and *ada* embroidery as well as beadwork (**Plate 4.59**). Additionally, contemporary designs may feature machine embroidery, reflecting a blend of traditional craftsmanship with modern aesthetics. Local designs found catering this need for the said community.



Plate 4.59: Karigar developing lepcha patterns on adda frame

Picture Courtesy: Tshela's one stop Store, Sikkim

Contemporary Textile Materials

Traditionally, the Lepchas crafted their textiles from nettle, which not only offered physical protection but also symbolically shielded wearers from negative energies, believed to be channeled through the plant's stinging barbs. However, weaving nettle fabric is a painstaking process, exacerbated by deforestation that has diminished nettle populations. As a result, nettle textiles are now nearly ten times more costly than other fabrics. Moreover, the Directorate of Handloom and Handicrafts (DHH) does not include nettle weaving in its curriculum, leading independent artisans to opt for more readily available materials.

In contemporary Lepcha textiles, cotton remains predominant, although silk and wool were also favored choices. Synthetic fibers was frequently utilized as well. While the DHH procures yarn from outside the state, independent artisans often source yarn locally, excluding nettle yarn, or collect wool from their own sheep. Despite the scarcity of nettle yarn in markets, there was a growing trend of weaving nettle textiles, with organizations like Mutanchi Lom Aal Shejum in Dzongu conducting workshops three times a year to train weavers in traditional nettle textile production. Experienced weavers mentor newcomers during these sessions, simultaneously expanding production and preserving Lepcha weaving traditions.

It was evident that Lepcha weaving traditions shared connections with neighboring Himalayan regions. Historically, areas of eastern Bhutan, parts of India, and Tibet were culturally and politically interconnected until the mid-1600s. Lepcha fabric production showed striking resemblances to the weaving traditions of nearby communities in South Bhutan. The attire worn by Lepcha men bore similarity to the garments worn by the "Sherdukpens" in Arunachal Pradesh. Women typically used backstrap looms and worked with cotton and silk imported from neighboring countries (**Plate 4.60, Plate 4.61**), with nettle fiber also historically used. The process of obtaining nettle fiber shared similarities between the Lepchas and Bhutanese. Furthermore, weaving techniques and patterns exhibited parallels with those found in Bhutan. In the current market, a variety of Lepcha weave products were available, including bags, purses, cushion covers, napkins, and table mats. Lepcha hand-woven jackets, known for their utility, enjoyed significant market demand. Apart from these printed fabrics has also taken over markets which resembles woven lepcha traditional motifs and motifs from Bhutanese textiles (**Plate 4.64**).

During an interview with local wholesale distributors in Sikkim, it was discovered that many of these printed fabrics were sourced from the Surat market. Surat, being a hub of textile industries, was where most imitations and explorations occurred, and somehow, Lepcha and Bhutanese weaves had also become a part of this trend (**Plate 4.63**). The advantage of these printed fabrics was that they were lightweight compared to traditional woven Lepcha fabric. Based on the data collected, it was observed that Chinese brocade (**Plate 4.2.38**) was another textile material used by Lepcha men and women for their shirts and other festive blazers, coats and other garments. Since the migration of the Chogyals, many have adopted their dressing style, resulting in a noticeable cultural exchange in terms of textiles.



Plate 4.60: Chinese silk



Plate 4.61: Patterned silk



Plate 4.62: Chinese brocades

S.No	Products	Size (L X W)
1.	Daree(Dumprraa/Thokro)	120"X30"
2.	Daree (Medium size)	120" x27"
3.	Bag Tan (File folder yardage)	120"x19"
4.	Cushion Cover yardage	125"X18"
5.	Napkin	16.5"X16.5"
6.	Table Mat	18.5"X12.5"
7.	Jhola (Bag) large	36"X12.5" with flap
8.	Jhola (Bag) small	28"X10.5"without flap
9.	Jhola (Bag) large	28"X12.5" without flap
10.	Jhola side Panel	150"X5"
11.	Waist belt	160"X2"
12.	Tray cloth	23.5"X13"

Table 4.2: Standard sizes of handloom products which are woven at DHH

Contemporary Lepcha textiles were experiencing a notable transformation, largely influenced by the burgeoning synthetic market. Many young people were gravitating towards the modern fabrics due to their appealing designs, vibrant colors, and diverse fabric options. This departure from traditional weaving methods signifies a shift towards contemporary aesthetics and convenience.

Additionally, the effects of global warming have had a significant impact on textile preferences among the Lepcha community. With rising temperatures, there's a growing preference for lighter fabrics over heavy traditional textiles. This shift is driven by the need for comfort in increasingly warm climates. **(Plate 4.2.40)**

While the allure of synthetic textiles is undeniable, it's essential to consider their environmental implications. Balancing modern trends with sustainability is crucial as we navigate these changes in Lepcha textile practices. Finding ways to merge tradition with innovation while remaining mindful of our environmental footprint is key to shaping the future of Lepcha textiles.



Plate 4.63: Contemporary Lepcha woven fabric



Plate 4.64: Printed Fabrics used for various purposes.

Card Weaving:

Card weaving was another craft which was practiced by the lepchas. They use to weave narrow width belts . In this process, cards were used instead of harnesses, and weft was introduced either by hand or by a small wooden stick on which weft yarn was wrapped .Few traces of card weaving was documented by Cope, Tom & Nesbitt, Mark in 2002 (**Plate 4.65**) Palden Lepcha mentioned that leather cards were initially utilized for weaving, and it was only much later, during British rule, that cardboard was introduced (**Plate 4.66**).



Plate 4.65: Card weaving belt (1927)

Source:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234002872_Plate_435_Lygeum_spartum



Plate 4.66: Leather card used for card weaving

Source: Unknown



Plate 4.67: Lepcha / Rong man from Sikkim, India 1860 wearing nettle dumpraa

Source: <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/lepcha.html?sortBy=relevant>

II. Garments & Accessories: Lepcha traditional attire comprised garments like the *Dum-prá*, typically worn over a high-collared shirt called *Tago* and knee/calf-length drawstring trousers known as *Tomoo*. These elements were not a part of pre-modern Lepcha attire. For women, the *Dum-dyem* served as the traditional outfit. Historically, it was wrapped around the body similarly to *Dum-práa* worn by men, fashioned from a large rectangular cloth, draped and pinned or buttoned at the front and shoulders, creating a sleeveless ankle-length garment.

It was secured at the waist with a *nyemrek* and crossed over the breast to the back. Accessories like necklaces, bracelets, and earrings were crafted using traditional techniques. Lepcha Hats, *Thyaktuk*, were intricate works of art woven by skilled artisans, often accompanied by chanting mantras for good luck. Five common hat types were *Papri Thyaktuk*, *AnokThyaktuk*, *SeyrabooThyaktuk*, *SumokThyaktuk*, and *Soring Thyaktuk*, primarily worn by men, while women opted for scarves to cover their heads.

Men Clothing:

Upper Garment: Consist of *Tago/Hyantaj* (shirt), *Dumpraa* (shawl) **(Plate 4.69)**

Lower Garment: *Tomoo/Gyado* (Calf length pant)

The Dumpraa : *Dumpraa* refers generally to the Lepchas' traditional male dress—one of the tribe's oldest cultural products. The original, unadorned form was known as *kūjūgyado*, which relates to the nettle (*kūjū*) **(Plate 4.67)** it was woven from. This style of *dumpraa* was worn without any other garments, simply wrapped around the body, leaving certain parts uncovered.



Plate 4.68: Lepcha Men wearing Koojoo Vaadoah
Picture courtesy: Karma Sonam

The *Dum-praa*, also referred to as *Dampraa* or *Thokro-Dum*, encompasses three primary patterns. The oldest among them was the '*Tagaap*,' distinguished by its floral weave, signifying its historical significance in Lepcha weaving. Another pattern, known as the '*Khemchu*,' features scissor-like motifs of inverted and upright V's, adding a touch of intricacy to the design. Lastly, the '*Tamblyoak*' pattern depicts graceful butterflies, infusing a sense of whimsy and natural beauty into the *Dum-praa* attire. Dum-

praa, also known as '*KoojooVadoah*,' (**Plate 4.68**) represents the earliest attire of the Lepchas, showcasing their indigenous use of nettle plant fibers from bamboo looms. This simple yet significant garment, dark cream in color, lacks dyes and embroidery, embodying traditional craftsmanship. Another attire, '*Thokroah*,' crafted from thin, soft fibers, is typically black and white, devoid of embroidery. Ready-made dum-prá were seen typically made in cotton. These were then paired with knee-length *pyjamas*, it's ideal for fieldwork and jungle activities, sparking assumption about the Lepchas possibly originated from marshland. '*Menchhyo*,' was a multicolored dress, featured elaborate embroidery, cascading beautifully along the wearer's chest. Underneath, Lepcha men wore a loose shirt with Chinese collar and frog button known as '*Tago*,' or '*Hyantaj*' (**Plate 4.73**) and calf-length *pyjamas* called '*Tomoo*,' (**Plate 4.71**) offering practicality in waterlogged fields and leech-infested jungles of Sikkim. It was believed that this knee/calf-length drawstring trousers (*tomoo*), which was earlier not a part of traditional Lepcha attire and came much later as the community got more enlightened under Bhutia rule.

The *Tagoor Hyantaj*' was often discarded during hunting, as the *Dum-praa* provides sufficient coverage. Additionally, men adorn the *Yangloo* shawl, maroon and white, embroidered at the ends, reserved for auspicious occasions. Footwear was historically absent from Lepcha attire, although this is no longer the case. Various accessories remain integral to Lepcha men's attire, reflecting their cultural significance and traditional practices.

Dum-prá garments were crafted from large rectangular cloths, wrapped around the body and secured at the shoulder, typically matching the wearer's dominant hand. These sleeveless outfits extend to mid-thigh or knee-length. They were traditionally fastened at the waist using a traditional girdle known as *nyemrek* or a modern belt. Traditionally, dum-prá consists of two pieces of cloth, each measuring approximately three and a half feet wide by four to four and a half feet long, joined width-wise. Roughly a quarter of the upper sections of both the front and back of the cloth can fold over itself, usually draping across the chest, upper back, and occasionally over the shoulder. This folded section was then tuck beneath the part of the cloth fastened at the shoulder and then extend as far down as the navel and lower back, but it never reaches beyond the hips.

Nowadays, Western-style clothing has become a common choice. The adoption of these undergarments reflects the historical interaction of Lepchas with various communities over time. Wearing *dum-prá* with *tago* and *tomoo* today is reminiscent of how Lepchas used

to incorporate Bhutia clothing into their traditional attire during the Bhutia rule. However, this interaction was not confined to the past; the wearing of Western-style clothing alongside traditional garments signifies the adaptability of Lepcha textiles to various cultural influences (**Plate 4.75**). This attire exemplifies an ongoing process of cultural exchange. Using dumpraa fabrics for making jackets and other wearing objects showed a good blend of tradition with modern silhouette.

From the collected data, it was evident that Lepchas have incorporated Chinese brocade shirts, as well as brocade blazers, coats, and various other garments into their attire. Following the migration of the Chogyals, many individuals have embraced their style of dressing, like leading to a discernible cultural exchange, particularly concerning textiles (**Plate 4.70**)

It was also observed that during the reign of the Chogyals in Sikkim, the royal guards, who served under the Last King Palden Thondup Namgyal until 1975, were

observed wearing Lepcha dumpraa along with jackets (**Plate 4.78**). These jackets were influenced by Bhutia and Tibetan culture, typically made of velvet fabric with front closures, usually adorned with frog buttons, and long sleeves. The uniform was complemented with a bamboo hat. These costumes were preserved in the High Court Museum, Sikkim, and the Directorate of Handloom and Handicraft Museum in Gangtok (**Plate 4.72**).



Plate 4.69: Palchen Lepcha wearing Traditional Dumpraa

Source: (1) <https://aachuley.blogspot.com/2010/10/lepcha-dress.html>

Picture Courtesy: (2) Palchen Lepcha's Personal Collection, Dzongu, North Sikkim.



Plate 4.70: 1860s India - Lepcha or Rongkup man in traditional attire from Sikkim

Source: Source: <https://www.alamy.com/stock->



Plate 4.71: Lepcha Men pant (*Tomo*)



Plate 4.72: Hyantaj (Lepcha Men shirt)



Plate 4.73 Variation in Dumpraa



Plate 4.74: Lepcha man wearing Contemporary Lepcha jacket, *Jhola* (Lepcha Bag)



Plate 4.75: Lepcha weave woven jacket



Modern Lepcha men seamlessly blend tradition with modernity, honoring their cultural legacy by embracing traditional garments like the *Dumpraa*. They explore innovative ways to incorporate these traditional attire pieces into their wardrobe, pairing them with jeans, casual shirts, formal shirts, trousers, and jackets. This fusion of traditional and modern clothing not only allows them to celebrate their culture but also opens up opportunities to embrace contemporary fashion trends.

Plate 4.76: Young Lepcha man dressed in modern attire.



Plate 4.77: Lepcha men dressed in modern attire.

**Jacket worn
by the Royal
Guards**



**Plate 4.78: Lepcha Guard in trending dumpraa and royal guard Costume
Picture Courtesy: Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok**



**Plate 4.79: Lepcha Royal Guard costume
Picture Courtesy: High Court Museum, Sikkim**

In recent time, men in Sikkim opt for a variety of attire for different occasions. For casual wear, they often choose formal shirts, trendy t-shirts, jeans, and pants. Given the colder climate of the region, woollen sweaters, sweatshirts, jerseys, coats, jackets, and overcoats were also commonly worn. During special events such as weddings, festivals, and community gatherings, there was a preference for traditional attire like *dumpraa*, *tago*, and *tomoo*. This diverse selection of clothing reflects both practical considerations and cultural traditions.

***Dumpraa* draping steps:**

Step 1: Get the Dumpraa Cloth Ready: Firstly pick a *dumpraa* cloth, make sure it's ironed.

Step 2. Hold the Cloth Just Right: Hold the *dumpraa* cloth lengthwise, one end in each hand. Let it hang down evenly, like you're getting ready to wrap it around yourself

Step 3: Wrap it Around: Bring one end of the cloth across the front of your body, making sure it covers your chest nicely. Hold it snug against you with one hand.

Step 4: Secure at the Shoulder: Take the other end of the cloth and bring it across your back to the opposite shoulder. Adjust the length so it's even.

Step 5: Check the Length: Make sure the *dumpraa* reaches the right length – somewhere around mid-thigh or to the knees usually works best.

Step 6, 7, 8: Adjust the *dumpraa* on shoulder and waist properly.

Step 9,10,11: Tie it Up: Use a traditional girdle called a "*nyemrek*" or a belt to secure the *dumpraa* at your waist. This not only keeps it in place but adds a nice touch too.

Step 12: Adjust the *dumpraa* and pull out a little on top in order to cover the *nyemrek*.

Step 13: Smooth out any wrinkles or folds and make it neat and tidy.

Step 14: Add Some Extras: Depending on the occasion, they might want to accessorize with a shawl or hat to complete the look. It's all about personal style and choices. (**Illustration 4.2**)



Plate 4.80: *Jhola* (Lepcha Bag made out of Nettle and jute) Sample from Culture Department, Manan Bhavan, Gangtok, Sikkim



Plate 4.81: Contemporary *Jhola* (Lepcha Bag) Sample from Culture Department, Manan Bhavan, Gangtok, Sikkim

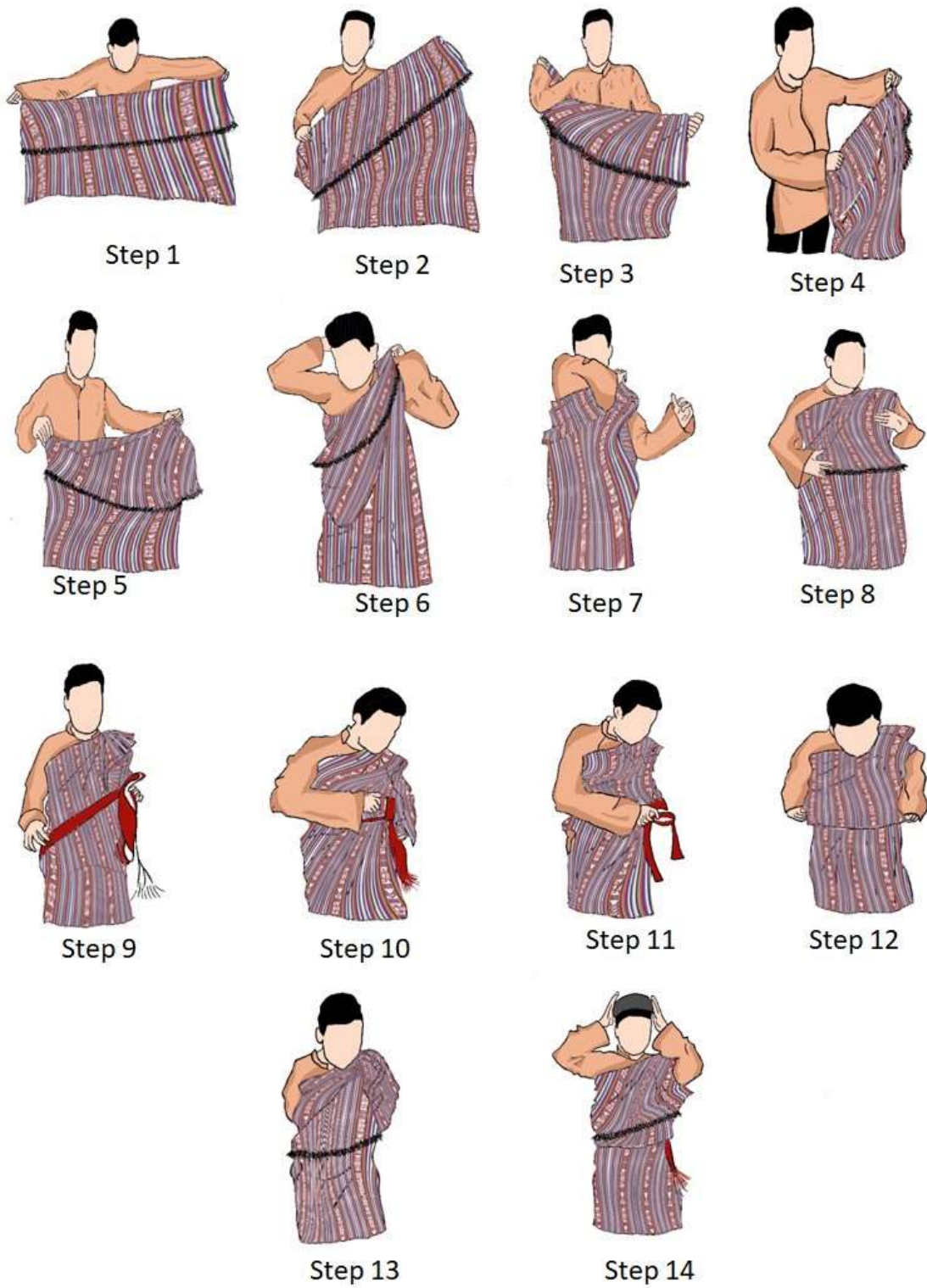


Illustration 4.2: Steps in wearing *dumpraa*

Women Clothing

Upper Garment: Upper garment consist of *Tago* (silk blouse), *Jyoordong Tago*: Long sleeves blouse which almost touches the calf. Worn only by married women, *Taroa*: Scarf worn on head.

Lower Garment: Ashyam/ Dumdyem/ Gado, "*Naamrek* (waist belt)

Ashyam/Dumdyem/Gado

The Lepcha women have a distinct attire of their own. In earlier times, distinguishing between males and females was challenging as both wore the same earthly-colored nettle (*sisnu*) dress slung over their shoulders leaving the breast exposed. **(Plate 4.82)** However, over time, feminine instincts prevailed, leading to the evolution of the *Dumdyem*. This flowing dress, usually off white, was crafted from silk threads derived from caterpillar cocoons found in the jungles. Sometimes these coarse silk threads were dyed in bright colour and woven into a simple flowing dress, slung over both shoulders and crisscrossing just below the neck. It was held at the waist by a waistband called "*Naamrek*," with the end piece wrapped and secured over the waistband.



Plate 4.82: Lepcha / Rong women from Sikkim, India 1860

Source:

<https://www.alamy.com/stock->

According to Athol Lepcha just like a man, women dress was held in at the waist by a *Naamrek*, a sash, or cummerbund, the *dumdyem* front crossed over the chest, attaching to the back at the shoulders. The lower part of the fabric was usually wrapped around the legs, forming a fold that generally ended between the legs or over the left leg. *Dumdyem* **(Plate 4.2.59)** garments were draped in such a way that it fit the wearer's body. Ashyam /*Dumdyem* /*Gado* **(Plate 4.3, Illustration)** was made in plain weave and measures 156 "X 60"(Usually 4 meters in length) with joints. As the fabric was of narrow width, joining of the fabric was done to increase the width. A section of the remaining fabric was folded and looped over the front of the *nyemrek* **(Plate 4.89)** from behind. This extra cloth, known as *dum-pyoum* or *dum-pyn* in Lepcha, was folded into a rectangle and typically fell at the wearer's knees,

although it could reach as high as the mid-thigh. The *dum-pyoum* could have served as a pocket for items collected from fields and forests. It was interesting to note that even little girls were draped in their traditional attire during festivals and ceremonies as shown in (Plate 4.84).

This dress which resembles *sari* was complemented with a long flowing shirt covering the arms and folded at the wrists, known as the *Tago*. A married Lepcha lady wears a '*Jyoordong Tago*,' a flowing long-sleeved gown, over her *Dumdyem*, reaching down to her calves. The *Jyoordong Tago*,

which is made in either black or sometimes blue velvet or net material, is worn as a long coat over the *Dumdyem* which signifies marital status. This Shawl collar *tago*, at times, feature an interior lining of a

different color, such as a white *tago* with a red interior lining. In such cases, the cuffs of the *tago* are often turned up to reveal this interior lining, a practice similar to that of Tibetans, Bhutias, and Sherpas with their blouses. Like their male counterparts, *tago* shirts were not part of the pre-modern Lepcha female attire. Nowadays, Western blouses were sometimes preferred over traditional *tago* shirts. Similar to the *dum-práa* ensemble, this attire reflects a history of cultural exchange. *Lepcha* women cover their heads are usually covered by a small white-colored scarf called a *Taroa*. (Plate 4.87)

The dress, covering the Lepcha women from the shoulders to the ankles, was simple. The material for this dress was readily available in the market nowadays, and women wore it in most of the cultural and social ceremonies. In Sikkim, after the Lepchas came in contact with the Tibetans, socio-cultural assimilation was observed, and the Tibetan dress known as *Bakhu* found its way into Lepcha lives. As observed during field work, the women found wearing the long flowing overdress with buttons and the sleeved shirts inside an easier alternative to the original *Dumdyem*, which was a bit cumbersome and button less.



Plate 4.83: Young Lepcha women wearing traditional *dumdyem*
Picture Courtesy: Pema Zangmu personal collection



Plate 4.84: Little Lepcha girl wearing traditional *dumdyem* made out of nettle.

Contemporary *dumdyem* garments are predominantly made of cotton or silk. Rough silk *dumdyem* known as *tamaan-dum*, were also common. Today, unembellished white or beige *dumdyem* were considered more traditional, while non-traditional variations often feature colors and decorative patterns, often floral in nature, (4.85). Even embroidered *dumdyem* were also available. It has been observed that modern women also prefer woven brocade fabric for *dumdyem*. These patterns bear resemblance to traditional Sherpa, Bhutian, and Tibetan attire, indicating a history of cultural exchanges. The presence of the *dum-pyom* distinguishes *dumdyem* garments, which was worn similarly to dresses in neighboring communities, suggesting shared origins and a history of interaction between the Lepchas and their neighbors.



Plate 4.85: Young women wearing contemporary *dumdyem* with modern blouse and waist belt.

Picture Courtesy: Personal Collection of John. Z. Lepcha.



Plate 4.86: Lepcha female from Sikkim, 1935
Source: Culture Department, Archive Section, Manan Bhavan, Gangtok, Sikkim



Plate 4.87: Lepcha Women in Traditional attire
Source: Archive section, Department of Culture, Government of Sikkim.
Picture donated by Royal anthropological society London during 1880's-1920's

After the arrival of the Chogyals in Sikkim, a noticeable change which was observed was in how Lepcha women from Sikkim dressed. They started adding Bhutia-style clothing to their everyday outfits, like the *honju* and *bakhu*, which became quite popular for casual wear. It's interesting to see how Bhutia culture has influenced their fashion scene, showing how cultures can blend and evolve over time (**Plate 4.88**).

And when it comes to the younger crowd, they're really into mixing and trying new things up. You'll see them wearing all sorts of styles, from traditional to modern. It's like they're creating their own fashion language, drawing inspiration from different cultures and putting their own twist and taste on it. It's all about expressing themselves in unique ways while staying connected to their roots.

Other clothing's like brocade jackets were frequently worn by lepcha women along with traditional *dumdyem* during important occasions.



Plate 4.88: Lepcha women wearing Traditional *dumdyem* with brocade coats.

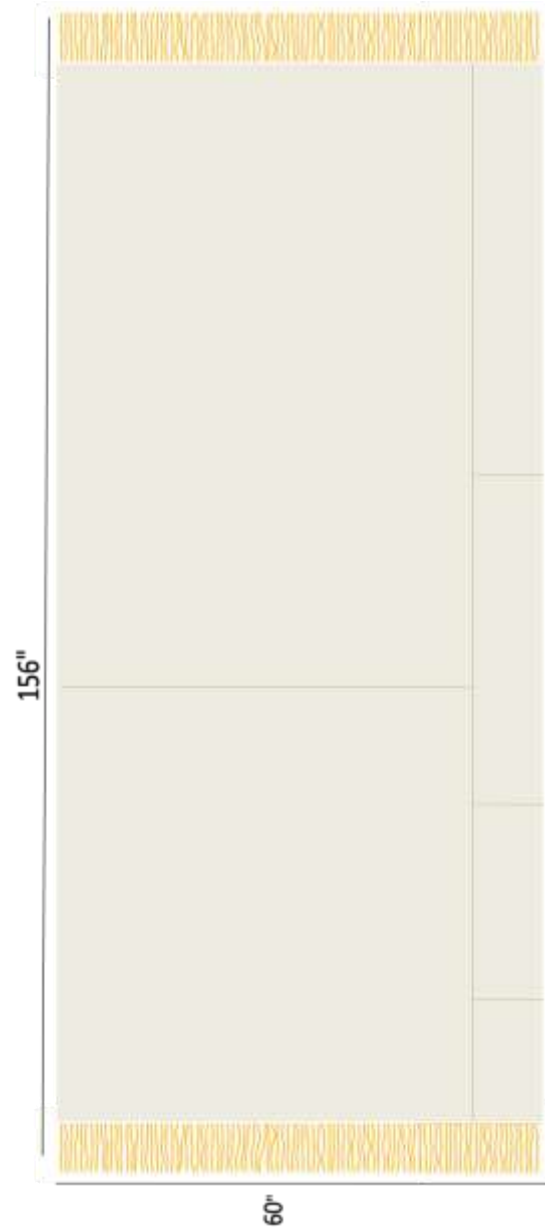


Illustration 4.3 Dumdyem

Dymdym/(*dumdyem* draping steps:

1. Start with tying a string around waist or wearing a petticoat beneath and then holding a rectangular piece of fabric (*dumdyem*), typically made from silk or cotton. Ensuring the fabric was straight and pressed. Holding one end of the fabric against the front of the body, just below the chest, and drape it across your back. Adjust the length as desired, with one end longer than the other.

2. Crossing Over: Bringing the longer end of the fabric across the chest towards the opposite shoulder. Allow it to drape loosely over the shoulder.
3. Securing the Ends: Taking the shorter end of the fabric and tuck it securely into the waistband or tying it around the waist, depending on the style and preference. The ends were secure on both the shoulders with the help of a broche or pin.
4. Adjusting the Drape: Draped fabric was arranged by creating a pleasing silhouette, ensuring it falls gracefully around the wearer's body. Then, pleats were made out of the remaining fabric similar to sari pleats and then string was tied around the waist. Finally, pleats were allowed to fall outside, lastly adjustments were made if necessary to the length and folds for the desired look.
5. Once it is draped *Nymrek* (belt) was tied around the waist to complete the look.(**Plate 4.89**)
6. Finishing Touches: Once the *dymdym* was draped, adding any additional accessories or embellishments, such as jewelry, or scarves, to complete the ensemble.(**Illustration 4.3, Illustration 4.4**)

Tago : was a silk blouse similar to Bhutia women honju worn below the dumdyem.

Naamrek: For the cotton waist belt making weavers uses 2/20 Ne yarn in both length (warp) and width (weft), indicating a two-ply, medium-fine yarn suitable for balanced woven fabrics.

Draping of Ashyam Dumdyem /Gado

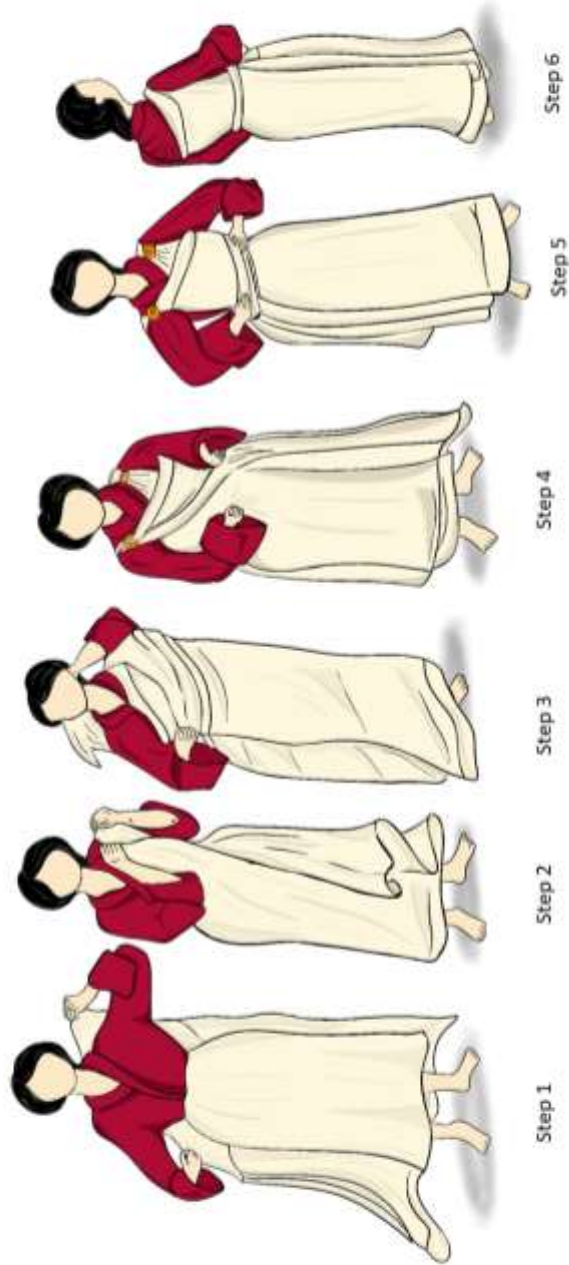


Illustration 4.4 Draping of Dumdyem

Different types of Nymreek (waist belt)

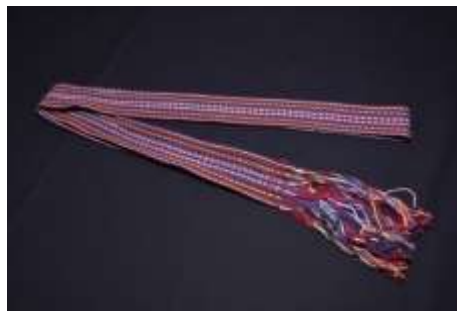
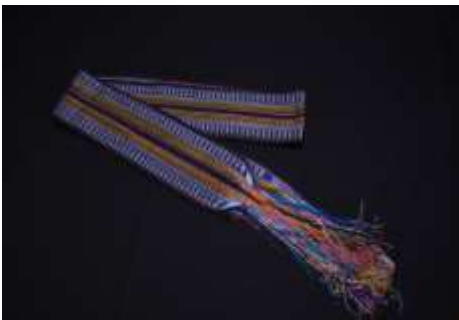
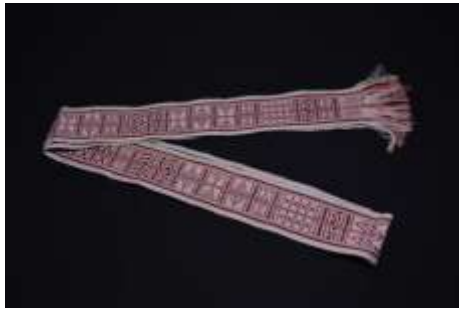


Plate 4.89: Nymreek

Accessories:

Accessories of Lepchas were usually silver based. It is divided into two parts:-

- 1) For Lepcha Men
- 2) For Lepcha Women

1) For Lepcha Men:

Love for accessories in men was apparent. They generally wore '*Baanpok*' (*knife*), ear rings, strings of beads, '*Tanggyip*' (*bag*), '*Sali*' (bow and the quiver containing arrows), Lepcha Hats, '*Thyaktuk*' (Head gear), '*Thyak*' from '*Athayk*' i.e. head and '*Tuk*' means cover, Lepcha *topi*.

'*Tanggyip*,' in contemporary terms, as a utility bag, worn slung from one shoulder across the body, integrating with the Lepcha attire. It contains various essential items, varying from person to person. Lepcha men carry it everywhere, from town to hunting grounds and fields. These bags were adorned with bright Lepcha designs or '*Taak Tik*' (spotted design). In earlier times, this bag which was made out of nettle yarn was referred to as '*Takvyoal*'.

The '*Baanpok*' an integral part of Lepcha culture, was a 12-inch knife crafted from wood, iron, and silver. Its wooden frame, adorned with motifs like three flowers and a moon, was believed to ward off the negative effects of solar and lunar eclipses. Worn by all male members, it was secured around the waist with a woven belt called "payank." This versatile knife, known as '*Baanpok*' was presented to boys at a young age and serves various purposes, from tree felling to meat cutting. Encased in an open bamboo scabbard, it measures around a foot and a half to two feet in length. Constantly carried by Lepcha males of all ages, it was indispensable for tasks like forest clearing, shelter building, and even combat. Comparable to a Gurkha's Khukri, its mastery was admired by outsiders, even among young boys.

The '*Sali*' was a bow and quiver containing arrows, essential for the Lepchas who relied on forest game for sustenance. Typically crafted from split bamboo, the bow was strengthened by drying and hardening it in a smoky environment. The strings, sourced from forest creepers, are securely fastened to notches at each end. Arrows, fashioned from mature bamboo, are tipped with iron arrowheads and feathers for stability. Often poisoned with toxins from local plants, these arrows were then stored in bamboo quivers.

Lepcha men used to adorn themselves with vibrant earrings and beaded necklaces crafted from coral and silver. Their penchant for colorful jewelry was evident in their choice of accessories.

The Lepchas of Sikkim have a longstanding tradition of crafting hats from bamboo and canes, known as *Papri* (**Plate 4.90**) and *Sumok Thyaktuk* within the tribe. This ancient craft, practiced exclusively in the Dzongu tribal reserve area of Sikkim, represents one of the oldest forms of handmade artistry in the community. As said by Jorden Lepcha who was a master craftsman and a Padam shree awardee for Lepcha hat making, he mentions that with the forces of modernization and the influence of neighboring cultures, this tradition faces a significant threat of extinction. Recognizing this risk, researchers have diligently documented information about these hats to preserve their hidden story.

In the past, these hats held symbolic significance, even becoming a part of the costumes worn by royal soldiers under the management of the Chogyal dynasty, known as the 'Sikkim Guard'. Today, these traditional hats continue to be worn during various festivals and religious ceremonies, including marriages.

Among the five distinct types of hats—*Papri*, *Sumokt hyaktuk*, *Anok thyaktuk*, *Soring thyaktuk*, and *Seyraaboo thyaktuk*—the *Papri* served as a basic headgear for everyday tasks such as field work, hunting, and fishing. On the other hand, the *Sumok thyaktuk* was reserved for special occasions, symbolizing not only the wearer's status but also their position within Lepcha society. The hats worn by kings and village chiefs were adorned with intricate designs featuring symbols like the sun, moon, and the tail feathers of birds such as the racket-tailed drongo (*Numbong Ong Fo*) and peacock (**Plate 4.96**). According to Lepcha belief, these symbols were thought to ward off the ill effects of eclipses. Another legend among the Lepchas tells of Narok Rum, a Himalayan musician, who joined the Lepcha community, bringing with him a tail feather from the racket-tailed drongo as a symbol of love and blessings.

Traditionally, Lepcha craftsmen would chant mantras while weaving these hats, imbuing them with spiritual significance and blessings for the wearer. The intricate art and design of these hats reflect the dedication and skill of the craftsmen who meticulously created them.



Plate 4.90: Papri hat

Materials used for Sumok thyaktok (Hats of Lepcha Chiefs)

- a. **Po Pali**- Large bamboo yarn
- b. **Payongpali**- small species of bamboo yarn
- c. **Rukup**- Cane.
- d. **Kung cho**- Vegetable dyes
- e. **Tongzer long**- Glass like stone (Mica sheets)
- f. **Kafer lop**- Wild leaves
- g. **NombongongFotukseem**- Bird tail feather
- h. **MongyungTukseem**(Peacock feather)

- i. **PuguReep-** Totola flower leave. Used during religious functions. It is believed to be very pure and clean.z

Lepcha hat usually consist of fine *Ru* (canes) (*Calamus acanthospathus Griffith*) and *Po-Young* or bamboo (*Cephalostacchium capitatum*) straws. Making of this hat requires a skill and patience. This complexly woven hat requires more than a month to complete the entire woven design. It has been observed that preparation of fine bamboo thread takes a significant amount of time. These fine and flexible strands made out of bamboo is approximately 4mm in thickness for weaving, which is known as *poli* of cane or bamboo. Some weavers use locally available natural dyes extracted from common and locally available resources like ‘*Rubia manjith*’ for dying of the bamboo (**Plate 4.91**). Along with other natural resources like mica stone locally known as ‘*tongzerlong*’ (**Plate 4.98**).

(A)*Sumok thyaktok* is prepared in five layers. Each layer has a distinct meaning and set of traditional values linked with their own culture.

- a) First layer- *Nongsatchum*, inner one is a rough surface of the hat.
- b) Second layer- *Afyel*, made with leaves
- c) Third layer- *Pugureep*
- d) Fourth layer- Mica stone
- e) Fifth layer- The final design and the main part of the hat, consisting of a design called *Eee- Mik.sumook* and spider web like design on the top of the hat is called *Sundyongsoong*.

The final upper layer is woven in 4 parts and each part has different woven pattern which has significance.

***Nongsatchum*: central part**

The central part of the hat, which forms the foundation for the rest of the layers, stands out distinctly from the outer layers. It's crafted with intricate weaving, featuring numerous hexagonal shapes arranged beautifully at regular intervals. In between this inner layer and the outer one, dried leaves of *kaferlop* (*Canna edulis*) are carefully placed to ensure they remain firmly in position. Additionally, sheets of *Tongzer long* (mica) and *Pugu Reep*, known as *Totola* flower in Nepali, are layered over the leaves. These sheets serve to keep the wearer's head cool under the sun (**Plate 4.98**)

***Sundyong Song*: The uppermost part**

In the Lepcha tradition, the outermost and topmost layer of the hat is referred to as Sundyong Song (**Plate 4.99**), which translates to "spider web." According to their belief, this section serves as a protective barrier and is intricately woven to resemble a spider's web, known as *Munkung-mungla*. The web is meticulously crafted using fine bamboo strings and divided into eight distinct sections. Lepchas hold the belief that this specific shape of the web brings them good luck and shields them from malevolent spirits.

Ee-mik: The second section

This segment of the upper layer of the Lepcha hat is called *Ee-mik* (**Plate 4.100**) in lepcha, which translates to "the little eyes of a bee." It's also known as *Putka*, referring to the *Trigona irridipennis*, a type of bee found in mountainous regions, valued for its honey with medicinal properties. This section of the hat resembles the eyes of numerous bees arranged in parallel rows. Crafting such intricate woven patterns requires exceptional craftsmanship.

Sumoktsum: Third layer

This segment in the uppermost layer is known as '*Sumoktsum*' which means 'design of armour' (**Plate 4.90**). This design is made of small geometric pattern similar to other artifacts of lepcha community. As said by Jorden Lepcha (Sumokthyaktuk weaver) these patterns are considered auspicious and pure and have a firm conviction in fight against evil thinking. This layer is interestingly interwoven in small triangular patterns with the finely sliced bamboo and cane strips. Natural dye is used to enhance these geometric patterns.

Afyel: the base part, this comprises of mountain shaped triangular pattern woven and interlaced together. The two ends of the string are tied together at the hats bottom rim in such a manner that it can be placed below the chin which help in holding the hat tightly on head.

Suchuk-Lavo: This symbol represents the sun and moon (**Plate 4.102**), crafted as a small wooden or metal piece shaped into their likeness. Traditionally, it's adorned with a feather from the Racket-tailed drongo, locally known as *Nubong Ong Fo*, a revered bird, positioned in a way that the feather remains centered behind the sun and moon symbols on the wearer's forehead. This arrangement signifies love and blessings. Lepchas often wear this type of hat during religious ceremonies and festive occasions. According to Jorden Lepcha, the significance of this bird lies in its role of heralding the arrival of different seasons. Nowadays, peacock feathers are commonly used due to the unavailability of the Drongo's tail. There's an ancient belief among Lepchas that the depiction of the sun and moon will

shield them from the negative effects of eclipses and protect them from evil spirits lurking in the mountains.

This hat measures in 22.50 centimeters in diameter (brim), Height: 14 centimeters Weight: 131 grams. *Sumok Thyaktok* (**Plate 4.91**) was only worn on the important occasion and is represented the status and the position of the person concerned in the Lepcha society. Only the kings and the chief's hats were decorated with the design of sun and moon and tail of the bird.

Tool and equipment used in making *sumok thyaktok*:

- **Bamboo:** The primary material for the hat's structure, selected for its strength and flexibility.
- **Knife:** A sharp knife which is essential for cutting and shaping of the bamboo into desired shapes and sizes.
- **Wooden frame:** The stand is of 20 to 25 inches in height made of wood, the height of the stand was maintained to sit down on a stool or chair and work. The wood used for this stand was usually sheesham wood or any other locally available wood. The woods used for the moulds of the head were also made of sheesham wood. Sizes of the mould vary according to the head size of the wearer.(**Plate 4.103, Plate 4.104, Plate 4.105, Plate 4.96**)
- **Saw:** Used for cutting bamboo into smaller, finer and more manageable pieces.
- **Chisel:** Helps in shaping intricate details on the bamboo pieces.
- **Awl:** Used for making holes in the bamboo for threading and attaching different parts of the hat.
- **Hook Needle:** Used for interlacing and putting together different components of the hat.
- **Scissors:** Used for cutting threads, fabric, or decorative materials with precision.
- **Measuring Tape:** Essential for ensuring accurate measurements and proportions during the hat-making process.
- **Sandpaper:** Helps in smoothening rough edges and surfaces of the bamboo pieces for a polished finish.

(B) *Papri Thyaktuk*: This hat is known as the Lepcha's all weather hats because it is constructed of bamboo and has a spider's web woven design on the top. This type of hat was

an ordinary hat used during field work, hunting, **(Plate 4.92)** and fishing. Shape and the style of the design vary according to the usage. The one showed in **(Plate 4.90)** was the kind of papri hat used for fishing this style usually help the wearer in protecting them against harsh sunlight.

(C) Anok thaktuk: The splendor of this hat is defined in its knot. The central knot on the hat has nine sub knots, which symbolizes ten sub-castes in the Lepcha tribe, and the knots are nine in number because the person wearing it counts ten heads altogether. The hat was usually referred to as a Lepcha hat, and it has a long history among the natives, who proudly wear it. Now days a lepcha woven fabric is used to make these types of hat. These hats are light weight and comfortable to the wearer.

(D) Seyraboo Thyaktuk: This is known as hunters' hat as explained by Molommu. P.S, in his paper 'The indigenous ethnic attire of the Lepchas of India: A case study', this looked like an inverted pot with intricate tightly woven circular design ending in a hole at the top. This hat was also made up of bamboo and straw and sits very tightly on the head of the wearer like a modern day helmet. Sparely used, this hat was rarely seen now days **(Plate 4.94)**.

(E) Soring thyaktuk, also known as the Sun hat, was specifically designed for farming in the fields. It is crafted using a combination of straws and bamboo, which are distinctive materials associated with Lepcha craftsmanship **(Plate 4.95)**.



Plate 4.91 : Natural dyed Sumok Thyaktuk



Plate 4.92: Papri Thyaktuk



Plate 4.93: Anok Thyaktuk



Plate 4.94: Seyraboo Thyaktuk

Source:

<https://aachuley.wordpress.com/2010/06/24/lepcha-hats/>



Plate 4.95: Soring thyaktuk

Source:

<https://aachuley.wordpress.com/2010/06/24/lepcha-hats/>



Plate 4.96: Sumok Thyaktuk

Source: Lungten lingdam urong cup personal collection



Plate 4.97: *Nongsatchum*: central part



Plate 4.98: *Tongzer long* (mica)(left) and *PuguReepknown* as *Totola* (right) flower



Plate 4.99 : *Sundyong Song*: The uppermost part



Plate 4.100 : *Ee-mik*



Plate 4.101: *Sumoktsum*



Plate 4.102: Hat with sun & Moon



Plate 4.103: Wooden mould for hat making



Plate 4.104: Bamboo hat in making on wooden mould.



Plate 4.105: Sumokthyaktuk in making on wooden mould.



Plate 4.106 :Jordan Lepcha weaving hat, Upper Dzongu, North Sikkim.

2. Lepcha Women:

Lepcha Women generally wear

1. **Zet:** Silver brooches.
2. **Kakyoop:** Silver ring worn on the finger

3. *Namchok/ Naykong/Neelop ka tyosiboo*: Earring
4. *Akager /Kakel/Kagyer*: Silver Bengal
5. *Sambraang Boor*: Tied on waist
6. *Takvil Lyaak*: Necklace
7. *Aavek/ Chaap Chaap* : Aavek is an elephant teeth (**Plate 4.107**)
 - a) *Alvak*: This is a colourful bead necklace made up of semi- precious stones (**Plate 4.108**). Coral and silver. One end of this necklace has a round locket with embossed swastik on it. Swastik is a symbol of purity and depicts life cycle. Motifs of sun and moon are also there on the necklace to protect them from the bad effects of solar and lunar eclipse (specially for a pregnant lady). It is also called '*Jasung*'. The other end of this necklace has 3 pairs of muskdeer teeth attached with silver holders and is called '*suburvik*'.
 - b) *Sambraagboor*: It is an ornament worn by Lepcha women around their waist to accentuate an otherwise regular silhouette of their garment. It is a long silver chain having 2 or 3 strings of chain running together. One end has a locket of 8 silver coins (one in center and others around it). There is a semiprecious stone embedded in the center of the middle coin. The other end of the chain has a circular arrangement for holding key bunches and a knife (**Plate 4.109**)
 - c) *Naykong*: They are beautiful silver ear rings adorned with beads worn by the women, also known as *neelop ka tyosiboo* . (**Plate 4.107**)

- d) **Akager/ Kagyer:** It is the name given to the silver bangles which worn by the Lepcha women.



Plate 4.107: Lepcha women accessories



Plate 4.108: Alvak elephant teeth (In semi precious stones)

Source: Unknown

Footwares

In ancient times, the Lepchas didn't wear shoes, but nowadays they acquire and wear various types of footwear available in the market. The shoes worn by the Lepcha community of Sikkim reflect both their traditional heritage and practical needs. Historically, Lepcha crafted their footwear's using locally available materials such as bamboo, cane, and leather, showcasing the community's resourcefulness and connection to their environment.

Over time, the footwear worn by Lepcha men and women has gone through transformations, especially after the Chogyals' migration. Before their arrival, Lepchas mostly relied on robust leather boots or sandals crafted from local resources like bamboo and cane. These shoes were essential for traversing the rugged terrains of Sikkim and often showcased traditional patterns and motifs.

However, with the Chogyals influence came new materials and styles, prompting changes in Lepcha footwear. While leather boots and sandals remained popular, there was a noticeable shift towards modern footwear like rubber-soled shoes and sneakers, women prefer to wear heels and stilettos. This change was partly driven by the availability of fresh materials and the impact of external cultures introduced during the migration period.

Moreover, the Chogyals migration facilitated greater access to markets and trade routes, enabling Lepchas to explore a wider array of footwear options. Consequently, traditional Lepcha footwear began incorporating modern elements while preserving its cultural essence. This blend of tradition and modernity reflects the evolving nature of Lepcha footwear, adapting to changing times while honoring its heritage.

Since there is no photographic record available, it is difficult to ascertain the appearance of this traditional footwear from the past.

Ceremonial and Ritual Use:

Lepcha textiles often played a significant role in ceremonies and rituals within the community. Special garments and textiles were created for events like weddings, festivals, and religious ceremonies. According to oral history and interviews with the community it was observed that in Sikkim, weddings and special ceremonies among the Lepcha community are marked by the vibrant textile and costumes they wear. For men, it's all about wearing the handwoven *dumpraa*, a kind of knee-length robe, matched with trousers and a waistcoat.

These outfits are often made of luxurious fabrics like silk, adorned with intricate embroidery and motifs. They also adorn their head with bamboo hat called Sumokthyaktuk. Sometimes these hats are naturally dyed as per the choice and preference of the wearer.

Women's attire is equally stunning. They wear a *dumdyem* paired with a silk embroidered or woven long-sleeved blouse called tago. Additionally, they don a silk traditional hand or machine embroidered shawl or dupatta, similar to the Indian shallu. After the migration of the Chogyals, Lepchas began adopting their styles of clothing, leading to a gradual shift to brocade honju and bakhu for women, while men choose to wear gho or kho along with *Yenthantse* (silk shirt) and *jaja* (jacket). Jewelry, like necklaces, earrings, and bracelets typically made of silver, adds the finishing touches.

They also wear a garland of *totola* flowers, seeds of the Buddhist tree considered sacred and used in ceremonies. Another accessory used is the *khada*, a traditional ceremonial scarf symbolizing purity and compassion. There are various color variations seen in *khada* scarfs. **(Plate 4.109)** These screen-printed *khadas* feature motifs like the eight lucky signs and other Buddhist inscriptions as a sign of blessings. According to Sonam Lepcha, these *khadas* are screen-printed in Kalimpong and Kolkata, West Bengal. *Khadas* are worn and presented with incense at many ceremonial occasions, including births, weddings **(Plate 4.110)**, funerals, graduations, and the arrival or departure of guests.

Lepcha textiles were deeply rooted in the culture and spirituality of the community. Many patterns and motifs had symbolic meanings and were believed to protect the wearer from negative forces or bring good fortune.



Plate 4.109: Khada (Scarf)

Heritage and Preservation: Efforts were made to preserve Lepcha traditional textiles as they faced challenges from modernization and changing lifestyles. Organizations and individuals worked to document, promote, and revive these traditional weaving practices. According to the data collected through interviews and observation, it was concluded that the Lepcha dress, shaped by their isolation and sense of self-dignity, evolved independently. The male dress, reminiscent of medieval Romans and Greeks, featured loose garments fastened with pins at both shoulders, allowing free movement. Belts made out of cotton or bamboo secured the dress at the waist. Made from locally available resources, the attire was colorful, attractive, and practical. Woven over time, the Lepcha dress was a testament to necessity driving invention. Natural materials like nettle plants, locally sourced cotton, and silks were used. Dyes were crafted from various plants, shrubs, flowers, and insects, showcasing the Lepchas' expertise in dye-making. Dyes included *Rubia manjith* roots and leaves for red, roasted maize powder for black, and matured seeds of *Dichroafebriguga* for blue. Lepcha women, skilled weavers, produced '*Dum-praa*,' the men's dress worn during the day and used as a blanket at night. The weaving tradition continued in remote villages despite the decline in nettle plants and the availability of cheap cotton cloth. Lepcha ladies in villages like *Mayal*, *Pochok*, *Dabling*, *Lyanga*, *Tanek*, *Pringtaam*, and *TasheyNgssay*, as well as most households in Dzongu, North Sikkim, contributed to preserving traditional handloom and handicrafts.

The traditional textiles of the Lepcha communities of Sikkim were characterized by their handwoven nature, use of natural fibers and dyes, distinctive patterns and motifs, and cultural significance. These textiles served as a tangible representation of Lepcha culture and heritage, and efforts were made to ensure their preservation and continuation in the face of modernization.



**Plate 4.110: Lepcha couple wearing *totola* flower garland
Picture Courtesy: Personal collection of L.N. Sharma, Archive
Section, Culture Department, Sikkim**

4.2.2 Bhutia Traditional Textiles And Costumes

The Bhutia communities, originating from Tibet and settled in the Himalayan regions, have unique textiles reflecting their culture, heritage, and craftsmanship. They migrated south after the ninth century AD, settling in the Himalayan Mountain ranges near the Indo-Tibetan border. Despite maintaining Tibetan cultural characteristics, many Bhutia groups have incorporated aspects of Hindu culture. The Bhutia society was in transition, fusing Buddhist Central Asian and Hindu South Asian cultures. They all inhabit mountains and have historically engaged in trade between South Asia and Tibet via the Himalayas. They were also known as *Denjongpas*, descendants of Tibetan settlers in Sikkim.

4.2.2.1. Traditional textiles

Fibers and Fabrics: Bhutia textiles were renowned for their lavish use of silk, a material considered both luxurious and auspicious. Silk was frequently employed in weaving garments, imparting them with a distinctive sheen and elegance. Besides silk, Bhutia artisans utilized a variety of other materials including wool, felt, animal hair like that of yak and skin (**Plate 4.111**).



Plate 4.111: Weaver spindling yak fur into yarn

In more recent times, synthetic fabrics have also found their way into Bhutia garments. When we see historically, the Bhutia communities arrived in Sikkim in waves from Tibet via Bhutan, bringing with them diverse textiles, fibers, and weaving skills. According to accounts like Yangchok Lachenpa's, the Bhutias migrated from China (referred to as *Ghyana*) to India (*Ghyagar*), carrying with them silk, wool, and fur. The silk predominantly used was often of Chinese origin. It was believed that the silk yarn was meticulously dyed in vibrant hues before being woven into intricate fabrics like *Gyasar*. *Gyasar* (ornamented brocade) was reserved for ceremonial garments and religious textiles. This showed the Bhutias were master and had expertise and rich taste in textile craftsmanship compare to Lepcha.

The utilization of silk in Bhutia textiles not only underscored their affinity for luxury but also symbolized cultural and spiritual significance. Each garment woven with silk reflected not just the weaving skills of the artisans but also the cultural heritage and beliefs of the Bhutia community. Apart from silk, the Bhutia community relies heavily on wool, particularly from

sheep and yaks. In places like Lachen and Lachung in North Sikkim, they still carry out the age-old tradition of wool shearing and extracting fibers. These areas, nestled in the Himalayan belt, face extreme cold, making it essential for people to create clothing from these natural sources to endure the harsh winters. The process begins with carefully shearing the wool from sheep or yaks, followed by extracting fibers from it. This wool becomes a crucial material for making warm clothing, blankets, and other essentials to brave the severe winter weather.

Moreover, locals in Lachung have been found to use animal skins, such as those from bears (**Plate 4.112**), to craft footwear and jackets, providing additional protection against the cold. In an interview with Sonam Bhutia one of the local in Lachung it was revealed that around 17th century and early 18th century people use to wear sheepskin *chuba*, goat skin and Lamb skin which use to be traded from China. Wealthy people use to get these expensive skins for making garments. These skins use to be soaked in yak milk with salt for several days. Wool and animal hairs are particularly prized for making blankets, offering comfort and insulation during cold nights. By utilizing wool, animal skins, and hairs, the Bhutia community showcases their ingenuity in adapting to their environment and crafting items essential for surviving the harsh Himalayan winters. These traditional practices not only ensure their comfort and well-being but also serve as a means of preserving their cultural heritage and deep connection to the land.

In addition to silk, wool, and animal-based materials, fabrics like cotton and materials like nettle were also utilized by the Bhutia community. While there were no documented records of nettle fiber being used in Bhutia textiles, oral history suggests its use for crafting utility items and household textiles.

Most importantly observations were made which narrates stories of their choices and preference of fabrics. Bhutias often wore highly modest clothing. Even while some people now dress in western fashions, traditional styles were still popular, especially among Bhutia women. This ethnic clothing was known as *kho* in Bhutia or *bakhu* in Nepali. Textile used for the construction of these traditional costumes were mainly Chinese silk brocade, also known as *Khoechen/Ghoechen* or *Gyaser*. As per the information collected from the locals, silk brocades were bought from Tibet to make special *Bakhu's*, *Kho*, *Chubas* and *Jajas*, mostly by the Royal family, officials, trader's clan chiefs and aristocrat. They were high end fabric and were collected by officials. It was observed that sacred fabrics like *Gyaser* were brought

from China, Tibet, and eventually from Varanasi. It has been also observed that heavy brocades were used in the monasteries as a decorative feature & are not used for secular clothing. Despite the lack of written evidence, visual evidence suggests that the cloth was brought from China to the region during the Chogyal dynasty of Sikkim in (1642-1670), when the trade and use of *Khoechen* or *Gyaser* in the kingdom started about the 17th century CE in Sikkim. Brocade examples were often brought back to monasteries by missionaries travelling between Lhasa and Ladakh, typically in the form of robes, unstitched fabric, or the trim around stitched boots. These fabrics have been traditionally woven using a complex technique with multiple wefts, moving in and out of the fabric.



Plate 4.113: Palden Thondup Namgyal, King of Sikkim, and Hope Cooke, Queen of Sikkim in brocade dress at king's birthday celebration in Sikkim 1971.

Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

Old photographic records from various sources also show the usage of silk brocades which has Chinese influence. These textiles were used by the royal family of Sikkim. The 12th king of Sikkim Palden Thondup Namgyal, King of Sikkim, and Hope Cooke, Queen of Sikkim, can be seen in brocaded dress during the king's birthday celebration in Gangtok, Sikkim in 1971 (**Plate 4.113**).



Plate 4.112: Sample of bear hair from Lachen



Plate 4.114 Woman weaving *Gyapa* in Lachung

In the higher altitudes of Lachung and Lachen, women often engage in wool weaving. They create woolen blankets known as *gyapa* or *gadas* (plate 4.114) for personal use. These blankets, made from locally sourced wool, were essential for staying warm in the cold mountain climate. The weaving process was intricate and time-consuming, highlighting the

skill and dedication of the women weavers. These blankets were not only practical, providing much-needed warmth, but also reflect the rich cultural heritage and traditional craftsmanship of the Bhutia communities in Sikkim.

4.2.2.2 Colors

The Bhutia community is renowned for their vibrant and colorful textiles. In the past, they relied on natural dyes like indigo, madder, and marigold to achieve these bright hues. While synthetic dyes offer more color options and was easier to find, the Bhutia people still value and uphold the tradition of using natural dyes. These dyes not only connect them to the local environment but also promote sustainable and eco-friendly practices in textile production.

Despite the absence of historical evidence in Sikkim, the region receives rich and vibrant silk from China through Tibet. This silk adds to the diversity of textiles available to the Bhutia community.

Bhutia carpets were also known for their bold and vibrant colors, which always seem to blend harmoniously, bringing warmth to any space. Typically, the background colour was dark, providing a perfect canvas for the brightly colored motifs to stand out. Traditionally, these background colors were in natural shades like dark brown, black, fawn, or occasionally white, or they were dyed in dark hues like deep blue, maroon, or various shades of brown.

Striking combinations of monochromes, with the outlines sculpted in white or lighter shades were frequently visible. This technique gives the carpets a three-dimensional appearance, adding depth to their design. In older pieces, turquoise blue, sky blue, red, yellow, and various shades of green were commonly used in patterns and motifs. It's worth noting that carpets crafted for a bride's trousseau often featured red and yellow as one of the primary colors, adding a touch of tradition and symbolism to these special pieces.

The monks and lamas have a distinct style of dress that reflects their spiritual beliefs. They wear garments like the *shenthap*, a lower piece made from cotton or wool in a deep maroon color. Alongside this, they wear the *khenjah*, a sleeveless shirt typically in shades of orange or yellow, often made from cotton or silk. During significant events like religious ceremonies or visits to monasteries, they adorn themselves with the *dzen*, a ceremonial shawl crafted from raw silk, wool, or cotton, symbolizing their reverence and commitment.

Richly patterned brocade textiles woven in gold and silver threads woven with mulberry silk with buddhist Chinese symbols representing long life protection and prosperity. The uniqueness of these fabrics was that it had its own technique, colour palette and patterns. These textiles were available in all most all cool and warm colours. Dominant colours were like yellow, red, blue, pink, green and black along with golden.

As discussed by (Varadarajan & Patel, 2008) the five primordial Buddhas, known as *Patica*, were each associated with specific colors, each symbolizing the transformation of different negative emotions: white for the transmutation of ignorance, blue or black for anger, red for passion, attachment, and desire, yellow for pride, and green for envy or jealousy. Since the same culture was followed by the Bhutia's the same philosophy was also practiced.

In Indian texts, the five elements were also linked with color symbolism: white for water, yellow for earth, red for fire, green for ether (space), blue for air. This order was relevant in Bhutia culture as well, though with some flexibility. The colors red, yellow, and blue were particularly popular, with red symbolizing spiritual power, yellow representing sublime truth, and blue standing for transcendental knowledge. Yellow could be an alternative to white, and blue to green, but red had no substitute.

They believe that different combinations of colors conveyed different meanings. As per their tradition colors also indicate the mood, white and yellow suggested mild moods, while red, blue, and black indicated fiercer ones. Generally, gods (*lha*) were depicted in white, goblins (*tsan*) in red, and the devil (*bdud*) in black. Gold symbolized divine luster and spiritual bliss. In the double *dorje*, the four cardinal points—east, west, north, and south—could be represented by white, red, yellow, and green, respectively.

4.2.2.3 Intricate brocade and weaving:

Bhutia textiles were renowned for their intricate brocade work and weaving techniques, characterized by rich, textured patterns woven directly into the fabric. These patterns often include traditional motifs, floral designs, and Buddhist symbols. The Bhutia and Denjongpa communities traditionally wore modest clothing. Although some individuals adopted Western fashions, traditional attire remained popular, particularly among Denjongpa women. According to local sources, silk brocades were historically imported from Tibet to create special garments such as *Bakhus*, *Khos*, *Chubas*, and *Jajas*, predominantly for the Royal family, officials, traders, clan chiefs, and aristocrats. In contrast, modern times have seen the

rise of synthetic Chinese brocades with metallic threads, which were sold at relatively low prices in bright colors and designs. These fabrics were believed to be manufactured in China.

Sacred fabrics like Gyaser were not woven by monks but were imported from China, Tibet, and eventually from Benares' looms. Heavy brocades were used in monasteries for decorative purposes rather than for secular clothing. Despite the lack of written evidence, visual documentation suggests that these cloths were brought from China to the region during the Chogyal dynasty of Sikkim (1642-1670), marking the beginning of the trade and use of Khoechen or Gyaser in the kingdom around the 17th century CE. Brocade examples were often brought back to monasteries by missionaries traveling between Lhasa and Ladakh, typically in the form of robes, unstitched fabric, or trims around stitched boots.

Chinese silk brocade known as *Khoechen/Ghoechen* or *Gyaser* was customized and often commissioned for traditional attires, and remained popular among Bhutia women. Despite the influence of Western fashion, Bhutia textiles, known for their traditional motifs, floral designs, and Buddhist symbols, have remained a staple of Bhutia and culture. Locals recall that silk brocades were imported from Tibet to create special garments like *Bakhus*, *Khos*, *Chubas*, and *Jajas*, primarily worn by the royal family, officials, traders, clan chiefs, and aristocrats. These high-end fabrics were highly valued and often hoarded by officials. Nowadays, synthetic Chinese brocades with metallic threads were more common, available cheaply in bright colors and designs, and was believed to be manufactured in China.

These fabrics were woven using complex techniques with multiple wefts, creating large, emblematic, mythical, and ritualistic motifs. Used in Bhutia ceremonial costumes and religious wall hangings, they symbolize growth, protection, and peace. Old photographs show the royal family of Sikkim wearing these silk brocades. For example, the 12th King of Sikkim, Palden Thondup Namgyal, and Queen Hope Cooke were seen in brocaded attire during the king's birthday celebration in Gangtok, Sikkim, in 1971. This showed and left the researcher pondering how magnificently and intricately these textiles were crafted back then.

Mr. Yangchok Lachenpa from the Culture Department in Gangtok mentioned that brocades were initially imported from China via Tibet and Bhutan, and later from India as trade routes opened. Authentic Indian brocades, often more expensive than Chinese ones, were sometimes received as gifts or bought for special occasions. Today, brocade *Bakhus*, *Chubas*, *Khos*, shirts, and jackets were popular during festivals, while the fabrics were sourced from Varanasi, Kalimpong, and Surat. These Indian brocades differ from Chinese ones in color, motifs, and weaving technique, feel and overall quality of the fabric.

Ms. Tshering Ladhaki pointed out that heavier brocades were and were used in monasteries for decoration rather than for everyday clothing. Some shiny fabrics introduced to the Bhutia community were used as performance costumes. Lurex, a metallic thread, became common in jackets and shirts due to its affordability and lightness compared to pure gold thread. The brocades known as *Gyaser*, which showcased auspicious symbols, were used as wall hangings or important seating covers, while those with intricate floral motifs could be used for home furnishings.

These *gyasers* were made of brocade, using gold and silver threads in Buddhist religious rituals. They were characterized by woven complex patterns on handlooms. Traders from Tibet and the Marwari community in Kalimpong introduced gyaser to Banaras (Varanasi) in the mid-19th century. These brocades were more affordable than Chinese ones and higher in quality. Therefore, they gained a vast market in Ladakh, Tibet, and Sikkim. Collaborations by modern heritage firms with these master craftsmen from Banaras have redefined the process to create a much lighter and more agile form of gyaser without losing its intricate designs. The fact that it was still used and adapted argues something for the living cultural significance and artistic legacy of Gyaser brocade.

During the review researcher came across text written by **Varadarajan & Patel, 2008**, and that was the point when researcher started connecting the dots about how these textiles travelled in the entire Himalayan belt through Tibet. The Tibetan community's presence in India has brought attention to a distinctive type of brocade known as *khoechen*, which is specifically manufactured for this community. *Khoechen*, a generic term for brocade in the Tibetan language, is referred to as *kochin* in Varanasi—a term likely derived from *khoechen* (as noted by Lobsang Dawa of Zongkar Monastery in Hunsur, Mysore, and Anjan Chakravarty in Varanasi). The term *ghysar* or *gyaser* refers to a category of *khoechen* brocade characterized by a yellow background, deriving from the words *ghya* (famous) and *sar* (gold). Historically, the primary patrons of *khoechen* were members of the Tibetan community. According to a telephonic interview with Badruddoza Ansari who is a National Merit Awardi 2017 for Jungla banarasi saree weaving, he shared that back in times Pili Kothi in Varanasi (**Plate 4.116**), became the main sources for material procurement for China and Russia, though it was used in Tibet. While Banaras also contributed to this market, the extent of its supply remains uncertain.

Common colors in *gyasers* include red, golden yellow, dark blue, gold, green, white, and occasionally silver. These samples were crafted in extra weft brocade, featuring twill and

satin weaves, with motifs predominantly in weft-faced construction, mainly using twill or sometimes satin weave. He also mentioned that the designs have to be meticulously reproduced as per the sample provided by the client. The motifs, often were bold and based on Buddhist themes, carrying specific symbolic meanings. These *Gyasers* were heavy silk brocades woven in narrow widths, not exceeding 30 inches, and featured extensive use of gold *zari*. This influence was expected, given the Tibetan pictorial arts tradition, which drew inspiration from these regions, with Russian art being influenced by the Orthodox Church and Byzantine traditions. According to these sources, earlier prototypes originated from China and Russia, and that is the reason lot of similarity can be observed in the patterns, designs and the motifs. The production of this fabric was predominantly controlled by few families who run businesses in Pili Kothi, Varanasi.

It has been observed that *Khoechen* and *gyaser* fabric were used by Bhutias primarily in their temples and monasteries in the following ways:

1. **Monastery Hangings and Cloth:** Fabric pieces were cut and assembled to create decorative panels which were hung on pillars or alongside shrines. They were also used to cover platforms holding sacred objects.
2. **Dubels:** Cylindrical hangings which were about 6 feet long, made from pieces of gyaser and were suspended from the ceiling. (Plate 4.115).
3. **Coverings for Pillars:** These were custom-woven items designed to cover pillars in temples.
4. **Gyaser Cloth Bags:** Gyaser fabric used to make cloth bags for storing ritual objects, such as scarves and necklaces (symbolizing respect), bells and musical instruments (symbolizing praise), canopies, rosary beads, and scepters (symbolizing attendance on the Buddha), and cylinders and banners (symbolizing protection and guidance). Canopies and banners were also made from these fabric.
5. **Borders for Thangkas:** *Thangkas* (Plate 4.116), sacred scroll paintings on canvas or cotton, were usually bordered with strips of colored silk or brocade, typically



Plate 4.115: Dubels

khoechen or *gyaser*. The borders were arranged in panels of red, yellow, and blue, symbolizing the separation between the sacred inner world and the outer material world. The outer border was kept broad, especially at the base, and often featured a vertical patch of brocade in golden yellow, orange, or amber, representing the entrance to *Lhakhang*, the House of the Gods.

6. **Ritual Garments:** *Gyaser* fabric was used to make aprons, worn during rituals or religious dances. These aprons, known as *unla pyasers*, often feature *yaksha* faces and other motifs on a dark background.
7. **Dogden:** Triangular pieces of *khoechen* and *gyaser*, known as *dogden*, were used to decorate the *pangden*, the daily wear aprons for married women.
8. **Pothi Covers:** These were used to cover Tibetan manuscripts, with the title written in Tibetan script at the back of the flap.
9. **Export and Modern Usage:** These *khoechen* fabrics with all-over patterns and self-designs have been exported as furnishings and apparel fabrics to West Asian countries. These monochrome patterns also become popular in the Indian market as apparel fabric.



Plate 4.116: Thangka

4.2.2.3.1 Varieties in *Khoechen* and *Gyaser*

Gyaser fabrics, particularly those in the *tchingo* category, were rich with symbolic meaning and feature designs like *dorje*, *gyanta*, and *zinko*. *Dorje gyasers* were notable for their *vajra* motif and were typically single-colored with intricate zari work. *Gyanta gyasers* display a

striking three-eyed head motif in gold and silver thread on black satin. *Zinko gyasers*, adorned with protective *yaksa* motifs called *zeba*, were often seen as a topping panel in Tibetan temples.

Beside from *tchingo* (tantric design *gyaser*) and *khoechen* fabrics (**Plate 4.2.95**) come with a variety of motifs. *Padma chandan* features stylized lotus designs in silk with minimal zari. *Thiu gyamu*, believed to have Chinese origins, showcases golden flower bud motifs with extensive gold zari work, and there was another Russian variation with all-over zari. *Thiu sum* and *thiu gyamu* were another type of Chinese origin *gyasar*. *Mor-pankhi* (**Plate 4.118**), which originated in China and was later adopted in Varanasi, uses peacock feather wefts. This unique design was revived in 1987 by Kasim Silk Emporium for the Festival of India in the UK, producing monochrome fabrics that highlight the distinctive texture of peacock feathers. *Dragon gyaser* (**Plate 4.119**) fabrics were incredibly elaborate, with motifs that can stretch up to 1 -1.5 yards. *Dogden*, triangular pieces of *gyaser* fabric with floral motifs, were traditionally attached to rectangular aprons worn by married. Russian *gyasers*, inspired by Byzantine designs, blend floral motifs within geometric grids, reflecting their Russian roots. There were traces of brocades with Japan influence were also found.



Plate 4.117: Heavy Gyasar woven in Banaras



Plate 4.118: *Mor-pankhi*, Gyasar
Source: Resource Centre, National Institute of Fashion
Technology, New Delhi



Plate 4.119: Deep-Ultramarine Hand-woven Tibetan Dragon Brocade Patch from Banaras.

Picture Courtesy: Personal Collection of Tshering Yanki, Lachung



Plate 4.120: Koechen

4.2.2.4 MOTIFS

These Chinese brocades were decorated with various oriental Chinese motifs like dragon designs, *tankas* (Chinese coin design), *Khorlos* (wheel of dharma or dharma chakra) in

Tibetan other floral motifs like peonies and Buddhist motifs like *swastika*, *vajra*, endless knot and eight lucky signs. These fabrics were traded from China and Tibet. Motifs like Gyaltsen which is a representation of buddha's victory of wisdom over ignorance and his attainment of enlightenment. The Parasol (*dug*) another motif which symbolizes protection and security from all evil. Endless knot which represents the cycle of rebirth that all living beings must forever repeat. On another level it represents the buddha's teaching, it symbolizes the reality of cyclic existence. These motifs were symbolic to Buddhist culture and are very much a part of Bhutia costume (**Plate 4.121, Plate 4.122**).

Motifs and their symbolism which are usually seen in these brocade Bhutia textiles are as follows:

Eight Auspicious Symbols /Tibetan: bkra shis rtags brgyad, Sanskrit: astamangala (**Plate 4.123**)

Conch with right spiraling whorls, dung dkar/sankha: The right spiraling movement of the conch echoes the celestial motion of the sun, moon, planets and stars across the heavens. The hair whorls on the Buddha's head also spiral to the right. When such a conch was ritually blown, it symbolizes acoustically the true proclamation of Buddha dharma.

Sernya (Golden Fish): Signifies the ability to swim with ease without any hindrance in the ocean of samsaric world and from happiness to happiness into the water of blissfulness. This also signifies the two truths - pain and transcendental truth.

Gyaltsen (Victorious Banner): Signifies the fortune of having victory of good over the evil forces which obstructs the success of noble goals and also the victory of the Dharma preached by the Buddha.

Choekyi Khorlo (Wheel of Dharma(law)) : Signifies the fortune of passing the time of all the sentient beings under the blessings of the Buddha's Wheel of Dharma being turned eternally without coming to an end.

Pema (Lotus): Like lotus which through grown in the mud remains free from the muddy dirt, this signifies the purity of one's mind and deeds which are free from the dirt of sins. Symbol of non-attachment.

Bhumpa (Treasure Vase): It symbolizes the good fortune of having an inexhaustible luxurious wealth of good health, long life, and material wealth.

Endless knot dpalbe'u/ srivatsa: This is for unlimited wisdom and compassion.

Dug (Jeweled parasol): Represents the shade under which one can have the luck of getting away from the suffering of the scorching heat of all sorts of miseries of the world.

Each of the motifs in the group of the eight auspicious symbols is identified by an intertwining ribbon or fillet. The ribbon symbolizes the red cloth which was usually tied around objects with a belief to have magical or protective properties representing the charm's aura or radiance.

Dorje Thejdmje or Vajra: In Tibetan Buddhism, the *vajra*, or *dorje*, was a key ritual object. It was believed that Padmasambhava, the founder of Tibetan Lamaism, used his *vajra* to defeat his supernatural enemies. Symbolically, the *dorje* represented an indestructible, unmovable, and immutable state of enlightenment. In the double *dorje*, each point had specific meanings: the southern point symbolized peace, the western multiplicity, the northern initiatory power, the eastern fearlessness, and the center embodied all spiritual perfections.

Dragon/‘Brug: Unlike the malevolent dragons of Christian symbolism, Tibetan dragons represented strength and goodness. They symbolized change and life’s dynamism, and various types of dragons were commonly depicted in Tibetan art.



Plate 4.121: Traditional Tanka designs (coin, dragon endless knot patterns)

Svastika/G.yung Drung: This symbol appeared on idols, house eaves, fabrics, and many other objects, and it was believed to be imprinted on Buddha's heart. The orthodox swastika, with arms pointing to the right, symbolized good fortune and the continuous cycle of life. The Bon tradition used a left-facing version called the sauvastika. The swastika was one of the auspicious marks on Buddha's footprints, symbolizing life's ceaseless movement. It was associated with fire deities, representing the friction-created fire from two crosspieces of wood.

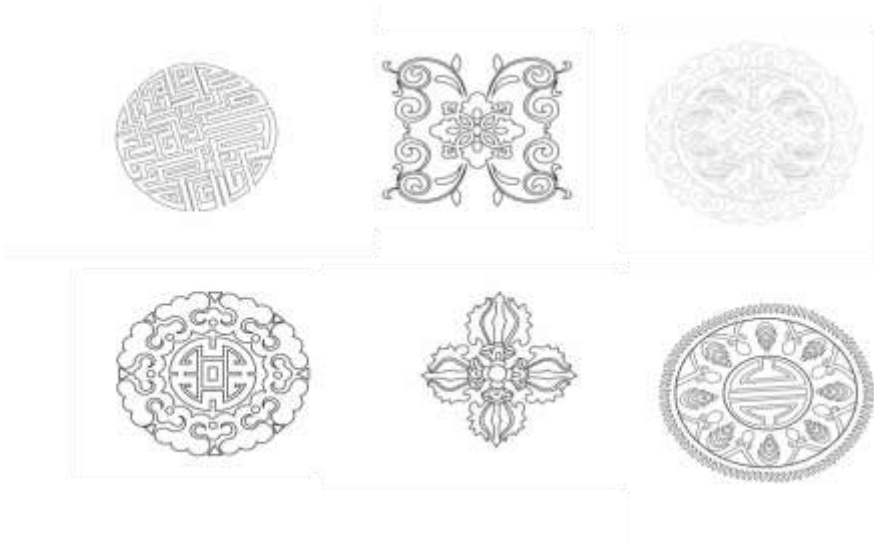


Plate 4.122: Tangka Motifs

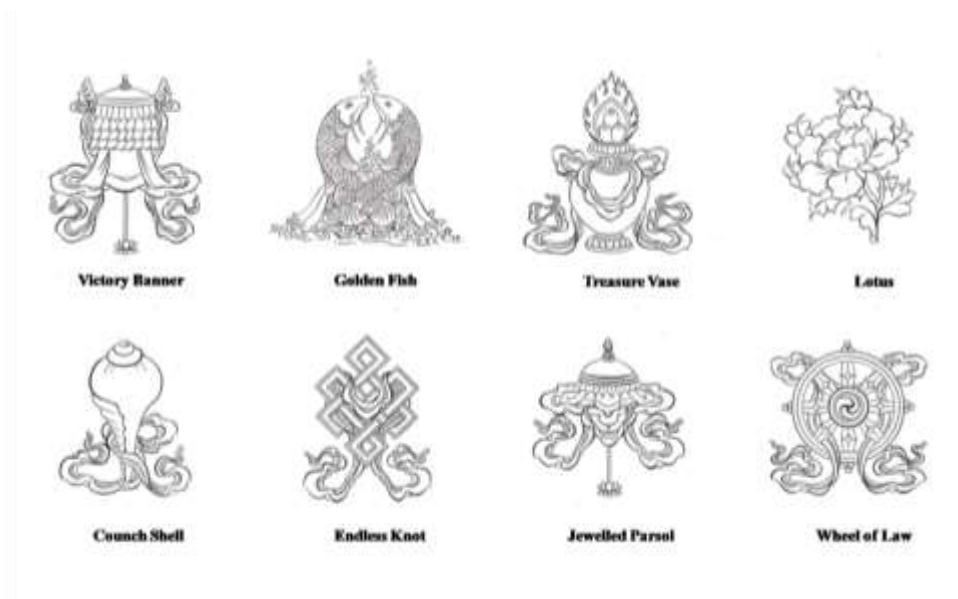


Plate 4.123: Eight Lucky Sign

Flame/Fire: Deities consumed evil with the fire of their wrath, analogous to the sun, which appears consumed by fire but remains whole.

Clouds: Representing perpetual movement, clouds were popular decorative elements.

Other Floral Motifs: These included:

1. **Thiu-gyamu:** A maroon bud.
2. **Thiu-sum:** A cluster of three buds.
3. **Chatun-mehto:** A round, stylized flower.
4. **Shinglo-mehto:** Greenery such as trees, creepers, and leaves.

Seven Possessions of the Chakravartin (Universal Monarch):

1. **The Wheel:** Symbolized spiritual and temporal sovereignty with its thousand spokes.
2. **The Eight-Faceted Precious Jewel:** A wish-granting gem.
3. **The Precious Queen:** Brought prosperity and happiness.
4. **The Precious Minister:** Managed the empire's affairs.
5. **The Precious Elephant:** Served as the ideal vehicle.
6. **The Precious Horse:** Carried the monarch effortlessly.
7. **The Precious General:** Conquered enemies and embodied righteousness.

The Vase (Bum-pater): In Lamaism, this eighth possession stored the hidden riches of the three regions: desire, form, and formlessness, paralleling the *Brahmanical* categories of earth, heaven, and space.

Triratna: Represented the three gems of Buddhism: Buddha, dharma (law), and sangha (community).

The Trigram (Spinning Jewel): These linear figures symbolized the constant change and process of becoming, representing binary principles such as male/yang and female/yin, and other opposites like active-passive and heaven-earth.

Symbol of Longevity: Often found in gyaser, these symbols could be oblong or circular and were related to the Chinese character for longevity, " *shou*."

Coins/Tanka: Symbols of prosperity used for decoration, amulets, and ornaments. Some coins were considered lucky charms that warded off evil.

Zeba: The yaksa motif used on the zinko, symbolizing protection.

As mentioned above these motifs have lot of similarity with Chinese textiles or as stated by people trade use to happen between Tibet, China and India that's how these Chinese fabric made their way to Sikkim. As seen in the Sikkim Royal Ceremonial Robe (**Plate 4.124**) the bottom of the robe has an exquisite border depicting ocean and waves, sacred mount Meru on the centre. The upper portion carries motifs illustrating many auspicious symbols tangka 'jewel' 'bat' 'peony' 'cloud' dragon and other Celestial beings.

These same similarities were found in the Dragon Robes of the Qing Dynasty of China (**Plate 4.125**). It has been also observed that these rich brocades wear also worn during mask dance by the Lamas in monasteries, which shows influence of Chinese textile as the motifs and patterns were found to be similar. (**Plate 4.126**) (**Plate 4.127**)



Plate 4.124 : Royal Ceremonial Robe with Design of Dragons amidst Clouds and Waves, Sikkimese, 19th–20th century, Silk with woven decoration, Sikkim, India, Asia, Costume & clothing, textiles, 60 x 62 1/2 in. (152.4 x 158.8 cm.

(Source: Photo by: Sepia Times/Universal Images Group via Getty Images)



Plate 4.125: Dragon Robe of the Qing Dynasty of China

(Source: <http://folkcostume.blogspot.com/2017/09/dragon-robos-of-qing-dynasty.html>)



Plate 4.126: Lama displaying brocaded robe and masks for the New Year's ceremony at the Tsuklakhang Main Temple (Palace Temple), Gangtok, Sikkim

2 3) Masked Black Hat dancer at New Year's ceremony, Gangtok, Sikkim

(Source: Repository Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>)



Plate 4.127: Masked dances wearing rich brocades
Picture Courtesy: John. Z. Lepcha, North Sikkim

4.2.2.5 Technique

Gyaser/ Gos-chen or known by the name *Koehen* these brocades was woven in Banaras on a dense silk warp twenty- two inches in width, to a maximum length of three and a half meters to maintain the tightness of the warp. Multiple wefts were intertwined to produce intricate designs; in the past, two weavers had to sit next to each other to physically manage the threads to create patterns. The patterns were then produced using a *jala* (harness) attached to the loom. These fabrics are available in various widths usually in between 23"to 45".

Designers like Swati and Sunaina, who were restoring Gyaser with Banaras weavers, believed that though as opulent as it might look, the craft of brocade had transcended its illustrious past of grandeur and monarchy. First conceptualized as a *naksha* (design on paper), the *naksha bandh* (designer) sculpts designs, ranging from artistic elaboration to minimalistic intricacy, on Banarasi silk weaves using a delicate gauze made of gold or silver threads.

Weaving process in Banaras took place in various stages:

1. Yarn was purchased from market.
2. Sometimes twisted yarns were bought.
3. Conversion of hanks to bobbins was done.
4. Winding the warp
5. Bleaching
6. Dyeing
7. Warp stretched and threads were untangled
8. Warp rolled on to the warp beam
9. Drawing of warp threads on loom
10. Weaving
11. Cutting of ready fabric from loom
12. Inspecting the fabric

13. Rolling and stacking the fabric

Raw materials used for making *Gyaser/ Gos-chen* were silk, metallic yarns (*Zari*), Synthetic *badla (lurex)*, peacock feather.

According to one of the article by Museum of Art and Photography, *Gyaser* which predominantly produced in Varanasi's was renowned for its price and patterns. These were crafted with genuine gold zari thread. Weaver use to create the punch cards, dye the threads, and draw the pattern on a graph, while their better half used to prepare the multi-ply yarn. Punch cards were used for patterning whereas the jacquard loom was mostly employed for weaving. The cloth was hand-patterned with designs utilizing metal silver or gold zari and was woven to a length of around twenty-eight inches. The pattern and colour of *Gos-chen/ Gyaser* brocades have not changed significantly over the time because of the fabric's religious significance. Buddhist symbols including the lotus, clouds, dragons, thunderbolts, and bells were introduced on the fabric. In order to appeal to a wider market, *Gyaser* weavers started mixing newer, more common motifs into the fabric in the 1980s after the Indian government's efforts to revive Vishwakarma and their partnerships with Martand Singh. These designs included geometric patterns. Additionally, metallic *Gyaser* that included twill-bound lozenges and designs like the flame pattern started to appear in *Gyaser* pieces were introduced.

Pit looms with jacquard mechanisms were used for the weaving of *gyaser*. The weaver operates the loom from a seated position at floor level. These looms have evolved from using the jala system to the more efficient jacquard mechanism introduced around 1961, which allowed intricate designs by raising or lowering each warp end individually.

The Banarasi jacquard loom has two sets of shafts, one for the ground weave and another for figuring, operated by pulleys and weights. For *gyaser* brocade, two jacquard machines were usually used, one for the figuring and a smaller one for the ground weave. Modern looms use nylon heddles and metal reeds instead of the traditional cotton and bamboo. The *sley*, which beats the weft into place, is now supported by the loom's main frame. The *urtu* mechanism is used for binding specific picks in the design.

Besides *Gyaser*, which is specifically used for religious purposes, there were other fabrics known as *Koechen* or *Gochen*. These were also brocades but lighter and produced on power looms, making them a more modern version of traditional Chinese brocades. *Koechen*, also

known as Mongolian plain Chinese silk brocade, typically comes in a width of 29.5 inches. These fabrics were versatile, used for apparel, upholstery, decor, curtains, altar cloths, shrine covers, and more.

This high-quality Bhutia fabric of Chinese origin features various motifs and designs, such as clouds, lotus flowers, and the Chinese *shou* (longevity) symbol. Bhutia people believe these fabrics were made in Tibet and imported to Sikkim. The Chinese dragon-style metallic silk fabrics were especially popular among the Bhutias for a range of purposes. These fabrics were prized for their intricate designs and durability, making them suitable for both practical and decorative uses in Bhutia culture.

Other than use of Gyasar, there were various other textile materials like woolen, felts, synthetic materials which were used by the Bhutias of Sikkim.

There were few other crafts like carpet weaving, Blanket weaving and thanangka painting which contribute to Bhutia earnings and help generate revenue for both the artisans and the state. However researcher didn't went into the depth as the study delimitation were set to wearable textiles and costumes. While these two crafts were studied briefly because of the similarities in the motifs and the use of materials in there making.

4.2.2.6 Carpet Weaving

Sikkimese carpets, crafted from animal hair with intricate knot patterns, displayed a strong Tibetan influence. Renowned for their craftsmanship, vibrant colors, and continuity, these carpets became essential household object particulars in Sikkim, representing the region's culture and tradition. Entirely handmade without the use of machines, these carpets highlighted the artisans' remarkable skills. According to Kunzo Lachungpa, the Lachungpas were involved in carpet weaving, looms weren't generally set up in individual homes. Rather, the Directorate of Handloom & Handicrafts(DHH) in Gangtok served as a hub for conserving and promoting Sikkim's traditional trades and crafts. Later on DHH has opened various centers in different zones of Sikkim, including one in Lachung. With branches throughout the state, the DHH handed training to young boys and girls in these colorful crafts. The center employed a branch in- charge and five women mentor for training. The DHH center in Lachung housed 10 carpet looms, where 30-35 girls, all age 14 and above, gain training in the art of carpet weaving. The DHH played a vital part in conserving these traditional crafts of Sikkim. It has been also observed that apart from the Government

training centers many Bhutia households have their own looms at home which they use it for non-commercial purposes (**Plate 4.128**).



Plate 4.128: Sikkimese Carpet at Directorate of Handloom and Handicraft

Picture Courtesy: <https://www.dsource.in/resource/carpet-weaving-Sikkim/process>

Weaving Process:

Shed Formation

A lease rod, known as '*kno*', was used to separate alternating sets of warp yarns. Additionally, a bamboo rod called '*so*' was connected to each alternate set of warp yarns. To change the shed, one needs to first remove the lease rod. Then, pull the bamboo rod forward, which moves the alternate set of warp yarns. After that, reinsert the lease rod to keep the shed open and one was ready for weft insertion.

Knotting Process

As observed at handloom handicraft centers there is a steel rod known as '*Pecha*' was used for knotting. The rod was tied at one end to the upper beam, aligning it with the weaving line. The free end of the rod was slid through the warp as the weft threads were knotted.

To tie a knot, the weaver passed the colored weft between two adjacent warp threads. After each weft insertion was completed, it was beaten down with a hammer called a 'tho'. The ends of the knots were then cut with a knife called '*Khechung*' to form an even pile, which was further evened out using scissors. A metal blade called '*Shinkab*' was used to separate the mixed colored threads in the pile.

Each row of colored weft insertion was followed by the insertion of weft for the base (back) of the carpet, which consisted of five yarns grouped together. This weft was passed through a shuttle called '*Sambo*,' similar to plain weaving. The weaver passed the strings around one warp thread and over and under the next. The loops were then snapped into the weaving line and beaten down with a tool called a '*chaptef*'. The selvedge was crafted similarly to the body of the carpet, using seven single-ply yarns at a time.

Tool used

- **Chatef:** A metal tool with a wooden handle, used for beating the yarns.
- **Tho:** Wooden hammer
- **Khechung:** Small metal knife used for cutting the weft yarns
- **Chimchi:** Metal scissors used for cutting the pile evenly and for finishing the carpet.
- **Shinkhab:** Metal blade used to separate sections of thread according to colours.
- **Pecha Simbo:** Metal rod on which weft threads are knotted.
- **Kno:** Lease rod
- **So:** Bamboo rod for shed formations

COLOURS

Vegetable dyes were used for dyeing yarn, with all dyes sourced from locally available plants. The dried plant material was stored in the DHH centers, where dyeing was carried out as needed. This process was both cost-effective and environmentally friendly (**Plate 4.129**).

The raw materials were sourced from outside Sikkim and the supplied to DHH centers across Sikkim. These materials include cotton yarn for the warp, tools for carpet weaving, and wool for the weft.



Plate 4.129: Natural dyed Yarns, DHH Gangtok

Designs and Motifs

Weavers were provided with a graphical representation detailing the design, colors, and layout. The designs were influenced by Buddhist traditions. The dragon head, Cloud Pattern, Rhododendron flower, Floral design, Snow lion etc.

4.2.2.7 Blanket Weaving

Blanket weaving was another craft a commonly practiced by Bhutia community in Sikkim, and the D.H.H. centers provide training in this craft. These blankets were woven from yarn made from the leftover wool used in carpet weaving, beginning with yarn production and then setting up the warp on the loom.

The looms were housed in just one or two locations. This craft was primarily practiced to meet the daily needs of the people of Sikkim. Products made at the DHH center in Lachung were either sent to DHH Gangtok or sold to local residents and interested visitors.

The Loom

The art of blanket weaving dates back centuries, originating when the Bhutias migrated from Tibet and settled in Lachung, Sikkim. Today, this craft was continued primarily by the DHH centers. The looms used in blanket weaving were locally called '*Rug thara*'. A distinguishing feature of these looms were that the heddles eyes were made from jute yarn tied in a specific

way. The harnesses were lifted by pressing down on a pedal attached to the harness. These pedals were located near the feet of the weaver, beneath the loom's surface.

Trainers at the DHH center start by learning the spinning process. One group of girls prepares the wool rolls, while another spins the wool rolls into yarn. The yarn was then rolled and stored or wound on shuttles for weaving.

The waste wool yarn from carpet weaving, known as '*kupo*,' is cut into lengths of approximately 1" to 9" using scissors called '*Khura*'. A card brush was used to comb these cut yarns until a soft, woolly roll is achieved. This brushing process straightens the fibers, removes shorter fibers, and prepares the wool roll for spinning.

The '*Phon*' was a specialized tool used to twist the wool rolls into yarn of the appropriate diameter for use as weft.

The warp was wound around the warp winding beam before being set on the loom for drafting and denting. The warp was prepared according to the desired length and width of the blanket to be woven.

Weaving

The warp, or "*Thara*," made of cotton yarn, was wound around the warp beam according to the required length and width. The beam is then transferred to the loom. Drafting and denting was done using four harnesses. The weave structure typically consists of a 2/2 twill, preferred for its compact and strong woven structure utilizing only four harnesses.

The weaving process involves shed formation, pick insertion, and beating up. Four harnesses were placed between two rows of wooden rods. The '*cane*' comprises four such rods attached to the harness rod, placed above the harness. During weaving, the weft, known as '*Saempa*,' is passed through using long hollow bamboo shuttles called '*Samboo*.' Weaving is typically done by two craftsmen, usually girls aged 13-14 years at the DHH in Lachung, whose skill in weaving is commendable. For a 4'x6' blanket, 386 warp ends are used. After weaving, the projecting warp ends on both sides of the blanket are braided to give a finished look and secure the loose ends together.

Products

The DHH in Lachung produces carpets, blankets, and tweed coat pieces. The coat pieces were of 10 feet in length and 20 inches wide, a relatively new product at the DHH centers.

All articles produced were stored and sold locally to tourists and interested buyers at fixed rates. Bulk orders were sent to the DHH head office at Gangtok, which arranges for the sale of these ready products.

Lachen Weaving

"Lachen" means 'big hill' and was situated at 8,000 feet above sea level. The village was spread on both sides of the road, with about 600 houses located close to each other, giving it a compact village structure.

In Lachen, every home had a carpet or blanket weaving loom. The yarns are bought from Gangtok and dyed locally using vegetable dyes. Light green dye is obtained from the root of weeds like Rumex, yellow from the leaves of a plant locally called "*Shuini*," pink from *Rubia cordifolia* (locally known as '*majito*'), and brown from Oak bark.

Products made at DHH Lachen were sold through the government, while those made at home were used for personal use. The designs were traditional, derived from Tibetan origins, with a distinctive use of bright colors. Besides carpets and blankets, other products produced on the looms include:

"*Chuttu*": A quilt made of pure sheep wool with a long pile. The size is 6 ft x 5 ft, priced at Rs. 2000/-. Approximately 12 kgs of sheep wool is used to make one chuktai. Two small sections are woven on a smaller loom and then joined to form one piece.

"*Den*": A mattress measuring 2 ft x 6 ft. The technique is the same as blanket weaving, using a twill weave.

"*Gappein*": A kind of backrest made for household use.

4.2.2.8 Thangka Painting

Thangkas were religious scrolls that adorn the walls of monasteries in Himalayan Buddhist regions. They were notable not only for their iconography, religious significance, and stylistic development but also for the craftsmanship and materials used in their creation. The art of *Thangka* painting follows specific unit measurements that an artist must adhere to before starting a piece. Despite the various traditions of Thangka painting, the general unit measurements remain largely similar. Given the numerous Buddhist deities, a painter must know the measurements of each deity to create accurate sketches. There are six major proportional classes known as 'THIG-'CHEN' (Great Lines), which include: Buddha, Peaceful

Bodhisattva, Goddesses, Tall Wrathful Figures, Short Wrathful Figures, Humans. Each class has sub-unit measurements based on the deity's posture, whether sitting or standing.

Role of DHH, Gangtok

The Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom (DHH) in Gangtok, Sikkim, works diligently to preserve this craft. They offer a five-year course in Thangka painting, which is open to both boys and girls, though historically only boys have enrolled. Girls tend to join other craft sections such as carpet, blanket, and embroidery. During the training stage, students receive a stipend of Rs. 300 per month. Upon completing the course and mastering the art, they earn a commission on each Thangka they create. The time required to complete a Thangka varies from five to seven days for simpler pieces to over a month for more intricate ones, with earnings corresponding to the complexity of the work.



Plate 4.130 Drawing on the canvas by Gyaltzen Zimba

Stages of the Course

The DHH course spans five years. In the first two years, students practice motifs on wooden boards coated with white chalk powder, using pencils to draw. This practice continues daily, with the board being wiped clean after each use. After the initial two years, students begin painting actual Thangkas with poster colors, refining their skills until they achieve perfection.

Painting Procedure

Creating a Thangka involves several defined steps. First, the painting surface is prepared. Thangkas are typically painted on canvas cloth, such as Indian muslin or cotton fabric known as '*Rasgzhi*.' The cloth is soaked in lukewarm water with glue and lime, and then stretched on a thin frame to dry and prevent shrinkage. It is later stretched on a wooden frame called "*thangshin*." The cloth is then washed, coated, and stiffened by applying a specially prepared

glue mixture, which includes white chalk powder called 'Kara' and another glue called 'Sorris.' For higher quality *Thangkas*, a better chalk powder called 'Phusen' is used (**Plate 4.130**).

The wooden frame is tied with a cord to the wall for stability. A grid of geometric lines is drawn on the canvas to serve as a framework for the composition. The design is then transferred to the cloth using a pointed wooden pen and charcoal, leaving a dotted outline ready for painting.

The painting process begins with laying down the initial coats of paint, followed by shading, and finally outlining the painting. The paints used are typically ordinary poster paints, though stone colors and natural colors are also used. Stone colors are sourced from China and Japan, and *Thangkas* painted with traditional mineral and vegetable pigments are valued higher.

These colors have both spiritual and symbolic significance, with white also signifying '*Sunyata*' or '*Nirvana*.'

Types of Thangka

According to Gyaltzen Zimba, who studied in Buddhiest Monastery in Darjelling and has been practicing this art of thanga making since long. According to him *thangkas* can also be made using embroidery, appliqué, or a combination of both. They are mounted in frames of silk and brocade, with wooden dowels at either end. These scrolls can range from 30 cm to over 10 meters in length.

Uses and Meanings of Chinese Symbols

Bhutia's often incorporate Chinese motifs into their designs, though the significance differs. For instance, a vase symbolizes peace in Chinese art but is a Buddhist emblem for Tibetans. These motifs entered Tibet through silk brocades, pottery, and other artifacts, transforming with Tibetan colors and interpretations.

Bhutia Tibetan Rug Designs

Bhutia Tibetan rug designs draw from traditional Buddhist iconography, imported textiles, and pan-Asian mythology. Common elements include individual designs, borders, corners, medallions, center field designs, and ridge designs. Various motifs from Chinese art, such as the eight ordinary symbols, the eight symbols of the Taoist immortal spirit, and others, are also present in Tibetan rugs, often with unique interpretations.

Thangka painting (Plate 4.131) and Tibetan rug designs are rich in symbolism and cultural significance, with intricate processes and diverse influences from both Buddhist and Chinese traditions.



Plate 4.131 Thangka Painting

4.2.2.9 Garments & Accessories:

As historical records indicate that the Bhutias were of Tibetan descent. In spring and summer, Bhutia people traditionally wore a short shirt made of cotton or white silk brocade with a large part left open in the front. Over this, they wore a robe with a round collar and wide sleeves, known as a *Chuba* in Tibetan, made from cotton and wool. They used a colorful *kyerah* belt, about 2 meters long and 20 cm wide, woven in seven-color striped wool, to tie the *Chuba* at the waist. The sleeves were crossed and tied at the back, creating a pocket at the waist for carrying items. Their trousers were wide at the waist, crotch, and bottom, and they wore short boots and felt hats.

Interviews revealed that in autumn and winter, Bhutias switched to warmer materials like leather or artificial fleece. *Chubas* were also made from wool and sheepskin, and they wore leather caps with ear protectors, along with high boots or self-made leather shoes.

According to Sonam Lachungpa, the Bhutias migrated to Sikkim in several waves, bringing their textiles, costumes, and culture from Tibet. Each region of Tibet has its own unique costumes, and these diverse traditional Tibetan clothing styles, rich in connotation and structural features, which were then carried to Sikkim during the migration period.

Bhutia clothing and culture was particularly reflected in women's attire, especially during festivals, major events, and ceremonies. To understand Bhutia costumes, it was essential to explore their Tibetan roots. Tibetan festival dresses were known for their richness and grandeur, with women often wearing elaborate headdresses made of coral or turquoise called "*Bazhu*." Similar adornments were worn by the Princess of Sikkim during the coronation ceremonies of the King in Gangtok, Sikkim during (1960-1979) (**Plate 4.132**), including gold or silver earrings inlaid with turquoise. Tibetan Bhutia women also traditionally wore a silver bracelet on their left hand and a white conch bracelet on their right, which has been worn since childhood and is believed to lead the wearer to happiness after death. They often wore beeswax bead necklaces and amulet boxes containing Buddhas or other sacred objects.

In the Lachung and Lachen regions, locals have significant differences in women's clothing before and after marriage and at certain age, which is a notable and similar to Tibetan attire. According to Tshering Yanki, Tibetan girls at the age of fifteen must wear the "*Marlton*" (hair set), made of cloth or satin and decorated with silver shields and corals. Newly married "*Guoluo*" Tibetan women were required to wear long-sleeved gowns with rainbow-like stitching around the cuffs and ornate vests. Unmarried women's hair hoods were shorter than those of married women, and some women only start braiding their hair after the age of sixteen. It was believed that unmarried girls braid three plaits. In rural areas, Tibetan women often wear bright rainbow aprons in front of their robes and style their hair into double braids, while others prefer to create numerous small braids and wear them down their backs.

These costumes have gone changes over the period of time due to mix of cultures they started calling them by various names. Some call these Bhutia dress for women as the "*Bakhu*" or "*Baku*." which consists of a full-length robe with wide sleeves and is fastened with a woven belt. Men often wear the "*kho*" as well, along with "*Daura*" trousers and a "*Labrang*" coat. *Bakhu's*, *Kho*, *Chubas* and *Jajas* are often worn made in brocade, wool and cotton fabrics. Today, synthetic fabrics have made their way in there local markets and eventually their wardrobes. Women typically pair the *bakhu* with a *Honju*, a loose gown-style garment that is belted tightly at the waist and has full sleeves made of silk. A loose sheet of woolen fabric in

various colors and unusual geometric patterns is tied at the front section. The *pangden*, as it was known, was a representation of a married woman. Men's and women's embroidered leather boots go well with this traditional ensemble.



Plate 4.132: Princess, sister of the King of Sikkim, standing on right, in traditional royal dress, during coronation of King, Gangtok, Sikkim. (1965)

**Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division
Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.30214/>**

Men Clothing:

Upper Garment : *Pho Kho*, *Labrang* (Coat), *Jaja* (waistcoat), *purukho* (Woollen gown), *Wonhatsi* (shirt)

Lower Garment : *Daura* (Trousers), *Kyerah* (waist belt)

Pho Kho for Men

The Bhutia's have traditionally been quite conservative for their attire. Although some now wear Western clothes, traditional attire is still common, especially among women. This traditional garment was called "kho" in *Denjong kay* (the Bhutia language) and "bakhu" in Nepali.

As per the data collected among the Bhutia Communities across Sikkim. Denjongpa men traditionally wear the *pho kho* (**Plate 4.135**), a full-sleeved garment secured at the waist with a silk *kyerah* (waistbelt) (**Plate 4.136**). According to Yangchok Lachenpa in the high-altitude valley of Lachen and Lachung in North Sikkim, men wore a variation of *kho*, which is known as *puru kho*, *puru kho* is a woolen gown. This attire typically included just the *kho*, a long robe with wide, elongated sleeves that nearly touched the ground. The garment is usually folded at the sides and secured at the waist with a woolen or silk *kyerah*, so its skirt reached only the knees while its upper folds created a large pocket or *amba* over the chest. It is believed that this pocket was used to carry various items such as an eating bowl, a bag of *tsampa*, (roasted flour) and other small necessities.

These *Kho*'s were crafted with lined interiors and neatly finished edges. This attire was a long, full-sleeved garment tied at the waist with a silk girdle or belt. Accompanied by silk full-sleeve undershirts called *wonthatsi* (**Plate 4.134**) and waistcoats known as *jaja* (**Plate 4.2.109**), made from Chinese silk brocade.

Brocades were integral to Buddhist monasteries in Sikkim, used for backing auspicious Thangkas. The *chahuk*, a silver hook with floral engravings, secured the *gyapa* or *gyaba* bag—a hand-woven rain cloak made from sheep or yak wool—over the chest. The *gyapa* served as weather protection for the *Lachenpas* and *Lachungpas* of Lachen and Lachung. Bhutia noblemen living in towns traditionally wore cotton or woolen drawers and a full-sleeved undershirt made of cotton or silk beneath their attire. This traditional shirt, called *wonthatsi*, was usually white, with extra-long sleeves that symbolized the wearer did not engage in manual labor. The *wonthatsi* was worn under the *kho*.

The *kho* is often paired with a *jaja*, a waistcoat made from Chinese brocade fabric adorned with dragon designs, *tankas* (Chinese coin designs), *khloros* (the wheel of dharma), or other traditional Buddhist motifs. In the past, only nobles or village headmen wore these waistcoats on special occasions, but now they are worn by everyone at various events. For special occasions like weddings, men wear *thuril shambu* or *chingsha*, which are hats made from yak wool.

It has been also observed that sometime leather and imitation of leather (**Plate 4.138**) was also used to construct waistcoat for Bhutia men.



Plate 4.132: Image from the meeting between Sir George Campbell, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal with the young Chogyal Thutob Namgyal & his sister 1873.

Picture Courtesy: Archive section, Department of Culture, Government of Sikkim.

Picture donated by Royal anthropological society London during 1880's-1920's



Plate 4.133: Jaja



Plate 4.134: Wonthastsi / tson-ta-ti



Plate 4.135: *Pho Kho, Labrang* (Coat)



Plate 4.136: Kyerah



Plate 4.137: The contemporary Kho- a more modern version of the traditional *Pho Kho*. It starts from the waist and extends to the ankles, and is typically worn with a *wonthatsi* (a shirt) and *jaja* and a trousers underneath. This version is less elaborate than the traditional Kho, offering a simplified yet culturally resonant style.

Distinctive Features of the Pho Kho:

1. **Material:** (Traditional Fabrics) originally made from wool or heavy cotton, the Pho Kho was designed to be warm and durable. Modern versions also use silk brocades or synthetic fabrics.
2. **Intricate Patterns:** The fabrics often feature detailed patterns and motifs that are significant to Bhutia culture.
3. **Design: Length and Sleeves:** The Pho Kho is a long garment that typically reaches the knees or below, with full sleeves to provide ample coverage and warmth.
4. **Loose Fit:** Designed for comfort, the garment has a loose fit that allows for easy movement.
5. **Collar and Neckline:** High Collar: Often includes a high collar that can either stand up or be folded down, adding a formal touch to the garment.
6. **Front Opening:** Features a front opening that can be secured with buttons or ties.
7. **Waistband (Kye-Rah): Silk Belt:** The garment is traditionally tied at the waist with a silk belt called a kye-rah, which is often brightly colored and intricately patterned.
8. **Adjustable overlapping Fit:** The kye-rah helps to adjust the fit, allowing the wearer to gather and secure the fabric at the waist neatly.
9. **Sleeve Details: Decorative Cuffs:** The sleeves often end in cuffs that are in contrasting fabric due to contrasting colour shirt which fold on top of the coat to create a different detail.
10. **Baggy Fit:** The sleeves are designed to be roomy, providing comfort and flexibility.
11. **Ornamentation:** Some Pho Kho garments feature detailed embroidery along the edges, cuffs, and collar, adding a touch of artistry.
12. **Brocade fabrics:** The use of brocade fabric, especially around the collar and cuffs, enhances the garment's elegance.
13. **Length and Hem:** Varied Length: While the Pho Kho traditionally extends to the knees or longer, the length can vary based on personal preference or occasion.

14. **Functional Elements:** Pockets: Some modern versions include hidden pockets for practicality.
15. **Layering:** In colder climates, the Pho Kho can be layered over other garments for extra warmth.
16. **Color and Patterns:** Traditional Colors: Common colors include maroon, dark blue, and black, often accented with brighter hues.
17. **Cultural Motifs:** Patterns often feature traditional Bhutia symbols, such as geometric shapes, floral designs, or religious motifs.



Plate 4.138: Leather waistcoat (Jaja)



Plate 4.139: Bhutia Man wearing traditional Costume

Women's Clothing

Upper Garment: *MoKho*, *Teygho* (blouse), *Kushen* (outer coat), *Gyapa* or *gyaba* (cloak), *Kkhatee* (Red scarf)

Lower Garment: *Pangdin* (Apron), Wrap skirt (Variation of *bakhu*)

Mo Kho for Women

Bhutia women wear *mo kho* (**Plate 4.147**) which was a sleeveless garment tied at the waist with a *kyerah* (waistbelt) and was made in various materials like brocade, wool, cotton, synthetic suiting fabrics etc. It has been observed that the wealthy often choose Chinese brocade for the making of these. This loose-fitting, full-length garment was folded at the sides and secured with a girdle. Similar to the male *kho*, the *mo kho* has a front fold where various items can be stored. Underneath, women usually wore a full-sleeved, buttonless blouse called *teygho*, which was made from light weight silk, polyester, or sometimes cotton fabrics. The *kushen*, an outer coat worn over the *kho*, was typically made in brocade, raw silk, or synthetic fabric. (**Plate 4.149**)

Another woolen garment was the *gyapa* or *gyaba* (**Plate 4.142**) bag, a hand-woven rain cloak made from sheep or yak wool, secured over the chest with a hook called *chahuk*, often made of silver and engraved with floral designs. The residents of Lachen and Lachung, known as *Lachenpas* and *Lachungpas*, use the *gyapa* to protect themselves from rain, snow, and cold. This was also used by Lachungpa women & men to carry their children on



Plate: 4.141 Tepche

their back in the hilly terrain. Another garment accessories was *Pangden* which was worn by married women, a colorful striped apron tied around the waist over the *kho*, this was traditionally hand-woven on a backstrap loom or through shuttle loom. In recent times, *pangdens* were also made of hand-woven multicolored silk fastened with *pangtha*, or straps.

During marriage ceremonies, brides partially cover their faces with a *khatee* (**Plate 4.140**) a red scarf hand-woven from raw silk or cotton, adorned with colorful embroidered designs and fringes at both ends. Additionally, an embroidered satin piece called *kinkhap* was used by noble ladies in Sikkim to cover their necks before putting on necklaces.

Readymade clothes were bought from Gangtok. Traditional buttons with lotus motif called "Tepche' (**Plate: 4.141**) were also found attached to their dresses.



Plate 4.140: Bride wearing *khattee* (Red scarf)
Picture courtesy: L.N Sharma, Archive Section, Culture Department, Sikkim



Plate 4.142: Gyapa/ Gyada

It was found that the 1959 Chinese invasion of Tibet became a turning point and an era when so many influxes of Tibetan refugees, including highly skilled tailors, known as *ulah*, came over to Sikkim. These caused significant changes in *kho*, (**Plate 4.147**) most particularly with the prevalence of stitching and variety of new fabrics. The effects of these transformations also lessened the gap between the clothing of the commoner and that of the nobility. A more uniform style became evident among all the Bhutias. Bhutia women have inherited the practice of acquiring fabrics for traditional dresses such as the Honju (**Plate 4.146**) and Bakhu (**Plate 4.148**) from Sikkim and Kalimpong. This practice dates back a long way, with these two places having served as trading hubs for the right quality textiles to form proper attire belonging to the culture of the Bhutias. The market of these textiles was based in the capital city of Sikkim and the densely populated city, Gangtok, into East Sikkim. Other regions of Sikkim also served this regional need to buy these textiles.

Kalimpong was a busy market, and since its inception it has always played a very important role in the trade of textiles. It played an important role for textile trade between India, Bhutan, Nepal, and Tibet. The strategic location made it a go-to spot for Bhutia women to buy cloth. Marwari community settled in this was the major suppliers of these goods, Agarwal Trading Company and other merchants in Kalimpong ensure availability of both traditional and contemporary textiles. These traders were responsible for deals and import of fabrics from almost every part of India and sometimes even from other countries, providing a wide range of varieties considering quality, design, and price.

Most goods coming from Sikkim and Kalimpong consist of wool, cotton, and silk blends, which were mostly of desirable quality for the climate conditions found in the region. These colourful markets, being rich in design, enable Bhutia women to keep their culture intact and yet modernize their clothing.

The markets also offer some specialized materials that may not be found locally; hence traditional clothing of the Bhutia was maintained and developed through these markets. In addition, the inter-trading route between Sikkim and Kalimpong with other places in India and Tibet used to facilitate cultural flow; for example, including the sharing of textile techniques and designs. This interchange enriches choices in fabrics and sensibilities for fashion among Bhutia women who can blend traditional aesthetics with contemporary trends. (**Plate 4.150**)

Pangden (aprons) (**Plate 4.143**) worn by Bhutia women were made using both handloom and powerloom fabrics. An official from Manan Bhawan in Gangtok noted that these aprons were initially imported from Tibet, but over the period of time, sourcing shifted to Uttarakhand in India. This transition occurred as Tibetan migrants, who settled in various parts of the Himalayan region during their migration, began weaving *pangden* in Uttarakhand. To understand this transition researcher visited Dekyiling Settlement in Dehradun district.

As per the data collected through field work, the *pangden*, measuring 31 inches in length, is crafted by joining three striped panels, each 7.5 inches wide. These aprons were introduced to India by Tibetan migrants and were a symbol of a woman's marital status. After the Chinese invasion to Tibet, many Tibetans were exiled and spread across the world, with a significant number coming and settling in India. In the Dehradun district, Tibetan communities were primarily located in Dekyiling Settlement, Clement Town Colony, and Rajpur Settlement. (**Plate 4.162**)

Established in 1982 and inaugurated by the 14th Dalai Lama in 1988, the Dekyiling Settlement was home to the third generation of Tibetan refugees. Approximately 3000- 5,000 Tibetans from 525-600 families reside in this settlement, with nearly half having migrated from Tibet to Bhutan and then to India. The settlement was overseen by a head officer.

Construction of *Pangden*

The apron was handwoven and consists of three panels, each woven in a strip which was 7.5 inches wide and three times as long as the finished garment. The three panels were stitched together without matching the stripes. The finished apron is 22.5 inches wide and 31 inches long with a ½ inch hem at the top and bottom. It was woven with horizontal stripes using a beating comb and was made from wool, cotton, acrylic yarns, and sometimes in viscose art silk.



Plate 4.162: Pangden made by Tibetan Refugee

Evolution of *Pangden*

As per one of the weaver in Dekyiling settlement, weaving of *pangden* has been influenced by various factors:

Cultural Factor: Ever since the arrival of *pangden* from Tibet, the color changed from soft and pale to brilliant. This was because the Indian market can bear the brighter colours and this showed the indirect cultural influence.

Economy factor: The raw material collecting was quite expensive and tough with such hilly area and harsh weather conditions. Transportation of the materials in such rough landscapes was both expensive and complicated plus there was unpredictability in the weather, which further complex their situation. These challenges escalate the cost and create more problems in the effort to attain the necessary materials for *pangden* weaving.

Social Factor: It was observed that many craftsmen who practice this craft of weaving *pangden* were often reluctant to let their children continue with the same tradition. The work was underpaid, mismatched with effort expended, time-consuming, and can be tiring physically, with demands on the back and eyes.

Loom

Wooden loom was used for *pangden* weaving. This was a wooden reed less vertical frame loom called '*thakdi*' locally. Once the weaving is done these *pangden* were packed and sent to the buyers including the one in Sikkim and from there it reaches to wholesalers to retailers and then to the consumers.



Plate 4.143: *Pagden* weaving in Dekyilling Settlement in Dehradun



Plate 4.144: Cotton Pangden



Plate 4.145: Synthetic Pangden (Sikkim)



Plate 4.146: Honju (Blouse)



Plate 4.147: Mo Kho



Plate 4.148: Bakhu (Tshring Yanki wedding dress from her personal collection)



Plate 4.149: Contemporary Jacket (Pema Zangmu personal collection)



Plate 4.150: Group of Bhutia women seen wearing Traditional and Contemporary costume

Picture courtesy: From the personal collection of John Z. Lepcha, North Sikkim

4.2.2.10 Accessories

Denjongpa/BhutiaMen Headgears: *Thuril shambu* or *chingsha* (Hat), "*Tungtop*" or "*Dhatu*"

Denjongpa/ BhutiaMen Footwear: *Phosom* also known as *tsompa/ Dhotey* (Handstitched boots)

Denjongpa Women Headgear: *Tshering kinkhap* or *Siling shambu* (hat), *Mogril namchochen* or also *Tshehring kinkhap* (Hat with shorter ears)

Denjongpa/ BhutiaWomen Footwear: *Somba* (Handstitched and embroidered boots)

Almost all Bhutia wear amulets, similar to the Tibetans. These amulets, often blessed by a lama, were considered very important and precious, kept safe and never sold. They were worn next to the skin, around the neck, and hidden under clothing, similar to the black "nazar ka dhaga" used in North India. Bhutia community believe these amulets protect the wearer

from natural forces, diseases, malevolent spirits, and evil influences in the world. Many of these amulets were seen stored in round or heart-shaped silver filigree or gilt boxes called '*gau*' or '*gawu*.' These (**Plate 4.155**) boxes were often crafted by Nepali artisans; sometimes these were decorated with coral and turquoise, depending on the owner's preference, and were worn in a strong cord around the neck.

Additionally, both Bhutia men and women adorn themselves with various pieces of jewelry, including multiple earrings, necklaces, rings, and hair ornaments. These were common during the time of the Chogyal rule but later become less common since the changes came in the style of adornment and personal choices, but the traditional jewellery remains the same and were occasionally worn by the community members. Belt ornaments and rosaries, were often made in bone, ivory, wood, or seeds like *rudraksha*, was also commonly worn. Rosaries served as the religious purpose and were usually tied around the waist or worn as a necklace. A variety of jewelry items, including coral (**Plate 4.157**), amber, precious stones, *dzi* beads (dark beads with patterned lines) (**Plate 4.156**), pearls, gold (**Plate 4.158**), silver, and ivory, had entered the Sikkim antique market from Tibet through cross-border trade. The silver waist ornament with corals (**Plate 4.159**) and *Ayandak/ Jade chabchab* (**Plate 4.160**) (**Plate 4.161**) which was also made using pearls and corals and other precious and semi precious stones.

One can find various shops in Gangtok market selling these. Another accessory was the pouches; Bhutia men and women had a liking towards the bags and pouches and were often seen carrying one.

Men's Hairstyles:

The Bhutia, who began migrating to Sikkim in the 9th century, were the second oldest ethnic group in the region. Historically, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, Bhutia men typically kept their hair long, tangled, and shaggy, rarely combing it. Over the period of time, they began to groom their hair more, using accessories like ivory or bone rings. This shift likely occurred during periods of cultural change. As modernization took hold, younger men started cutting their hair shorter and colouring it brown or any other hair colour which was in trend. Traditionally, Bhutia men were seen wearing distinctive headgear, such as the "*Tungtop*" (**Plate 4.151**) or "*Dhatu*" hats, which were often ornate and reflect their cultural identity. On special occasions like marriages men wore *thuril shambu* or *chingsha*, two varieties of hats made of yak wool. Another kind of *topi* which was found to be popular among the Bhutia

men was sikkimese topi, this was made in silk also known as ‘churi cap’ (Plate 4.152). The crown of the cap had six brocaded panels. At the top of the cap had a knotted bead usually made in red fabric. Cap is made in Chinese damask silk fabric with various floral motifs. Cotton fabrics were used for the lining and finishing of the cap. These caps were stiff and sturdy because of the fusing inside.

Women’s Hairstyles:

Bhutia women traditionally kept their hair long and braided, adorning it with numerous pieces of jewelry and heavy ornaments, including crowns. They created multiple braids similar to those worn by Tibetan women from the Amdo and Kham regions. On special occasions, women from East, South, and West Sikkim wore long-eared hats made of silk fabric with fur borders, known as *tshering kinkhap* or *siling shambu*. (Plate 4.153) These silk brocade hats had fur-lined flaps that could be lowered to shield against the mountain winds. Women from the Lachung and Lachen valleys wore similar hats with shorter ears, called *mogril namchochen* or *tsehring kinkhap*.

In these regions, women commonly wore *Sombo*, boot-like shoes made from cotton or wool with tanned animal skin soles. Unlike the plain design of men's shoes, women's shoes were embroidered with floral patterns. The *tshering kinkhap*, or *siling shambu*, was a long-eared hat worn by women in East, South, and West Sikkim on special occasions. Made of silk cloth with a fur border, it featured fur-lined flaps that could be lowered to block the mountain wind. The *mogril namchochen*, also known as *tsehring kinkhap*, was a similar type of hat with shorter ears, worn by women in the Lachung and Lachen valleys. (Plate 4.154)



Plate 4.151: .Tungtop



Plate 4.152: Sikkimese/ Churi Topi



Plate 4.153 Siling shambu



Plate 4.154: Bhutia Couple wearing Traditional Hat (Siling shambu, Sikkimese Topi)



Plate 4.155: Traditional 'gau' /'gawu



Plate 4.156: Dzi beads necklace (Phiru)



Plate 4.157: Yencho (Gold Earrings with corals)



Plate 4.158: Diu (Gold bangle with corals)



Plate 4.159: Silver waist accessories with corals



Plate 4.160: Jade chabchab



Plate 4.161: Ayandak/ Jade chabchab

Footwear

Bhutia along with their traditional attire "*Kho*" and "*Chuba*" often wore boots made from untanned yak or ox hide. The soles were flat without heels, and the hide was gathered and stitched onto a cloth base. These hand-stitched boots, known as "*phosom*" or "*tsompa*," these were decorated with brocade or embroidered woolen or felt cloth and had soles made from raw, untanned animal hide. They featured brightly colored woolen or cloth garters that

fastened below the knee and typically came in black, red, or green. The embroidery enhanced the aesthetic appeal of the leather. Oral history says that, only the nobility in Sikkim wore such shoes. Another type of shoe, the "*lhol ham*," was typical in the Lachen and Lachung valleys, made from sheep wool with soles made with well-tanned yak hide. Much later black knee-length leather boots which were made in China was introduced.

In recent times, a variety of footwear options have become available for both men and women, catering to different occasions, designs, styles, and preferences.

Bhutia Men's Traditional Footwear

Ghalo, traditional footwear, was worn by the *Dhotey* sect (Tibetan origin tribe) for walking in the mountains and for traditional Bhutia dance. These boots had no distinction between left and right and were made by assembling different sections, with the sole often crafted from cowhide or buffalo hide. Originally designed for snowy regions, these soles were later replaced with rubber to prevent slipping. These boots were also meant to keep wearers feet warm and protect their knees from the cold Himalayan weather. *Ghalo*, the boots worn by Bhutia dancers were called "*pumalam*." These boots were made in felt and wool with back opening finished with contrasting colour piping.

Material and Parts of Dhotey

The Dhotey (**Plate 4.162**) footwear included a jute-padded upper, fancy stitching, a front panel, brocade embroidery, and a back panel. This footwear was historically significant and practical, reflecting the Bhutia community's adaptation to their environment and cultural heritage. ([Scroll.in](#)) ([Utsavpedia](#)).

Technique of Making Traditional Bhutia Boots

The process of crafting traditional Bhutia boots was intricate and involves several steps, each requiring careful attention to detail. Here's an overview of how these boots were made:

Tools and Material

- **Composition of salt:** It was mixed into dough for sticking.
- **Glue:** Mixture of flour (maida) and salt.

- **Squeezy:** This tool was used to make the application of glue even on the fabric.
- **Wooden block:** For beating and pressing cloth.
- **Wooden plank:** For pressing glued layers.
- **Tailor scissors:** For cutting fabric with accuracy.

Steps in the Making of Side Panels for Upper:

1. **Application of 'Laie' on Jute Fabric:** An adhesive by the name of 'Laie', comprising rice water and a chemical was applied uniformly on the jute fabric with the help of a squeezy.
2. **Pasting and Beating:** There was an pasting of the jute fabric on another. Fabric was pasted with glue while it's being beaten hard to form a perfect bond.
3. **Beating and Cutting Fabric:** The cloth was beaten by a wooden block and then cut into two halves, one over the other.
4. **Cutting White Fabric:** White fabric was cut into equal parts (1'x 3') and pasted on the jute layer by 'Laie'. This layer was then equally pressed manually.
5. **Beating and Drying:** The pasted layers were sun-dried for one day for better bonding. A further layer of cotton fabric was attached to it as a lining and squeezed tight.
6. **Drying the Fabric:** The fabric layers were sun-dried until perfectly bonded.
7. **Pattern Cutting:** Once the fabric was dried, side panels were then cut using silhouette drawing lines and a pencil and then decorative panels for toe and heel were cut.

Stitching the upper:

- **Upper Construction:** The upper part of the shoe was made out of layers of felt and fabric which was stitched together. On the reverse side newspapers were pasted to give stiffness. Later decorative elements like embroidery and piping were added.
- **Stitch padded panel to upper:** The upper is folded into a cylinder then attached to the sole.

Constructing the Sole:

1. Pattern making:

- A thick card sheet was folded and patterned for symmetry, then cut.

2. Layering:

- The card was layered with stiffened fabric and leather, process was repeated four times for insulation against cold weather. Rubber was used for the outer sole to provide grip.

3. Shaving the leather:

- The leather outsole was shaved to ensure a smooth finish.

4. Assembling the sole:

- All layers were then pasted together and prepared for stitching.

5. Preparing the sole for stitching:

- The leather part was then soaked in water to make it flexible for stitching.

6. Stitching sole to upper part:

- The sole is manually stitched to the upper using thick thread, ensuring strength and durability.

7. Final pressing:

- The finished footwear was then pressed along the sole lines to refine its form.

8. Molding the footwear:

- Wooden mold sticks were used to stretch and shape the inside of the footwear, ensuring comfort.

Final Steps:

- **Hammering and Finishing:**

- The boots receive a final hammering to even out the sole and were checked for comfort and fit. This detailed process showcases the traditional techniques and meticulous craftsmanship involved in creating Bhutia boots, ensuring both functionality and cultural preservation.



Plate 4.162: Dhotey

Somba

Traditionally worn by ladies, *sombas* were a type of Bhutia (Tibetan origin) footwear distinguished by a embroidery which is passed down through generations. *Somba* originated in Tibet, design for women to help them negotiate the difficult terrain and prevent frostbite on their feet.

Somba (Plate 4.2.139) was made of rubber soles, thread, and various materials like leather, jute, felt, and colorful stitched soles. Usually constructed of felt for warmth, the upper part was embellished with detailed embroidery that draws inspiration from the local flora. Felt strips were sewn onto the sole throughout the making process, and beautiful embroidery was added.

Buddhism culture places value on colors, which in *Somba* symbolize various mental moods and natural components. For example, the color blue represents purity and healing, while green signifies balance and harmony.

The sole was constructed similarly to other traditional Tibetan footwear like *Ghalo*, involving layering of jute fabric for insulation and stitching leather and rubber soles together. The final product was stitched together with blue thread for structural integrity and aesthetic appeal.

Somba was just one type of traditional Tibetan footwear, among others which include *Ration* worn by monks, *Ghalo* worn by the general population, and *Pumalam* worn by Tibetan dancers. Since there was very less data available on the usage of these type of footwares among Bhutia women of Sikkim.



Plate 4.163: Somba

The decoration on these traditional Bhutia boots varies depending on factors such as geographical region, gender, and occupation. While the *Ghalo* boots were modestly adorned and commonly used for everyday activities like walking and herding yaks, other varieties designed for high-status individuals are often worn ceremonially yet remain practical.

Currently, only three workshops in Kalimpong were still producing these boots. Artisans have observed a lack of interest among the younger generation, who perceive these Tibetan stitched boots as outdated. Originally intended for daily wear and long-term use, these boots were now primarily reserved for ceremonial occasions, or lying in state museum for display. With mass-produced, inexpensive footwear taking their place in everyday wear.

Artisans mentioned that apart from local demand in Kalimpong, the highest requests for these boots come from regions such as the Tibet Autonomous Region, Tibetan settlements in Himachal Pradesh, Bhutan, and Nepal and North Sikkim. There was also some demand from tourists visiting Kalimpong.

Varieties in these boots were also available which were known as ‘*Reysun*’ this type of shoes were worn by lamas, ‘*Shuozu*’ shoes were worn by kings and authorities, ‘*Jhelam*’ shoes were worn by kings' footwear, and ‘*Teylam*’ which was worn by warriors. However no photographic records for these were found but just the oral history.

4.2.2.11 Embroidery

Elaborate and intricate embroidery work was often seen on clothing items like blouses, shawls, skirts and shoes. These designs were made using colorful threads and may incorporate motifs from nature, *tanga* designs (common in Bhutia textiles) (**Plate 4.164**). These embroideries were common between both Lepcha and Bhutia communities but majorly seen among Bhutia community. Common stitches like satin, herringbone, French knot were used. According to the oral history these embroideries were done in Tibet. However, researcher never came across any artisan practicing embroidery craft in Sikkim in her field visits but few females out of hobby do practice at home. Few pieces were still preserved in DHH museum and craft gallery. But that object doesn't have any record saying to which community they belong.



Plate 4.164: Hand embroidery

4.2.2.12 Religious garments

Upper Garment: *khenjah* (Sleeveless Shirt), *dzen* (shawl), *toenga* (woolen coat), *tombo* (buttonless shirt)

Headgear: *peh sha* (*pad shwa*) (mitre-shaped cap), *pan sha tsesing* (conical mitre-shaped cap)

According to Sonam Tashi Gyaltzen in a personal interview shared that monks or lamas used to wear a unique set of garments. Their attire included a lower garment known as *shenthap*, typically made from cotton or wool fabric and often colored maroon. The *khenjah*, a sleeveless shirt worn by monks, came in orange or yellow and was made from cotton or silk. When participating in religious rituals or entering sacred spaces like monasteries, monks used to adorn themselves with a *dzen*, a long ceremonial shawl made from raw silk, wool, or cotton.

There were various types of coats worn by monks, which varied based on their status and the climate they inhabited. Lamas who were placed higher in rank used to wear the *toenga*, which was a sleeveless woolen coat decorated with brocade, usually in red. Another garment, was *dagam*, which was a religious cloak made out of wool fabric. This was worn by Lamas

and was usually draped from their shoulders. Lined with fleece inside and wool outside, the dagam was often used during winter as a cloak.

The *pah sha*, or *pad shwa*, used to be a cap shaped like a mitre, with its origins linked to Guru Padmasambhava, a significant figure in Bhutia religion. An interesting story surrounded the *pan sha* cap's origin. In the Padma Vihara monastery in Chittagong (now Bangladesh), a Buddhist pandit wore a thorn-shaped cap during a religious debate, as suggested by an elderly woman. This led to his victory over heretic teachers, popularizing the cap and leading to its adoption by Tibetan and Sikkimese monks as a fashion statement.

Additionally, there was a specific type of shoe known as *rey som*, exclusively worn by masked dancers during special occasions in Sikkimese monasteries. Made from cotton fabric, these shoes were imported from Tibet and Bhutan and weren't part of monks' everyday attire.

The Evolution of the Kho

The traditional attire of the Bhutia has seen significant transformations over the years. These garments were originally long, full-sleeved, and neatly finished, secured at the waist with a silk belt called *kye-rah*. There was also a woolen variation known as *puru Kho*.

In contemporary times, synthetic Chinese brocades with metallic threads have become prevalent. Believed to be produced in China, these affordable materials come in vibrant colors like red, blue, yellow, green, orange, and gold. People now enjoy experimenting with a wider range of colors beyond the traditional palette.

According to **Sonam Tashi Gyaltzen (2022)** The Bhutia kho, also referred to as Honju and Bakhu in Nepali, has undergone substantial evolution since the founding of the kingdom of Sikkim in 1642, changing dramatically over the past 370 years. Initially, kho was crafted from hand-woven fabrics and tanned yak skins. During the 1700s and 1800s, Denjongpa men and women wore kho made from sheep or yak skin and wool. However, with the opening of trade between India and Tibet, factory-produced materials became accessible, and Tibetan traders brought these materials and ready-made garments to Sikkim through the historic trading town of Yatung in Tibet.

Conversely, the Lachenpas and Lachungpas, living in harsher climates, typically wore hand-sewn sheep-skin robes tanned in butter, with the fleece inside. These kho were often glued together using animal gelatin instead of stitching. By the early 1900s, increased trade

between Sikkim and India introduced more affordable and varied woolen and cotton fabrics. In the mid-1940s, Princess Coocoola (Princess Pema Tsedeun Yapshi Pheunkhang Lachum Kusho) (**Plate 4.2.141**), who passed away in 2008, was instrumental in modernizing the female kho. As the daughter of Sir Tashi Namgyal, the 11th Chogyal, and the wife of a Tibetan Governor of Gyantse, she redesigned the kho to suit contemporary



Plate 4.165: Princess Coocoola
Source:
<https://simonside.net/coocoola-von-sikkim/>

needs. The traditional loose-fitting gown with a separate belt was transformed into a garment with a closely fitted upper section, while the lower part remained loose with wide flaps that could be tied in various styles using straps made from the same material. The new design could be worn sleeveless or with full-length sleeves and was often made from plum silk brocade with Tibetan motifs, although more subtle fabrics were used for different occasions. The redesigned kho was typically worn over a blouse called a *teygho*.

This modern kho, being more comfortable, lighter, and elegant, was quickly embraced by young Bhutia women and spread to neighboring regions. It also gained popularity among Tibetan refugees in India and was also adopted in Tibet, where it is now regarded as the "traditional dress" of Tibetan women.



Plate 4.166: Bhutia Woman wearing Honju and a wrap skirt (Lachung).

4.2.2.13 Ceremonial and festive attire



Plate 4.167: Bhutia couple in their wedding costume
Picture courtesy: From the personal collection of John Z. Lepcha

Bhutia community has a rich tradition of crafting special textiles and garments for ceremonies, festivals, and significant life events like weddings. These garments are designed to be far more ornate and elaborate than everyday wear, reflecting the importance of the occasions for which they are made. For ceremonies and festivals, the Bhutia create garments that are masterpieces of intricate design and craftsmanship. These special textiles often feature vibrant colors and elaborate patterns, woven with meticulous care to ensure they stand out. The use of luxurious materials such as silk brocades (*Koechen and Gyasar*), often adorned with metallic threads, and adds a level of opulence befitting the grandeur of these events. **(Plate 4.148)**

Weddings, in particular, call for the most splendid attire **(Plate 4.167)**. The bridal garments were a stunning display of artistry, often featuring rich embroidery, detailed beadwork (contemporary), and traditional motifs that have been passed down through generations. The groom's attire was equally magnificent, with a focus on regal colors and intricate designs that symbolize prosperity and happiness.

Intricate jewelry forms an intrinsic part of Bhutia ceremonial attire, studded with precious stones like turquoise, coral, amber, and gold. This includes necklaces, earrings, bracelets, and headpieces. Jewelry was used to depict the wealth and culture of the Bhutia people and respect for their cultural heritage and adherence to traditions that they want to pass on to future generations. These garments and jewelry are worn with pride and transform ceremonies and festivals into colorful celebrations of Bhutia heritage. **(Plate 4.167).**

Bhutia textiles were versatile and suitable for various occasions. While traditional attire was worn during cultural events and festivals, more contemporary adaptations are designed for daily wear and special occasions. Known for their use of silk, vibrant colors, intricate weaving techniques, religious symbolism, and cultural significance. These textiles played a vital role in preserving and celebrating Bhutia culture and heritage in the Himalayan region. It was observed by the researcher that efforts were being made to preserve and promote and document Bhutia traditional textiles and weaving techniques.

4.2.2.14 Cross border trade patterns

Bhutia do not consider their own selves to be anywhere near being Tibetan although they have had sustained interaction with them and many of the older generation speak fluent Tibetan and Chinese. Interestingly these people came to be associated with Tibet. It is not an accidental association but the result of a long drawn political and trade-based drama where the various political and social entities on the borders have been negotiating and re negotiating with each other



Plate 4.168: Sherathang market, Indo- China Trade Center, near Nathula

One of the most important and successful commercial routes in ancient times was the Silk Road. It was essential in promoting trade and Buddhism between China and India. One of three border trading posts between India and China, the Nathu La (pass) is a component of the historic Silk Road. The other two are Shipkila (Himachal Pradesh) and Lipulekh or Lipulech (Uttarakhand). The route experienced a surge of activity during the British era, including trade and multiple British expeditions to Tibet as part of their strategy to limit Imperial Russia. Even after China and India gained their independence in 1949 and 1947, respectively, trade on the Nathu la persisted. The route was utilized for border crossing, exporting electronics and textiles, as well as importing raw wool, silk, and priceless stones from China. However, it was closed to all civilian activities following the 1962 Sino-Indian War.

After Sino-Indian relations were restored, attempts were undertaken to boost trade between the two nations. It was acknowledged by both nations that trade routes like the Nathu La have tremendous promise in this area. The Tibet Autonomous Region of China and the state of Sikkim are connected by Nathu La. The opening of Nathu la was agreed upon under Article 2 of a Memorandum on Expanding Border Trade signed between the two nations in 2003.

Border (China and India) trade at Sherathang (**Plate 4.168**) were scheduled to be open from Monday to Thursday every week from 7:30 am to 3:30 pm IST for the border trade. Agriculture implements, blankets, copper products, clothing, bicycles, coffee, tea, barley, rice, flour, dry fruits, dry and fresh vegetables, vegetable oil, gur and misri, spices, shoes, kerosene oil, stationery, utensils, wheat, liquor, milk processed product, canned food, cigarettes, local herb, palm oil, and hardware are among the items that were exported from India to other regions. Goat skin, Sheep skin, Wool, Raw Silk, Yak tail, Butter, China clay, Borax, Goat Kashmiri, Common salt, Yak hair, Horse, Goat, and Sheep are among the goods that can be exported from China to Sikkim through Tibet.

The Bhutia were thought to have moved from Tibet to the southern Himalayan Mountain ranges around the Indo-Tibetan boundary in the 9th century AD or later. Many Bhutia groups have incorporated aspects of Hindu culture despite having Tibetan roots and maintaining Tibetan cultural characteristics. Although there were social, cultural, and religious variations among the numerous Bhutia groups in the Himalayas, they do share several traits. They all

inhabit in mountains and have historically engaged in trade between South Asia and Tibet via the Himalayas.

According to **Corrigan, 2017** in her book *Tibetan Dress in Amdo and Kham* mentioned about the traditional trade patterns between Tibet and China which defiantly have connection with the textile trading pattern between India and China through Tibet. It was observed that Chinese silk and brocades were introduced to Tibetan court and in 719 the Chinese dynasty presented the Tibetan king with 2000 bolts of silk. The court gradually began to dress in Chinese style, but commoners still wore their traditional clothes made of sheepskin or woven woollen fabrics, adjusting the fabric to the season.

Trade with China nearly came to an end when the Tibetan Kingdom broke up in the middle of the ninth century, for a period of about 400 years. The Sakya sect brought peace to Tibet during the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368), and close ties were once again made.

In the fifteenth century, popular fairs developed to sell and barter woollen fabrics with traders from Nepal Bhutan and India.

The Tibetans enjoyed close trading ties with India for many years, especially with Bengal's Calcutta. The wealth of Tibet was referred to in the stories of missionaries and travelers. Warren Hastings, the Governor of Bengal, sought to expand trade with Tibet, therefore in 1774 George Bogle was send to conduct talks with the Tibetans.

Later it was observed that because transportation via the high Himalayan Mountains was costly and challenging, the majority of the things Tibetans bought and sold were of great value. At this period, India was exporting spices, sugar, indigo dye, coral, pearls, and woollen textiles. In exchange, the Tibetans traded yak tails, gold, silver, woollen clothing, musk, salt, and Chinese brocades.

Due to local conflicts with Nepalese and Bhutanese factions who sought to monopolies commerce, transport through the main trade routes from India was challenging and dangerous. The East India Company should have complete control over the Himalayan monarchy, according to British ideals. However, the Tibetans were opposed to creating a new trade pact. Despite this pandemonium, trade continued and Tibetans merchants went to Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi to buy luxury items.

Researcher observed that Sherathang, trade was accessible to the locals of Sikkim State and has been shown to be a source of income for those living in this area. Trade between the two nations had played an important role in weaving Bhutia textile history.

4.3 Evolutions in traditional textiles and costumes of Lepcha and Bhutia Communities across generations.

4.3.1 Tools and Techniques

4.3.2 Social Customs

4.3.3 Cultural changes

Interviews conducted with various families, government officials, tailors, and designers revealed that, after the merger of Sikkim with India in 1975, the textiles and costumes of the Lepcha and Bhutia communities of Sikkim have undergone several significant changes. Researcher observed that after the monarchy's ascension, the Lepchas began adopting elements of Bhutia culture, including its national religion Buddhism. Although they continued weaving their own textiles, they allegedly started wearing traditional Tibetan/Bhutia clothing in addition to their traditional Lepcha clothing. These clothing items included silk male and female robes, cotton and silk male and female undershirts, and trousers. By the twentieth century, some Lepcha men reportedly began wearing long-sleeved, buttoned overcoats in purple, blue, and red, similar to those worn by Tibetan Buddhist lamas. Wool and silk garments became popular among various ethnic groups in Sikkim and were popularized primarily by Tibetans/Bhutias. These fabrics reached sharp popularity in this period and their contemporary usage was inevitably tied up in the community's history.

According to the oral narratives, during the period of British rule in Sikkim, foreign companies began hiring Lepchas to weave different textiles apart from their traditional crafts. Cotton production and silk weaving were already common in Sikkim at that time. As a result, cotton textiles became more popular among the Lepchas, and they started embellishing their fabrics with vegetable-dyed, vertical stripes of red and blue. These new textiles and weaving techniques were similar to those introduced by the Bhutias. These techniques have been passed down to contemporary textiles. During interview it was revealed that Lepcha textiles have been both modernized and commercialized in the process. Their current textile productions results were therefore representative of their recent history and contemporary conditions.

The Chogyals regained some autonomy towards the end of the British occupation in their area. Although Sikkim did not become a part of India after the dissolution of the British Raj in 1947, it did become an Indian protectorate in 1950. The reigning Chogyal established the

Technical Institute for Training and Production of Traditional Arts and Crafts in 1957 to preserve and revive traditional arts and crafts of the state. This institute also aimed to generate income and provide employment by training aspiring artisans. The Institute has been teaching artisans to weave Lepcha textiles on back-strap looms, trainees also learn how to dye yarn. American designers were invited to Sikkim to promote textile design diversification. Despite the efforts to ensure the survival of traditions in an increasingly culturally diverse Sikkim, there have been attempts to bolster this survival through the adoption of new techniques and designs. These not only open up the textile market to new consumers but also encourage innovations that will continue to allow Lepcha textiles to serve as not merely surviving but living and evolving components of the community's culture. Therefore, despite the new elements which were seen as distancing from traditions, also allow for the preservation of tradition.

4.3.1 Tools and Techniques

As per the interviews conducted the handloom sector in Sikkim has experienced several significant changes in tools and techniques.

4.3.1.1 Introduction of Modern Looms: Traditional backstrap and loin looms began to be supplemented or replaced by frame looms and mechanized looms. Weavers have started using throw shuttle looms with Jacquard attachments. This transition created space for more efficient production and the ability to create larger and more complex textiles. Weavers started exploring various fibers other than the traditional ones. Directorate of Handloom was set up in Gangtok and was spread to other Zones of Sikkim with the objectives of training the artisans and preserve and revive the languishing ethnic art and craft of Sikkim. According to Poonam Khatiwara, assistant director at DHH, Gangtok, shared that Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom (D.H.H.) began its journey in 1957 as a Technical Institute for Training and Production of traditional arts and crafts, starting with 58 trainees. Over the years, it has evolved into a prominent center for learning and training in the traditional arts and crafts of Sikkim. Today, the Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom was a vibrant hub for craft activities, development, and progress, showcasing Sikkim's rich heritage. Its growth in terms of physical assets, infrastructure, and manpower has been remarkable, now boasting 32 branch training centers across the state with a total of 388 trainees.

4.3.1.2 Improved Weaving Techniques: Weavers in Sikkim have adopted advanced weaving techniques introduced through training programs. They have started using various

software for designing, such as CAD, Illustrator, Corel, and Photoshop, to create new patterns and motifs, especially for carpet weaving. The introduction of computer-aided design tools has allowed for more precise and innovative pattern creation, enabling weavers to experiment with intricate designs and maintain consistency across products. Additionally, weavers were sent to training programs conducted by other government agencies in different states of India, where they learn new designs and weaving patterns. These programs have introduced new patterns, designs, and weaving methods, enhancing the quality and variety of handloom products. After the merger, various government and non-governmental organizations started focusing on skill development and training programs for weavers and craftsmen. These programs aim to modernize traditional techniques and improve the livelihoods of artisans.

4.3.1.3 Use of Synthetic Dyes: While natural dyes were traditionally used, later synthetic dyes were introduced, offering a broader range of colors and greater colorfastness. This shift provided more vibrant and durable textiles. Plus these dyes were cheaper compare to the natural dyes. Additionally it saves time and labor. Locals have switched to better raw materials. Integration into the Indian market provided Sikkimese weavers with improved access to high-quality raw materials, such as better grades of dyes, fibers, yarns like cotton, wool, and silk, which were previously less accessible.

Design Innovation: Exposure to broader Indian and international markets brought new design ideas and trends to Sikkim. Weavers started incorporating contemporary designs alongside traditional motifs, appealing to a wider customer base. People also began using modern silhouettes in garments, influenced by British presence in the state.

4.3.1.4 Quality Control and Standardization: According to one of the Govt. official at DHH, Gangtok, post-merger, there was an increased focus on quality control and standardization, ensuring that handloom products from Sikkim met national and international standards; thereby it boosted marketability of the products. It was observed that there was a shift towards better marketing and branding strategies. Handloom products from Sikkim began to be promoted at trade fairs and exhibitions, increasing their visibility and appeal in wider markets. The Indian government provided financial support, subsidies, and schemes specifically aimed at boosting the handloom sector. This support helped in modernizing equipment, providing raw materials at subsidized rates, and improving overall infrastructure. These changes collectively contributed to the modernization and growth of the handloom sector in Sikkim, helping it to thrive in the post-merger era while preserving its unique

cultural heritage. Social media had played an important role in promoting traditional textiles and goods from Sikkim. Platforms like, Instagram, Facebook, Whatsapp and others have created awareness about the new products on a global level.

4.3.2 Social Customs

Lepchas conduct a variety of conventional traditions, including observances related with birth, marriage, and death. These fests constantly include traditional music, cotillion, and deity immolations. The *Dokho* form, which marks the transition of a boy to masculinity, is an important ritual in the Lepcha society. It consists of a number of traditional observances and carnivals. The Lepcha community celebrates colorful carnivals, the most notable of which are " *Nimdo*" and " *Saga Dawa*." Prayers, rituals, and artistic performances are held during these carnivals, promoting a sense of community and artistic durability. The Lepchas exercise their indigenous religion, *Mun*, which incorporates a close relationship with nature and the deification of spirits. Sacred timbers and lakes are deified as spiritual hotspots. Similarly, the Bhutia community also has a rich cultural heritage, and their social customs which played a significant role in shaping their way of life.

Over the time, the social customs of the Lepcha and Bhutia communities in Sikkim have undergone significant transformations influenced by modernization, education, and broader integration into Indian society. Traditionally, both communities practiced strong endogamous marriages to preserve cultural identity and lineage. However, contemporary times have seen a growing acceptance of inter-community and inter-caste marriages due to Younger generation moving out for higher studies, Job and increased interactions with other communities and evolving social norms were noticed. Language and education have also seen substantial changes. Indigenous languages were once predominantly spoken, with traditional education methods focused on oral transmission of knowledge. Today, formal education has gained prominence, with English and Hindi often being the primary languages of instruction in schools. Despite ongoing efforts to preserve indigenous languages, a shift towards bilingualism or multilingualism was evident.

Religious practices, while still rooted in tradition, they have incorporated influences from other religions such as Hinduism and Christianity. The Lepchas, who traditionally followed animistic beliefs and nature worship, and the Bhutias, who practiced Tibetan Buddhism, now exhibit a blend of old and new religious elements. Festivals and celebrations reflect this blend of tradition and modernity. Traditional festivals like *Pang Lhabsol*, *Losar*, and *Tendong Lho*

Rum Faat remain important, yet there was increasing participation in national festivals such as Diwali and Christmas, highlighting broader cultural integration.

Economic activities have diversified due to increased exposure to new ventures. People were more educated and employed in various government and private sectors. The shift has expanded beyond subsistence agriculture, animal husbandry, and handicrafts to government jobs, tourism, and small-scale industries. Traditional arts and crafts have found new markets, contributing to economic sustainability and growth. When talking about giving equal opportunity for both the genders things have really changed. The role of women in Lepcha and Bhutia communities has also evolved a lot over the period of time. Traditionally it was focused on household chores, agriculture, and family care, women now have greater access to education and employment opportunities, making significant strides in public spheres such as politics, business, and education.

Community structures and governance have shifted from traditional chieftains and elder councils to more democratic governance models, with increased community participation in state and national politics. While traditional councils still hold influence, they coexist with modern administrative systems.

Losar was the Tibetan New Year festival which was celebrated by the Bhutia community with enthusiasm. This involves traditional rituals, prayers, and festive gatherings. Families come together to celebrate and exchange greetings. This practice was still continue along with Cham dance which was a traditional dance form performed by Buddhist monks during religious festivals. The Bhutia community actively participates in and observes these dances, which were often associated with religious ceremonies. People were usually seen wearing their traditional attire during these festivals.

4.3.2.1 Marriage Customs: Lepcha and Bhutia weddings involve elaborate rituals and ceremonies. Matchmaking was often done with the involvement of elders, and traditional customs such as exchange of scarves locally known as *khada*, which was woven in silk. Available in various range starting from plain to printed. Offering of traditional drinks were integral to the marriage ceremony. Due to modernization and globalization people have started giving flowers and bouquets. Recently an initiative was taken by 'La'design, an organization working towards sustainable craft practices in Sikkim. This organization has introduced sustainable *khada*, which was made out of *sisnu* (nettle) fiber and woven on a

traditional loom. These *khadas* were hand block printed and sometimes screen printed. Screen and block printing of the textiles also started and majorly took place in Kalimpong.

Buddhism was at the heart of Bhutia culture, deeply woven into their social customs. Monasteries were central part of their culture, where people regularly engage in prayers, rituals, and pilgrimage worship. Music and dance were also rich traditions within the Bhutia community. They use traditional instruments like the *dramnyen*, and their dances often tell stories from folklore and religious texts.

One of the most significant times for the Bhutia people was Sagadawa Festival, a sacred month that marks the birth, enlightenment, and death of Buddha. During this time, special ceremonies, prayers, and acts of generosity are common. The Bhutia were also renowned for their traditional arts and crafts, such as thangka painting, wood carving, and carpet weaving, which were steeped in religious and cultural symbolism.

Talking about food, culinary practices have diversified as well. Although traditional diets and specific dietary customs remain cherished, foods and culinary practices from other parts of India and the world have been incorporated. Cuisine played a vital role in Bhutia social life, with traditional dishes like "*Phagshapa*" (pork with radishes), "*Gundruk*" (fermented greens), and various types of momos being central to social gatherings and celebrations. Additionally, customs like Losung and Namsoong, which revolve around planting and harvesting crops, include rituals and prayers for a successful harvest. These rich traditions and practices were essential to the Bhutia community's cultural identity and social cohesion. The opening of new specialized kitchens and restaurants has increased tourist footfall within the state, adding more value to the local economy.

4.3.2.2 Residential Architecture:

During field visits it was observed that traditional Lepcha and Bhutia houses often have distinctive architectural features, Lepcha houses were very simple whereas Bhutia houses were made with intricately carved wooden panels and colorful paintings. The arrangement of rooms reflects the social structure of the family. These social customs contribute to the cultural identity and cohesion of the Lepcha and Bhutia community in Sikkim, fostering a sense of continuity with their rich heritage. Even the monasteries and colourful architecture somewhere connects and reflected in their textiles and costumes.

4.3.2.3 Traditional Attire

Researcher has conducted various interviews with the Lepcha and Bhutia community members while investigating their traditional textiles and costumes. The information collected from the interview revealed, despite being far away, Sikkim in India has always been a hub of cultural interaction. It was located in the southern highlands of the Himalayas. Numerous changes have been brought about by interactions between Sikkim's indigenous populations and foreign forces.

Since ancient times, the Lepchas, an ethnic group native to the region in and surrounding Sikkim, have been affected by these events and have become accustomed to them. These developments, which was seen as the catalysts for Sikkim's and the Lepchas' modernity, have been linked to the gradual erasure or alteration of Lepcha culture. Increased development, industrialization, and urbanization in Sikkim had an even greater impact on Lepcha culture.

Although modern Lepcha textiles frequently deviate from what the Lepchas define as the textiles'(as discussed in objective 4.2) historical forms, the community's traditional textiles were nevertheless among the elements of traditional Lepcha culture that have been preserved. The modifications to Lepcha textiles, along with the acknowledged effects of the various forces of cultural exchange and modernization on Lepcha culture, show a balance of elements associated with tradition and elements associated with cultural change and modernity within Lepcha textiles. Lepcha textiles were still accepted as components of traditional Lepcha culture. Because weaving was a visual art, the interaction between tradition and change may be seen in both the production and the aesthetics of current Lepcha textiles. This defines the idea that advancement and conventional wisdom were mutually exclusive. Additionally, the crafts become physical representations of the Lepchas legacy, which was saturated by both traits, as a result of the interactions between modernity and tradition inside the textiles.

Mr. Mohan and Mr. Tom Shering Lepcha's research also explores the Lepcha weaving tradition and contemporary textiles, examining the amalgamation of traditional culture and modernization. It is necessary to first discuss and understand the original forms of embellishments and weaving techniques of Lepcha textiles in order to comprehend how modern Lepcha textiles balance tradition and development. This was used as a point of comparison for the characteristics of "modern" and "outside-originating" textiles from the present. It is important to understand how specific characteristics of contemporary Lepcha textiles relate to the traditional landscape of Lepchas culture in their very homeland Sikkim.

The Bhutia community had distinct traditional attire that has evolved significantly over time. Originally handmade materials like sheep or yak skin and wool, the Bhutia kho has been transformed over the past 370 years since the formation of the Kingdom of Sikkim in 1642. According to **Sonam Tashi Gyaltzen (2014)**, traditional hand-woven fabrics and tanned yak skins have largely been replaced by factory-produced materials.

In the 1700s and 1800s, Bhutia men and women wore the kho made from sheep or yak skin and wool. With the opening of trade between India and Tibet, factory-manufactured materials became available, brought by Tibetan traders through Yatung, a historic trading town in Tibet. The *Lachenpas* and *Lachungpas*, who lived in harsh climatic conditions, typically wore sheep-skin robes, hand-sewn and crudely tanned in butter, with the fleece on the inside. These robes were often glued together with animal gelatin rather than stitched.

It was also observed that by the early 1900s, increased trade between Sikkim and India introduced better and cheaper variations of woolen and cotton fabrics. Textiles were primarily brought in by the Agarwal Trading Company (Marwari traders) to Kalimpong, an important trading hub linking India, Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, and China. The Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959 led to a large influx of Tibetan refugees into Sikkim, including highly skilled tailors known as *ulah*, who contributed to the transformation of the kho.

Stitching became more common, and alternative fabrics were used, diminishing the differences in attire between commoners and nobility and leading to a style common to all Denjongpas/ Bhutias. The traditional loose-fitting gown, fastened by a separate belt, was tailored to fit more closely at the upper part while maintaining the loose and folded effect at the lower section. The redesigned kho features wide flaps from the waist down, with straps made of the same material that can be tied in various ways. The garment was also adapted to be sleeveless, though full-length sleeves are still worn. Often made from silk brocade with Tibetan motifs of longevity, the kho was worn over the *teygho*, or blouse.

This redesigned kho was easier to wear, lighter, and more elegant. Young Bhutia women have readily adopted it, and it has spread to adjoining regions. Besides being worn by Tibetan refugees in India, the design has also been adopted in Tibet and was now considered the "traditional dress" of Tibetan women.

Over the past century, Sikkim has experienced significant changes that have reshaped its social fabric and cultural perceptions. The adoption of the Western education system, which

included the introduction of school uniforms, played a key role in this transformation. Students were encouraged to connect with the external world to build a modern Sikkimese society, and many were sent to study outside Sikkim in English-medium schools. This exposure significantly influenced their attire and social behavior. Despite these changes, the Bhutias largely adhered to a disciplined dress code under the guidance of the Chogyal, maintaining a sense of national dress. Today, the traditional kho is primarily worn during festivals like Losung (the Sikkimese New Year), weddings, funerals, and special religious events. While men reserve the kho for such occasions, married Bhutia women often wear it daily, valuing the sense of dignity it provides. Younger women, too, appreciate the kho for its fashionable ethnic design and diverse materials. Although Western-style clothing is more practical for everyday wear in Sikkim, many working women, particularly in government roles, opt for the kho.

In a personal interview with Sonam Gyaltzen and Karma Sonam it was shared that the rise of Western-style clothing is evident, with numerous clothing shops and branded retail outlets catering to modern preferences. Clothing choices often reflect one's stance on tradition versus modernity, which extends beyond attire to lifestyle changes among the Bhutias. Traditionally, they lived in self-built houses in deep valleys, constructed from earth, stone, and wood, harmonizing with their surrounding ecosystem.

However, many have moved to urban areas, living in buildings constructed by migrant laborers. These buildings often lack space for drying clothes and have inconsistent water supplies, making Western clothing more practical. The availability of dry-cleaning services and washing machines has also encouraged the daily wear of the kho. Centralized development in Gangtok has driven changes throughout Sikkim. From the 1970s, educated individuals and businesspeople migrated to Gangtok seeking better job opportunities and infrastructure.

There is a notable tension between tradition and modernity among the Bhutia's. While they historically relied on agriculture and animal husbandry, increased tourism and external job opportunities have introduced new skills and ideas through interaction with other ethnic groups and modern education. They have come to depend more on external markets and people.

Modern Bhutia view this as a natural transition, indicative of a culture open to growth and learning. Today, the Bhutia kho is more than just clothing; it symbolizes ethnic identity and

serves as a fashion statement, reflecting the community's adaptation to contemporary influences while preserving its heritage.

4.3.3 Cultural changes

Over the course of its history, Sikkim has witnessed various phases of change and exchange, particularly in terms of attire. Traditionally, the attire of the indigenous communities like the Lepchas and Bhutias reflected their cultural heritage and environmental adaptation. However, with the influence of external factors such as migration, trade, and cultural exchanges, Sikkimese attire has undergone significant transformations.

It is believed that back in days, Sikkim attire was largely dictated by local customs, climate, and societal norms. The Lepchas, adorned themselves with garments made from natural fibers like sisnu (nettle), cotton and wool, often intricately woven or embroidered with traditional motifs. Similarly, the Bhutias were known for their distinctive attire, including the Kho, for men and the kho for women, typically crafted from wool and adorned with intricate patterns.

According to the personal interview with **Sonam Dubal** a revivalist and a designer, who did mentioned that with the arrival of traders, travelers, and settlers from neighboring regions and beyond, influence of neighboring countries like china, Tibet, Bhutan, India had a major impact on the textile culture of Sikkim. Sikkim became a melting pot of cultures, leading to the exchange of ideas and fashion influences. The introduction of new fabrics, dyes, and weaving techniques enriched the local textile traditions, leading to the adoption of new styles and designs. For example, the incorporation of silk and satin fabrics, as well as intricate embroidery and beadwork, added a touch of luxury to Sikkimese attire.

It was also revealed during the interviews that during the colonial era and subsequent periods of political change, Sikkim's attire also reflected shifts in power dynamics and social structures. Western influence, particularly British colonialism, brought about changes in clothing styles, with elements of Western fashion gradually assimilating into traditional attire. This fusion of styles can be observed in the adoption of tailored coats, trousers, and skirts alongside traditional garments, reflecting a blend of modernity and tradition. Later on with trade happening with India Skkimese started a showing liking towards Indian fabrics and weaves, also started adopting Indian attire like sari, Blouse, Ghaghara, Salwar, Kameez, Kurta, pajama. **(Fig 4.3.1)**

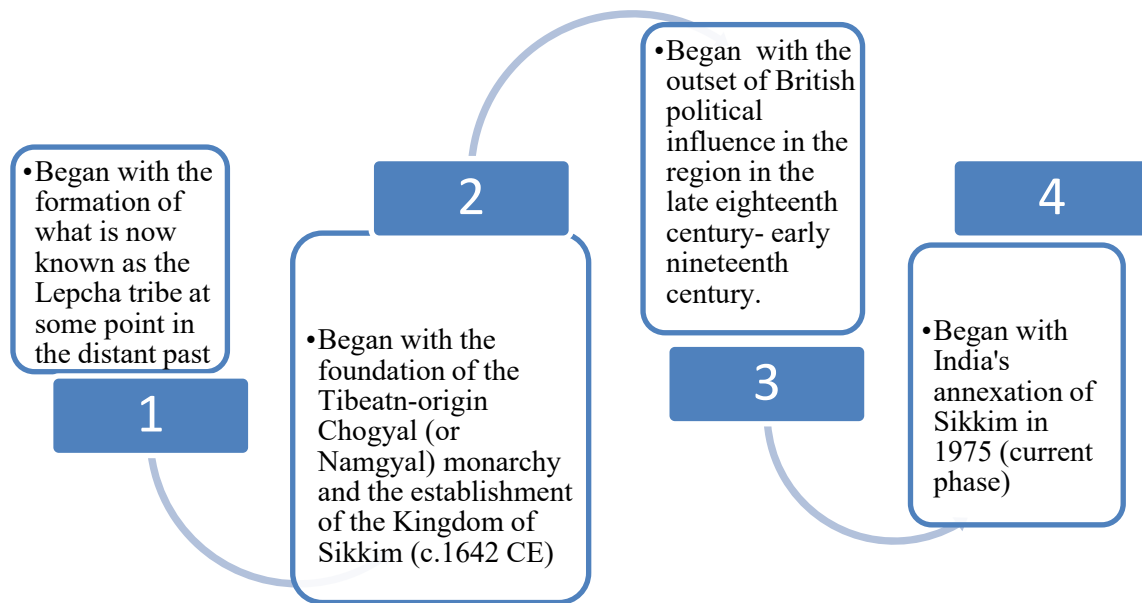


Fig 4.1 Various Phases of Change

In contemporary times, Sikkimese attire continues to evolve, influenced by globalization, tourism, and the media. While traditional attire remains integral to cultural festivals and ceremonies, everyday dress has become more eclectic, with individuals embracing a mix of traditional and modern clothing styles. Additionally, the rise of the fashion industry and increased access to global markets have led to greater experimentation with fabrics, colors, and designs, resulting in a vibrant and diverse fashion landscape in Sikkim. The new fashion brands making their way in the Sikkim market, brands like, United Colours of Benetton, H&M, Reebok, Woodland, MINISO, Bata, Allen Solly, Metro, Lifestyles, Fab India are few examples who have made their stand among the Sikkimese. Overall, the phases of change and exchange in Sikkim's history have shaped its attire into a dynamic expression of cultural identity, reflecting the region's rich heritage and its openness to external influences. The influence of media, including radio, cinema, and television, introduced new trends in music, fashion, and attitudes. More recently, mobile phones have become revolutionary communication tools and status symbols accessible to various income groups.

The Lepcha & Bhutia community in Sikkim, like numerous indigenous communities, has experienced artistic changes affected by colorful factors over the times. These changes reflect a dynamic commerce between traditional practices and external forces. Some crucial artistic changes in the Lepcha & Bhutia community of Sikkim include:

4.3.3.1 Influence of Modernization: The arrival of modernization, increased connectivity, and exposure to global trends which has made a major impact on the cultures of the Lepcha & Bhutia community. This includes changes in apparel and consumption patterns.

4.3.3.2 Language Shift: While efforts were made to save the Lepcha & Bhutia language, there's an implicit language shift, especially among the young generation. Using other extensively spoken languages like Nepali and English in education and daily life.

4.3.3.3 Education and Employment Openings: The pursuit of formal education and employment openings outside traditional occupations has become more common among the Lepcha & Bhutia youth. This shift has impacted social dynamics and artistic practices.

4.3.3.4 Migration and Urbanization: The observation reveals that the shift to urban areas for work or education has a notable impact on how individuals adjust to city cultures. This transition from rural to urban living has brought about changes in traditional customs and community interactions. Notably, there are consistent efforts observed, both internally within the Lepcha and Bhutia communities and externally through various groups, to safeguard and rejuvenate traditional artistic practices. These endeavors are focused on validating myths, traditional medicine, and rituals.

4.3.3.5 Media and Technology: Access to media and technology has increased mindfulness and connectivity among the Lepcha & Bhutia community. This exposure has led to both the preservation of traditional knowledge and the relinquishment of new artistic influences along with the expectable changes. The influence of media, including radio, cinema, and television, introduced new trends in music, fashion, and attitudes. More recently, mobile phones have become revolutionary communication tools and status symbols accessible to various income groups.

4.3.3.6 Tourism Impact: Tourism in Sikkim has grown over the years, bringing both economic opportunities and challenges. The influx of tourists can influence cultural practices, and there may be efforts to showcase and commercialize aspects of Lepcha & Bhutia culture. Buying pattern has been also changed due to these. It has been observed that procurement of raw material for the garments is done from India as well as China. Cross border trade place a major role in building rich textile vocabulary of Sikkim.

The objective of the study was “to document the changes in traditional textiles and costumes”. With this objective, interview schedule was designed to understand these changes

and what were the factors which were responsible for these changes. Researcher conducted in-depth interviews with locals from the Lepcha and Bhutia communities after identifying them. The communities were examined based on location, ease of travel, and making contact with weavers and local authorities in a study of the two communities with 160 respondents. The analysis of data was conducted considering variables such as family, gender, education, occupation, family type, and religion, in alignment with the frame hypotheses of the study. To assess this, the Kruskal-Wallis test and proportion test was applied. The test involved comparing the median of three groups (generations). The acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis was determined based on the p-value. The data collected during fieldwork aimed to fulfill the study's hypotheses involved preparing an Excel sheet to segregate and organize responses from 160 individuals according to the interview schedule questions. Analysis was conducted, and the data was presented in bar diagrams.

4.3.3.7 Hypotheses set to understand the changes occurred in the Textile and costume of the two communities

Hypothesis I

H₀: There is no significant difference in the changes in textile and costume due to education.

H₁: There is a significant difference in the changes in textile and costume due to education.

Hypothesis II

H₀: Perception of all respondents with respect to the changes in textile and costume was not due to the merger of Sikkim with India.

H₁: Perception of all respondents with respect to the changes in textile and costume was due to the merger of Sikkim with India.

Hypothesis III

H₀: Perception of all respondents with respect to the changes in textile and costume was not due to the influence of mass media.

H₁: Perception of all respondents with respect to the changes in textile and costume was due to the influence of mass media.

Hypothesis IV

H₀: Perception of all respondents with respect to the changes in textile and costume was not due to the influence of the neighboring countries.

H₁: Perception of all respondents with respect to the changes in textile and costume was due to the influence of the neighboring countries.

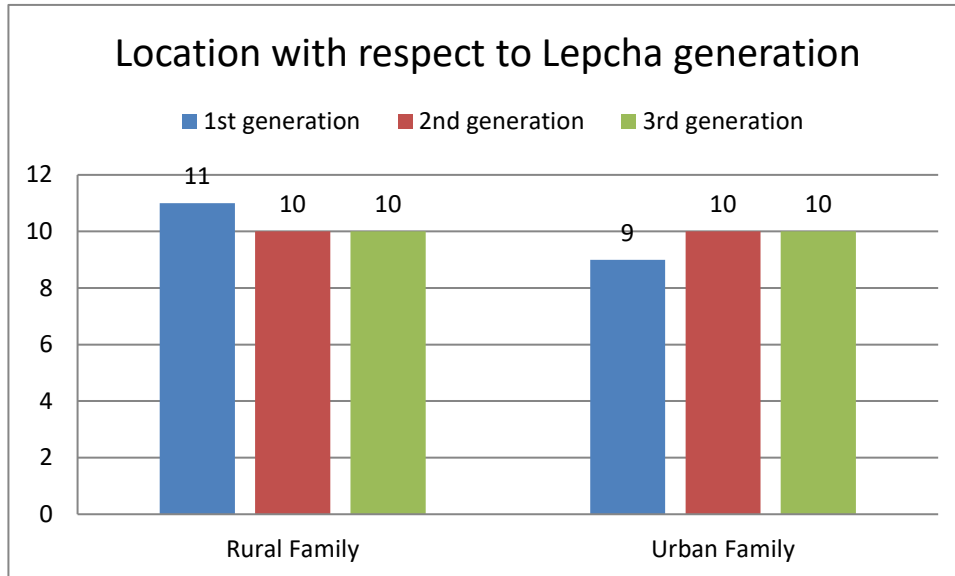
4.3.3.7.a Location with respect to generation

Generation 1	Above 60 years
Generation 2	Above 40 years
Generation 3	Above 20 years

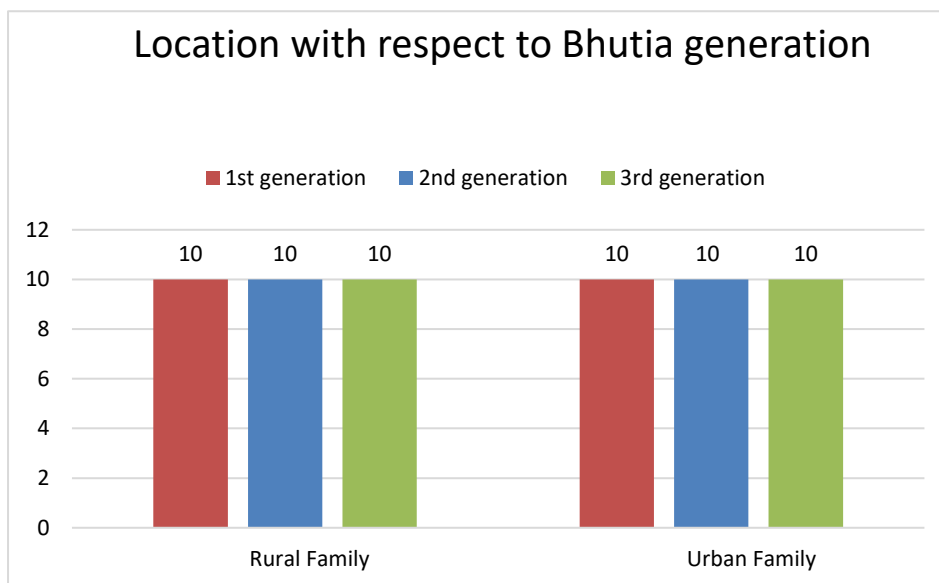
As every age group has their own preferences, therefore responses were collected from three different generations pertaining to traditional textiles and costumes of the Lepcha and Bhutia community. Both the genders were selected from three different generations because the kind of textiles and costumes used by all three has evolved with time. After receiving data related to generations of respondents, it was segregated under age groups. Data relating to Generation of Lepcha respondents indicated in **(Graph 4.1)** the distribution of counts across three generations (1, 2, and 3) and two locations (Rural Family and Urban Family), along with the grand totals for each. In Rural Family, the counts for Generations 1, 2, and 3 are 11, 10, and 10 respectively, adding up to a total of 31. In Urban Family, the counts are 9, 10, and 10 for the same generations, totaling 29. Each generation has a consistent total count of 20 across both locations, indicating a balanced distribution. However, Rural Family slightly out numbers Urban Family in the overall total, contributing 31 compared to Urban Family's 29. Data reflected from various Generation of Lepcha that total 60 respondents were from Sikkim and Kalimpong (West Bengal) state were between age group of 20 above , 40 above & 60 above respectively. Lepcha people who were interviewed in rural and urban areas from which the data indicates that the 1st Generation has more individuals from rural families compared to urban families. However, the 2nd and 3rd Generations have equal representation from both rural and urban backgrounds. Overall, there is a slight predominance of rural individuals across all generations, but the difference is minimal. This suggests a gradual equalization of rural and urban representation over generations.

Whereas for Bhutia people the data **(Graph 4.2)** indicates a balanced and equal representation of both families.

The bar chart **(Graph 4.2)** shows an equal distribution of Bhutia community respondents across three generations in both rural and urban areas. While older generations were more rural, the data suggests a gradual shift towards urbanization, with younger generations balancing both settings. This reflects modernization and better access to urban opportunities, while still maintaining strong cultural roots in rural areas.



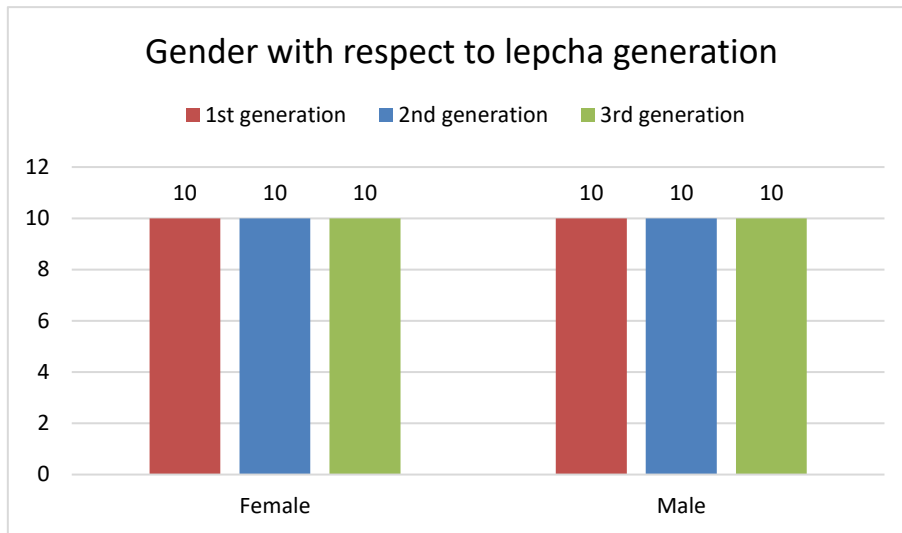
Graph 4.1 Generation of Lepcha



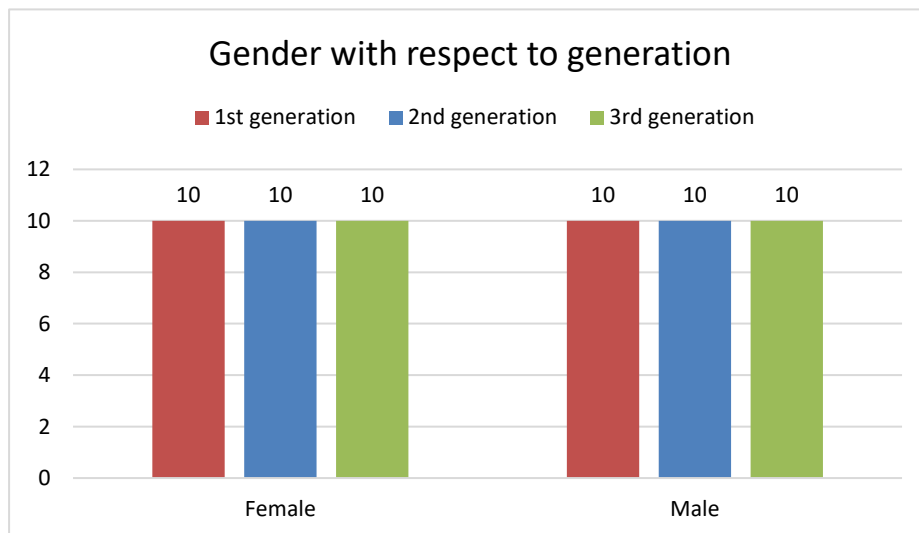
Graph 4.2 Generation of Bhutia

4.3.3.7 b. Gender with respect to Generations

The dataset (**Graph 4.3, Graph 4.4**) for Lepcha and Bhutia community reveals a consistent and equal representation of genders across three generations. Each generation consists of 20 individuals, with an even split of 10 males and 10 females. This balanced gender distribution suggests a stable demographic trend over the generations, reflecting equilibrium in gender representation.



Graph: 4.3 Lepcha community Gender Distribution

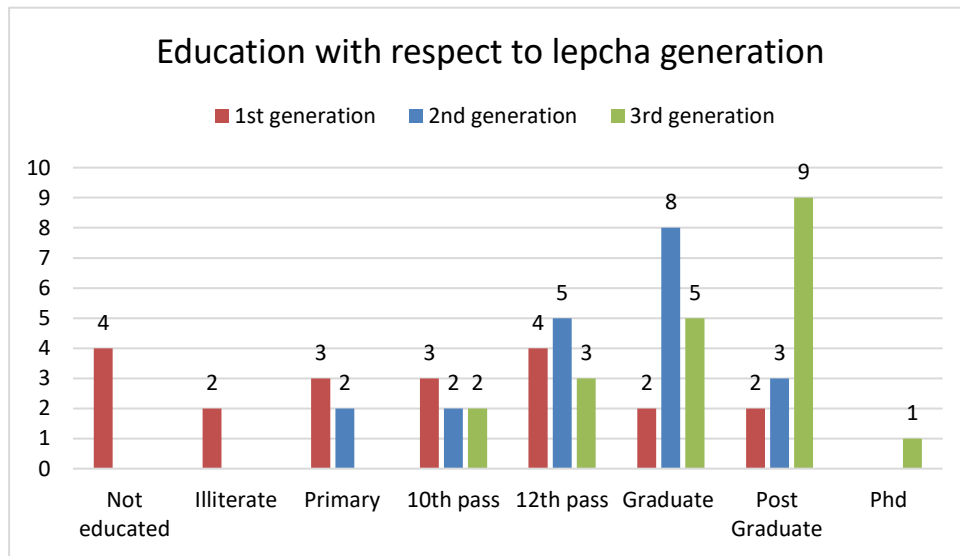


Graph 4.4 Bhutia community gender distributions

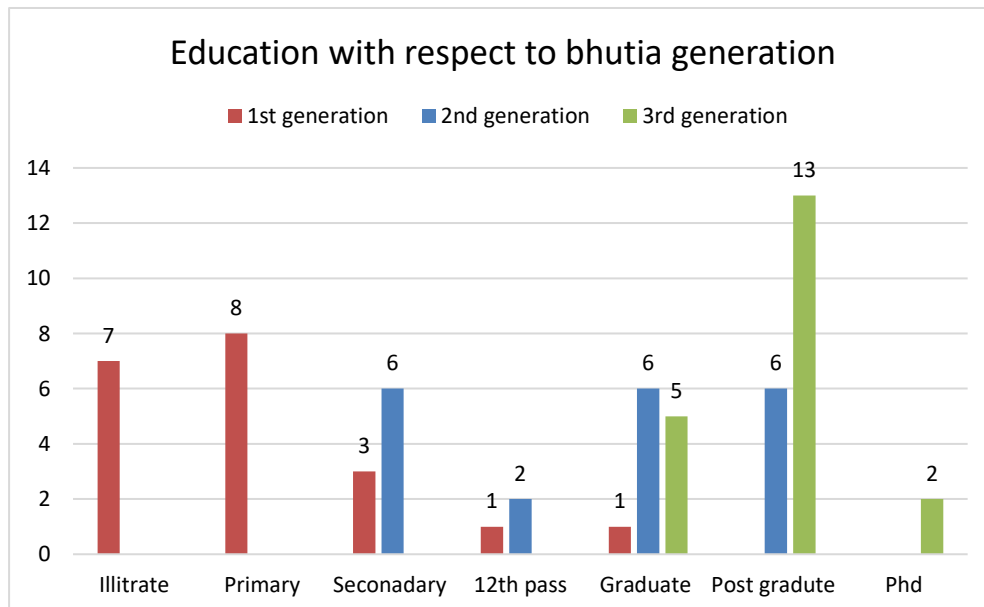
4.3.3.7 c. Education with respect to Generations

Data related to educational qualification of the respondents from Lepcha community were collected as education extensively influences a person’s behavior, attitude, value, interest and preferences to a huge extent. The data showcases a significant improvement in educational attainment across generations, moving from a substantial portion of the population being uneducated or having only primary education in Generation 1 to a higher percentage achieving graduate and postgraduate degrees by Generation 3. One count for PhD in 3rd generation. So positive shift is observed in the education of Lepcha community. This trend highlights the growing importance and accessibility of education over time (**Graph: 4.5**).

Similarly data related to educational qualification of the respondents from the Bhutia community was collected; the data indicates a progressive improvement in educational qualification across the three generations. Earlier generations had more individuals with lower levels of education, while the latest generation has a substantial increase in higher education qualifications, including postgraduate and PhD levels. The trend suggests a significant socio-educational development, with each generation achieving higher educational standards than the previous one (**Graph: 4.6**).



Graph: 4.5 Qualification of respondents (Lepcha)



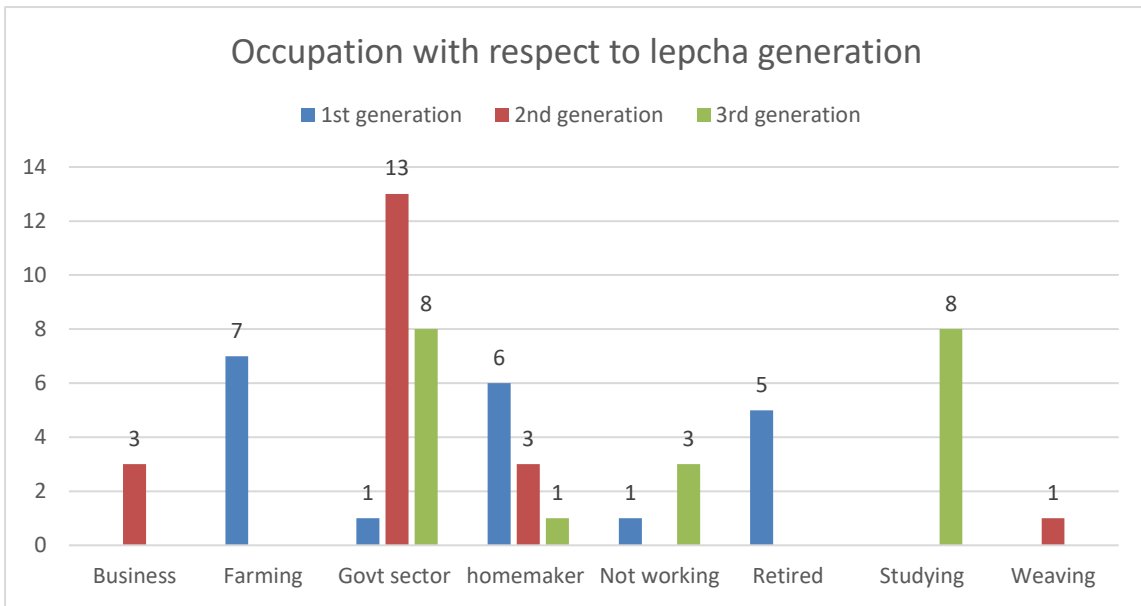
Graph: 4.6 Qualification of respondents (Bhutia)

4.3.3.7 d Occupation with respect to Generation

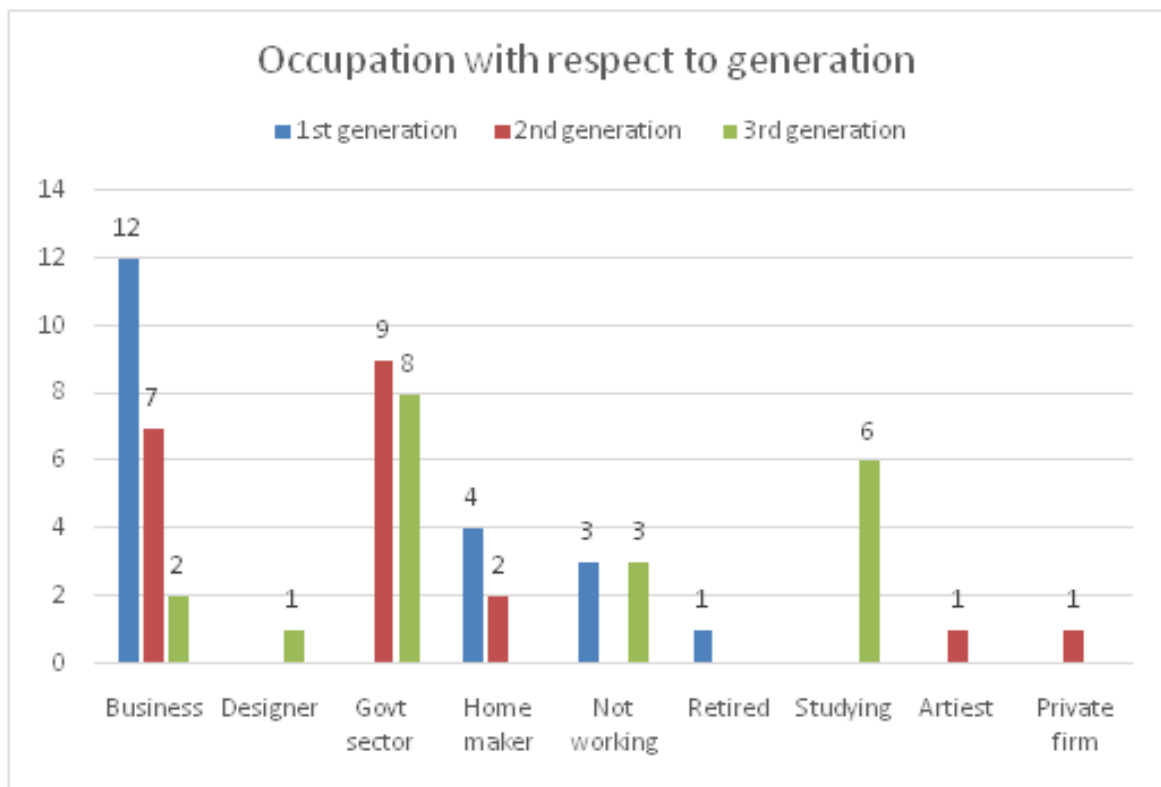
Data interpretation from Lepcha respondents illustrates the occupational distribution among three generations of the Lepcha community. In the 1st generation, the most common occupations are in the government sector (1 individuals), followed by retirees (5 individuals) and homemakers (6 individuals), with notable representation in farming (7 individuals). The 2nd generation shows a strong preference for the government sector, with 13 individuals, and a smaller number engaged in business and homemaking (3 individuals each), with minimal representation in weaving (1 individual). The 3rd generation is primarily focused on studying (8 individuals) and also has a significant number in the government sector (8 individuals), with zero engaged in farming and one individual not working. This data indicates a trend from diverse occupations in the 1st generation to a concentration in government jobs in the 2nd generation and a strong focus on education in the 3rd generation, reflecting socio-economic changes and evolving priorities within the Lepcha community. **(Graph : 4.7).**

Similarly Data interpretation for Bhutia shows a clear progression in educational attainment over three generations. The first generation has the highest number of individuals who are either illiterate or have only completed primary education, indicating limited educational access in the past. The second generation shows significant progress, with a marked decrease in illiteracy and primary education and a rise in people attaining secondary and higher education. The third generation demonstrates the greatest educational advancement, with no instances of illiteracy or just primary education. This generation also shows a significant increase in post-graduate degrees and includes PhD holders. This trend points to improvements in educational opportunities, socio-economic conditions, and an increasing emphasis on education over time.

The Graph 4.8 shows a shift in occupational trends across generations. The 1st generation was highly engaged in business (12 individuals), but this declined in later generations. In contrast, government jobs increased, with the 2nd and 3rd generations favoring stable employment. A notable rise in education (6 individuals studying in the 3rd generation) highlights a growing focus on academics. Fewer homemakers and the emergence of new careers like design and private sector jobs reflect evolving gender roles and modernization. Overall, the younger generation is moving away from traditional occupations, embracing diverse career paths and higher education. **(Graph: 4.8).**



Graph 4.7 Occupation of respondents (Lepcha)



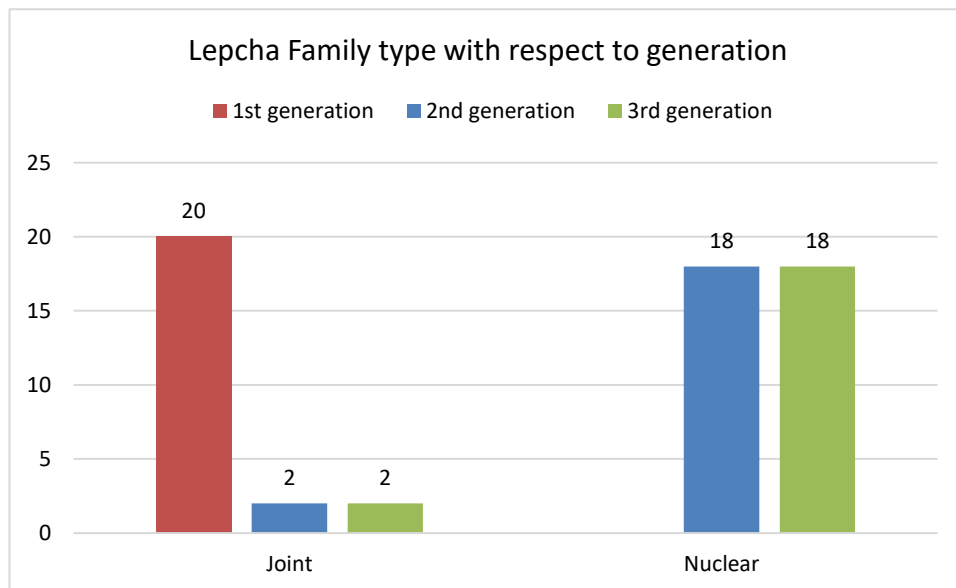
Graph 4.8 Occupation of respondents (Bhutia)

4.3.3.7 e Family type with respect to Generation

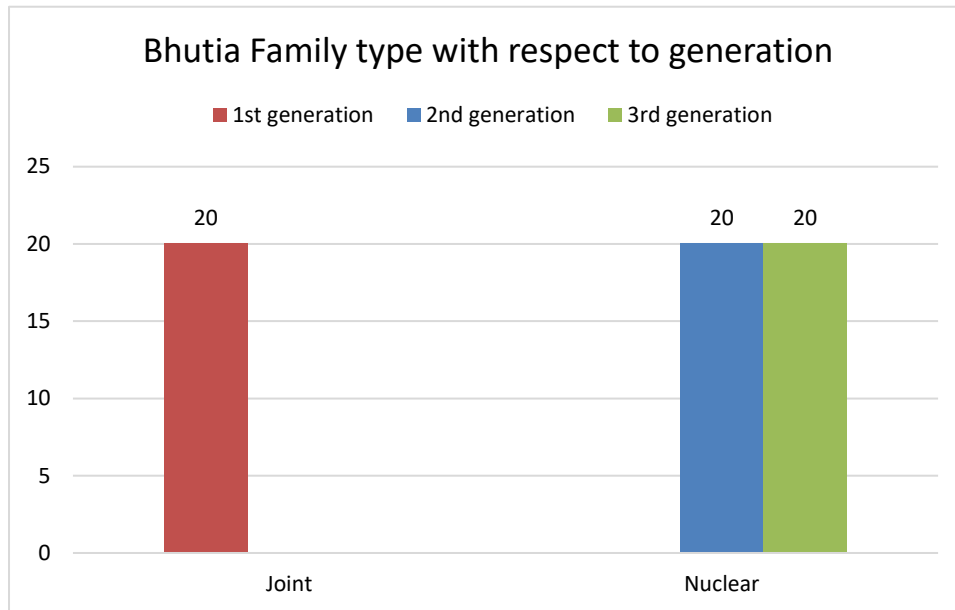
The data shows a significant change in family structures across Lepcha community (**Graph: 4.9**) three generations. In the first generation, all 20 individuals live in joint families,

reflecting the traditional family setup of the past. However, by the second generation, there is a marked shift: only 2 individuals remain in joint families, while 18 have moved to nuclear families. This trend continues into the third generation, where 18 individuals are in nuclear families and only 2 in joint families, mirroring the second generation's pattern. Overall, the data illustrates a clear move away from joint families to nuclear families over time. This shift could be due to various factors such as increased urbanization, changing cultural values, and a desire for more autonomy and privacy. The trend highlights a significant transformation in family structures across generations.

Similarly, the data sets for Bhutia community (**Graph: 4.10**) reveals a significant change in family structures across three generations. In the first generation, all 20 individuals live in joint families, showing that joint families were the standard in earlier times. However, by the second generation, there is a complete shift, with all 20 individuals moving to nuclear families. This pattern continues into the third generation, where again all 20 individuals are in nuclear families. Overall, the data clearly shows a move from joint families to nuclear families over time. This shift could be due to various reasons such as urbanization, modernization, changing cultural values, and a preference for smaller family units. The trend highlights a major transformation in family structures across these three generations.



Graph: 4.9 Lepcha Family type with respect to generation



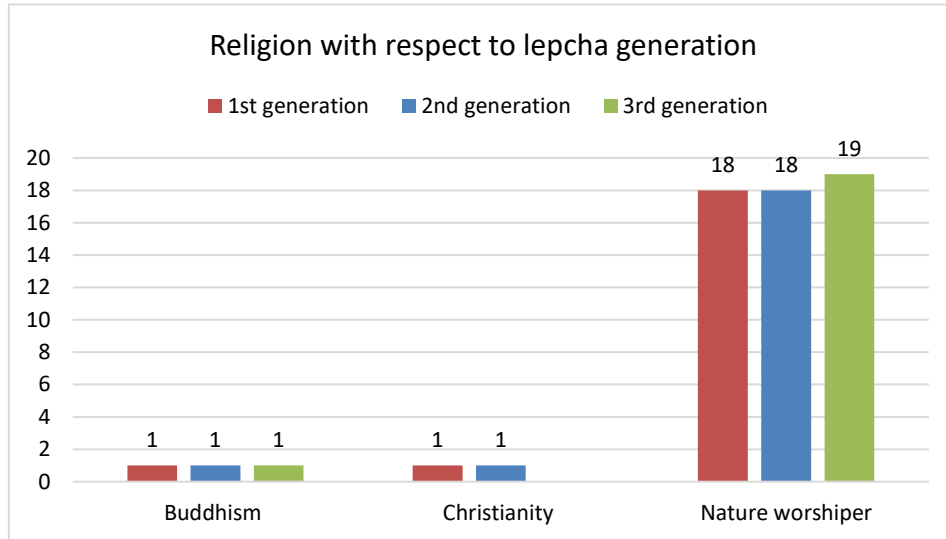
Graph: 4.10 Bhutia Family type with respect to generation

4.3.3.7 f Religion with respect to Generation

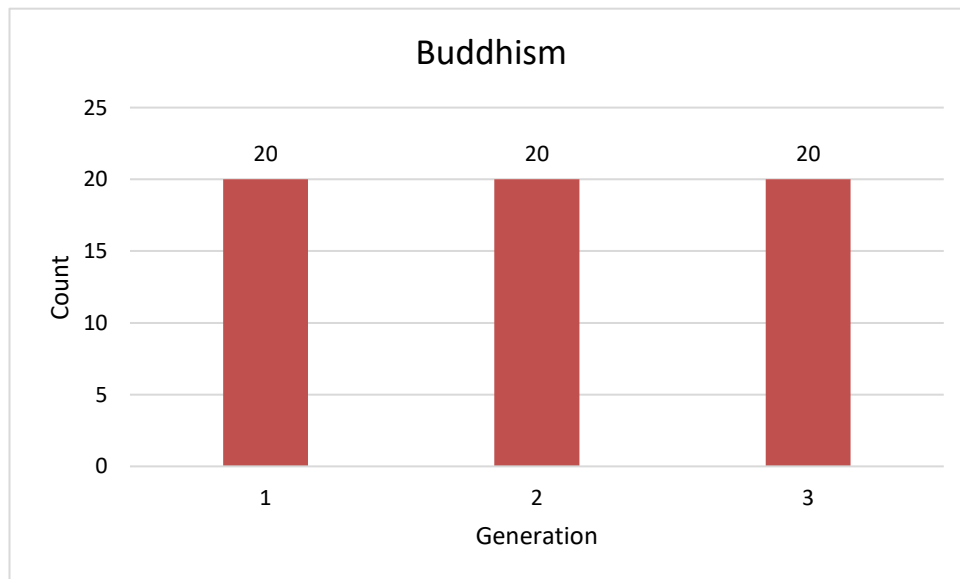
The data for Lepcha community shows the distribution of religious affiliations across three generations. In the first generation, there is 1 Buddhist, 1 Christian, and 18 nature worshipers. The second generation has the same distribution with 1 Buddhist, 1 Christian, and 18 nature worshipers. However, in the third generation, there is 1 Buddhist, no Christians, and 19 nature worshipers. Overall, nature worship remains the dominant religion across all three generations, with a slight increase in the third generation. Buddhism remains constant with one individual in each generation. Christianity shows a decline, with no individuals identifying as Christian in the third generation. This data highlights a strong adherence to nature worship and a decreasing number of Christians over time (**Graph 4.11**).

Similarly data set for Bhutia community reveals that each of the three generations—1st, 2nd, and 3rd—consists of 20 individuals who identify as Buddhists. This equal distribution indicates a strong and stable commitment to Buddhism within the community, suggesting that religious and cultural teachings have been successfully passed down through the generations. The consistency in numbers highlights the cultural stability and continuity of core religious beliefs over time. For researchers and policymakers, this data emphasizes the importance of Buddhism in shaping the cultural identity of this population. It suggests that any cultural or social programs should consider the significant role Buddhism plays in these communities.

Overall, the data shows the enduring presence and influence of Buddhism across generations, illustrating a successful transmission of religious and cultural values (**Graph 4.12**).



Graph 4.11: Lepcha religion respect to generation



Graph 4.12: Bhutia religion respect to generation

Collecting this data is important for several reasons. First, it helped in understanding how religious affiliations have changed over different generations, revealing shifts in beliefs and practices. This information is valuable for religious leaders, sociologists, and cultural historians studying the evolution of faith within communities.

Secondly, helped in tracking the prevalence of different family structures across generations provides insights into social and cultural changes. The transition from joint to nuclear families can reflect broader societal trends such as urbanization, economic factors, and changing values around independence and privacy.

This was important for examining educational attainment across generations which has given much clear picture of progress in education and the impact education has made in every sector. It also showed how access to education and the importance placed on higher education have evolved, which helped in forming future educational policies and investments.

Overall, this data collection highlighted significant social and cultural shifts and can guided efforts to meet the needs and preferences of different generations.

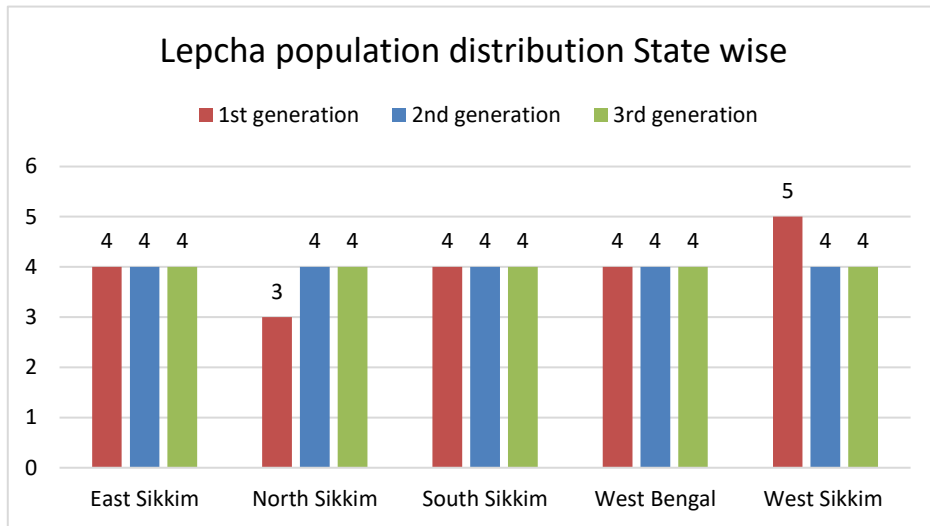
4.3.3.7 g Zone distribution with respect to Generation

The data for Lepcha community indicates a stable distribution of individuals across East Sikkim, South Sikkim, and West Bengal, with each zone having 4 individuals in each generation. North Sikkim shows a slight increase, with the number of individuals rising from 3 in the first generation to 4 in subsequent generations. West Sikkim has the highest number in the first generation (5), but this number decreases to 4 in the later (**Graph: 4.13**).

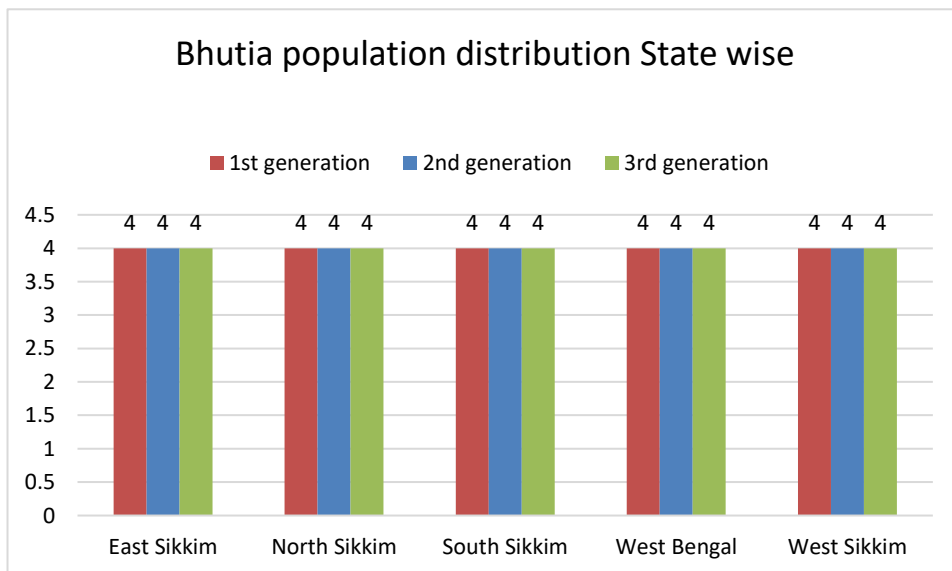
Similarly, The dataset for Bhutia community reveals a perfectly balanced distribution of individuals from each zone across three generations. Each zone—East Sikkim, North Sikkim, South Sikkim, West Bengal, and West Sikkim—consistently contributes 4 individuals to each generation, resulting in a total of 12 individuals per zone over the three generations. This consistency indicates a stable and equal demographic representation across all regions over time (**Graph: 4.14**).

This data was important because it helped in a balanced and equal representation of individuals from different zones of Sikkim across three generations. This balance was crucial for several reasons. First, it ensured that resources could be fairly distributed across all regions, knowing that each zone had a similar population over time. Second, it provided insights into the stability and consistency of demographic patterns within these regions, which was important for cultural and social studies in term of understanding the changes and evolution happen in the traditional textiles and costumes of the two communities. This data also helped in ensuring balanced regional development, making sure no zone was overlooked in terms of development opportunities and resource distribution. The data highlighted a stable

and evenly distributed population across the zones, which was essential for understanding the traditional textiles and changes and development happened over a period of time in different zones of Sikkim.



Graph: 4.13 Lepcha population distribution zone wise



Graph: 4.14 Bhutia population distribution zone wise

The analysis of data was conducted considering variables such as family, gender, education, occupation, family type, and religion, in alignment with the frame hypotheses of the study.

It was observed that changes in the traditional textiles and costumes of Lepcha and Bhutia occurred due to education. To assess this, the Kruskal-Wallis test was applied. The test involved comparing the median of three groups (generations). The acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis was determined based on the p-value.

Hypothesis I

H₀: There is no significant difference in the changes in textile and costume due to education.

H₁: There is a significant difference in the changes in textile and costume due to education.

Lepcha

Observations revealed that in the 1st generation, there were respondents who lacked education (illiterate). The 2nd generation showed the highest number of individuals graduating, while the 3rd generation exhibited the highest count at the post-graduate level, with one individual attaining a PhD. This indicates a positive shift in the education levels within the Lepcha community.

P-value = 0.0001428

As p-value is less than 0.05 level of significance so we reject null hypothesis and conclude that there is significant difference in the median of the groups. Thus, we can say that over a period the education level has increased. Median value with respect to generation are 3 (Secondary), 5 (Graduation) and 6 (Post graduation) respectively.

Bhutia

Observations revealed that in the 1st generation, there were respondents who lacked education (illiterate), with a few having completed primary education and very few attaining secondary education. In the 2nd generation, the highest number of individuals graduated, while in the 3rd generation, the highest count was at the post-graduate level, with two individuals attaining a PhD. This indicates a positive shift in the education levels within the Bhutia community.

P-value = 1.202e-09: As p-value is less than 0.05 level of significance so we reject null hypothesis and conclude that there is significant difference in the median of the groups. Thus,

we can say that over a period the education level has increased. Median value with respect to generation are 2 (Primary), 5 (Graduation) and 6 (Post graduation) respectively.

This shift in education in recent years has definitely affected the choices and preference of people in terms of textiles and the way they adorn. Changes can be seen as people have moved out of the rural areas and started living in urban spaces the choice of clothing also changed. Over time, people's clothing preferences have changed quite a bit. One big reason for this is that education has opened up a lot more job options for folks. In the past, what they wore often depended on their job or where they stood in society.

But now, with more education, people have a wider range of careers to choose from. This means we see all sorts of professionals in different fields, from tech to art to healthcare. And as the job scene has changed, so has the way people dress for work. Many workplaces have become more relaxed about dress codes, especially in industries like tech and creative fields. Instead of traditional garments, we might see people wearing jeans and t-shirts. Traditional wear has been limited to occasion now. Now they prefer more of simpler clothing less complicated for the daily wear. Switching more to readymade clothing. Since brands like Fab India, Good Earth, Pantaloons, Puma, Uniqlo and other have also made their spaces in the local market. This doesn't mean that they have stopped wearing the traditional costumes. Both the communities still choose to wear traditional attire in every festival and occasion.

Plus, education has also helped people to think creatively, and this spills over into fashion too. With more exposure to different cultures and ideas, people now want to express themselves in unique ways through their clothing choices. So, we often find folks opting for trendy and individualistic styles that reflect their personalities and values in Sikkim.

In short, education has opened up a lot of doors professionally, and this has influenced how people choose to dress. They have moved away from strict dress codes to more casual and diverse fashion choices, reflecting the changing times and attitudes toward work and self-expression.

Further based on p-value we accept the Alternate hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis, which shows that level of education has increased with time which has indirectly affected the clothing choices and preference.

These clothing preferences and changes which have occurred through the generations was also got affected by various other factors, and to find out the root of these changes three more

hypotheses were set to see whether these changes came due to merger of Sikkim in India or due to Influence of mass media or because of influence of neighboring countries

Hypothesis II

H₀: Perception of all respondents with respect to the changes in textile and costume was not due to the merger of Sikkim with India.

H₁: Perception of all respondents with respect to the changes in textile and costume was due to the merger of Sikkim with India.

The data presents varying viewpoints on the factors affecting changes in costume across different categories within the community. While there's widespread consensus on the impact of Sikkim's merger with India (**Graph 4.15**) shows the higher no. of responses who agreed that changes in the textile and costumes came due to merger of Sikkim with India as it opened the gateway for the maximum trade which happens between the two. Even the Marwari and Bihari community which were settled in Sikkim were responsible for introducing new fabrics and design in the Sikkim local market. The data highlights varying perceptions on the factors influencing changes in textiles and costumes in Sikkim across different groups and generations. While there is a broad consensus on the influence of the merger with India show more variation. Tailors/designers and the younger generation (3rd generation) tend to agree more on these influences, whereas handloom weavers and government employees show more divergence. Specifically, the p-value for the influence of the merger with India among artisan categories is 0.008234, indicating statistically significant differences in perceptions. However, the p-value for generations is 0.5237, showing no significant difference, suggesting a consistent viewpoint across generational lines. Hence, further based on p-value we reject null hypotheses and accept alternate hypotheses.

Hypothesis III

H₀: Perception of all respondents with respect to the changes in textile and costume was not due to the influence of mass media.

H₁: Perception of all respondents with respect to the changes in textile and costume was due to the influence of mass media.

The data presented in (**Graph 4.15**) shows the higher no. of responses who agreed that changes in the textile and costumes came due to influence of mass media. Media had played an important role in playing with the psychology of the consumer and same has been seen

case of the choices and preference of Lepcha and Bhutia communities, especially the youth, who has started imitating various characters from K-dramas and various other POP cultures. The data highlights varying perceptions on the factors influencing changes in textiles and costumes in Sikkim across different groups and generations. While there is a broad consensus on the influence of the merger with India and mass media, perceptions about the influence of neighboring countries show more variation. Tailors/designers and the younger generation (3rd generation) tend to agree more on these influences, whereas handloom weavers and government employees show more divergence. Regarding the influence of mass media, the p-value for artisan categories is 0.1036, suggesting no significant differences and indicating a general consensus. For generations, the p-value is 0.1889, also indicating no significant difference and thus a broadly consistent agreement. Hence, we reject null hypotheses and accept alternate hypothesis based on p-value.

Hypothesis IV

H₀: Perception of all respondents with respect to the changes in textile and costume was not due to the influence of the neighboring countries.

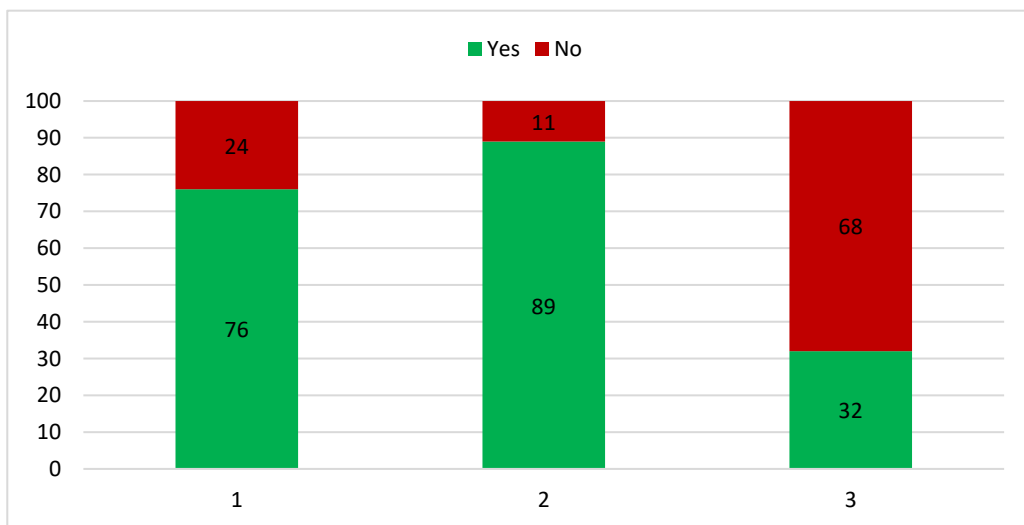
H₁: Perception of all respondents with respect to the changes in textile and costume was due to the influence of the neighboring countries.

The data highlights varying perceptions on the factors influencing changes in textiles and costumes in Sikkim across different groups and generations. While there is a broad consensus on the influence of the merger with India and mass media, perceptions about the influence of neighboring countries show more variation. Tailors/designers and the younger generation (3rd generation) tend to agree more on these influences, whereas handloom weavers and government employees show more divergence. For the influence of neighboring countries, the p-value among artisan categories is 0.05827, which is marginally significant but not enough to reject the null hypothesis, indicating similar perceptions. The p-value for generations is 0.7881, showing no significant difference, thus reflecting consistent views across generations. Opinions diverge notably regarding the influence of neighboring countries. This suggests a complex understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics shaping costume changes. Notably, handloom weavers and local retailers show diverse perspectives, indicating differing views within these groups. Hence, we reject null hypothesis and accept alternate hypothesis.

Tailors and designers unanimously agree on some factors but differ on others, underscoring the complexity of their perspectives. Similarly, government employees also exhibit a split

opinion, particularly regarding the influence of neighboring countries. Overall, the data emphasizes the importance of exploring these diverse perspectives to comprehensively grasp the socio-cultural factors driving costume changes within the community. Further dialogue and exploration within and across these categories yield valuable insights into the nuances of these perspectives (**Graph: 4.15**). It was observed that changes in the traditional textiles and costumes of Lepcha and Bhutia occurred due to merger of Sikkim, influence of mass media and neighboring countries. To assess this proportion test was carried out to analyze whether the data collected from different groups was same or not the acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis was determined based on the p-value. According to the data collected it has been observed that major shift in the choice of clothing has come due to mass media followed by Sikkim merger with India and least by neighboring countries.

	Hypotheses	Yes Changes came	No change	Total
1	Changes in costume came due to merger of Sikkim in India	76	24	100
2	Due to Influence of mass media	89	11	100
3	Due to Neighboring countries	32	68	100



Graph: 4.15: Frequency distribution representing Changes in the Textiles andCostumes

The bar graph (**Graph: 4.16**) given below illustrates the individual percentage of "Yes" and "No" responses across different categories and generations regarding certain changes in costume influenced by various factors.

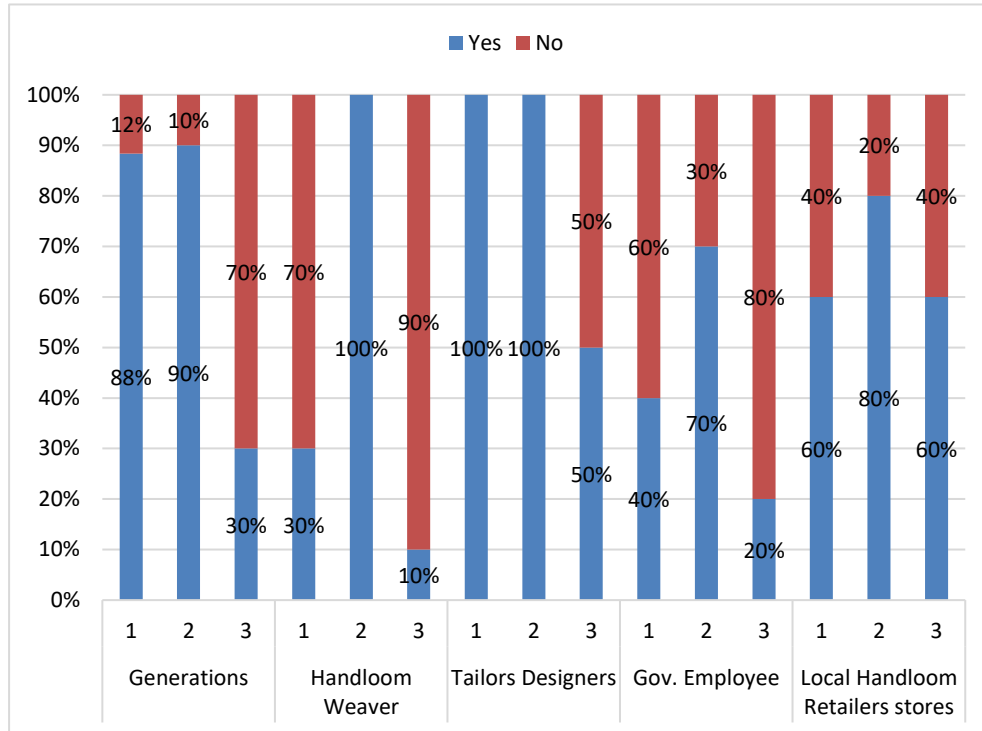
The data from the above bar graph shows differing opinions across generations and categories regarding changes in costume influenced by specific factors.

Generations consistently show high agreement (around 88-90%). Handloom Weavers demonstrate significant variation, especially in the 3rd generation which overwhelmingly disagrees (90% "No"). Tailors Designers maintain unanimous agreement in the earlier generations but showed a difference in the 3rd. Government Employees reflect a trend where the older generation (1st) is less agreeable, the middle generation (2nd) more agreeable, and the youngest (3rd) less so again. Local Handloom Retailers tend to agree across all generations, with the 2nd generation showing the highest agreement (80%).

These patterns suggest that while certain groups show consistent agreement across generations, others, particularly handloom weavers and government employees, display significant generational shifts in opinion. This could point to evolving perspectives influenced by changing social, cultural, or economic contexts.

Proportion test was carried out to analyze whether the data collected from different groups was same or not. The majority of the respondents had positively responded to the question with respect various questions as reflected in the (**Graph 4.15**). Thus, the difference in the percentage of the two options was obviously large and thus based on this itself we can say that there was significant difference and applying any other test was not worth in such cases.

These findings underscore the complex and multifaceted nature of cultural and social influences on textiles and costumes in Sikkim, reflecting diverse viewpoints among different professional and generational groups. Further dialogue and research could help understand these nuances better, informing more inclusive cultural and policy initiatives.



Graph 4.16: perceptions of different groups regarding the factors influencing changes in textiles and costumes

Changes in the traditional textiles and costumes of the Lepcha and Bhutia have been observed, influenced by various factors, with education being a major one that has significantly altered clothing preferences and choices.

The latest trends and changes in daily and occasional wear among the Lepcha and Bhutia communities have been studied. The study examined the preferred types of textiles and costumes among the two communities, including the materials used, colors, style lines, design patterns, use of embroidery, and sources of fabric, in order to understand their preferences for daily wear garments.

For casual wear, T-shirts and shirts were preferred. The preferred materials were cotton knitted and cotton woven. Lepcha and Bhutia men predominantly use colors such as blue, black, and white, while both genders also use green. It was observed that Lepcha and Bhutia men generally do not prefer much embroidery on their clothing. Traditionally, people went to tailors for constructing their traditional dresses, while some opted for Indian wear. Nowadays, ready-made clothing has become more popular. Fabrics are sourced from tailors, local markets, and sometimes from Kalimpong. For Western clothing, people are increasingly purchasing online from brands like Myntra, Ajoio, Amazon, Flipkart, and others. Garments

like, jackets, coats, tuxedo, Jeans, Formal shirts, pants, trousers, Salwar Kameez with duppata, saree etc are a few example of clothing which they have shifted to. Major change has been observed among the younger generation compared to the middle and older one.

Interviews revealed that Lepcha and Bhutia people do not wear headgear on a daily basis but prefer to wear it occasionally. When it comes to footwear, casual footwear was preferred, although fancy brands and trendy styles were increasingly popular. Men prefer brands like Woodland, Reebok, Nike, Decathlon, and Adidas due to availability, climatic suitability, durability, and brand reputation. Youth, influenced by Chinese and Korean pop culture, often opt for stylish footwear like Jordan's. Similarly, women from these communities favor stylish high heels and boots, blending traditional and Western styles. Interviews also indicated changes in hairstyles over time; men now tend to keep their hair short, influenced by media and cultural exchanges, while women style their hair according to the latest fashion trends.

Jewelry, primarily worn by women, consists mainly of traditional jewelry for occasional wear, and simple and elegant pieces like chains, rings, earrings for daily wear. Some also enjoy wearing bead necklaces and order new styles in junk jewelry online. Women generally do not use headgear or other hair accessories, except for Bhutia bride who sometimes wear precious stone headgear, especially during weddings.

Overall, the study highlights how the fashion preferences and practices of the Lepcha and Bhutia communities have evolved with time, influenced by modern trends and cultural exchanges.

The subsequent pages delve into the transformation of textiles and costumes within the Lepcha and Bhutia communities of Sikkim, illustrated through photographic comparisons between historical and contemporary images. These visuals vividly demonstrate the evolution and changes in traditional attire over time, reflecting the cultural shifts and influences within these communities



Plate 4.169: A sample of the invite issued for the Ser-Thri Nga-Sol ceremony. Invite mentions the dress code for the attendees. 1965, Chogyal, Coronation, Palden Thondup Namgyal, Royal family.

Source:<https://sikhim.blogspot.com/2011/03/invitation-letter-for-chogyals.html>



Plate 4.170: Ancestors of Tholung Family (Lamas) in elaborate costumes & head-dress, Sikkim. Costumes in the picture is very different from the costumes worn by the 21st century lamas. Elaborate headgears with elaborate bulky garments made in brocade can be seen.

Picture courtesy: Archive section, Department of Culture, Government of Sikkim. Picture donated by Royal anthropological society London during 1880's-1920's



Plate 4.171: The new Buddhist Pemiongchi Monastery showing head lama at the centre.1909. Over the period of time changes came in terms of choosing comfortable fabric and less elaborated head gears.

Picture courtesy: Archive section, Department of Culture, Government of Sikkim. Picture donated by Royal anthropological society London during 1880's-1920's



Plate 4.172: Gyalmo Yeshe Dolma (died: 1910) was the Queen-consort of the ninth Chogyal, Thutob Namgyal. The royal couple authored an exhaustive book on the history of Sikkim in 1908.

Picture courtesy: Archive section, Department of Culture, Government of Sikkim.

Picture donated by Royal anthropological society London



Plate 4.173: Crown Princess Maharajkumarani Sem Sangey Deki Namgyal and Sonam Tashi Rhelon grandmother Rhenock Chamkusho Tsewang Lhamo with two Finnish Mission ladies who taught the technique of weaving blankets to the womenfolk of Lachung and Lachen in north Sikkim.

Source: Sonam Tashi Rhelon personal collection. [sonam.tashi.rhelon](https://www.instagram.com/sonam.tashi.rhelon) (Instagram post)



Plate 4.174: Miwang Denjong Chogyal Chenpo Palden Thondup Namgyal (Crown Prince) 1950s

Picture courtesy: Archive section, Department of Culture, Government of Sikkim.



Plate 4.175: Bhutia wedding in Sikkim.1880

Picture courtesy: Archive section, Department of Culture, Government of Sikkim. Picture donated by Royal anthropological society London



Plate 4.176: Bhutanese people at Sikkim, India. Circa 1890s. The men seen wearing ankle-length robes Pokho, which is wrapped around the body and held in place by a belt called a kera. While the women can be seen wearing long, flowing skirts called Mokho a, which are draped over a blouse called honju and held in place with a sash called a kira. A child in the picture can be seen wearing a a simple tunic and a scarf.

Source: <https://www.mediastorehouse.com/>



Plate 4.177: Lepcha (Sikkim) along with Nepalese and Bhutia men wearing traditional dhumpra.

Source: <https://www.prints-online.com/Lepcha-sikkim-nepalese-bhutanese-men-14143772.html>



Plate 4.178: Lepcha men wearing their traditional costume seen caring a British women in a palanquin

Source: <https://historified.in/2024/05/10/Lepcha-community-of-sikkim-cultural-heritage-and-conservation-efforts/>



Plate 4.179: Tibetan lady wearing Lahasa style of dress 1890.

**Picture courtesy: Archive section, Department of Culture,
Government of Sikkim.**

Picture donated by Royal anthropological society London



Plate 4.180: Rong women in Sikkim wearing traditional draped dumdum. Circa 1890.

Picture courtesy: Archive section, Department of Culture, Government of Sikkim.

Picture donated by Royal anthropological society London



Plate 4.181: Rong men in Sikkim wearing traditional draped dumpra. circa 1890.

Picture courtesy: Archive section, Department of Culture, Government of Sikkim.

Picture donated by Royal anthropological society London



Plate 4.182: Rong men in Sikkim wearing Chinese coat made nettle fiber. circa 1890.

Picture courtesy: Archive section, Department of Culture, Government of Sikkim.

Picture donated by Royal anthropological society London



Plate 4.183: Queen Hope Cooke with her children, Prince Palden and Princess Hope Leezum, Gangtok, Sikkim wearing silk brocade kho along with silk honju and a crown made in precious pearls and stones. circa (1965- 1974)

Source: <https://www.loc.gov> (Library of Congress)



Plate 4.185: The Precious Jewel of the Heart of Sikkim (Denzong Thu ki Norbu) - Exceptional Class or Grand Commander with Collar, collar, breast star, sash and sash badge. “*The Precious Jewel of the Heart of Sikkim (Denzong Thu ki Norbu): founded by Chogyal Chempo Palden Thondup Namgyal in September 1972, to reward merit in all fields of service and endeavour. Awarded in an exceptional class (Grand Commander with Collar) and three ordinary classes (1. First Class or Grand Commander, 2. Second Class or Commander, and 3. Third Class or Member).* Ribbon – white with a broad central stripe of red-ochre with two narrow saffron (yellow ochre) stripes towards each edge. Note: the name of this decoration is often imperfectly given in some as the “Order of the Jewel of Sikkim” and erroneously said to have had five classes”.

Source: ©<https://www.royalark.net/India/sikkim5.htm>



Plate 4.186: Group of Lepcha and Bhutia men in their traditional and contemporary clothing. (2020)



Plate 4.187: Group of young Lepcha and Bhutia women wearing modern clothing like overcoats, jackets, and trousers, along with boots and sports shoes. (2020)

Picture courtesy: Pema Zangmu, Mangan.



Plate 4.188: People on streets of Sikkim seen wearing western and modern silhouettes like overcoat, jackets, jeans, pants etc. (2020)



Plate 4.189: Lepcha weavers at Lingdong Village, wearing shirt and cardigans with a drape skirts. (2020)



Plate 4.190: Lepcha Handloom weaver Sujata wearing pant, t-shirt and a shrug.



Plate 4.191: Bhutia newly married couple in their traditional attire wearing Kho and khada. (2020)



Plate 4.192: Researcher along with Bhutia women from Sikkim. Bhutia women can be seen wearing modern silhouettes along with Indian kurta and churidar.



Plate 4.193: Group of Lepcha women dressed in their traditional attire during a Lepcha wedding (2023)

Picture Courtesy: Pema Zangmu Personal Collection



Plate 4.194: A group of Lepcha and bhutia elderly women in their contemporary clothing.

Picture courtesy: John.Z.Lepcha personal collection.



Plate 4.195: Bhutia bride and groom in their traditional attire wearing Kho „Jaja made in heavy brocades. Bride is seen wearing Pangden along with traditional jewellery ‘Ghou’ (2023)

Picture courtesy: John.Z.Lepcha personal collection, North Sikkim



Plate 4.196: A group of Lepcha people wearing trendy and casual clothes (2020), Lepcha family in Lingthem (Upper Dzongu, North Sikkim) wearing knitted sweaters and tracks pants which were modern and trendy.



Plate 4.197: Bhutia women wearing kho and pangden while working in the fields. The length of the kho is different from that of royalties.

Source: Lands of the thunderbolt : Sikkim Chumbi & Bhutan by lord Ronald shay , paperback | Pango books, n.d.

4.4 Traditional Attire Analysis: Lepcha and Bhutia Costumes Construction and Draping Styles

The comprehensive research into the traditional costumes of the Lepcha and Bhutia communities involved in-depth understanding and documentation. It included a literature review, fieldwork, interviews with tailors and pattern masters, as well as photographic analysis of garment details. This approach provided a clear understanding of the costumes and helped in developing patterns on a 1/4 scale.

A comprehensive analysis of *Bakhu*, *Honju*, *Pangdin*, *Kho*, and other garments was conducted to comprehend the structural intricacies of attire worn by both men and women in the Lepcha and Bhutia communities. Subsequently, line sketches were created to gain a detailed understanding of the cuts and styles of these garments.

While conducting extensive research, similarities were noted between the costume patterns of the Lepcha and Bhutia communities and those found in Chinese, Tibetan, Mongolian, Korean, Afghan, and Uzbek costumes. Furthermore, comparable textile and costume patterns were observed among Tibetan refugees residing in various parts of India, particularly in regions such as Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, and Sikkim. Notably, the influence of Mongolian attire is discernible in the costumes of Sikkim, which shares borders with China and Tibet (**Illustration 4.5**).

4.4.1 Costumes of the Lepcha community:

The men's and women's costumes of the Lepcha community are as follows:

Men: *Tago/Hyantaj* (shirt), *Dumpraa* (shawl), *Tomoo/Gyado* (calf length trouser)

Women: *Tago* (silk blouse), *Jyoordong Tago* (long sleeve blouse) which almost touches the calf and is worn only by married women, *Taroa* (Scarf), *Ashyam/Dumdyem/Gado* (draped garment), *Naamrek* (waist belt)

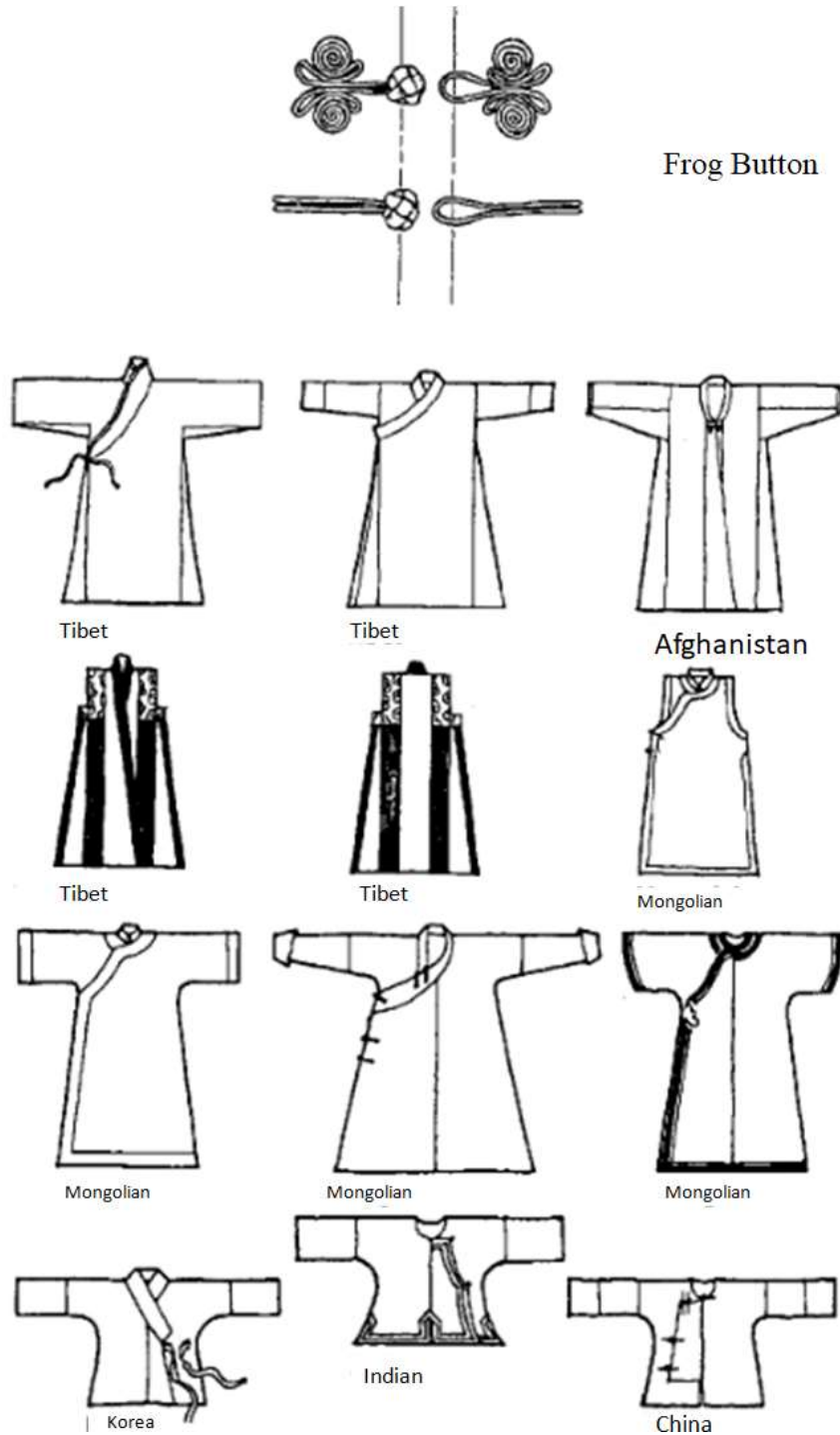


Illustration 4.5: Robe pattern in different countries with similarity to India.

Source: <https://seegrass.discordia.ch/Medieval/Kleidung/Kaftan.php>

4.4.1.1 Lepcha Men's Shirt Tago/Hyantaj (shirt)

Traditionally, the Lepcha men's shirt, known as *Tago* or *Hyantaj*, is paired with calf-length pants. This shirt is typically crafted from cotton, silk, or occasionally synthetic materials. Its construction bears resemblance to Mongolian shirts, comprising a front, back, long kimono sleeves, and a mandarin collar. The length varies according to the wearer but is generally waist-length. It features an extended center front panel secured with frog buttons. (**Plate 4.198 & Illustration 4.6**).

FRONT



BACK



Plate 4.198: *Hyantaj* (shirt)

Measurements:

1. Chest (Half): 55 cm
2. Waist (Half): 55 cm
3. Shoulder slope: 11.43cm

4. Across Shoulder: 43cm
5. Sleeve length (from shoulder to wrist): 58.42 cm
6. Round Neck 38 cm
7. Full length (from shoulder to desired length): 68 cm

Drafting Instructions:

1. Front and Back Panels:

- Measure the chest circumference, adding 5.08 cm for ease and seams.
- Measure from the highest point of the shoulder to the desired hem length.
- Cut two pieces of fabric according to these measurements (one for the front and one for the back).
- Divide the front panel into two parts: the left panel should measure 55 cm and the right panel 26 cm, featuring an asymmetrical neckline and an extended center front. The left panel should overlap the right by joining at the side seam just below the armhole.

2. Neckline and Shoulder:

- Measure 21 cm from the center back of the neckline to the center front on the fold. To create a rounded neckline, draw a soft curve connecting the two points.
- Deepen the neckline by moving down 2.5 cm and inward 7.6 cm on the back panel.

3. Armholes:

- Measure the armhole depth from the arm by 26.6 cm and drop down from where the shoulder seam will be joined.
- Mark a gentle curve for the armholes in both front and back panels.

4. Sleeves:

- Measure the sleeve length from shoulder to wrist.
- Measure the arm circumference and add 5.08 cm for ease.
- Cut two rectangular pieces of fabric with these dimensions.

- At the top of each sleeve, mark a gentle curve and notch matching the shoulder center point and the sleeve to match the armhole curve.

Stitching: Place the front and back panel's right sides together.

Step 1: Stitch two panels of front and back together.

Step 2: Then attach sleeves

Step 3: Join front and back with side seam

Step 4: Attach mandarin collar on the neckline.

Step 5: Lastly finish the hemline

5. Add Closures:

Buttons:

- On the front panel, mark placements for buttons on the center front and along the side seam just below the armhole.
- Sew loops on the other side for closures and attach buttons on the other.

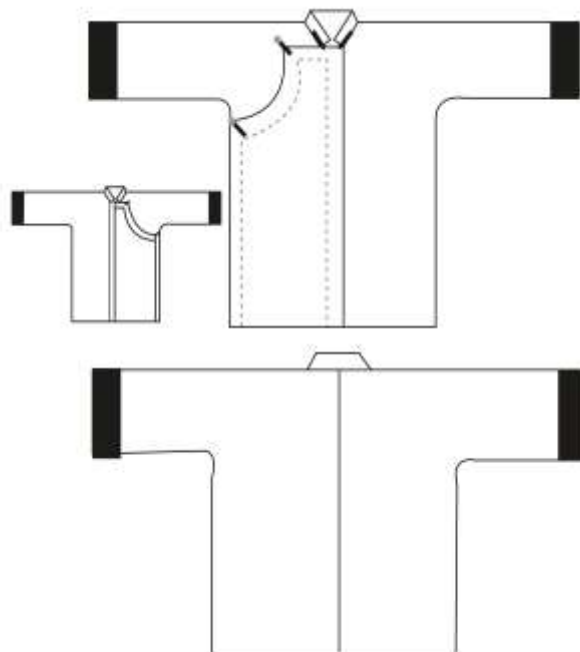


Illustration 4.6: Hyantaj

Scale 1/4

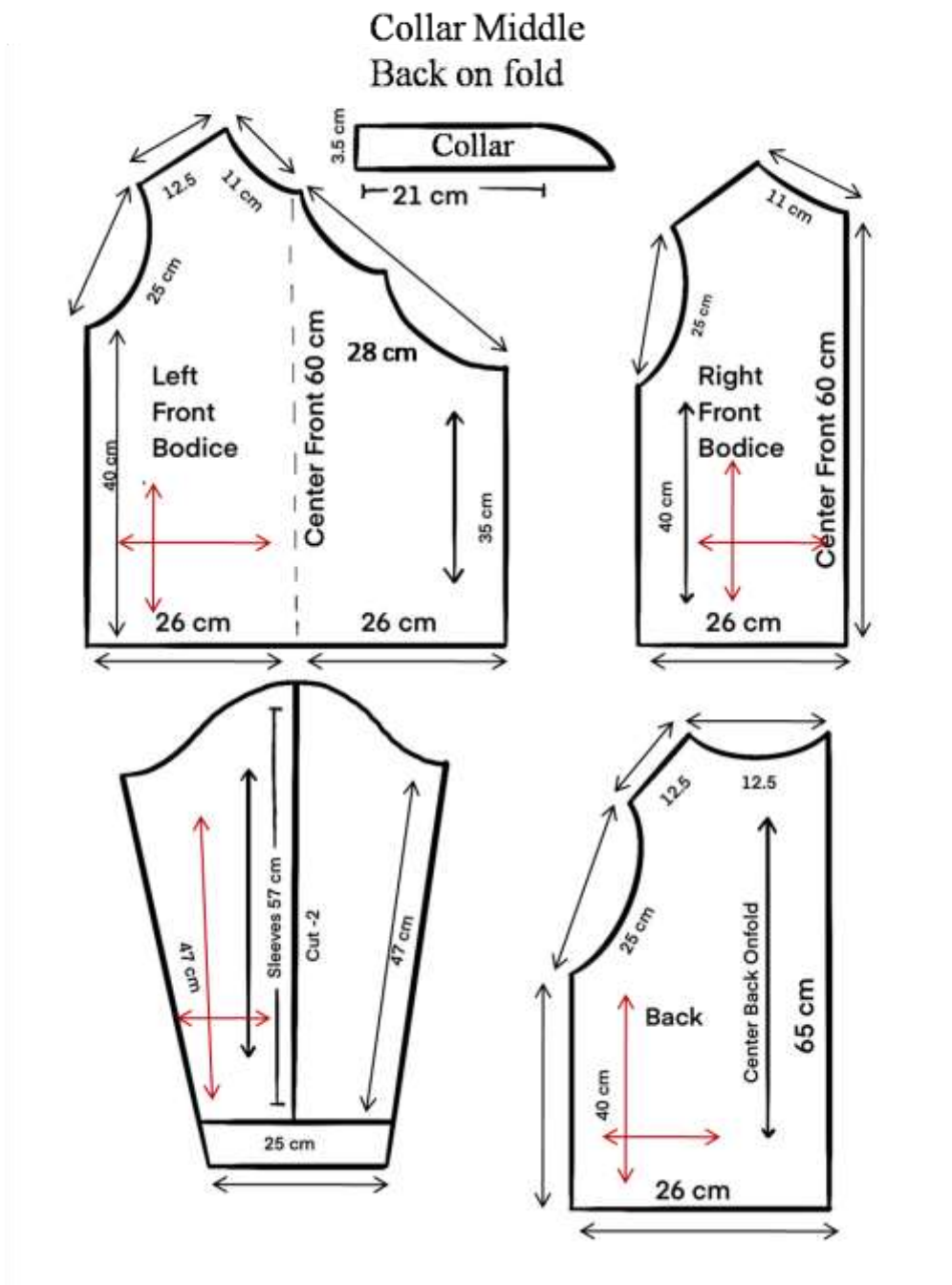


Illustration 4.7: Hyantaj (shirt) Pattern

4.4.1.2 Lepcha Men Trouser (*Tomoo/Gyado*)

Lepcha men traditionally wore calf-length trousers known as *Tomoo* or *Gyado*. These trousers were similar to the Indian *pyjama*, being loose and straight from top to bottom, with a waistband designed for a drawstring or elastic. The *pyjama* consisted of four parts: two front and two back panels, a crotch piece, a waistband, and pockets on both sides. Initially crafted from sustainable materials such as cotton and nettle, contemporary versions are now also available in synthetic fabrics. (**Plate 4.199, Illustration 4.8**)

Measurements of the trouser: Length from waist to Hemline: 68cm

1. Half Waist: 35cm
2. Hip :127cm
3. Thigh: 83 cm
4. Bottom: 30 cm

FRONT



BACK



Plate 4.199: Tomoo/Gyado

Drafting Instructions:

1. Front and Back Panel:

- Cut four pieces, two for the front and two for the back
- Cut one waistband of 120 cm in length and 13cm wide.
- Cut a diamond-shaped gusset for the crotch.
- Join the gusset with the front and back panels.
- Attach the inseam pockets on both sides.
- Join the side seams.
- Attach the waistbands with the trousers and finish the hemline.

2. Finish the Waistband:

1. Elastic Band or Drawstring:

- Fold the top edge of the waistband down 13cm and then another inch to create a casing for the elastic band or drawstring.
- Sew the casing, leaving a small opening to insert the elastic band or drawstring.
- Insert the elastic band or drawstring and sew the opening closed.

3. Finish the Hems:

- Ankle hems: Fold the bottom edge of each leg up 2.5cm and then another 2.5 cm to create a double-fold hem. Sometimes hemline was decorated with Lepcha weave fabric.

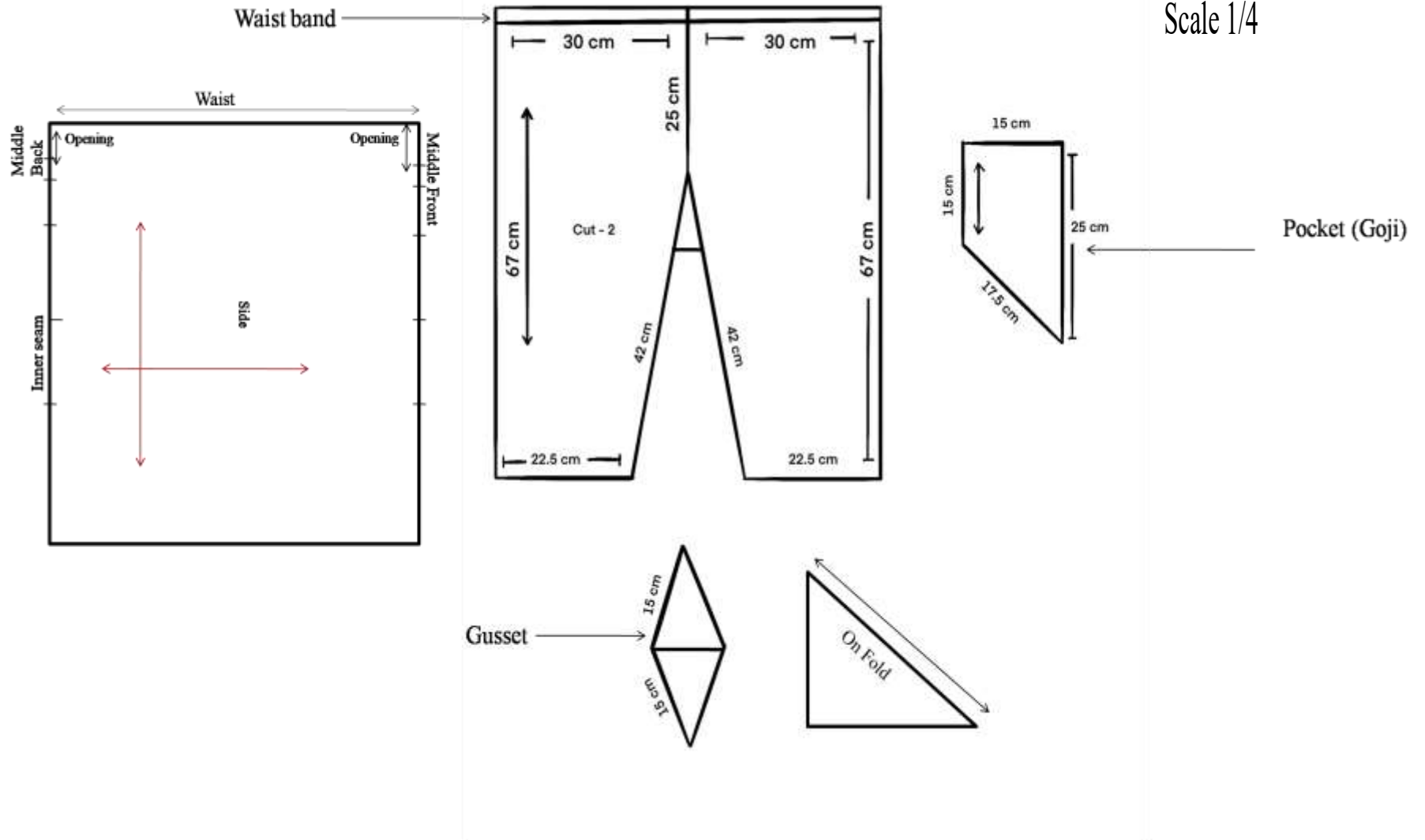


Illustration 4.8 Tomoo/Gyado Pattern

4.4.1.3 *Dumpraa* (shawl)

The *Dumpraa* is a rectangular woven shawl measuring 305 cm in length and 76.2 cm in width, designed to drape around the shoulders (**Plate 4.200**).

***Dumpraa* Draping Steps:**

Step 1: *Dumpraa* cloth is selected as appropriate for the wearer's age and height.

Step 2: *Dumpraa* cloth is held lengthwise with one end in each hand, allowing it to hang evenly as if preparing to wrap it around you.

Step 3: One end of the cloth is draped across the front of the body to cover the chest comfortably, holding it in place with the other hand.

Step 4: Bring the other end of the cloth across the back to the opposite shoulder, adjusting the length to be even.

Step 5: Ensure the *Dumpraa* is the correct length, typically around mid-thigh or knee level.

Steps 6, 7, 8: Properly adjust the *Dumpraa* on the shoulder and waist.

Steps 9, 10, 11: Secure the *Dumpraa* at the waist using a traditional girdle known as "*nyemrek*" or a belt, which prevents it from slipping and adds decorative detail.

Step 12: Adjust the *Dumpraa* to cover the *nyemrek* slightly at the top.

Step 13: Smooth out any creases or folds to ensure a neat appearance.

Step 14: Lepcha men may accessorize with a shawl or a hat (*topi*) depending on the occasion to complete their attire. It's a matter of personal style and preference. Additionally, the style varies with the age of the individual. (**Illustration 4.9**)

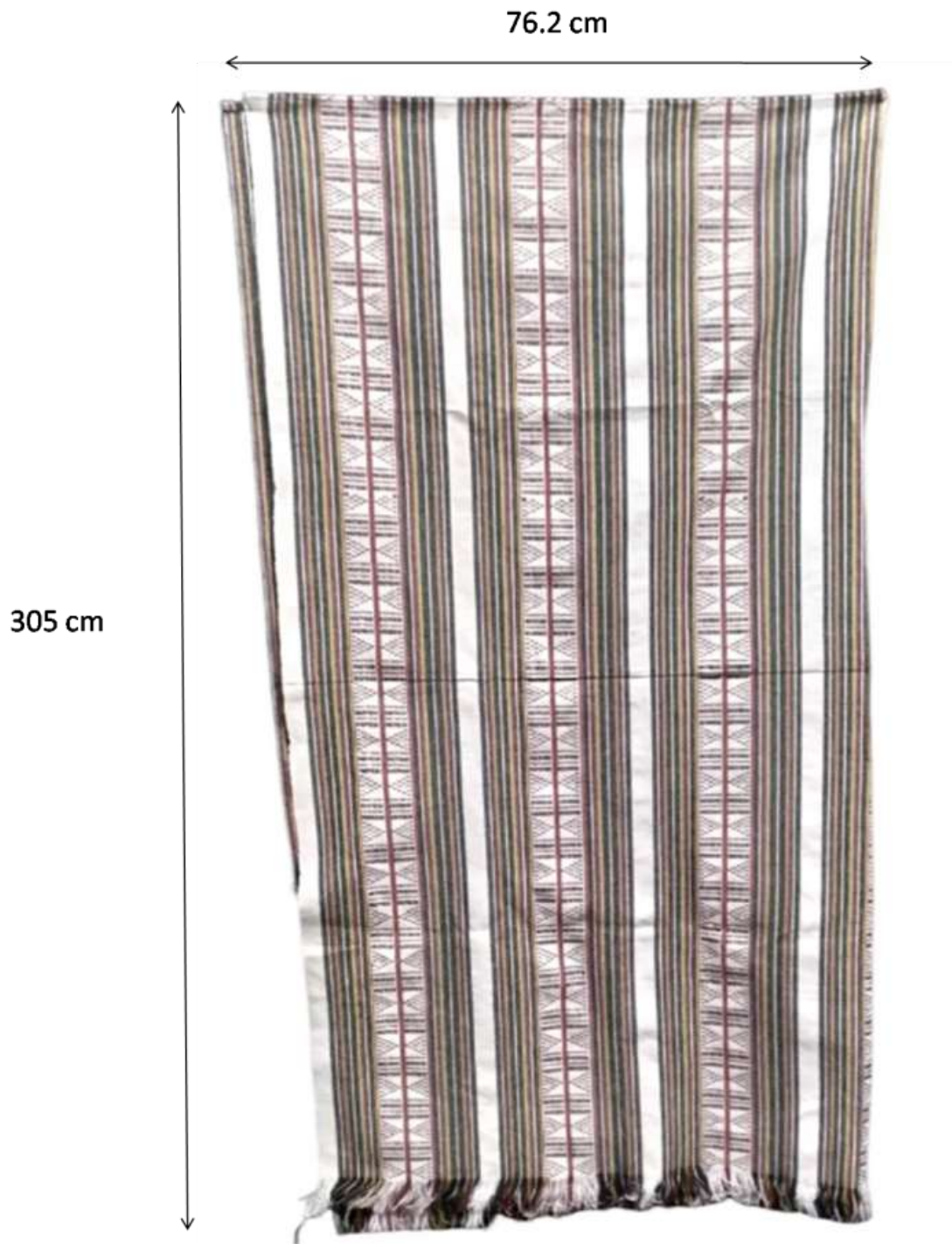


Plate 4.200: Dumpraa

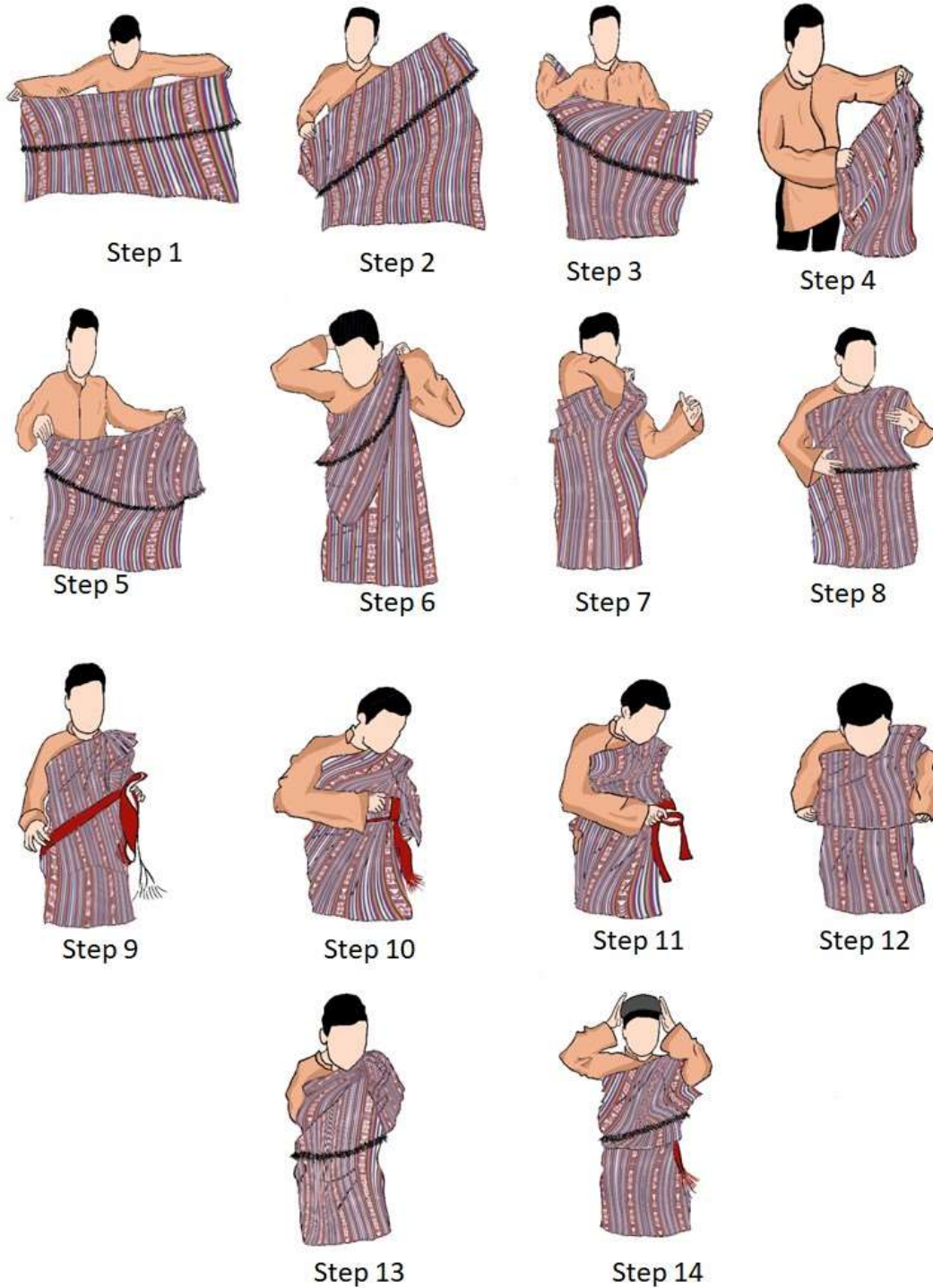


Illustration 4.9: Steps in Dumpraa draping

4.4.1.4 Men's Shirt (Lepcha Jacket)

This was a contemporary garment worn by Lepcha men which is similar to Bhutia men's waistcoat called *jaja*. (**Plate 4.201 , Plate 4.202 & Illustration 4.10**)



Plate 4.201: Dumpraa Jacket

Measurements:

1. Chest (Half): 55cm
2. Waist (Half): 55cm
3. Shoulder slope: 17.cm
4. Across Shoulder: 43cm
5. Round Neck:36 cm
6. Full length (from shoulder to desired length): 66 cm

1. Front and Back Panels:

- Measure the chest circumference and add 5.08 cm for ease and seams.
- Measure from the highest shoulder point to the waist or as desired.
- Cut two panels for the front. The left front panel was extended from the center front with an asymmetrical neckline. The left panel overlaps the right by joining the side seam just below the armhole.

2. Neckline and Shoulder:

- Mandarin collar: On the front panel, mark the neckline by measuring down 11.4 cm from the top and in 11.4 cm from the center. Create a gentle curve between these points for a rounded neckline.
- For the shoulder seams, mark the shoulder width on both the front and back panels from the top corners.

3. **Stitching:** Place the front and back panel's right sides together.

Step 1: Stitch the front and back together.

Step 2: Attach the lining if required.

Step 3: Attach mandarin collar on the neckline.

Step 4: Lastly finish the hemlines.

5. Add Closures:

Buttons :

- On the front panel, mark positions for buttons down the center front and along the side seam near the armhole.
- Sew loops on the other side for closures and attach buttons on the other.

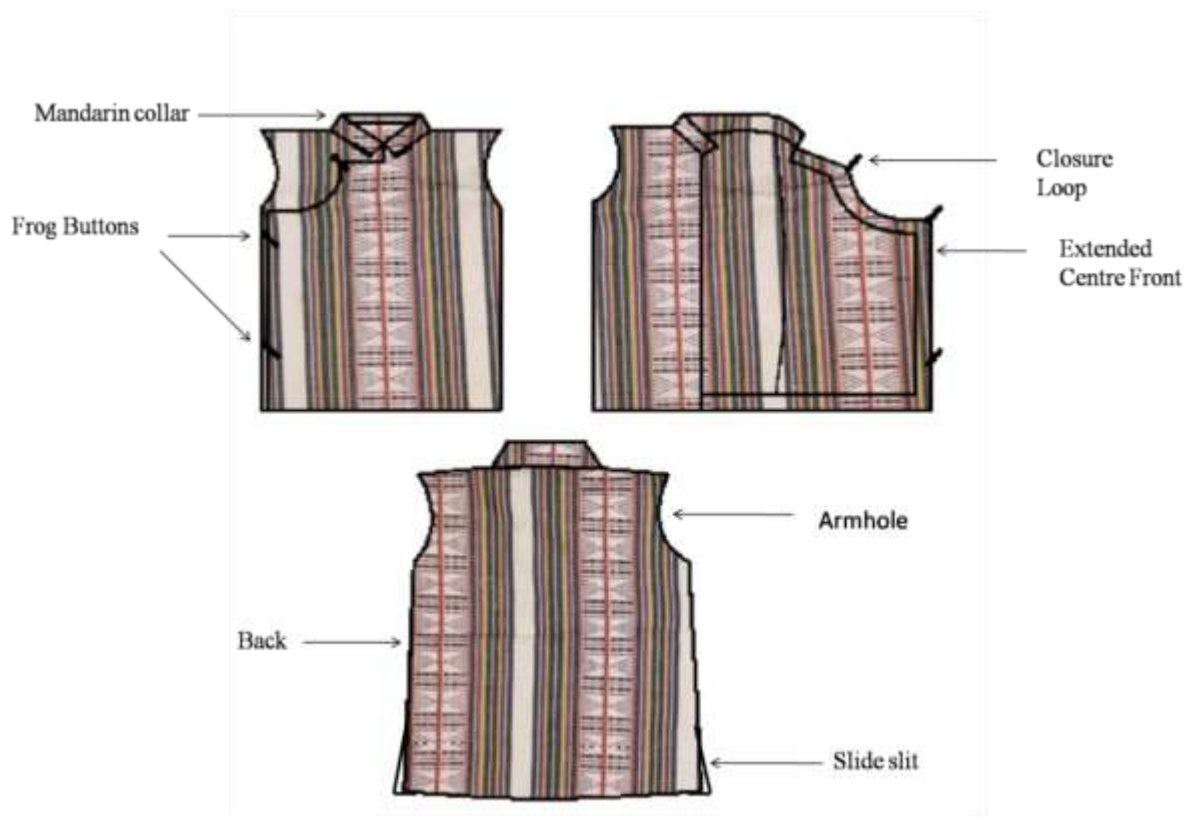


Plate 4.202: Dumpraa Jacket

Scale 1/4

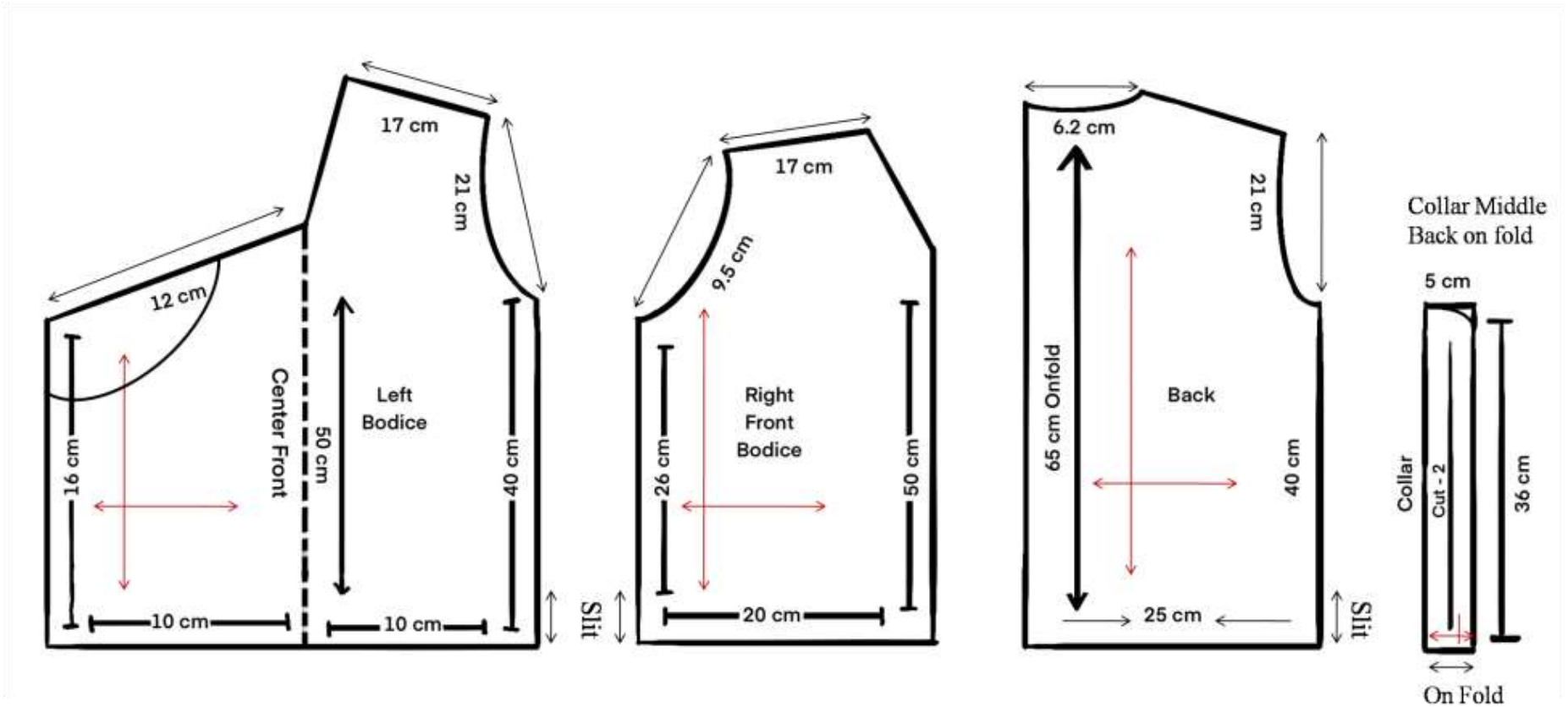


Illustration 4.10: Dumpraa Jacket Pattern

4.4.1.5 Lepcha Women:

Tago (silk blouse) also known as *Honju* (Worn by both Lepcha and Bhutia women). This blouse was primarily made in lightweight Chinese silk brocade. The full sleeve kimono style blouse has a front, back, shawl collar and sleeves. Sleeves were wide. The front had two pieces with 45.72 cm deep shawl collar. A rectangular piece which was 95 cm long kept on fold and 12.5cm wide was cut for shawl collar. Construction style and fabric were same as those of Bhutia women. (Plate 4.203, Illustration 4.11)

Measurements:

1. Round Bust: 91 cm
2. Waist: 91 cm
3. Shoulder: 35 cm
4. Sleeve length (from shoulder to wrist): 53.3cm
5. Round Neck: 35cm
6. Full length (from shoulder to desired length): 43 cm



Plate 4.203: Honju/Blouse/Tago: Silk blouse worn under Kho which is a coat dress and along with Bakhu and Dumdyem.

Stitching of *Tago* (silk blouse)

Step1: Cut two pieces for front and back on fold along with kimono

sleeves. Step2: Cut two pieces for waist

Step3: Cut a rectangular piece on grain for shawl collar.

Step4: Attach front and back bodice at center back and at waistline.

Step5: Attach the shawl collar around the neckline.

Step 6: Finish the hemline by folding 2 cm fabric inside.

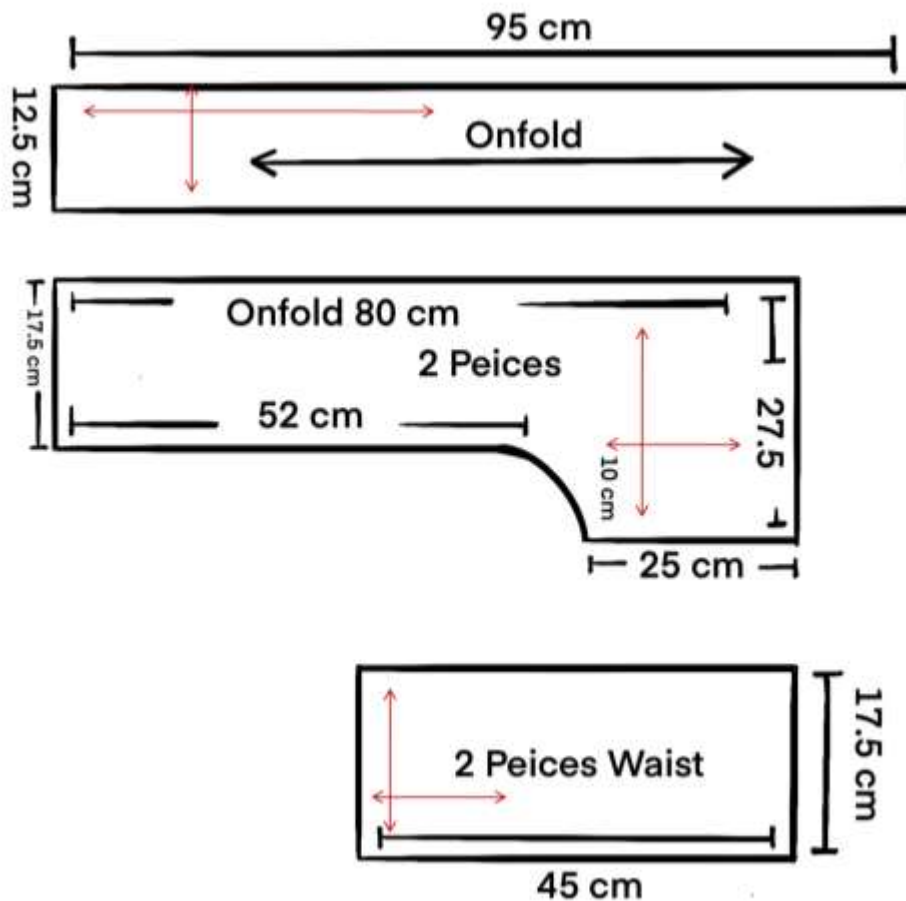


Illustration 4.11: Honju/Blouse/Tago Pattern

4.4.1.6 Ashyam/Dumdyem/Gado (Draped sari)

A draped garment worn by Lepcha women measured 396.24 cm in length X 152.4cm. Worn over a *tago* (silk blouse). Made by joining the pieces together in order to increase the width of the fabric. (Illustration 4.12)

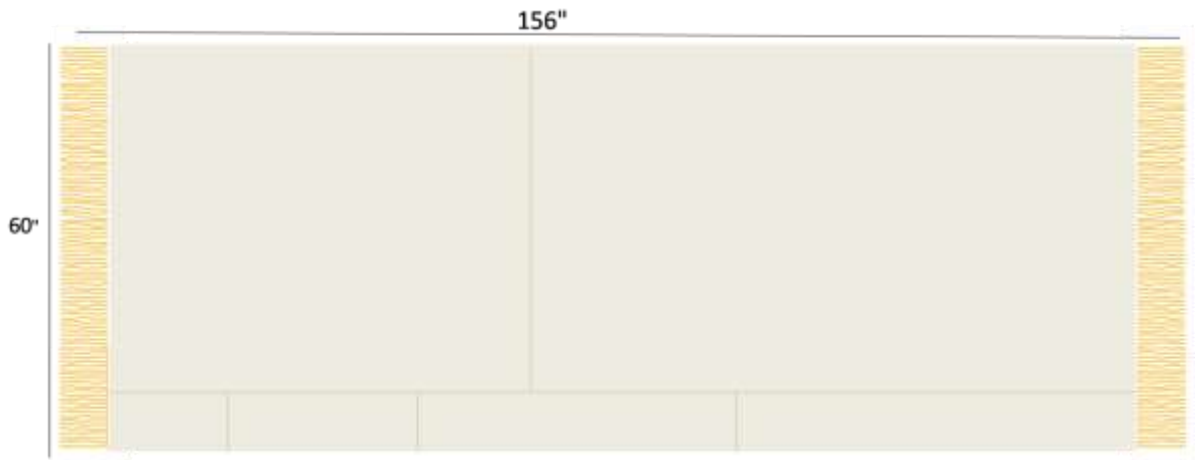


Illustration 4.12: Ashyam/Dumdyem/Gado

***Dumdyem* draping Steps**

Step 1: Begin by tying a string around your waist or wearing a petticoat, then hold a rectangular piece of fabric, known as *dumdyem*, which is usually silk or cotton. Ensure the fabric is straight and wrinkle-free. Hold one end against the front of your body, just below the chest, and drape it across your back, adjusting the length so one end is longer than the other.

Step 2: Crossing Over: Take the longer end of the fabric and bring it across your chest to the opposite shoulder, allowing it to drape loosely.

Step 3: Securing the Ends: Tuck the shorter end of the fabric securely into the waistband or tie it around your waist, based on your style preference. Secure the ends on both shoulders using a brooch or pin, typically a silver one, ensuring a snug yet comfortable fit.

Step 4: Adjusting the Drape: Arrange the draped fabric to create an attractive silhouette, making sure it falls elegantly around your body. Pleat the remaining fabric like sari pleats and secure with a string around your waist. Allow the pleats to hang outward, adjusting the length and folds as needed for the desired appearance.

Step 5: After draping, tie a *Nymrek* (belt) around your waist to complete the look.

Step 6: Finishing Touches: After the *dumdyem* is draped, accessorize with additional items like jewellery or scarves to finish the ensemble. (Illustration 4.12 & Illustration 4.13)



Illustration 4.13: Steps in Ashyam/ Dumdyem/ Gado draping

4.4.2 Costumes of the Bhutia community:

Men Upper Garment : *Pho Kho*, *Labrang* (Coat), *Jaja* (waistcoat), *Wonhatsi* (shirt)

Men Lower Garment : *Daura* (Trousers), *Kyerah* (waist belt)

Women Upper Garment: *MoKho* (*Chupa*, *Gyapaor gyaba* (cloak), *Teygho* (blouse), *Kkhatee* (Red scarf)

Women Lower Garment: *Pangdin* (Apron), *Wrap skirt* (Variation of *bakhu*)

4.4.2.1 Men's: *Pho Kho, Labrang* (Coat , Chupa)

Po-Kho, Chupa was a upper garment worn by Bhutia men in Sikkim. It consist of front, back, collar and pocket. Front panel has two parts right and left. Right opening has two panel, whereas left has three panel. Left over right panel opening. Usually 3 1/5 meters fabric is required for men's kho.

Measurements:

1. Chest: 60 cm + (7.5+7.5) Extended panels
2. Waist : 28 cm
3. Shoulder Slope: 22 cm
4. Across shoulder: 54.6 cm
5. Sleeve length (from shoulder to wrist): 77.5 cm (Sleeve length could vary can go up till 200 cm.
6. Round Neck: 38 cm
7. Full length (from shoulder to ankle): 127 cm

1. Front and Back Panels:

- Measure the chest circumference and add 5.08 cm for ease and seams.
- Measure from the highest shoulder point to the desired length (usually ankle or below ankle).
- Cut two panels for front right and three panels for front left with asymmetrical neckline extended center front .Left panel overlaps right joining side seam just below the armhole.

2. Neckline and Shoulder:

- Mandarin collar: On the front panel, mark the neckline by measuring down 11.4 cm from the top and in 11.4 cm from the center. Create a gentle curve between these points for a rounded neckline.
- For the shoulder seams, mark the shoulder width on both the front and back panels from the top corners.

3. Sleeves Draft:

- Measure the sleeve length from shoulder to wrist.
- Cut two rectangular pieces of fabric according the dimensions.

Stitching: Place the front and back panel's right sides together.

Step 1: Stitch two panels of front right together and then the three panel of front left side

Step 2: Then attach sleeves and join front and back with side seam.

Step 3: Attach mandarin collar on the neckline.

Step 4: Lastly finishing the lower hemline

4. Add Closures:

Buttons :

- On the front panel, mark positions for buttons down the center front and along the side seam near the armhole.
- Sew four to five loops on the other side for closures and attach buttons on the other. **(Plate 4.204, Illustration 4.14 & Illustration 4.15)**



Plate 4.204: Pokho

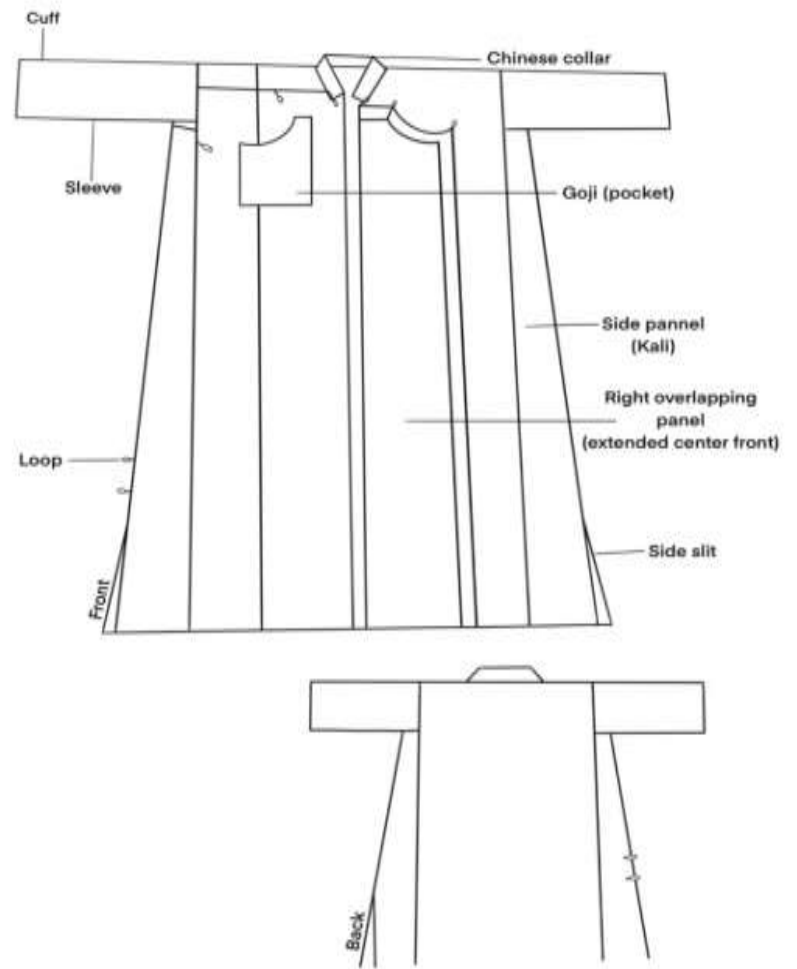


Illustration 4.14: Pokho

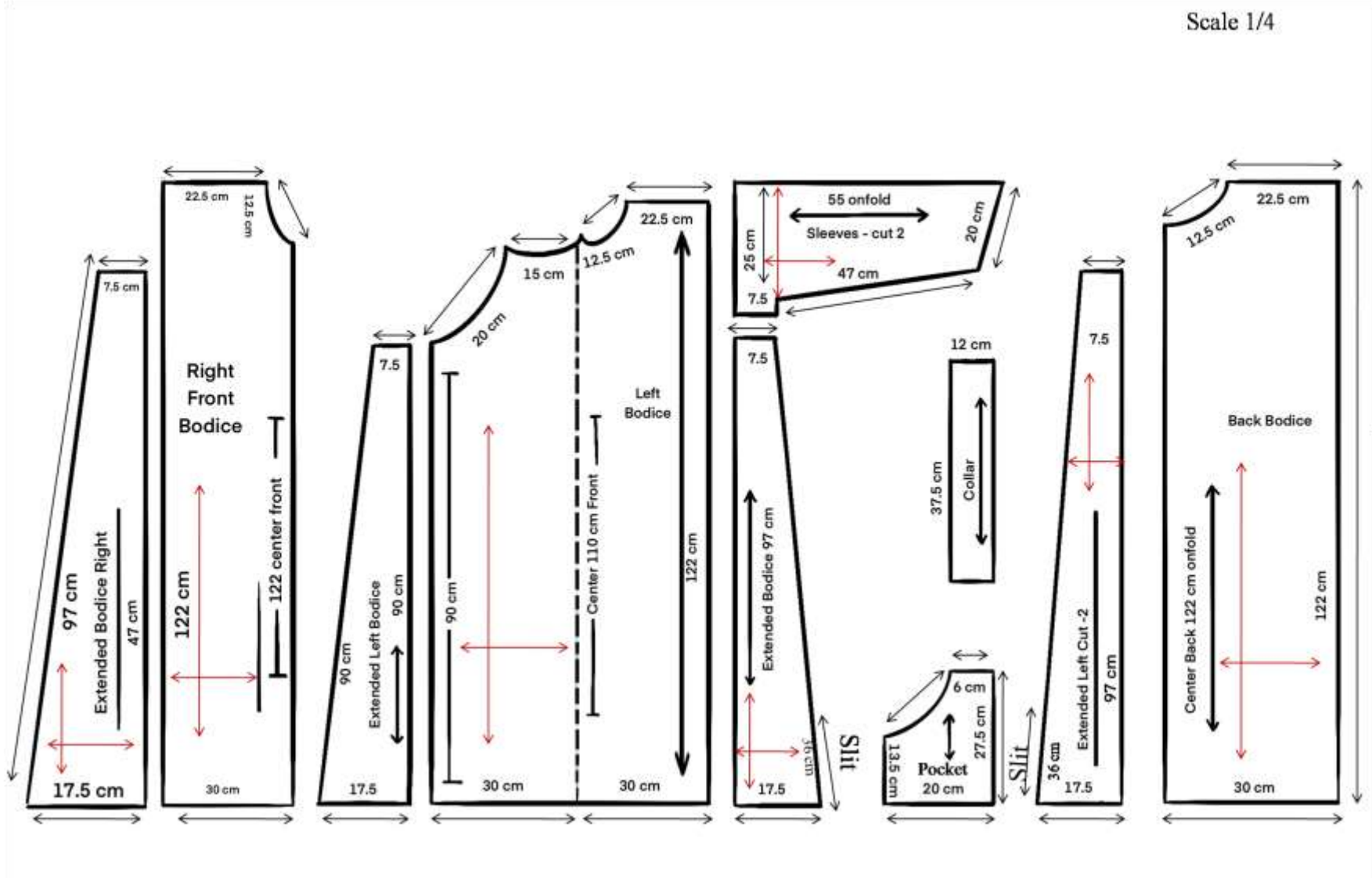
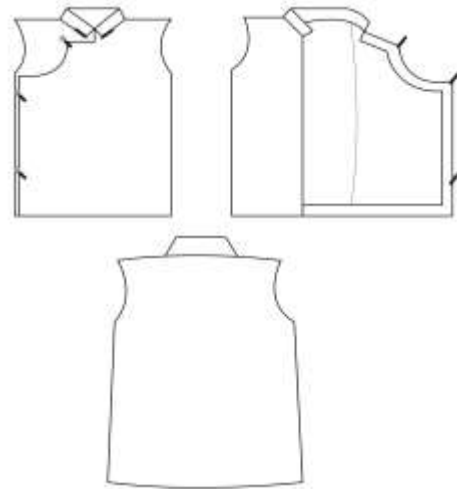


Illustration 4.15: Pokho Pattern

4.4.2.2 Bhutia Mens *Jaja/ Kushen* (waistcoat)

Measurements:

1. Chest (Half): 55cm
2. Waist (Half): 55cm
3. Shoulder slope: 17.cm
4. Across Shoulder: 43
5. Round Neck:36
6. Full length (from shoulder to desired length): 66 cm



1. Front and Back Panels:

- Measure the chest circumference and add 5.08 cm for ease and seams.
- Measure from the highest shoulder point to the waist or as desired.
- Cut two panels for the front. The left front panel is extended from the center front with an asymmetrical neckline. The left panel overlaps the right joining side seam just below the armhole.

Illustration 4.16: Jaja

3. Neckline and Shoulder:

- Mandarin collar: On the front panel, mark the neckline by measuring down 11.4 cm from the top and in 11.4 cm from the center. Create a gentle curve between these points for a rounded neckline.
- For the shoulder seams, mark the shoulder width on both the front and back panels from the top corners.

4. **Stitching:** Place the front and back panel's right sides together.

Step 1: Stitch the front and back together.

Step 2: Attach the lining if required.

Step 3: Attach mandarin collar on the neckline.

Step 4: Lastly finish all the hemline.

5. Add Closures:

1. Buttons :

- On the front panel, mark positions for buttons down the center front and along the side seam near the armhole.

Sew loops on the other side for closures and attach buttons on the other. (Plate 4.205)

(Illustration 4.16) (Illustration 4.17)

FRONT



BACK



Plate 4.205: Jaja/ Kushen (Waistcoat)

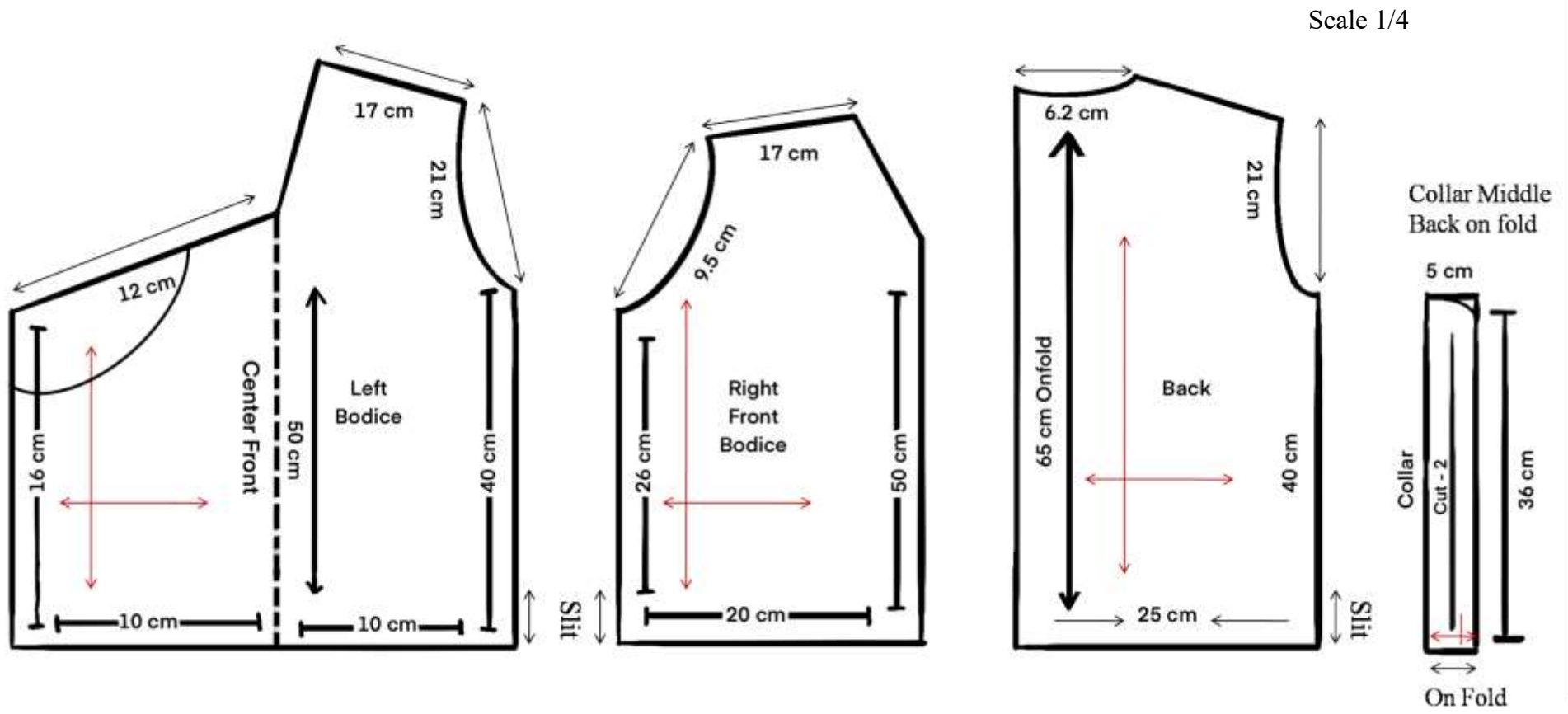


Illustration 4.17: Jaja Pattern

4.4.2.3 Wonthatsi (shirt)

The construction of this shirt was similar to that of Mongolian shirts. Consist of front, back, long kimono sleeves and mandarin collar. The Length is according to the wearer, but usually kept till waist. It has a extended center front panel which is fasten with the help of a frog buttons.

Measurements, Drafting and Construction patterns were same as that of Lepcha shirt (*Tago/Hyantaj*) (Plate 4.206) (Illustration 4.18)

FRONT



BACK



Plate 4.206: Wonthatsi (Shirt)

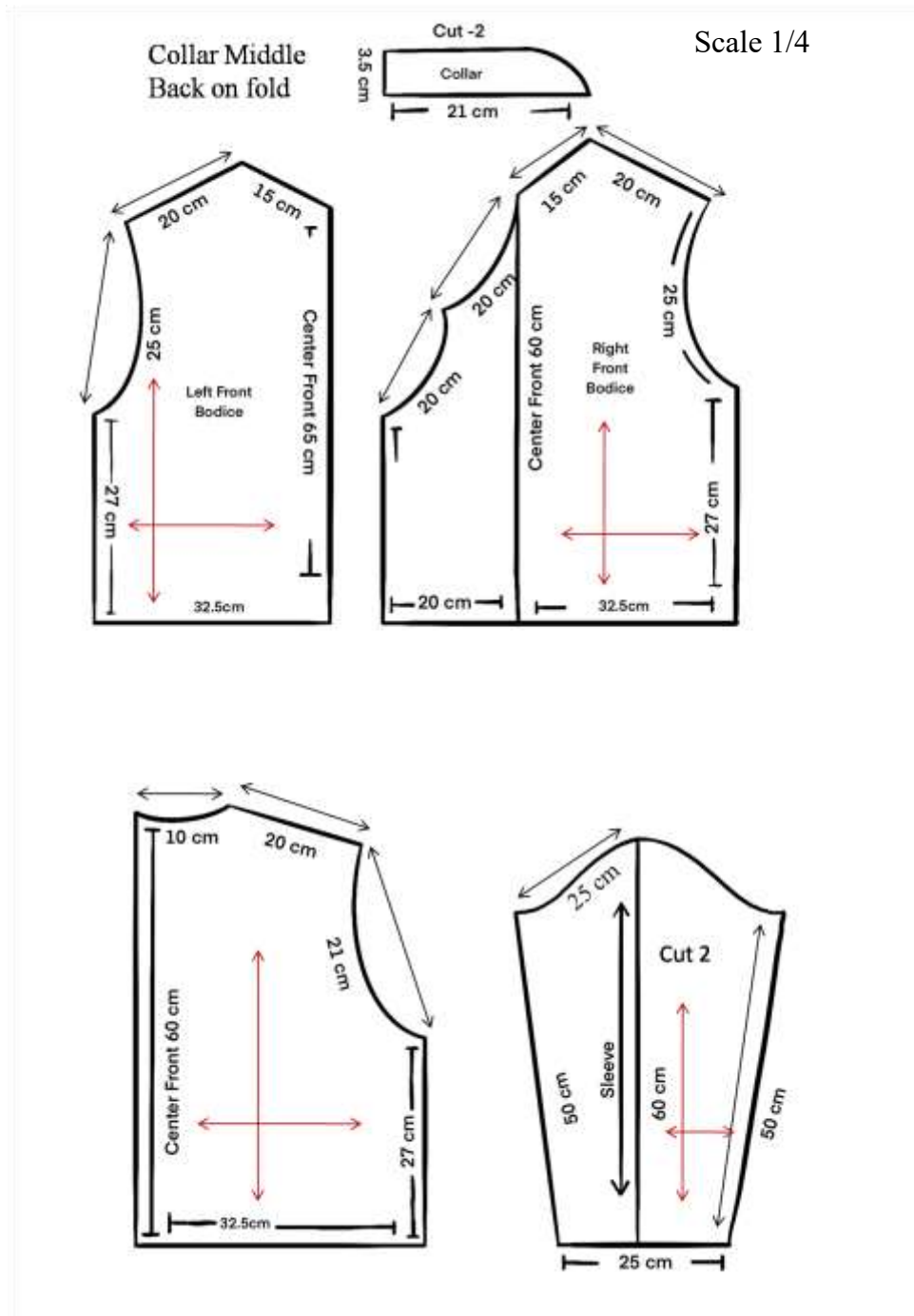


Illustration 4.418: Wonthatsi (Shirt) Pattern

Draping of the traditional bhutia men costume

Bhutia people drape their traditional costume in different styles. As they are migrated from Tibet lot of similarity was seen in the costumes and draping styles.

Draping of garments of *Wonthatsi*, *Po-Kho*, *Kyerah* (waist belt)

Step 1: Men wear shirt (*wonthatsi*) with trouser. Shirt overlaps the right panel and tied at the four places, Two around the neck, one below the under arm and one around the side seam.

Step 2: The shirt is then tucked into the *Daura* (Trousers).

Step 3: Sometimes trousers was tucked inside the boots and sometimes it is left like a formal pants.

Step-4: Then *Po-kho* was worn which was very wide, almost double the body size of the wearer. *Po-kho* also has an asymmetrical neck line and extended center front similar to the shirt. Sleeves are long.

Step 5: One hand was kept out of the sleeve and shoulder along with sleeve was allowed to fall.

Step 6: The wide sash or waistband called as *Kyerah* was then tied around the waist by wrapping it around twice.

Step 7: A hat or *topi* was worn to complete the look. (Illustration 4.19)



Illustration 4.19: Draping of Bhutia costume Tibetan style

Another style was in which wearer wears a waistcoat (*Jaja*) on top of the *Kho*. In this style wearer do not insert trouser inside the boots. Also the *kho* is worn completely without dropping one shoulder sleeve. Rest other drape style remains same.

Step 1: Men wear shirt (*wonthatsi*) with trouser. Shirt overlaps the right panel and tied at the four places, Two around the neck, one below the underarm and one around the side seam.

Step 2 & 3 :*Po kho* was worn which was very wide, almost double the body size of the wearer. *Po kho* also has an asymmetrical neck line and extended center front similar to the shirt. Sleeves are long.

Step 4 & 5: Buttoning up the closures. *Kho* has frog buttons with loops similar to *wonthatsi*.

Step 6,7 & 8: *Kho* is then pulled up a little and adjusted properly towards the back.

Step 9. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14: The wide sash or waistband called as *Kyerah* was tied around the waist by wrapping it around twice or thrice and then the remaining tassel of the belt was tied and tucked at the back.

Step 15, 16,17: Waistcoat (*jaja*) which was made in brocade was then worn on top of the *kho*. Buttons were tied up similar to that of *kho* around the neckline, just below the armhole and at the side seam above the waistline.

Step 18: Bhutia topi is worn along with it to complete the look. **(Illustration 4.20)**

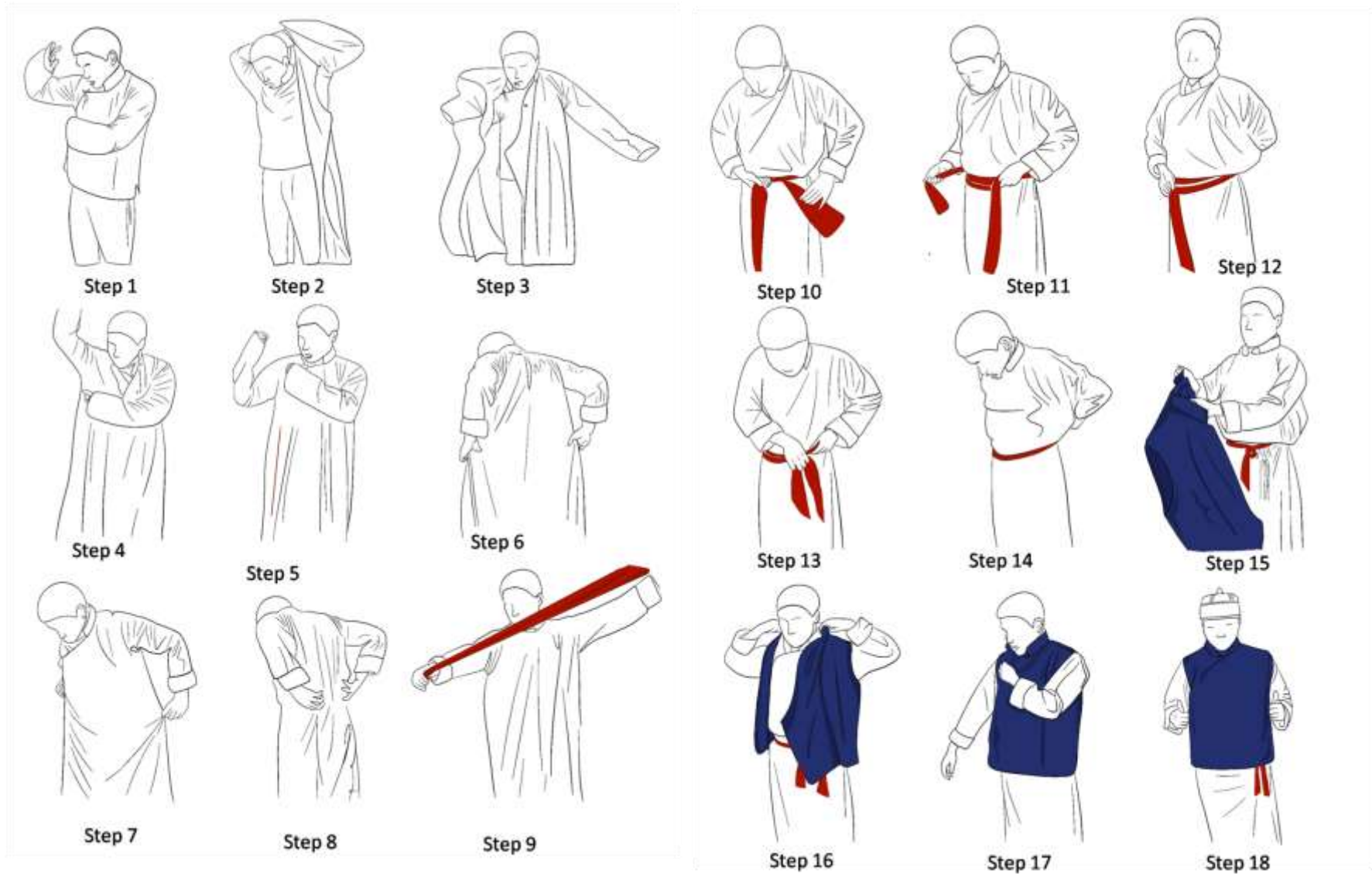


Illustration 4.20: Draping of Bhutia Costume

4.4.2.4 Keyerah (waist belt)

Keyerah (waist belt) was made out of light weight silk fabric, measuring 203.2 cm × 15.24 cm. A single piece of fabric was cut on grain. Fringes were added on both ends as a added embellishment to it. (**Illustration 4.21**)

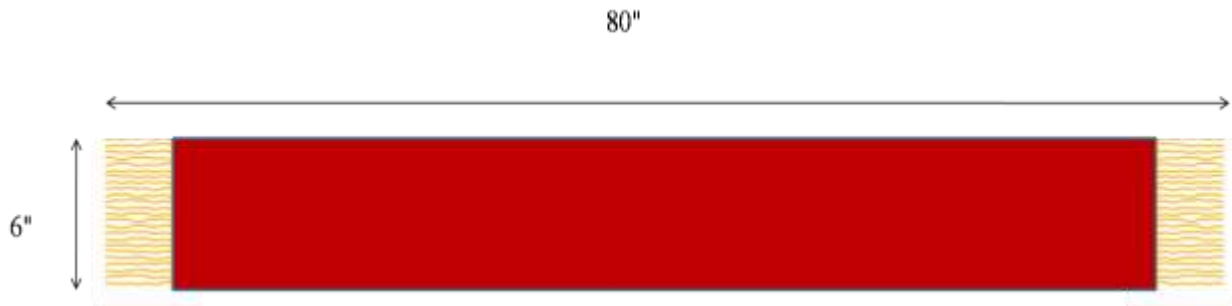


Illustration 4.21: Keyerah

4.4.2.5 Gya-ton /Daura (Trousers)

Trousers worn by the Bhutia men were straight with a waistband. Earlier there were no pockets in them. Later on in tailor made trousers, it was customised according to the requirement. (**Illustration 4.22**)

Measurements of the trouser:

1. Length from waist to Hemline (Full length): 107 cm
2. Half Waist: 14" (35cm)
3. Hip : 127cm
4. Thigh: 83 cm
5. Bottom: 30 cm
6. Waist belt: 5.5 cm

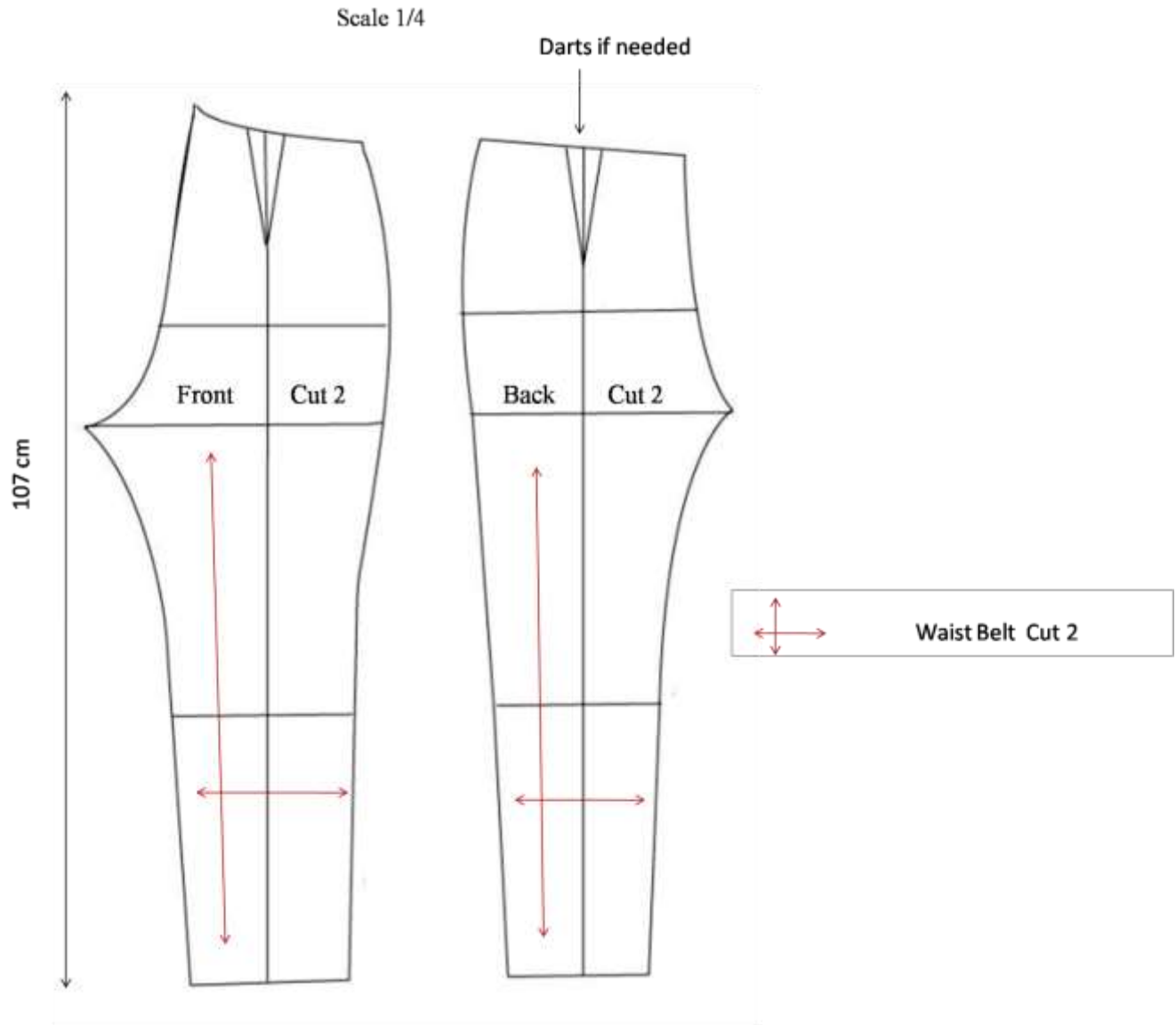


Illustration 4.22: Gya-ton /Daura (Trousers) Pattern

4.4.2.6 Bhutia Women: MoKho (Chupa, Gyapaor gyaba (cloak).

It's a cross over coatdress, Called *Mokho* (**Plate 4.207**) (**Illustration 4.23**).The cut is similar to that of Bhutia male *Pokho (Chuba)*, but it is sleeveless. The loose sides are folded over the back forming two big pleats at the back . This is then seacured at the waist by the help of a waist belt called *Keyerah*.



Plate 4.207: Mokho

Another variation of *kho* according to Tshering Dolma who was a known Fashion designer in Gangtokwas the traditional Gyaba or Chupa

(**Plate 4.208**) (**Illustration 4.24**) which was similar to Tibetan Chupa dress. In an interview with her she revealed that since they share history with Tibetans. Bhutia's have similarity with Tibetan culture this type of *chupa* was also worn by women. This chupa was double the size of the wearer. She herself, who migrated from Tibet and settled in Sikkim now. Shared that as the construction pattern suggest, this was made by joining the panels which was usually added to increase the width of the garment. Sleeve and collar were also attached. Some coats were lined with cotton, satin or silk lining. Coat length is usually 137 cm and bottom wide is 275 cm and usually required



Plate 4.208: Tibetan Chupa

Source: Tshering Dolma personal collection
https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php/?story_fb_id=164018186248477&id=100079208901760

2.5 meters of fabric for its construction fabric requirement changes according to the width of the fabric.

Measurements:

1. Round Bust: 111 cm
2. Round Waist : 111 cm
3. Shoulder Slope:15 cm
4. Across shoulder: 38 cm
5. Sleeve length (from shoulder to wrist): 71cm
6. Round Neck:35cm
7. Full length (from shoulder to desired length): 137 cm

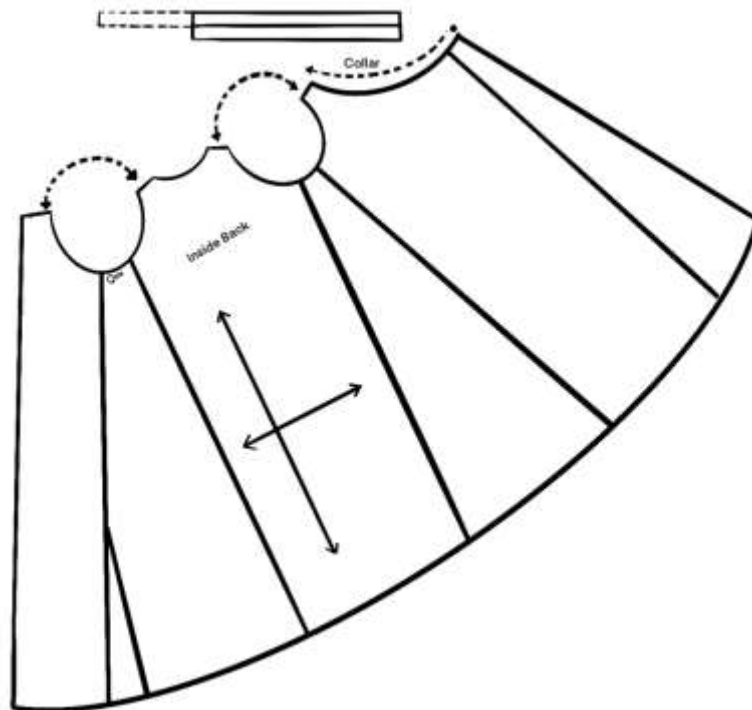
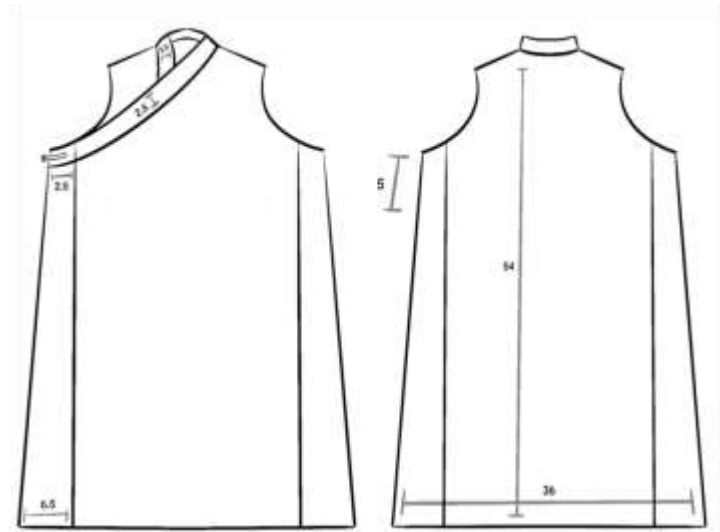


Illustration 4.23: Mokho Pattern

1. Front and Back Panels:

- Measure the bust circumference and add 5.08 cm for ease and seams.
- Measure from the highest shoulder point to the desired length (usually ankle or below ankle).
- Cut panels for front and back with asymmetrical neckline extended center front .Left panel overlaps right joining side seam just below the armhole.

5. Neckline and Shoulder:

- Shawl collar with extended front shoulder line. On the front panel, mark the neckline by measuring from the center.
- For the shoulder seams, mark the shoulder width on both the front and back panels from the top corners.

6. Sleeves Draft:

- Measure the sleeve length from shoulder to wrist.
- Cut two rectangular pieces of fabric according the dimensions.

7. **Stitching:** Place the front and back panel's right sides together. Stitch two panels of front right together and then the three panel of front left side. Then attach sleeves and join front and back with side seam. Attach mandarin collar on the neckline. Lastly finishing the lower hemline

5. Add Closures:

- On the front panel, mark positions for buttons down the center front and along the side seam near the armhole.
- Sew four to two belts on the right side for closures

Note: Fabric sometimes cut on fold for the *Kho (Chupa)* which does not have shoulder seam.

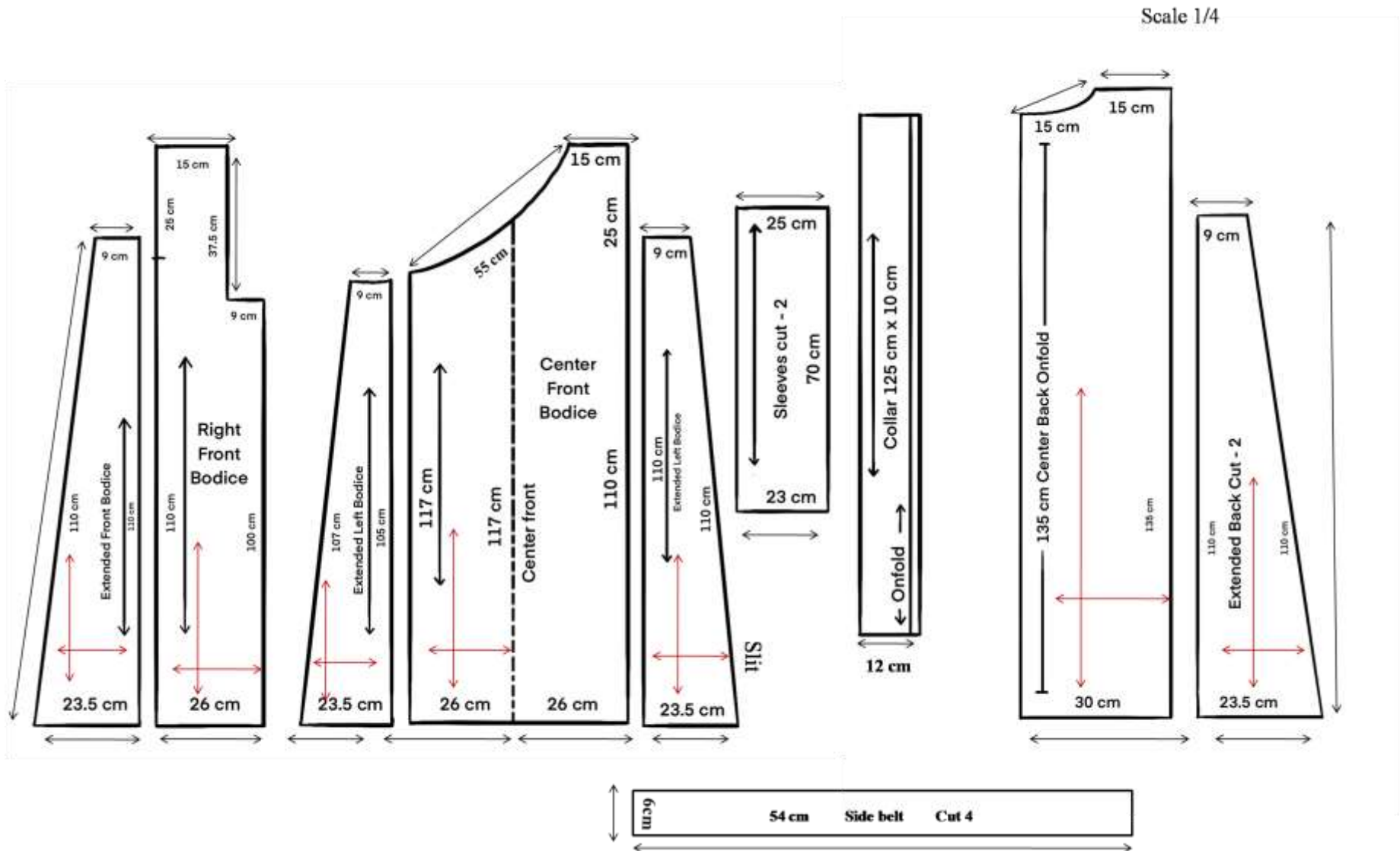


Illustration 4.24: Mokho Pattern

4.4.2.7 Bakhu

Another modernize version of *Mo Kho (Chupa)* with an extended wrap panel and belts. Along with shawl collar. This was a garment which was made to fit the wearer body by giving front and back shaping darts, wide neckbands and simple finished armholes. Unique feature was the side extension that wraps around the back and tied at the centre front. Wrapped extension gives enough space to walk. (Illustration 4.25, Illustration 4.26, Illustration 4.27, Illustration 4.28)

Measurements:

1. Round Bust: 91.4cm
2. Waist :91.4 cm
3. Shoulder Slope: 19 cm
4. Across shoulder: 41.9 cm
5. Round Neck: 35.5 cm
6. Full length (from shoulder to desired length): 137 cm



Illustration 4.25: Bakhu

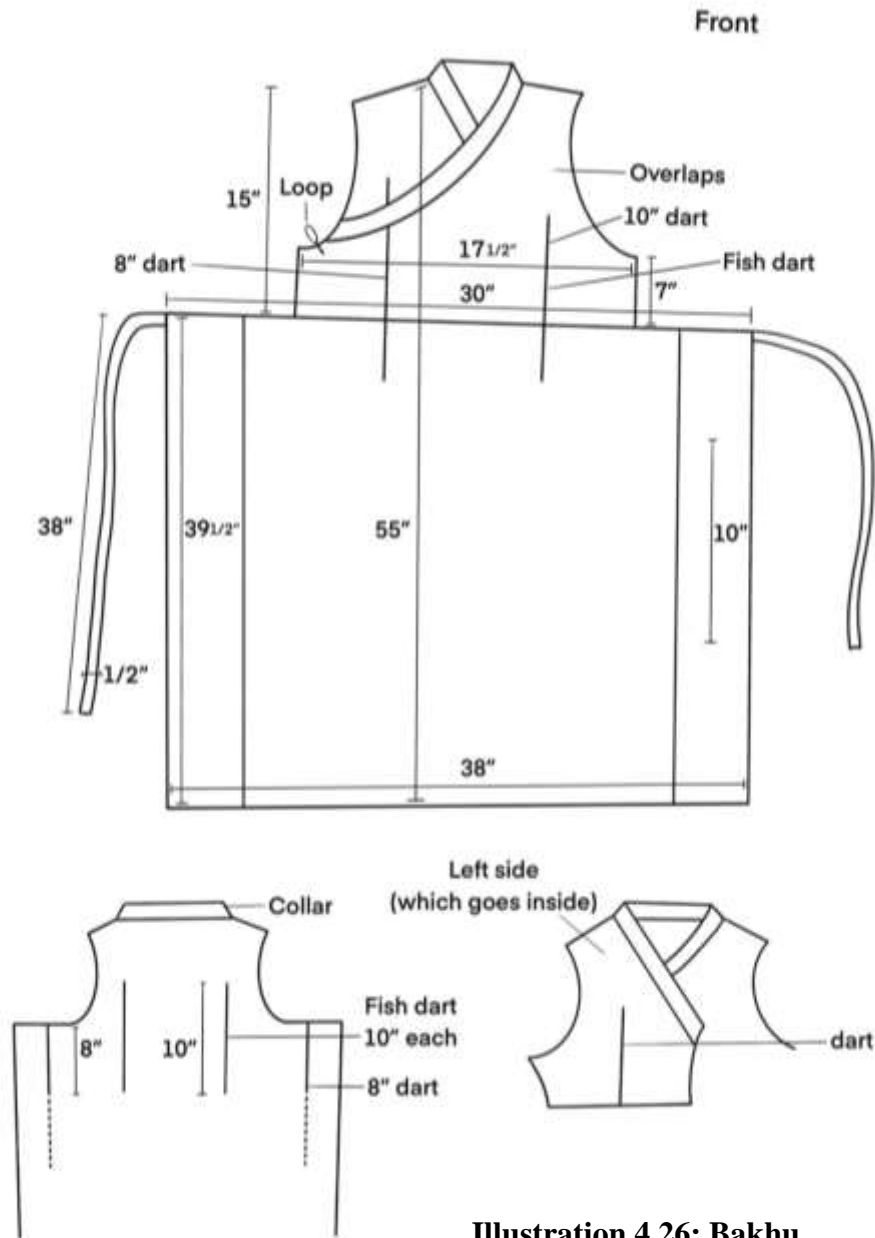


Illustration 4.26: Bakhu

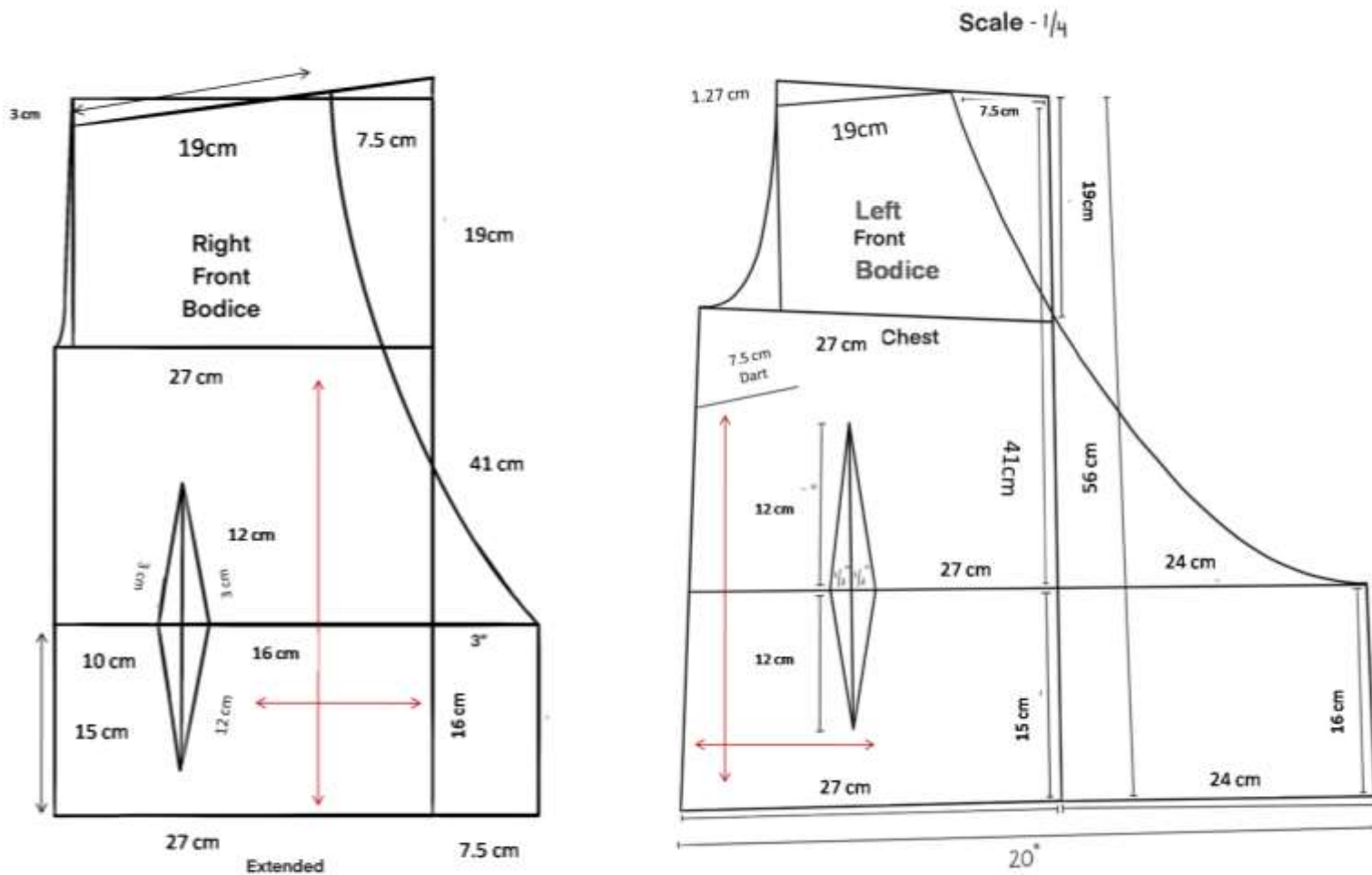


Illustration 4.27: Bakhu Pattern

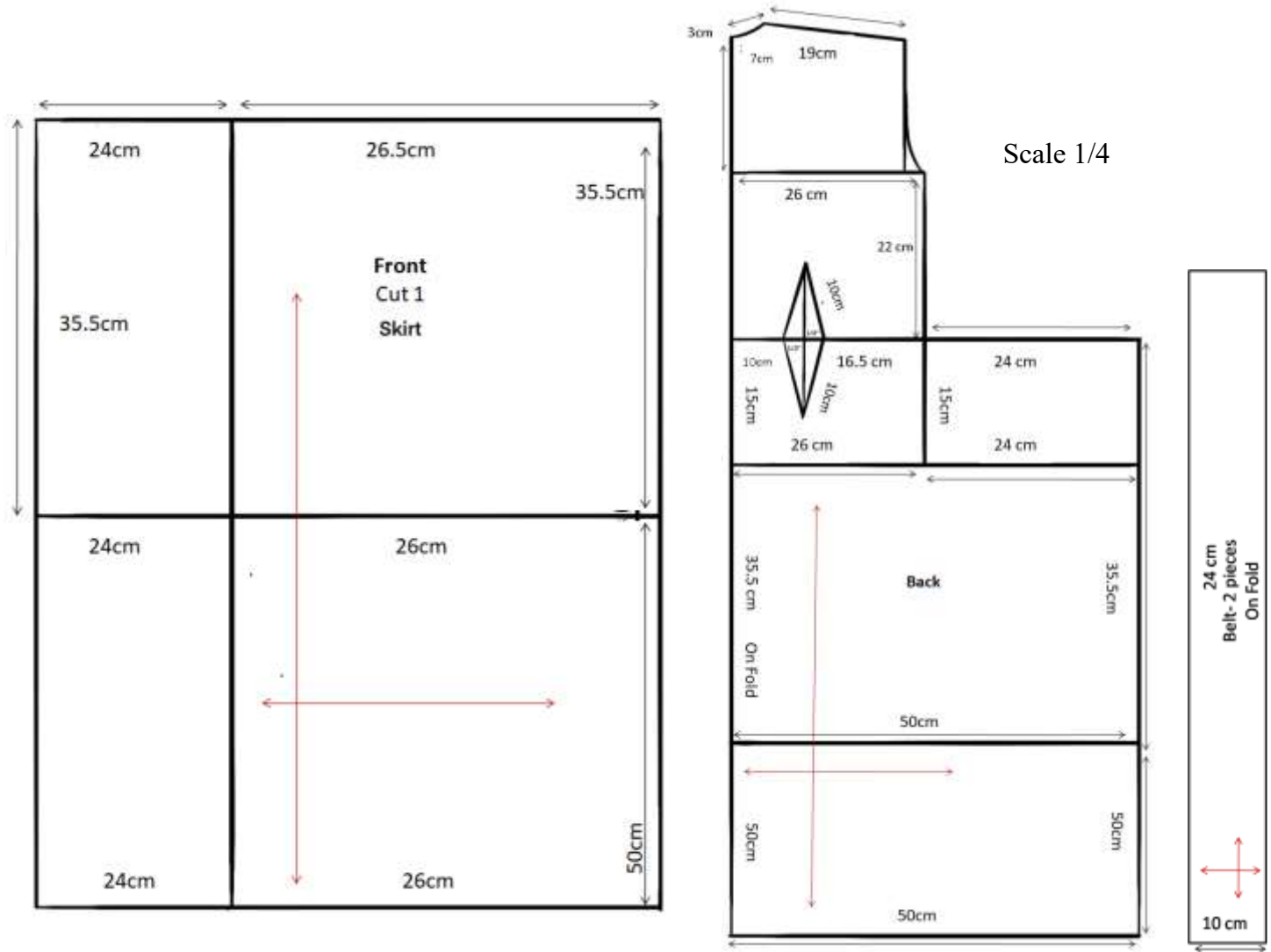


Illustration 4.28: Baku Pattern

4.4.2.8 Pangden

Apron worn by Bhutia married women signifying their marital status. Similar to wearing a sindoor in Hindu culture. This was made by joining the three woven panel together. Fabric was usually cut in rectangular pieces and these pieces were stitched together either by hand or by machine. Two belts were attached which helps in tying the *pangden* over the waist. **(Plate 4.209)**



Plate 4.209: Pangden

Measurements:

Rectangular pieces: 68.58 cm x 52.07 cm

Brocade Belt: 76.2 cm x 6.3 cm

Cotton Belt: 35.5cm x 6.3 cm

Construction:

Step 1: Cut 3 rectangular pieces and stitch them together and finish the edges.

Step 2: Cut 2 Brocade belt

Step 3: Cut 2 cotton belt

Step 4: Attach the belts to the edges of the apron. **(Illustration 4.29)**

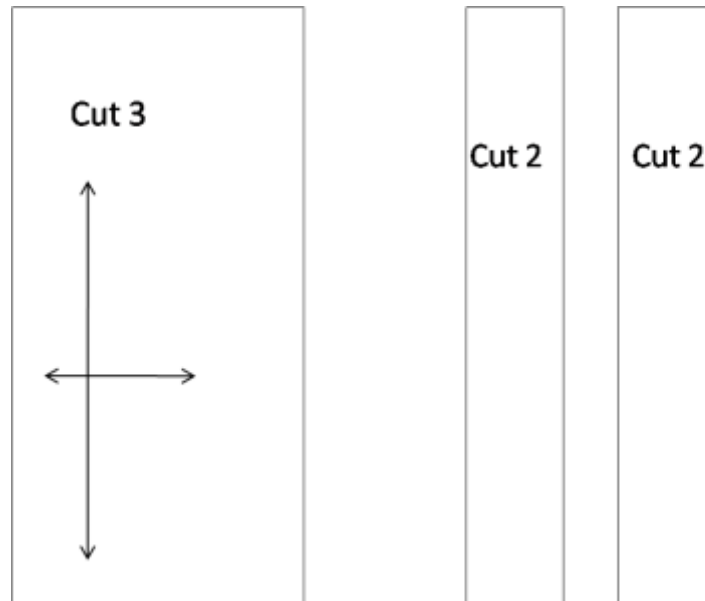


Illustration 4.29: Pangden Pattern

4. 4.2.9 *Honju* (Blouse/Shirt)

Pattern and draft is same as that of Lepcha women *Tago* (Blouse)

Draping of *Mo Kho* (Chupa) dress: (Illustration 4.30)

Step 1: Wear *Honju* (women shirt) which is front open with a shawl collar. Put the *Bakhu* or *Chupa* dress after that.

Step 2: Fold the right half of the *Honju* over a right panel which fits the bust line.

Step 3: Fold the right half of the *Kho* under the left panel and pull the left panel and overlap the bust.

Step 4& 5: Fastened the overlapped panel with a button on the right side.

Step 6 & 7: Wide part of the *Kho* is adjusted to form a fitted skirt. Belts in case of *Bakhu* and extra fabric in case of *Kho* are pulled and adjusted around the waist at the back.

Step 8: Waist belt *Kyerah* is tied around to adjust and keep the wrap in place.

Step 9, 10, and 11: *Pangden* is tied on the waist on top of the *kho* /*Bakhu*

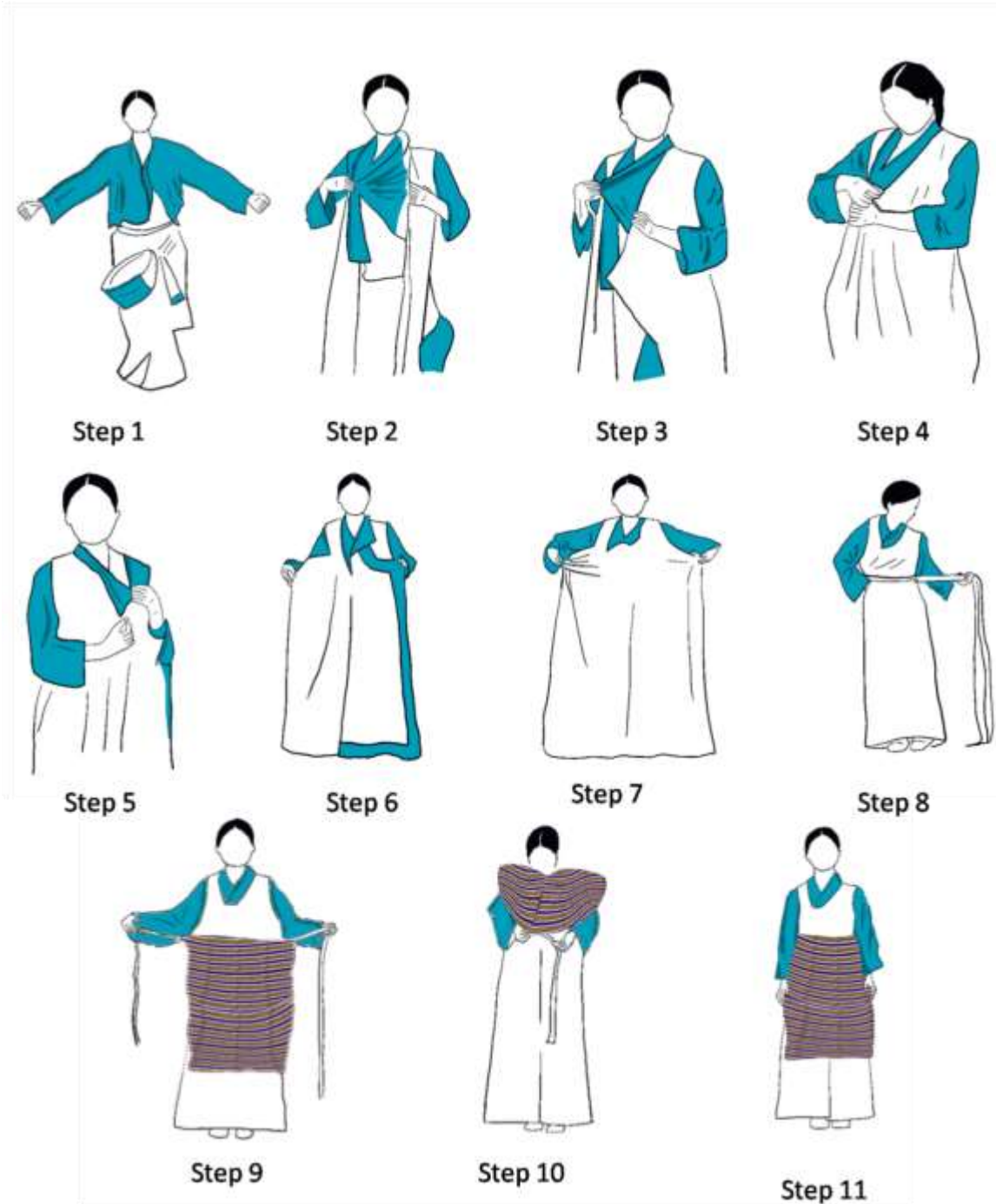


Illustration 4.30: Steps in draping Bhutia costume

4.5 i Revamping Cuts and Styles: Crafting a Contemporary Capsule Collection and a Design Catalogue

The objective of the study was “To design a capsule collection for contemporary wear inspired by traditional costumes of the Lepcha and Bhutia communities”. The whole idea was to revamp the potentiality of traditional textiles and costumes of Lepcha and Bhutia communities of Sikkim into today’s fashion and designed androgynous clothing in such a way that youth could easily accept & popularize it. With this purpose, a preference schedule was designed to analyze newly developed designs. The schedule was framed under three segments where the first segment dealt with demographic details like age, gender, qualification, and locality; the second section dealt with craft and area awareness among respondents like awareness about Sikkim traditional costumes, their preferences regarding the liking and the acceptability of the designed sketch. Opinion related to the similarity towards the traditional silhouettes.

Therefore, in order to complete this objective researcher has initially sketched 80 designs taking inspiration from the traditional silhouettes. Out of these, only 48 were selected for the preference collection, and then on the basis of that researcher has developed the Opinionnaire for the evaluation of the designs which was inspired from the traditional garments and silhouette of these two communities of Sikkim. Designs were divided into four categories (These selected 48 designs (12 in each category) (**Figure 4.2**) were then presented to 100 design practitioners to gather feedback). The designs were developed with a focus on incorporating the cuts and styles of traditional garments from the Lepcha and Bhutia community. The Opinionnaire was prepared using Google Forms. Form was designed in two parts, Form I had categories 1 & 2 whereas Form II had categories 3 &4 (**Plate 4.223**).

Also, brief about Sikkim and its Lepcha and Bhutia community was shared among the design practitioners along with the theme and inspiration boards. Place was not a limitation as responses were to be collected digitally. The researcher also shared her contact number and email with respondents to contact in case of any queries. Responses were received from ten different states and two countries. This approach allowed making people aware of the traditional textiles and costumes of the Lepcha and Bhutia communities of Sikkim to a broader audience globally.

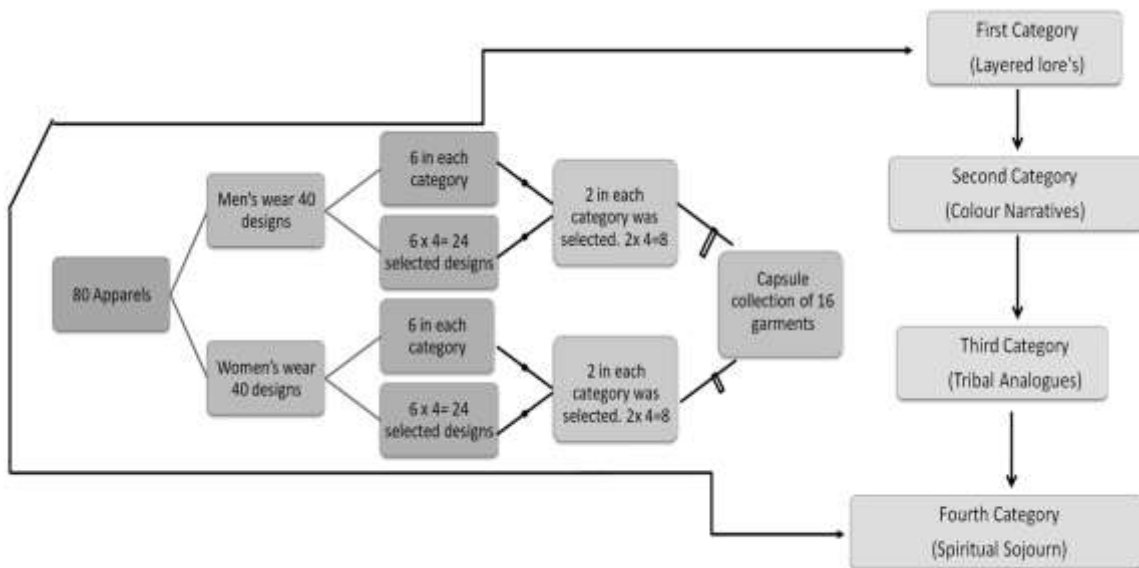


Figure 4.2: Design Categories

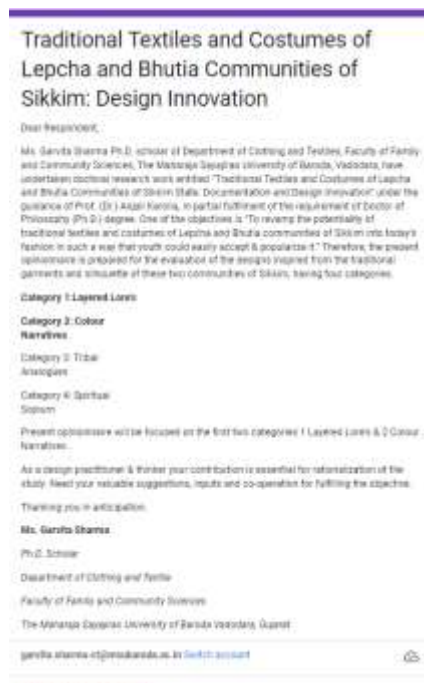


Plate 4.223 : Google forms

Category 1: Layered Lore's: The concept for category 1 drew inspiration from the cuts and styles of traditional Lepcha and Bhutia costumes, maintaining the essence intact. As Sikkim is situated in the Himalayan mountains, characterized by mountainous terrain and a close connection with nature, the focus was on the region's colder climate. The people of Sikkim

prefer wearing loose, cloak-style garments that are fastened at the neck on one side and near the waist to keep them warm. The traditional style was blended with a contemporary outlook. Collections were developed using the best suitable fabrics like wool, and silk. Layered garments and exaggerated sleeves formed the foundation of this winter wear collection.

Category 2: Colour Narratives: The concept for Category 2: Color Narratives was inspired by the styling methods and vibrant textiles of Sikkimese clothing. The researcher aimed to celebrate the meeting of cultures and diversity by capturing the colourful spirit of Sikkim's culture in contemporary wear. By re-imagining traditional styles while keeping the cuts and styles intact, the researcher created a luxury resort wear collection, merging the essence of traditional Sikkimese attire with modern design elements. Collections were developed using the best suitable fabrics like Chinese silk, and satin.

Category 3: Tribal Analogues: The concept for Category 3 drew inspiration from the Lepcha and Bhutia communities, known for their casual, well-made clothing adorned with attractive tribal patterns that hold historical and traditional significance. Lepcha weaving, indigenous to Sikkim, dates back to a time when the Lepcha people utilized nettle, or *sisnu*, as a natural fibre to spin yarn for handloom weaving. Locally called *thara*, the Lepcha weave cloth featured tribal designs and was made on a back-strap loin loom, resulting in a narrow fabric width. Similarly, Bhutia textiles had their distinctive patterns. This category focused on the tribal patterns of the Lepcha and Bhutia textiles. The researcher attempted to combine these tribal patterns with modern silhouettes, creating outfits that were distinctive and showcased the fuss-free style of these two communities in Sikkim. These silhouettes included shirts, dresses, pants, jackets, and skirts with clear lines and geometric patterns. The conspicuous clothing of the tribes was interpreted in these silhouettes of the said communities.

Category 4: Spiritual Sojourn: The concept for Category 4: Spiritual Sojourn was inspired by Buddhist culture and the way monks dressed. As the community followed Buddhism as their religion, the researcher drew inspiration for this collection from spirituality, particularly Buddhist philosophy, and from draped silhouettes.

This Opinionnaire was shared among the design practitioner & thinker which was important for rationalization of the study. A total of 100 responses were collected. Based on the Opinionnaire the best 4 designs were selected from each category and a total of 16 garments were designed based on the opinions collected.

The best two selected designs under each category recorded were as follows:

Category 1 Women: Design 1(Short dress category)

Design 2 (Long dress category)

Category 1 Men: Design 2 & 3

Category 2 Women: Design 1&2

Category 2 Men: Design 2&3

Category 3 Women: Design 1& 4

Category 3 Men: Design 2 &5

Category 4 Women: Design 1&6

Category 4 Men: Design 1&5

CATEGORY 1

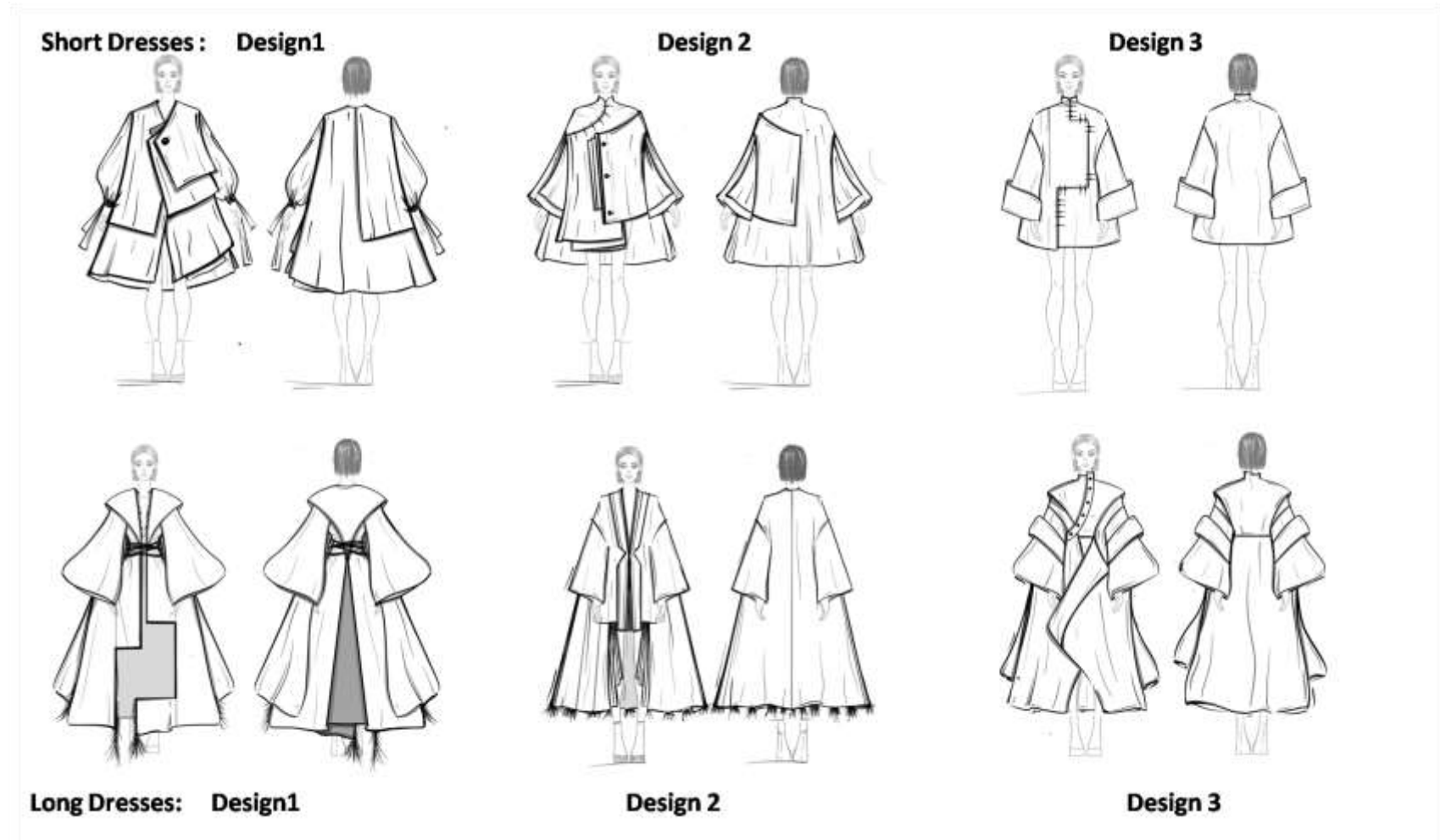


Illustration 4.31: Women's Wear

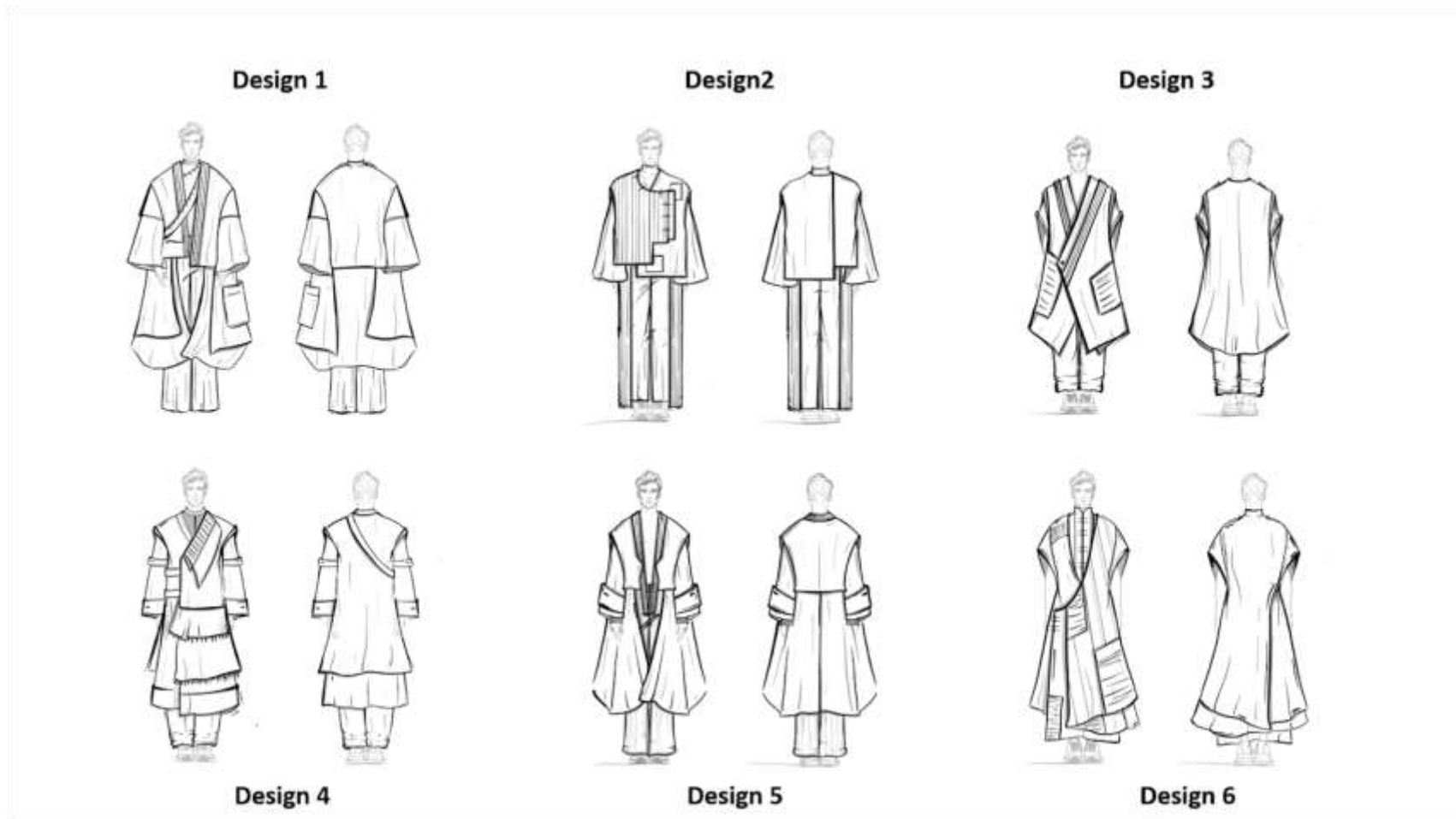


Illustration 4.32: Men's Wear

CATEGORY 2

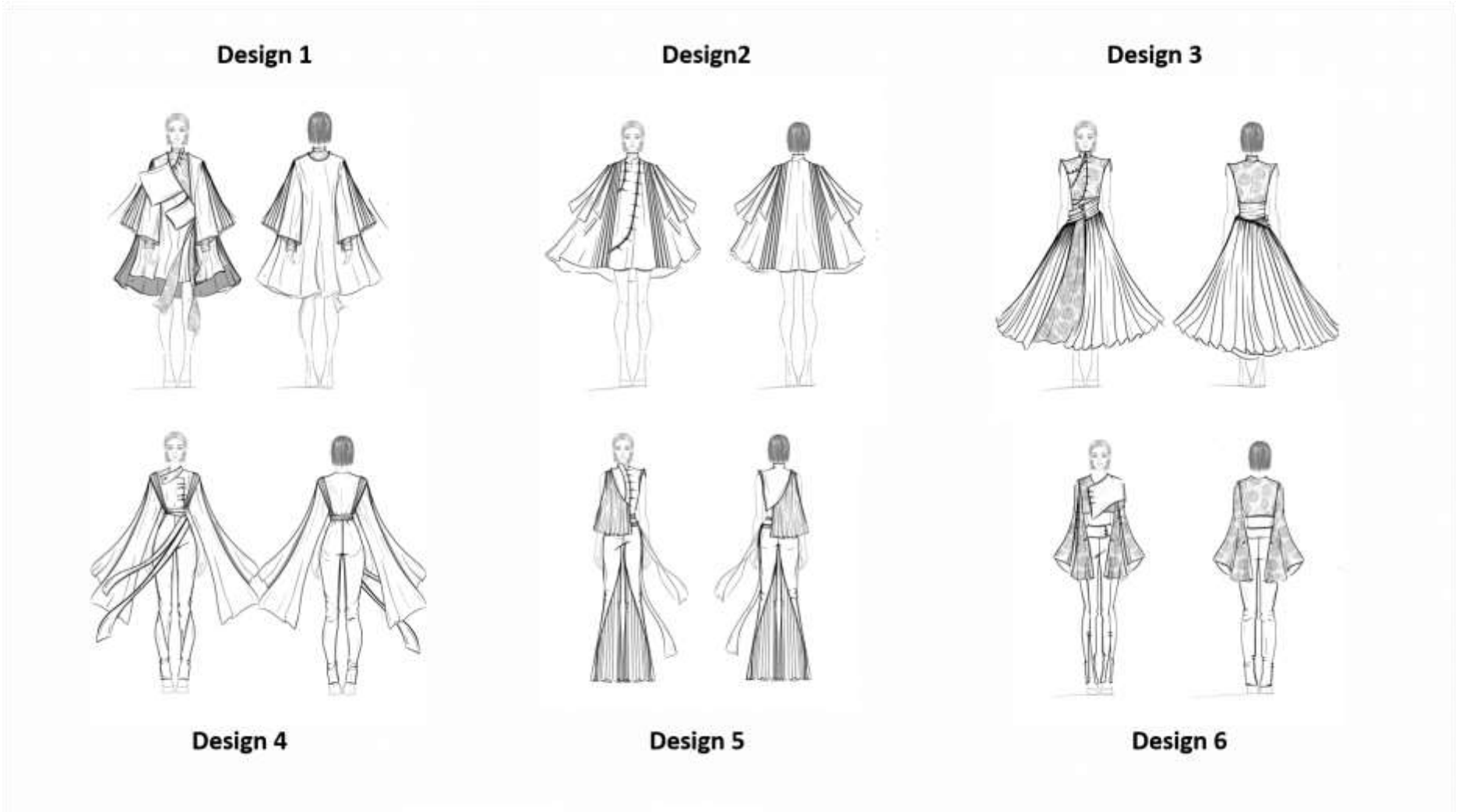


Illustration 4.33: Women's Wear

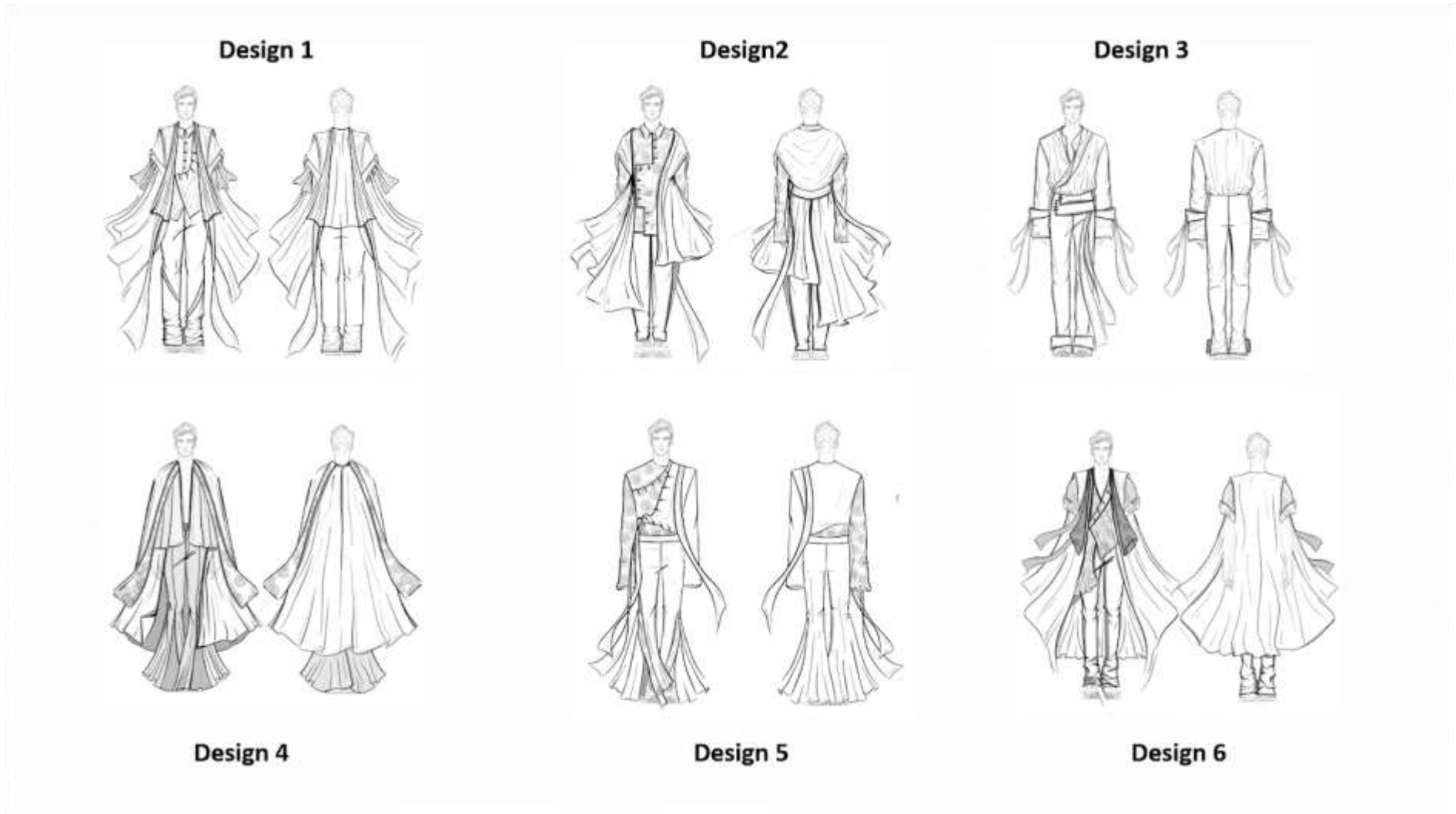


Illustration 4.34: Men's Wear

CATEGORY 3

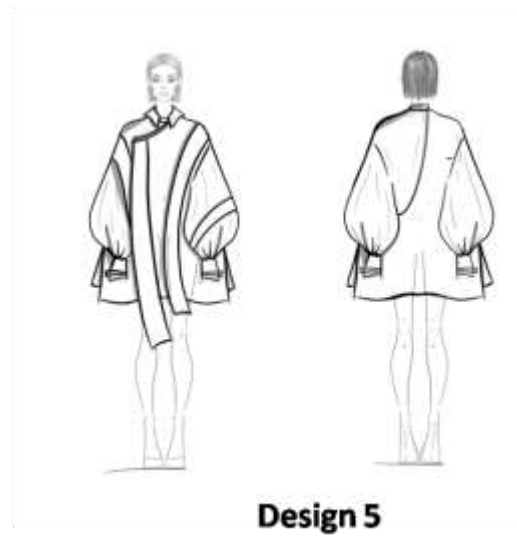
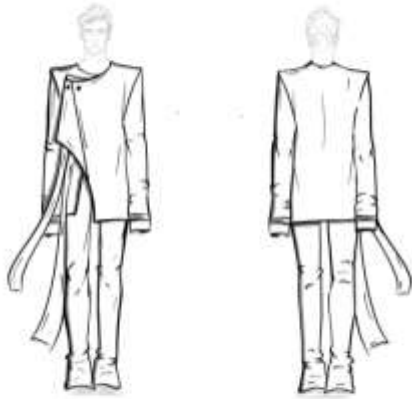
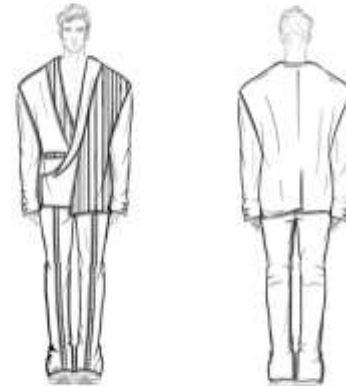


Illustration 4.35: Women's Wear

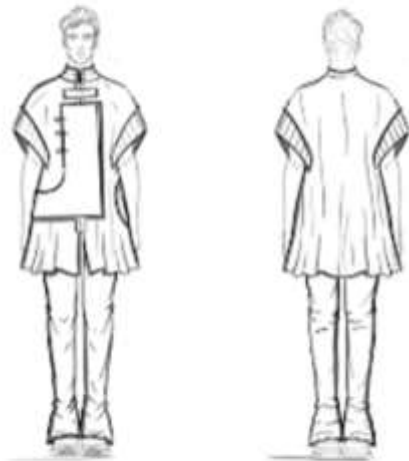
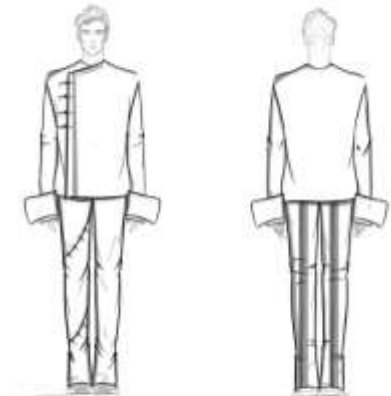
Design 1



Design 2



Design 3



Design 4



Design 5

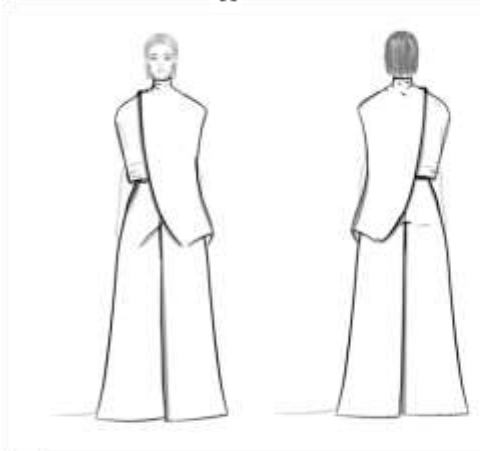


Design 6

Illustration 4.36: Men's Wear

CATEGORY 4

Design1



Design 2



Design 3



Design 4



Design 5



Design 6

Illustration 4.37: Women's Wear

Design 1



Design 2



Design 3



Design 4



Design 5



Design 6

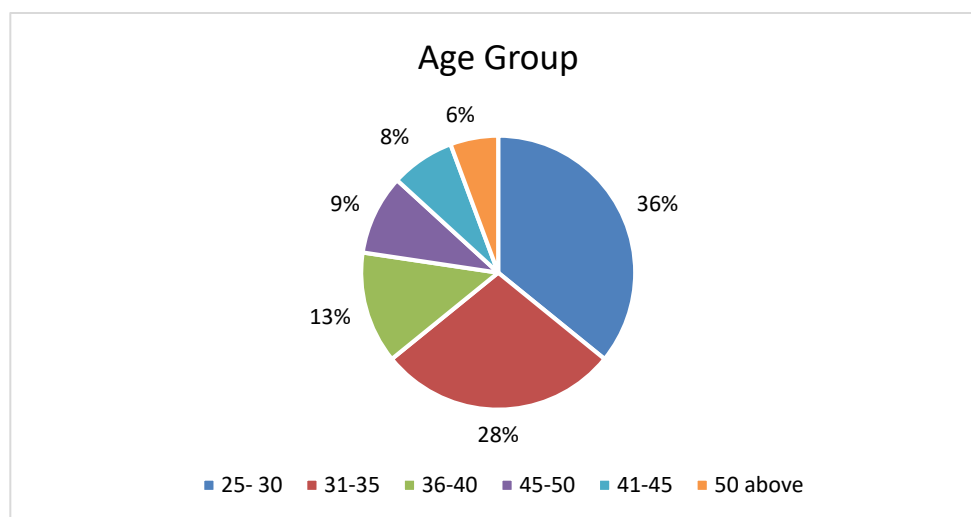


Illustration 4.38: Men's Wear

4.5.1 Demographic data of respondents

4.5.1 a. Age of respondents

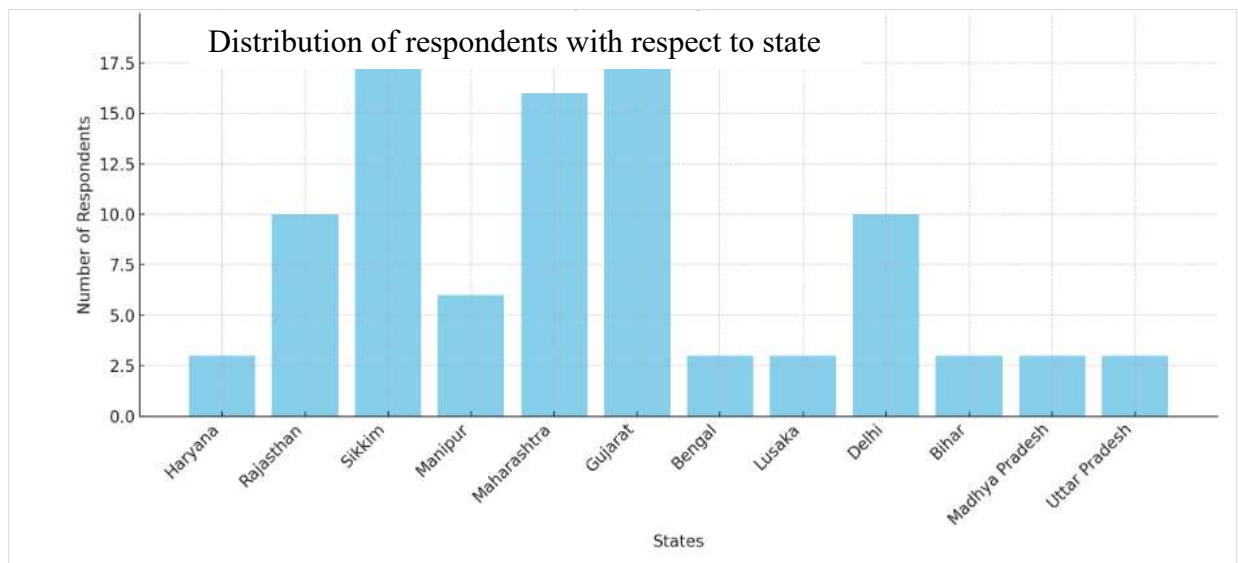
The preferences of different age groups were diverse, hence views from experts cutting across various age brackets. Predominantly youthful demographic was indicated by the data chart **Graph 4.17** on age groups. It showed that there were more individuals aged 25-30 years constituting 36% of the sample meaning many young adults who are probably in their early stages of careers or still pursuing education. Next was the 31-35 age group which represented 28% of the respondents; these were mainly people who were already well-established in their careers and had additional responsibilities to undertake. The third largest category with a representation of 13% was the mid-career professionals, aged between 36 and 40 years old. Older age groups had smaller shares: this involved those aging between 45-50 years and accounting for only 9%, then ages between 41-45 at just about 8% thus fewer participants belonging to these two categories that would possibly occupy senior positions. This information suggests that they include a larger population in their late thirties and forties who are mostly career builders and some top management personnel whose representations are given by these design experts that added depth and insight within this research base which is overall seen as youthful and dynamic.



Graph 4.17: Age of respondents

4.5.1 b. Locality of the respondents

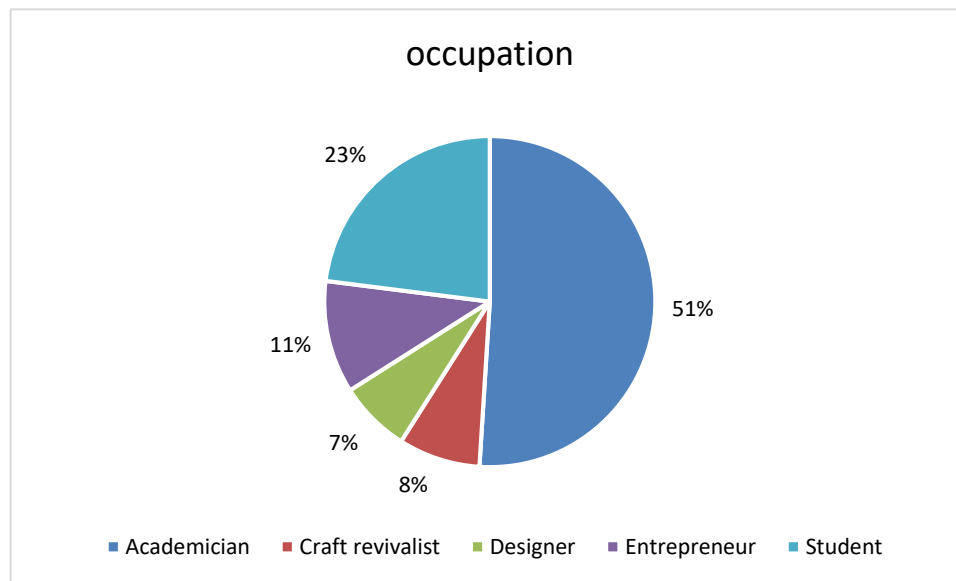
Sikkim state has a unique culture, and the same is reflected in their textiles and costumes. Their costumes have different unique patterns which is similar to those of other Mongolian communities. Therefore, respondents were selected from design practitioners all across who will understand the cuts and the style of the garments and compare it with the traditional ones. Data relating to the locality of respondents indicated in **Graph 4.18** reflected that among total of 100 respondents; Sikkim and Gujarat have the maximum number of respondents with each contributing 19 respondents. Maharashtra follows closely with 16 respondents. Rajasthan and Delhi have 10 respondents each. States like Haryana, Bengal, Lusaka (Zambia, South Africa), Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh each have 3 respondents. Manipur has a slightly higher representation with 6 respondents. This indicates a diverse set of responses from various states, with the highest concentration of respondents from Sikkim, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. The graph effectively illustrates this distribution, highlighting the states with the highest and lowest number of respondents



Graph 4.18: Locality of the respondents

4.5.1 c. Occupation of the respondents

Graph 4.19 data represented a diverse group of respondents with a significant skew towards the academic sector. Academicians made up the majority, comprising 51% of the sample, indicating a strong emphasis on educational and scholarly activities. Students formed another substantial portion at 23%, reflecting active engagement from individuals in the learning phase of their careers. Entrepreneurs accounted for 11%, suggesting a presence of business-oriented individuals involved in starting or managing enterprises. Craft revivalists and designers, though smaller in number at 8% and 7% respectively, contributed unique perspectives from traditional crafts and creative industries. This mix highlighted a community with a solid foundation in design education and research, enriched by diverse viewpoints from creative and cultural fields, suggesting potential for interdisciplinary collaboration and a multifaceted approach to their collective interests and goals.

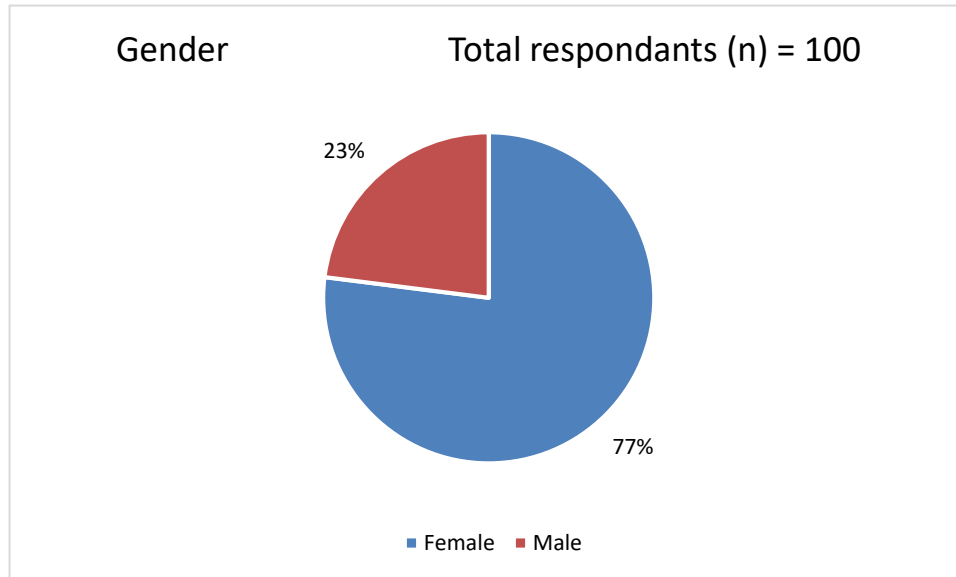


Graph 4.19: Occupation of the respondents

4.5.1.d Gender of the respondents

The provided chart shows the gender distribution among respondents, divided into two categories: Female and Male. The chart (**Graph 4.20**) reveals that a significant majority of the

respondents, 77%, are female. In contrast, only 23% of the respondents are male. This distribution indicates a considerable gender imbalance in the sample group, with females making up more than four-fifths of the total respondents. This suggests that the field of study from which these respondents were drawn has a higher female representation.



Graph 4.20 Gender of the respondents

4.5.2 Awareness about the textiles and costumes of Sikkim State among the respondents.

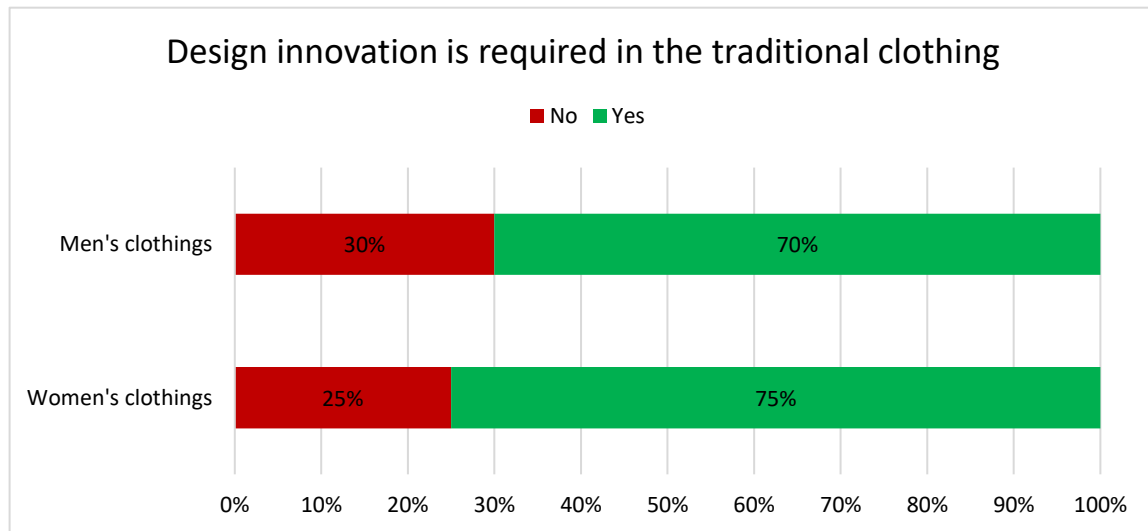
Table 4.3 shows the data representation of the awareness levels regarding the textile and costume of Sikkim State among the respondents. Data indicates that 65.2% of respondents are aware of the textiles and costumes of Sikkim State, while 34.8% are not. This was important to understand how many people are aware of the communities in the region of the study and would be able to relate to the silhouettes of the newly designed garments.

	N	%
No	17	34.8%
Yes	33	65.2%

Table 4.3: Awareness of the respondents about the textiles and costume of Sikkim State

4.5.3 Requirement of Design Innovation

The bar chart indicates a strong preference for design innovation in traditional clothing, with 70% of respondents supporting innovation for men's clothing and 75% for women's clothing. This suggests a significant inclination towards modernizing traditional attire, with a slightly higher demand for updates in women's wear. Despite this trend, a notable minority—30% for men's and 25% for women's clothing—believe no innovation is needed, emphasizing the importance of preserving traditional designs. Overall, the data reveals a predominant desire for refreshing traditional clothing styles, especially for women, while also acknowledging the value placed on maintaining cultural heritage and traditional aesthetics by a considerable portion of the respondents.



Graph 4.21: Requirement of design innovation

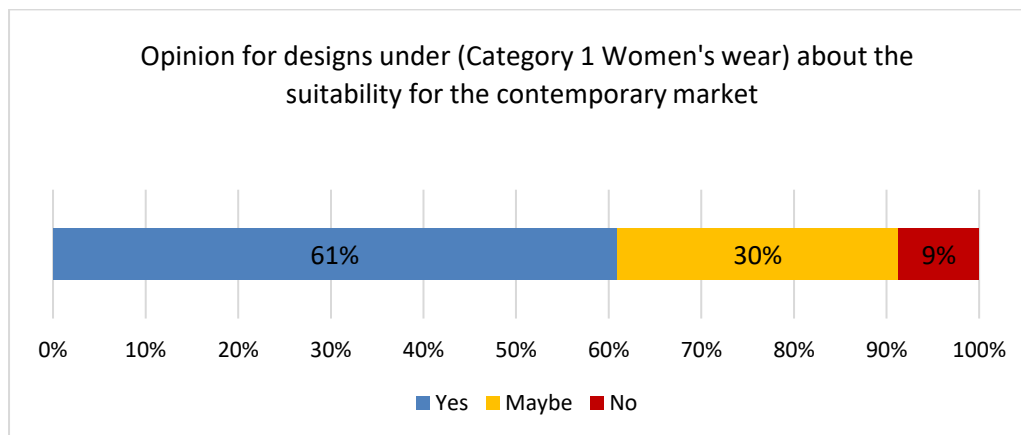
Respondents have also given views supporting their response for design innovation in traditional clothing. The debate over whether the traditional clothing of Lepcha and Bhutia communities of Sikkim State needs design innovation shows a mix of viewpoints. Many argue for innovation, seeing it as vital for raising awareness of traditional textiles, improving comfort and functionality, and keeping traditional crafts viable in today's markets. They believe modernizing designs can make traditional clothing more appealing to younger people and bridge the gap between tradition and contemporary fashion. However, few urge, caution. They emphasize the importance of preserving cultural heritage and the unique features of traditional designs. They

argue that traditional clothing is well-adapted to local environments and that unnecessary changes could disrupt indigenous practices and the natural evolution of these designs. Overall, there was a consensus that while innovation is necessary to keep traditions alive and engage younger generations, it must be done thoughtfully. This approach respects the essence and integrity of traditional designs while ensuring they remain relevant in today's world. (**Graph 4.21**)

RESPONSES COLLECTED FOR CATEGORY 1

4.5.4 Opinion for designs under (Category 1 Women's wear) about the suitability for the contemporary market.

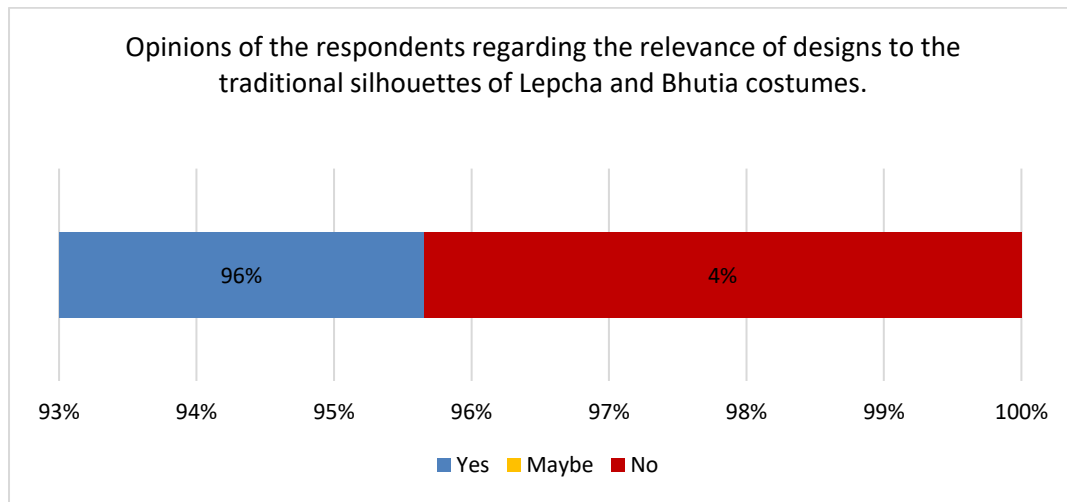
The bar **Graph 4.22** illustrates the opinions on the suitability of designs in Category 1 Women's wear for the contemporary market. The data was divided into three categories: "Yes," "Maybe," and "No." A significant majority, represented by 61%, agreed that the designs were suitable for the contemporary market, indicating strong approval and confidence in the designs. Meanwhile, 30% of respondents were uncertain, as indicated by the "Maybe" category, suggesting that a considerable portion of the audience sees potential but has reservations or requires more information. Lastly, a small minority, accounting for 9%, do not find the designs suitable, highlighting some dissent but overall minimal resistance. This distribution suggests that while the majority views the designs positively, there remains a notable fraction of the audience that is either undecided or not convinced of their suitability for the current market trends.



Graph 4.22: Suitability of designs in Contemporary market

4.5.4 a. Opinions of the respondents regarding the relevance of designs to the traditional silhouettes of Lepcha and Bhutia costumes.

The bar **Graph 4.23** depicts the respondents' opinions on the relevance of designs, specifically to the traditional silhouettes of Lepcha and Bhutia costumes. A dominant majority of 96% of respondents believe that the designs successfully retain the traditional elements of Lepcha and Bhutia costumes, as indicated by the "Yes" category. This overwhelming approval underscores a strong recognition and appreciation for the traditional aspects of contemporary designs. Conversely, only 4% of respondents disagree, suggesting a minimal perception of deviation from traditional styles. The absence of a "Maybe" category indicates a decisive opinion among respondents, with the vast majority affirming the retentiveness of the traditional silhouettes in modern designs. This data highlights a clear consensus that the designs effectively incorporate traditional elements, reflecting a successful blend of contemporary fashion with cultural heritage.

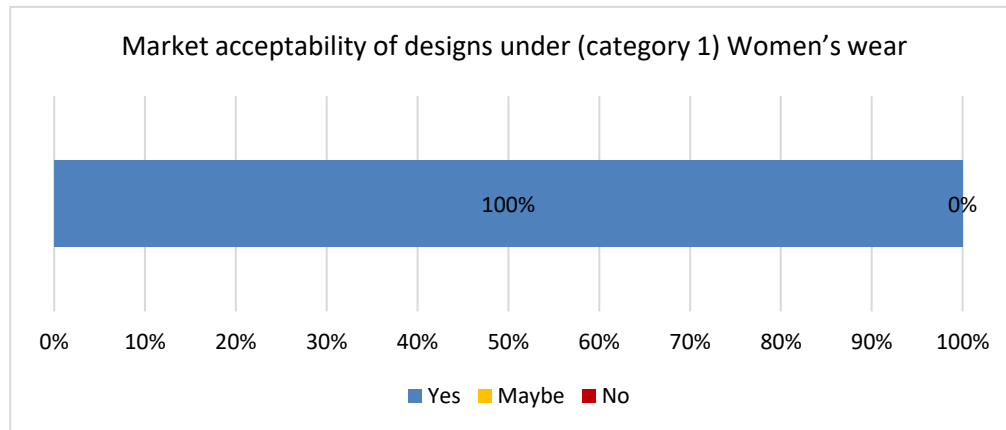


Graph 4.23: Relevance of designs to the traditional silhouettes of Lepcha and Bhutia costumes.

4.5.4 b. Market acceptability of designs under category 1 Women's wear.

The bar **Graph 4.24** illustrates the market acceptability of designs in Category 1 Women's wear. Remarkably, 100% of the respondents indicated "Yes," showing unanimous approval of the designs. This complete consensus suggests that the designs are exceptionally well-received in the market, reflecting a strong alignment with consumer preferences and market trends. There are no

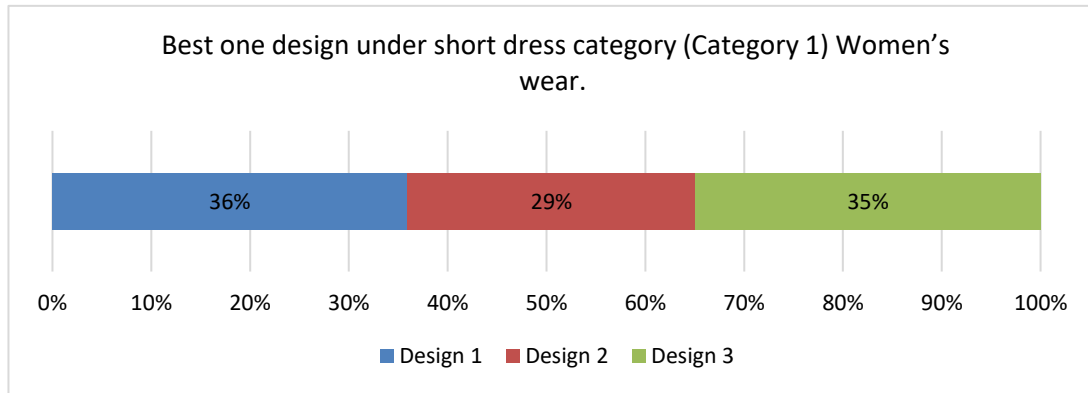
responses in the "Maybe" or "No" categories, indicating that none of the respondents have any doubts or negative views about the market acceptability of these designs. This data points to a highly favourable market outlook, suggesting that the designs are likely to be successful and widely accepted by consumers.



Graph 4.24: Market acceptability of designs under category 1 Women's wear

4.5.4 c. Best one design under short dress category (Category 1) Women's wear.

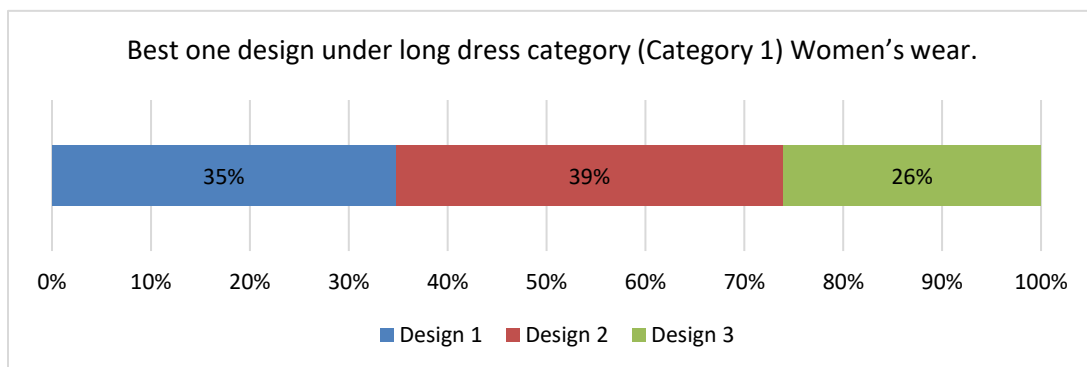
The provided bar **Graph 4.25** showed the distribution of preferences among three different designs for women's short dresses within Category 1. The data was represented as a percentage of the total preference. Design 1, depicted in blue, held the largest share of preferences at 36%. This indicated that more than one-third of the participants favoured this design over the others. Design 2, shown in red, captured 29% of the preferences, making it the least preferred option among the three. Lastly, Design 3, represented in green, showed 35% of the preferences, closely trailing Design 1 by just 1%. Overall, the data showed a balanced distribution of preferences with no single design dominating overwhelmingly. However, Design 1 was slightly more favoured compared to Designs 2 and 3, which were almost equally preferred. This suggested a competitive market for short dress designs, with a liking for Design 1.



Graph 4.25: Best one design under short dress category (Category 1) Women's wear.

4.5.4 d. Best design under long dress category (Category 1) Women's wear.

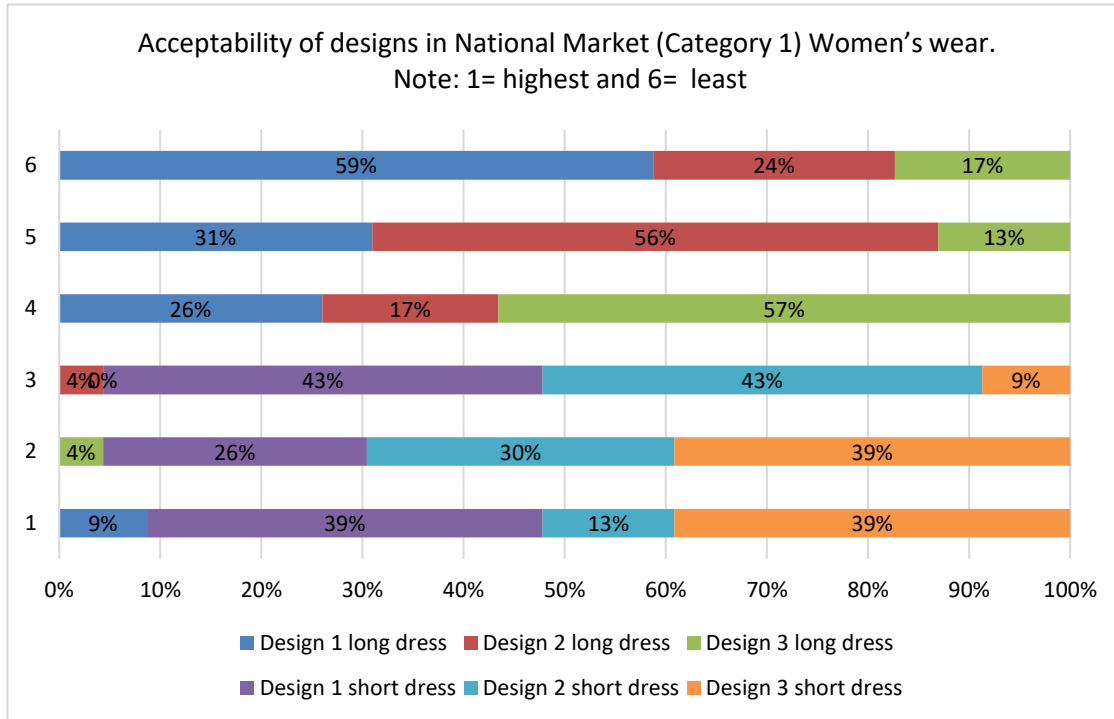
The bar **Graph 4.26** provided represented the preferences for the best design under the long dress category (Category 1) for women's wear, with percentages indicating the distribution of choices among three designs. Design 1, shown in blue, was preferred by 35% of the participants. Design 2, depicted in red, had the highest preference at 39%, making it the most favoured option among the three. Design 3, represented in green, held 26% of the preferences, making it the least favoured design. From the data, it was evident that Design 2 was the leading choice, surpassing Design 1 by 4%. Meanwhile, Design 3 lagged behind both Design 1 and Design 2, indicating a lower level of preference among the participants. The distribution suggested a clear preference for Design 2 in the long dress category, although Designs 1 and 3 still maintained significant portions of the total preference, indicating a relatively competitive landscape.



Graph 4.26: Best one design under long dress category (Category 1) Women's wear

4.5.4 e. Acceptability of designs in National Market (Category 1) Women's wear.

The bar **Graph 4.27** represented the acceptability of various designs for long and short dresses in ranked order, from 1 (most preferred) to 6 (least preferred). The percentages indicated the proportion of respondents who ranked each design at each level. **Rank 1 (Most Preferred):** Design 1 short dress and Design 3 short dress were the most preferred, each with 39%. Design 2 short dress was next with 13%. Design 1 long dress had minimal preference at 9%, and both Design 2 long dress and Design 3 long dress had 0%. **Rank 2:** Design 3 short dress led with 39%. Design 2 short dress followed closely with 30%. Design 1 short dress had 26%. Design 3 long dress was least preferred for this rank at 4%, with Design 1 long dress and Design 2 long dress both at 0%. **Rank 3:** Design 1 short dress and Design 2 short dress both led with 43%. Design 3 short dress was significantly less preferred at 9%. Design 2 long dress was the only long dress option with any preference at this rank, with 4%. **Rank 4:** Design 3 long dress was highly preferred at 57%. Design 2 long dress was next with 17%. Design 1 long dress had 26%. None of the short dresses were preferred at this rank. **Rank 5:** Design 2 long dress was the most preferred at 56%. Design 1 long dress had 31%. Design 3 long dress was the least preferred of the long dresses at 13%. None of the short dresses were preferred at this rank. **Rank 6 (Least Preferred):** Design 1 long dress was the least preferred overall, with 59%. Design 2 long dress followed at 24%. Design 3 long dress was also less preferred at 17%. None of the short dresses were ranked in this category. Overall, the short dresses, specially Design 1 short dress and Design 3 short dress, were the most preferred designs, consistently ranking high. Conversely, the long dresses, particularly Design 1 long dress, were generally less preferred, frequently appearing in the lower ranks. This data highlighted a clear preference for short dresses in this category.



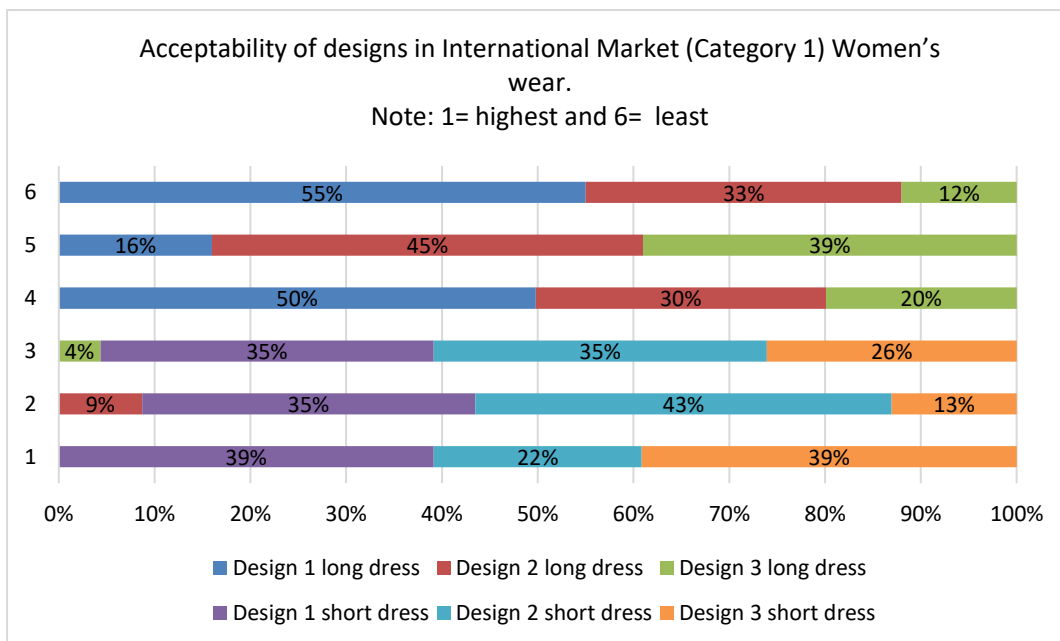
Graph 4.27: Acceptability of designs in National Market (Category 1) Women's wear.

4.5.4 f. Acceptability of designs in International Market (Category 1) Women's wear.

The bar **Graph 4.28** shows the acceptability of various design preference rankings for different long and short dress designs, with percentages indicating the proportion of respondents who ranked each design at each level from 1 (most preferred) to 6 (least preferred).

Rank 1 (Most Preferred): Design 1 short dress and Design 3 short dress were equally the most preferred, each with 39%. Design 2 short dress followed with 22%. None of the long dresses (Design 1, Design 2, Design 3) were preferred at this rank. **Rank 2:** Design 2 short dress led with 43%. Design 1 short dress followed with 35%. Design 3 short dress was less preferred at 13%. Design 2 long dress had minimal preference at 9%, while both Design 1 long dress and Design 3 long dress had 0%. **Rank 3:** Design 1 short dress and Design 2 short dress were equally preferred, each with 35%. Design 3 short dress was less preferred at 26%. Design 3 long dress had a minimal preference at 4%, with both Design 1 long dress and Design 2 long dress at 0%.

Rank 4: Design 1 long dress was highly preferred at 50%. Design 2 long dress followed at 30%. Design 3 long dress had 20%. None of the short dresses were preferred at this rank. **Rank 5:** Design 2 long dress led with 45%. Design 3 long dress followed at 39%. Design 1 long dress was less preferred at 16%. None of the short dresses were preferred at this rank. **Rank 6 (Least Preferred):** Design 1 long dress was the least preferred overall, with 55%. Design 2 long dress followed at 33%. Design 3 long dress was also less preferred at 12%. None of the short dresses were ranked in this category. Overall, the short dresses, particularly the Design 1 short dress and Design 3 short dress, were the most preferred designs, consistently ranking high in Rank 1 and Rank 2. In contrast, the long dresses, especially Design 1 long dress, were generally less preferred, frequently appearing in the lower ranks. Design 2 short dress also showed significant preference, particularly in Rank 2 and Rank 3. This data highlighted a clear trend favouring short dresses over long dresses in terms of preference for this category.

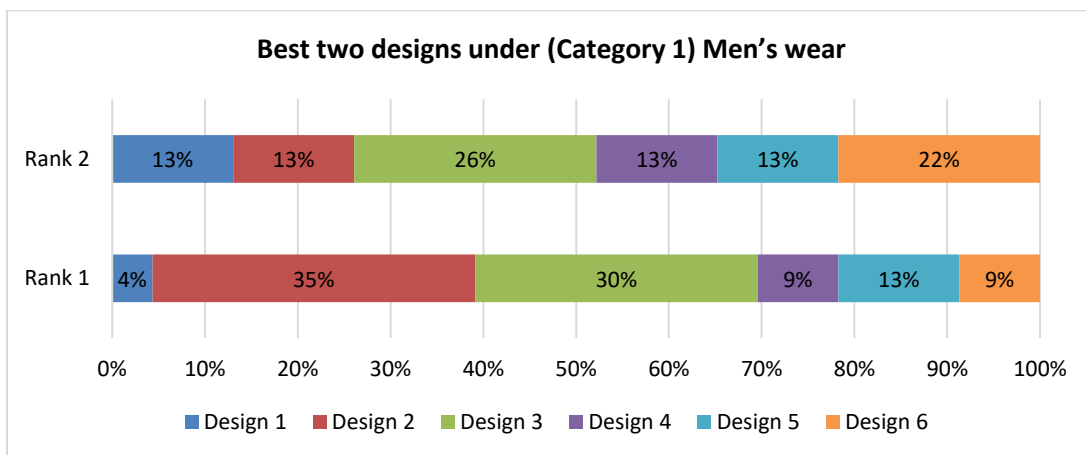


Graph 4.28: Acceptability of designs in International Market (Category 1) Women's wear.

4.5.4 g Best two designs under (Category 1) Men's wear

The bar **Graph 4.29** illustrated the top two designs under Category 1 Men's wear as rated by respondents. The designs were ranked as Rank 1 (best design) and Rank 2 (second-best design).

For Rank 1, Design 2 was the most favoured, with 35% of respondents selecting it as the best design. Design 3 was chosen* by 30%, indicating a strong preference for these two designs among the respondents. Design 5 and Design 6 each received 13% and 9% respectively, while Design 4 and Design 1 received lower preference, with 9% and 4% respectively. For Rank 2, the preferences were more evenly distributed. Design 3 led with 26%, followed by Design 6 with 22%. Design 1 and Design 2 both had 13%, indicating a moderate level of acceptance. Design 4 and Design 5 each had 13%, suggesting they were equally considered but not the top preference for most respondents. To conclude, Design 2 and Design 3 were the most preferred designs for Rank 1 in Category 1 Men's wear, showcasing a clear preference among respondents. However, the preferences for Rank 2 were more varied, with no single design overwhelmingly favored. This distribution indicated a diverse range of acceptable designs, with Designs 3 and 6 being notable for their higher acceptance as second choices. Design 2 had the highest percentage under Rank 1, and Design 3 had the highest percentage under Rank 2.

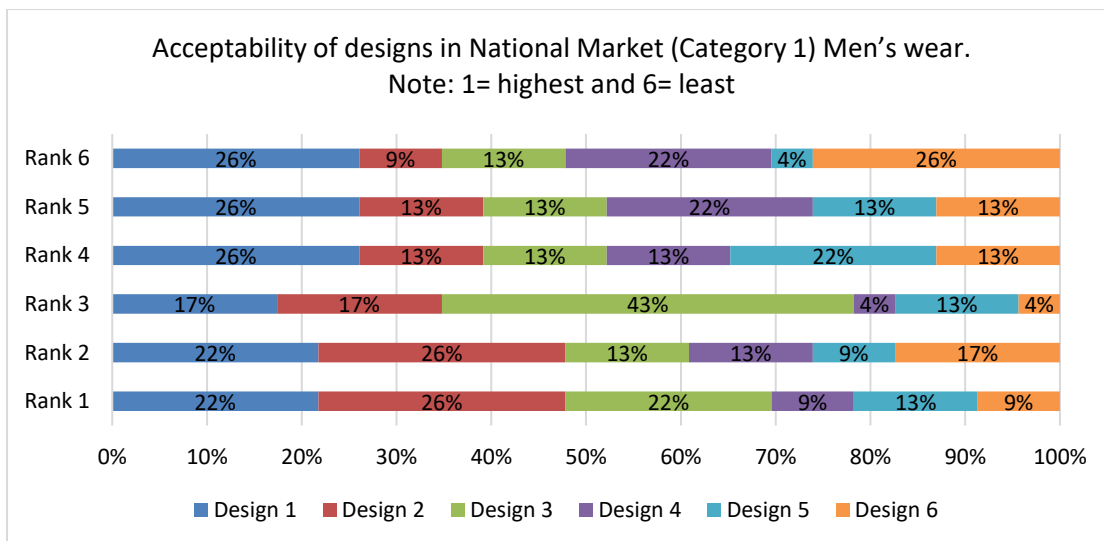


Graph 4.29: Best two designs under (Category 1) Men's wear

4.5.4 h Acceptability of designs in National Market (Category 1) Men's wear.

The bar **Graph 4.30** for the acceptability of men's wear designs under category 1 showed the acceptability of designs in the national market for Category 1 Men's wear, ranked from 1 (highest) to 6 (least). **Rank 1 (Most Preferred):** Design 2 was the most preferred, with 26% of respondents ranking it first. Design 1 and Design 3 were equally preferred next, each with 22%. Design 5 had 13%, and Design 4 and Design 6 had 9% each. **Rank 2:** Design 2 remained the

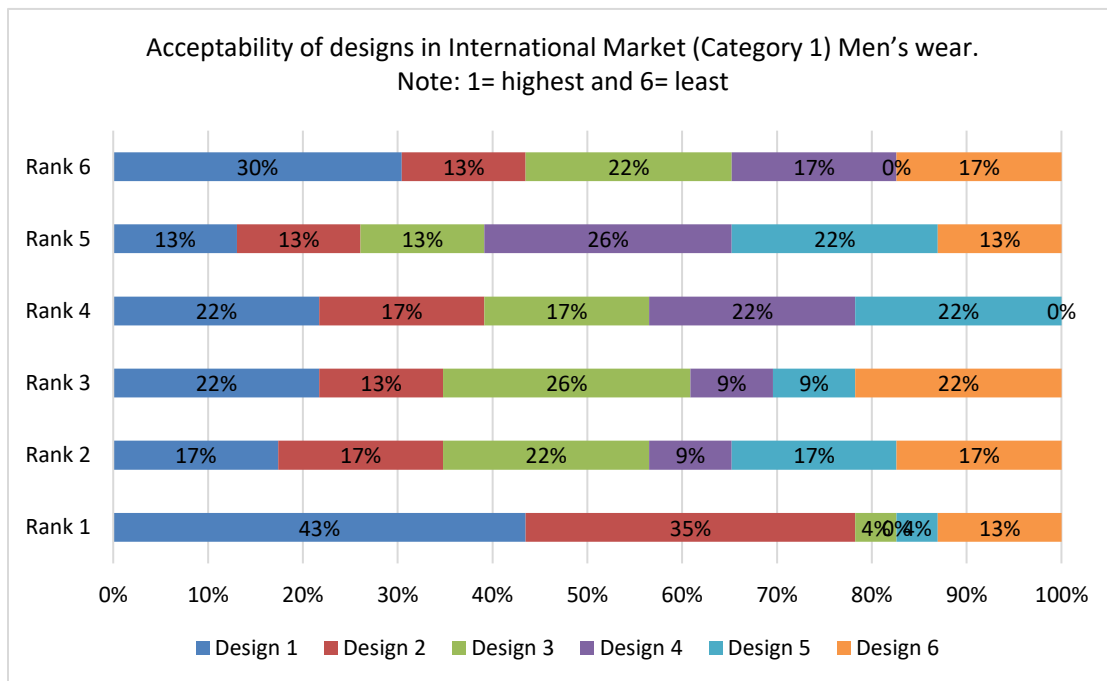
most preferred at 26%. Design 1 followed closely with 22%. Design 6 had 17%, and Design 3 had 13%. Design 4 and Design 5 had 13% and 9%, respectively. **Rank 3:** Design 3 was the most preferred at this rank, with 43%. Design 1 and Design 2 each had 17%. Design 5 had 13%. Design 4 and Design 6 were the least preferred at this rank with 4% each. **Rank 4:** Design 1 was the most preferred at this rank, with 26%. Design 4, Design 5, and Design 6 each had 13%. Design 2 and Design 3 had 13% each. **Rank 5:** Design 1 was the most preferred at this rank, with 26%. Design 4 was next at 22%. Design 2, Design 3, Design 5, and Design 6 each had 13%. **Rank 6 (Least Preferred):** Design 1 and Design 6 were the least preferred at 26%. Design 4 followed at 22%. Design 3 had 13%, and Design 5 had 4%. Design 2 was the least preferred at this rank, with 9%. From this data, it could be concluded that Design 2 was the most preferred overall, ranking highest in Rank 1 and Rank 2. Design 1 also showed strong preference, consistently appearing high in Rank 1, Rank 2, and Rank 3. Design 3 had a significant preference at Rank 3 but less so in other ranks. Design 4, Design 5, and Design 6 had more mixed preferences, with some rankings showing moderate preference and others indicating lower preference. Design 1 and Design 6 were the least preferred designs overall, frequently appearing in the lower ranks, especially in Rank 6. This data indicated a clear preference for Design 2 and Design 1 across the higher ranks, suggesting these designs were more favored by respondents. Conversely, Design 6 and Design 1 were often less preferred, indicating these designs might not have been as popular.



Graph 4.30 Acceptability of designs in National Market (Category 1)

4.5.4 i Acceptability of designs in International Market (Category 1) Men’s wear.

Graph 4.31 illustrates the acceptability of six different designs for men's wear in the international market under Category 1, with ranks ranging from 1 (highest acceptability) to 6 (least acceptability).**Rank 1 (highest acceptability):** Design 5 leads with 4%, followed by Design 1 at 43%, Design 2 at 35%, and Design 3 at 40%.**Rank 2:** Design 3 again leads with 26%, followed by Design 1 and Design 2, each with 17%.**Rank 3:** Design 3 leads with 26%, followed by Design 1 at 22%.**Rank 4:** Design 5 and Design 1 both lead with 22%.**Rank 5:** Design 4 leads with 26%, followed by Design 1 and Design 2, each at 22%& 13%.**Rank 6 (least acceptability):** Design 1 leads with 30%, followed by Design 3 at 22%. Overall, Design 1 was the most preferred, ranking highest in acceptability and consistently performing well across ranks. The distribution suggests a competitive market with distinct preferences for specific designs.



Graph 4.31: Acceptability of designs in National Market (Category 1) Men’s wear.

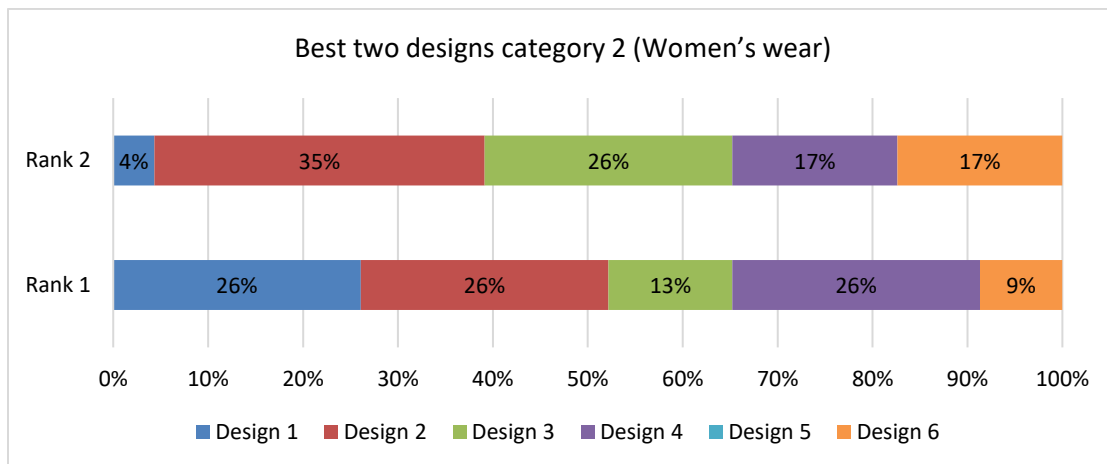
RESPONSES COLLECTED FOR CATEGORY 2

4.5.5a Best two designs under (category 2) Women’s wear.

The bar **Graph 4.32** illustrates the preferences for two designs under Category 2 (Women's wear), ranked as **Rank 1** (most preferred) and **Rank 2**. For **Rank 1**, Design 1 and Design 2 were equally preferred, each receiving 26% of the votes, indicating strong favorability. Design 4 with 26% preference, while Design 3 is chosen by 13% of respondents. Designs 6 are less favored, with 9% and no votes, respectively.

In Rank 2, Design 2 leads with 35%, followed by Design 3 with 26%. Design 6 and Design 4 are chosen by 17% of respondents, showing moderate preference. Design 1 is the least preferred for Rank 2, with only 4% of the votes.

Overall, Designs 1 and 2 are highly preferred for Rank 1, while Design 2 stands out in Rank 2. Design 4 also shows a strong preference in both ranks. The least favored designs are Design 6 in Rank 1 and Design 1 in Rank 2. This distribution highlights the varying preferences for women's wear designs in Category 2, with some designs being consistently favored across both ranks.



Graph 4.32 Best two designs under category 2 (Women’s wear)

4.5.5b Acceptability of designs under (category 2) Women's wear in International market.

The bar **Graph 4.33** illustrated the acceptability of six different designs for women's wear from Category 2 in the international market, ranked from 1 (most acceptable) to 6 (least acceptable).

Rank 1: Design 2 was the most acceptable with 30%, followed by Design 1 with 26%. Designs 3 and 5 were less favored at 13% and 4% respectively, while Design 4 had 9%, and Design 6 was the least favored at 17%.

Rank 2: Design 3 led with 30%, followed by Design 2 at 22% and Design 1 at 17%. Designs 4 and 5 were both at 9%, and Design 6 remained the least favored at 13%.

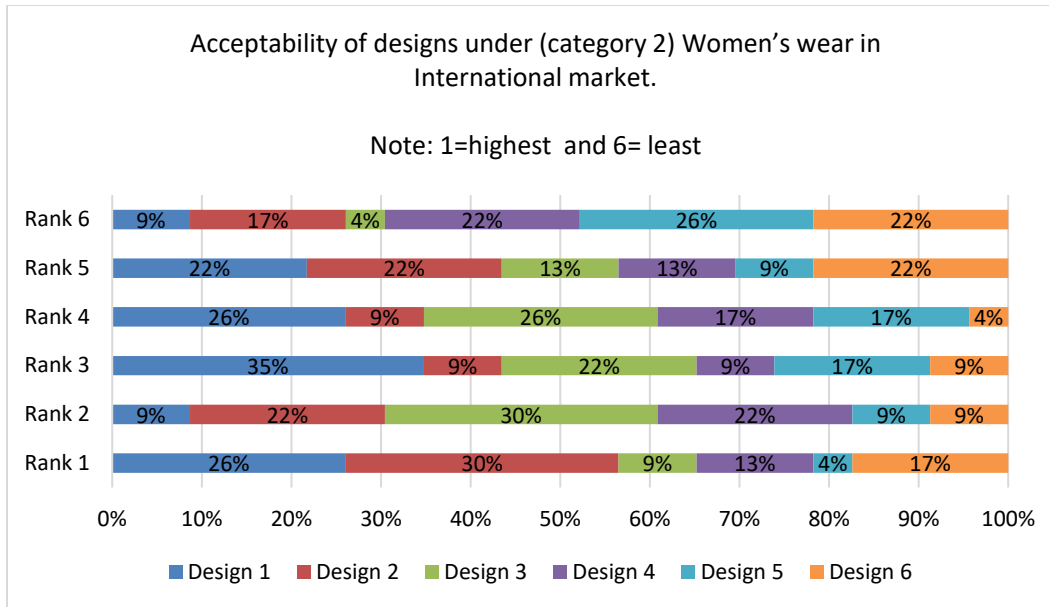
Rank 3: Design 1 dominated with 35%, indicating strong favorability. Design 3 followed at 22%, and Design 4 was at 17%. Design 5 held 9%, while Design 2 and Design 6 were the least favored at 9%.

Rank 4: Designs 1 and 3 were equally preferred at 26%. Design 2 held 9%, Design 4 was at 17%, and Design 5 and Design 6 had 17% and 4% respectively.

Rank 5: Designs 1 and 2 were again equally preferred at 22%, with Design 3 and Design 5 both at 13%. Design 4 held 9%, and Design 6 was at 22%.

Rank 6: Design 6 led with 22%, followed by Design 2 and Design 4 at 17% and 22%. Design 1 was at 9%. Design 3 was the least acceptable at 4%, and Design 5 was at 26%.

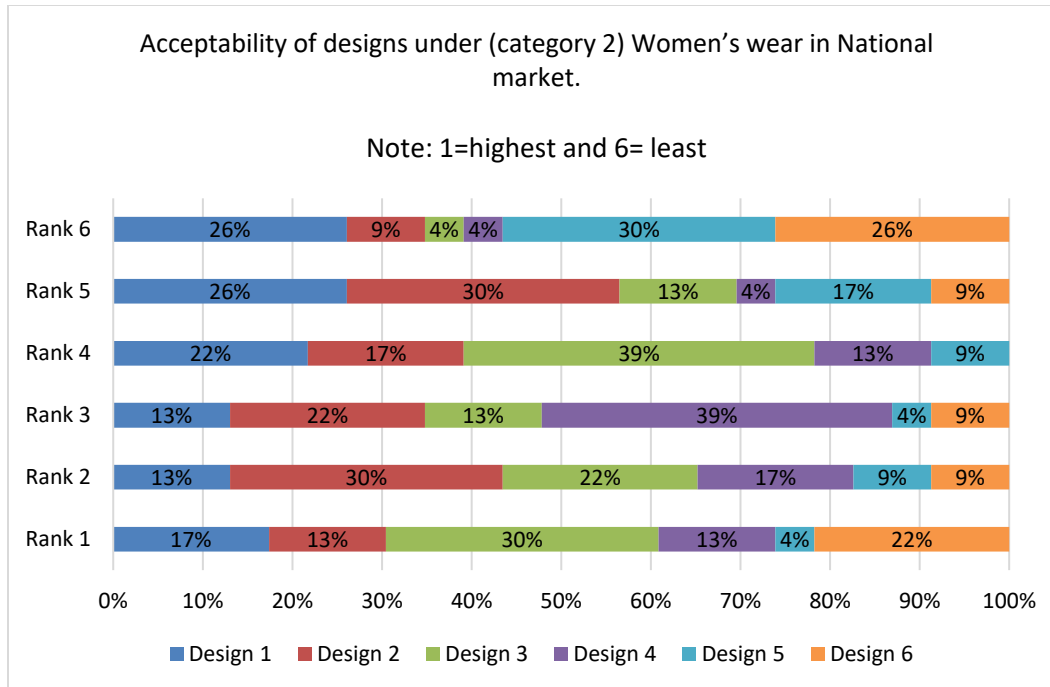
Overall, acceptability under category 2 women's wear shows that Design 1 consistently appeared as a top choice, especially in Ranks 1 and 3. Design 2 was also highly acceptable, particularly in Ranks 1 and 5. Design 3 was favored in Rank 2. Design 4 showed moderate preference across the ranks, while Design 1 was preferred in the least acceptable Rank 6. Design 6 was the least favored in multiple ranks, indicating lower overall acceptability. This distribution highlighted the varying levels of preference for each design in the international market.



Graph 4.33: Acceptability of designs under (category 2) Women's wear in International market.

4.5.5c Acceptability of designs under (category 2) Women's wear in the National market.

Based on **Graph 4.34 (Table 4.4)**, Design 3 emerges as the most favoured overall, particularly excelling in Rank 4 with a significant 39% preference and maintaining strong percentages in the top three ranks. In contrast, Design 2 shows strong performance in Rank 2 and Rank 5, both with 30%, indicating it has notable support in these specific positions but less consistency overall. Design 1 and Design 5 are generally less favoured, with significant percentages (26% and 30%, respectively) in the lower ranks of 5 and 6. This indicates a preference away from these designs. Design 6 presents a mixed perception, achieving a notable 22% in Rank 1 and 26% in Rank 6, suggesting that while some people view it very favourably, others rank it much lower. Design 4 performs strongly in Rank 3 with 39% but is less consistent across other ranks. Overall, Design 3 stands out as the strongest candidate due to its consistently high rankings, while Design 5 is the least favoured.



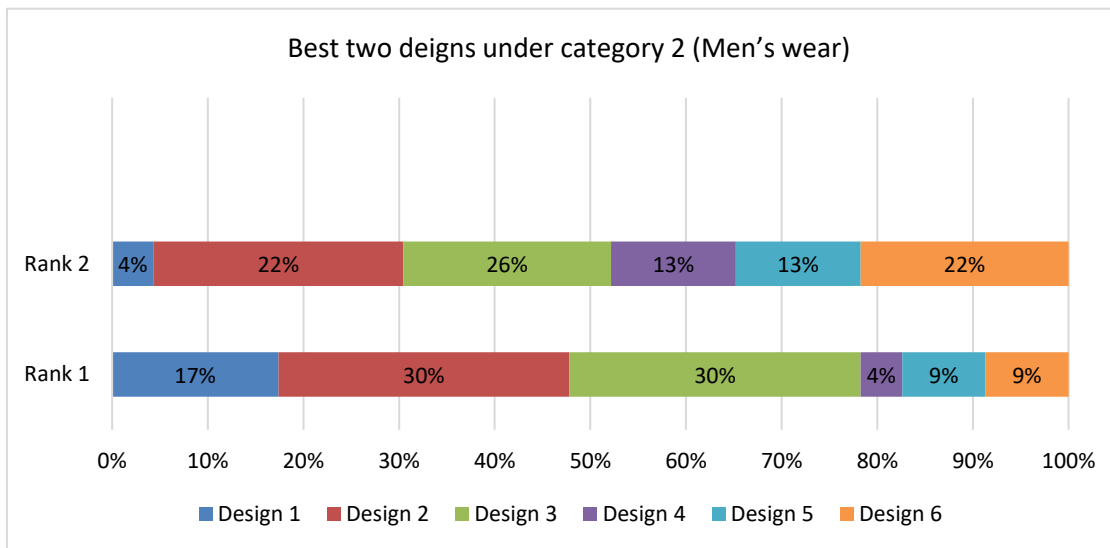
Graph 4.34: Acceptability of designs under (category 2) Women’s wear in National market.

Rank	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6
Design 1	17%	13%	13%	22%	26%	26%
Design 2	13%	30%	22%	17%	30%	9%
Design 3	30%	22%	13%	39%	13%	4%
Design 4	13%	17%	39%	13%	4%	4%
Design 5	4%	9%	4%	9%	17%	30%
Design 6	22%	9%	9%	0%	9%	26%

Table 4.4: Acceptability of designs under (category 2) Women’s wear in National market.

4.5.5 d Best two designs under (category 2) Men’s wear.

Graph 4.35 data reveals that Design 2 and Design 3 are the clear frontrunners, both leading in Rank 1 with 30% and maintaining high preference in Rank 2 with 26% and 22%, respectively. Design 6 shows a notable improvement in Rank 2 (22%) compared to Rank 1 (9%), indicating a mixed but overall favourable view. Design 1 has moderate preference in Rank 1 (17%) but drops significantly in Rank 2 (4%), suggesting it is not a strong contender for the top ranks. Both Design 4 and Design 5 show lower and more consistent preferences across both ranks, indicating moderate but not leading support. Overall, Design 2 and Design 3 stand out as the most favoured designs, with Design 6 showing potential due to its improvement in Rank 2, while Design 1, Design 4, and Design 5 are less competitive in this ranking.

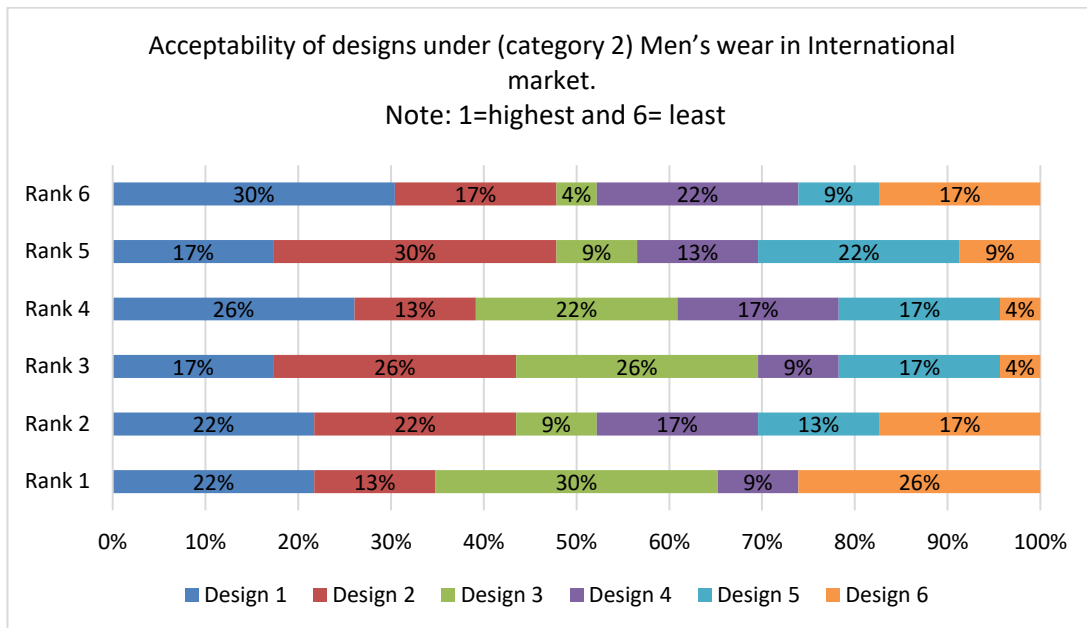


Graph 4.35: Best two designs under category 2 (Men’s wear)

4.5.5 e Acceptability of designs under (category 2) Men’s wear in the international market.

Graph 4.36 (Table 4.5) data reveals that Design 3 is the most favoured for Rank 1 with a significant 30%, followed closely by Design 6 at 26%. Design 1 and Design 2 show consistent performance across most ranks, with Design 1 peaking at 26% in Rank 4 and 30% in Rank 6, while Design 2 reaches its highest at 30% in Rank 5. Design 6 has mixed results, performing well in Rank 1 but not consistently in other ranks. On the other hand, Design 4 and Design 5 were less favored overall, with Design 4 peaking at 22% in Rank 6 and Design 5 at 22% in Rank 5.

Despite Design 3's strong performance in Rank 1 and Rank 3 (26%), it is less favoured in the lower ranks. Design 1 and Design 2 are generally well-regarded but are more favoured in the middle and lower ranks. Overall, Design 3 stands out as the most preferred for the top rank, while Design 4 and Design 5 remain less competitive due to their lower and more scattered support.



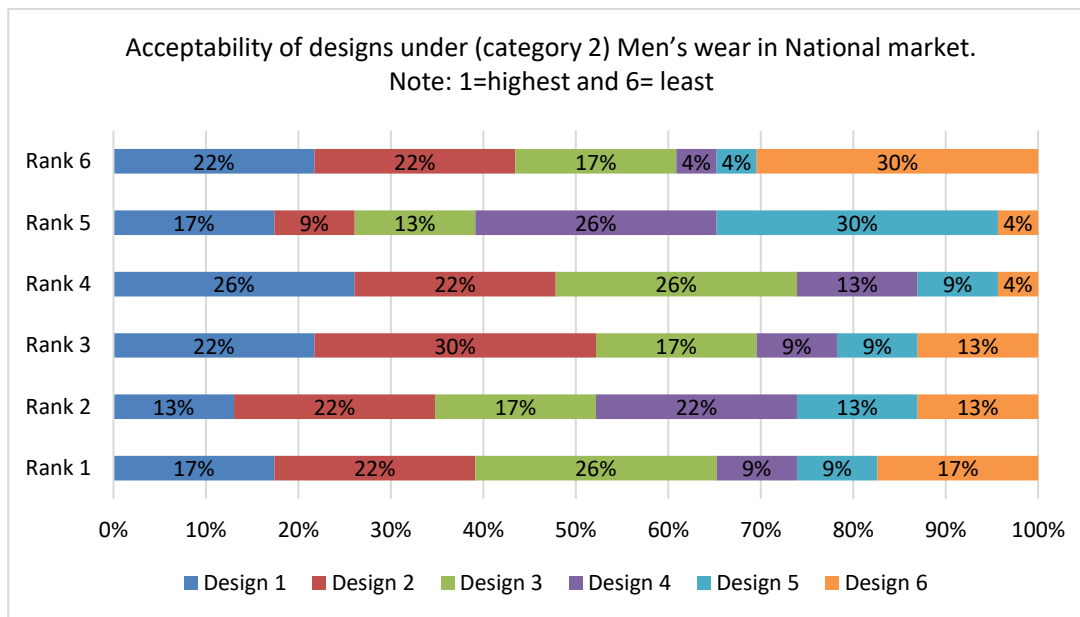
Graph 4.36: Acceptability of designs under (category 2) Men's wear in the International market.

Rank	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6
Design 1	22%	22%	17%	26%	17%	30%
Design 2	13%	22%	26%	13%	30%	17%
Design 3	30%	9%	26%	22%	9%	4%
Design 4	9%	17%	9%	17%	13%	22%
Design 5	0%	13%	17%	17%	22%	9%
Design 6	26%	17%	4%	4%	9%	17%

Table 4.5: Acceptability of designs under (category 2) Men's wear in International market.

4.5.5. f Acceptability of designs under (category 2) Men’s wear in the National market.

Graph 4.37 (Table 4.6) data reveals that Design 3 and Design 2 were the most favoured overall, with Design 3 leading in Rank 1 and Rank 4 with 26% each, and Design 2 showing strong performance in Rank 3 with 30% and consistent preference in Ranks 1 and 2 with 22% each. Design 1 displays a balanced distribution across ranks, peaking at 26% in Rank 4 and maintaining moderate percentages in other ranks, indicating steady but not leading preference. Design 4 and Design 5 generally perform lower, with Design 5 peaking at 30% in Rank 5, suggesting it is favoured in this specific rank. Meanwhile, Design 6 was strongly favoured in Rank 6 with 30% but shows weaker performance in other ranks. Overall, Design 3 and Design 2 stand out as the most preferred designs due to their strong and consistent presence in the top ranks, while Design 1 remains steady but less dominant, and Design 4, Design 5, and Design 6 exhibit more niche preferences.



Graph 4.37: Acceptability of designs under (category 2) Men’s wear in National market.

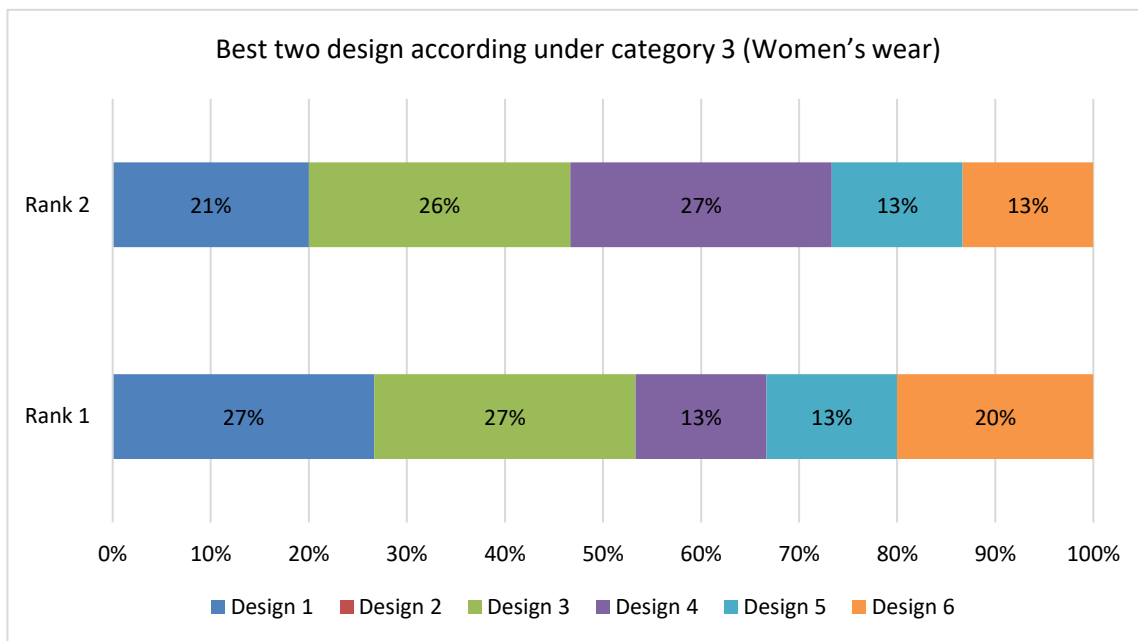
Rank	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6
Design 1	17%	13%	22%	26%	17%	22%
Design 2	22%	22%	30%	22%	9%	22%
Design 3	26%	17%	17%	26%	13%	17%
Design 4	9%	22%	9%	13%	26%	4%
Design 5	9%	13%	9%	9%	30%	4%
Design 6	17%	13%	13%	4%	4%	30%

Table 4.6: Acceptability of designs under (category 2) Men's wear in National market.

RESPONSES COLLECTED FOR CATEGORY 3

4.5.6 a Best two design according under (category 3) Women’s wear.

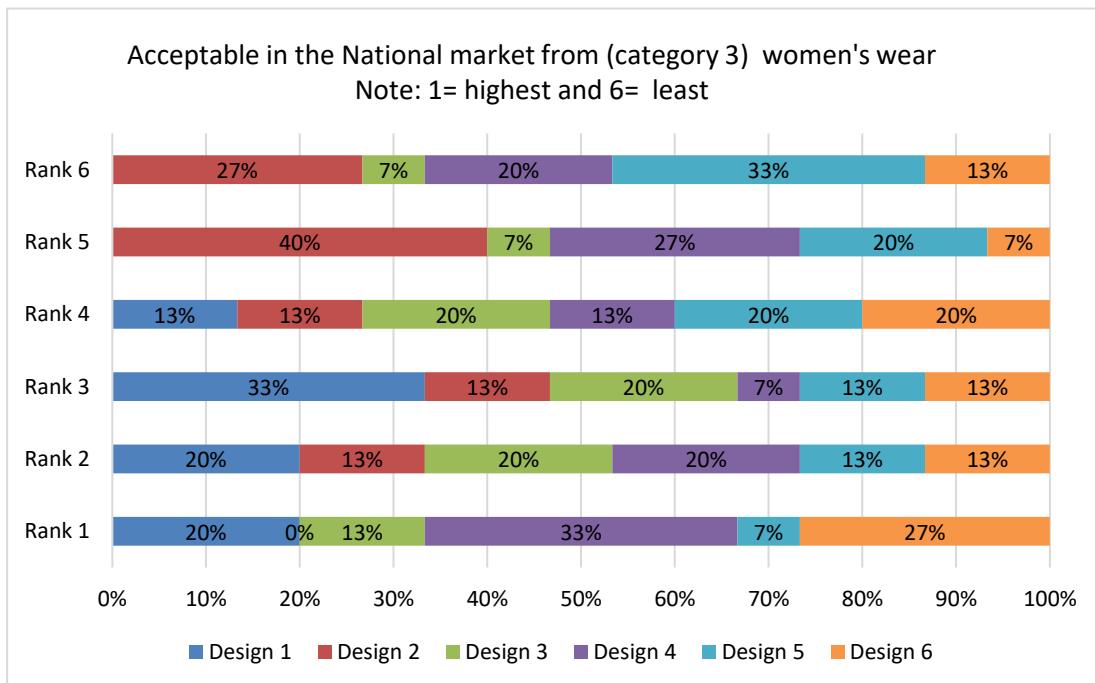
The **Graph 4.38** data revealed that Design 3 was the most preferred, showing strong and consistent preference in both Rank 1 and Rank 2 with 27% each. Design 1 also demonstrated significant favor, particularly in Rank 1 with 27% and a moderate 20% in Rank 2, indicating strong initial appeal. Design 4 was more favored as a second choice, achieving 27% in Rank 2 but only 13% in Rank 1. Both Design 5 and Design 6 had moderate and consistent support, each with 13% in Rank 2, while Design 6 also had 20% in Rank 1, indicating some level of favor but not leading. Notably, Design 2 was not preferred at all, receiving 0% in both ranks, making it the least competitive. Overall, Design 3 stood out as the most favored design, with Design 1 also showing strong initial preference, while Design 4, Design 5, and Design 6 exhibited moderate support, and Design 2 fell behind significantly.



Graph 4.38: Best two designs according under (category 3) Women’s wear.

4.5.6 b Acceptability of designs in the National market from (category 3) women's wear

Graph 4.39 (Table 4.5.4)data reveals that Design 4 was the most favoured for Rank 1 with 33% and shows strong support across other ranks, making it a well-rounded option. Design 1 was most preferred in Rank 3 with 33% and has consistent support in the top two ranks but drops off in the lower ranks. Design 2 was highly preferred in the lower ranks, particularly in Rank 5 with 40% and Rank 6 with 27%, but has no support in Rank 1. Design 3 demonstrates moderate and consistent support across all ranks, indicating balanced preference. Design 5 was most favoured in Rank 6 with 33% and showed moderate support across other ranks, especially in Rank 5 with 20%. Design 6 shows strong preference in Rank 1 with 27% and maintains moderate support across several ranks. Overall, Design 4 stands out as the most favoured design, particularly in the top rank, while Design 1, Design 3, and Design 6 show balanced and consistent preferences. Design 2 wasfavoured in the lower ranks, and Design 5 showed notable support in Rank 6.



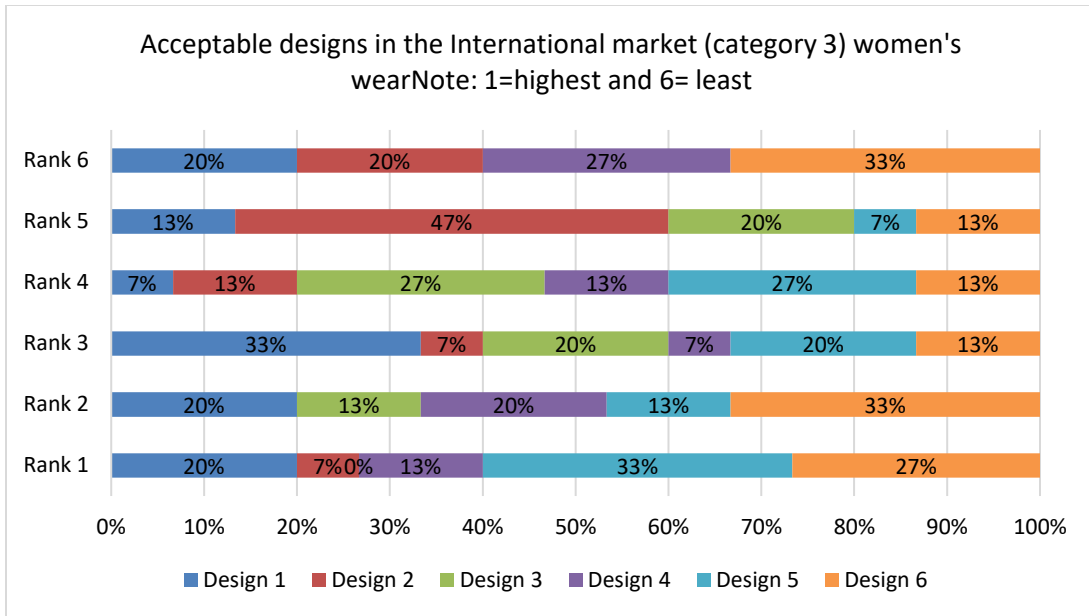
Graph 4.39: Acceptable of designs in the National market from (category 3) women's wear

Rank	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6
Design 1	20%	20%	33%	13%	0%	0%
Design 2	0%	13%	13%	13%	40%	27%
Design 3	13%	20%	20%	20%	7%	7%
Design 4	33%	20%	7%	13%	27%	20%
Design 5	7%	13%	13%	20%	20%	33%
Design 6	27%	13%	13%	20%	7%	13%

Table 4.6: Acceptable of designs in the National market from (category 3) women's wear

4.5.6 c Acceptable of designs in the International market (from category 3) women's wear

The **Graph 4.40 (Table 4.7)** data reveals that Design 6 was the most versatile choice, with the highest preference in Rank 2 and Rank 6 (33% each) and strong support in Rank 1 (27%), indicating broad appeal across multiple ranks. Design 1 is most favored in Rank 3 (33%) and shows consistent support in Rank 1, Rank 2, and Rank 6 (20% each), making it a strong contender. Design 5 was the most preferred for Rank 1 (33%) and Rank 4 (27%), with moderate performance in other ranks. Design 2 was highly favored in Rank 5 (47%) but has low preference in other ranks, including no support in Rank 2 (0%). Design 3 shows moderate and consistent support across Rank 2, Rank 3, Rank 4, and Rank 5, with the highest preference in Rank 4 (27%), but no preference in Rank 1 and Rank 6. Design 4 has its highest preference in Rank 6 (27%) and consistent moderate support in Rank 1, Rank 2, and Rank 4. Overall, Design 6 stands out as a strong and versatile option, while Design 1 and Design 5 also show strong preference in specific ranks. Design 2 was highly favored in Rank 5 but lacks support in higher ranks, and Design 3 and Design 4 display moderate and consistent support across various ranks.



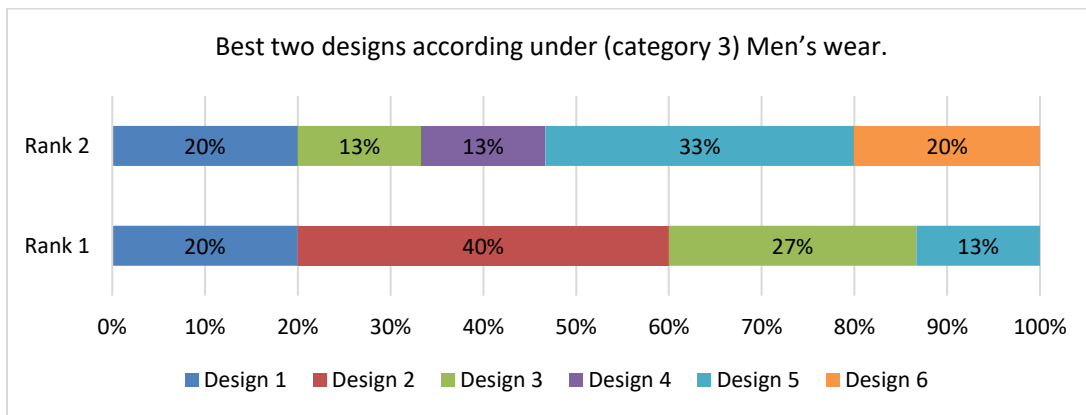
Graph 4.40: Acceptable of designs in the International market from (category 3) Women's wear

Rank	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6
Design 1	20%	20%	33%	7%	13%	20%
Design 2	7%	0%	7%	13%	47%	20%
Design 3	0%	13%	20%	27%	20%	0%
Design 4	13%	20%	7%	13%	0%	27%
Design 5	33%	13%	20%	27%	7%	0%
Design 6	27%	33%	13%	13%	13%	33%

Table 4.7: Acceptable of designs in the International market from (category 3) Women's wear

4.5.6 d Best two designs according under (category 3) Men’s wear.

The **Graph 4.41** data reveals that Design 2 was the top choice for Rank 1 with 40%, indicating it is the most favored design for the first rank. Design 5 stands out as the preferred option for Rank 2 with 33%, making it the top choice for the second rank. Design 1 shows balanced support, with equal preference in both Rank 1 and Rank 2 (20% each), indicating steady support. Design 3 had a moderate preference in Rank 1 (27%) but a lower preference in Rank 2 (13%). Design 6 shows equal moderate preference in Rank 2 (20%) but no preference in Rank 1 (0%). Design 4 has no preference in Rank 1 (0%) and only moderate preference in Rank 2 (13%). Overall, Design 2 excels in Rank 1, Design 5 in Rank 2, while Design 1 maintains steady support across both ranks. Design 3, Design 6, and Design 4 showed varying levels of moderate to low preference across the ranks.

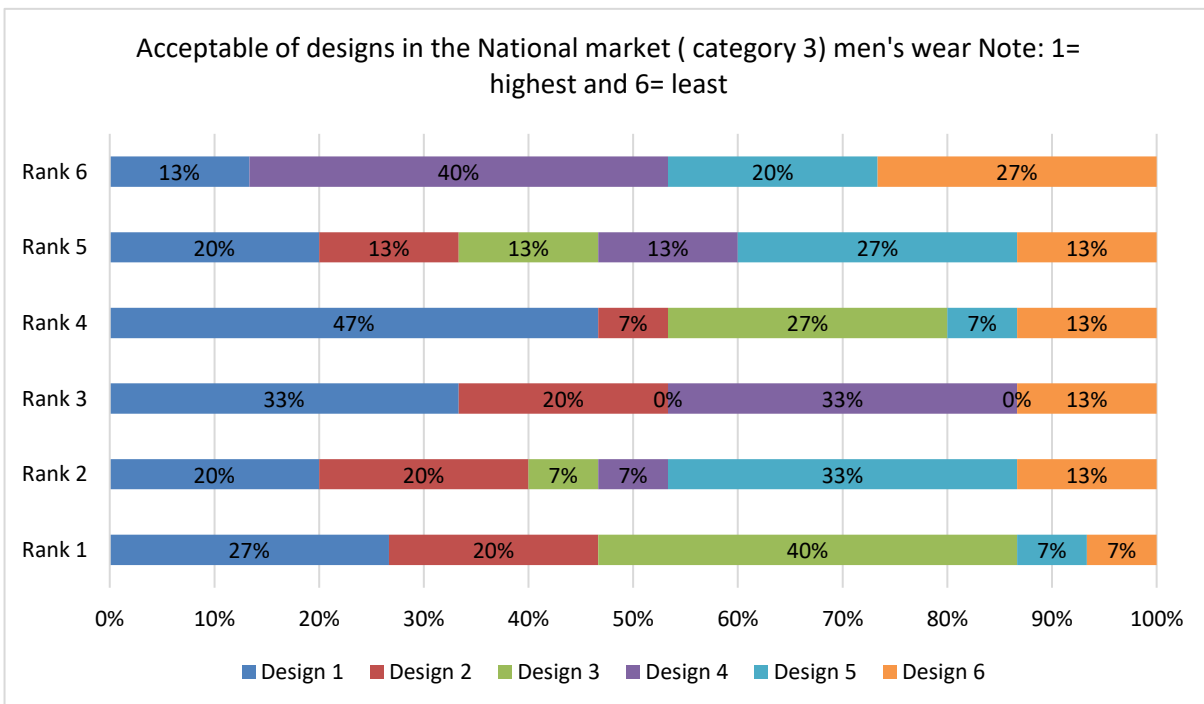


Graph 4.41: Best two designs under (Category 3) Men’s wear

4.5.6 f Acceptable of designs in the National market from (category 3) Men's wear

The **Graph 4.42 (Table 4.8)** data reveals that Design 1 was strongly preferred in Rank 4 with 47% and Rank 3 with 35%, showing consistent support in Rank 1 (27%) and Rank 2 (20%), along with moderate support in Rank 5 (20%) and Rank 6 (13%). Design 2 demonstrates balanced support in the top three ranks, with 20% each in Rank 1, Rank 2, and Rank 3, but lower preference in Rank 4 (7%) and Rank 5 (13%), and no preference in Rank 6. Design 3 is the most favoured in Rank 1 with 40% but has a significantly lower preference in other ranks, with no

support in Rank 3 and Rank 6. Design 4 was least preferred in Rank 1 and Rank 4 (0%) but is highly favored in Rank 6 with 40% and has moderate support in Rank 3 with 33%. Design 5 shows strong preference in Rank 2 (33%) and Rank 5 (27%) but lower support in Rank 1 (7%) and Rank 4 (7%), with no preference in Rank 3 and moderate support in Rank 6 (20%). Design 6 displays moderate support across Rank 2, Rank 3, Rank 4, and Rank 5 (13% each), with the highest preference in Rank 6 (27%) and lower preference in Rank 1 (7%). Overall, Design 1 stands out with strong preferences in multiple ranks, particularly Rank 4 and Rank 3, while Design 3 excels in Rank 1. Design 2 shows balanced support in the top ranks but falls short in the lower ranks. Design 4 is heavily favored in Rank 6, indicating a polarized preference. Design 5 performs well in Rank 2 and Rank 5 but has a low preference in other ranks. Design 6 has moderate and consistent support across several ranks, with the highest preference in Rank 6.



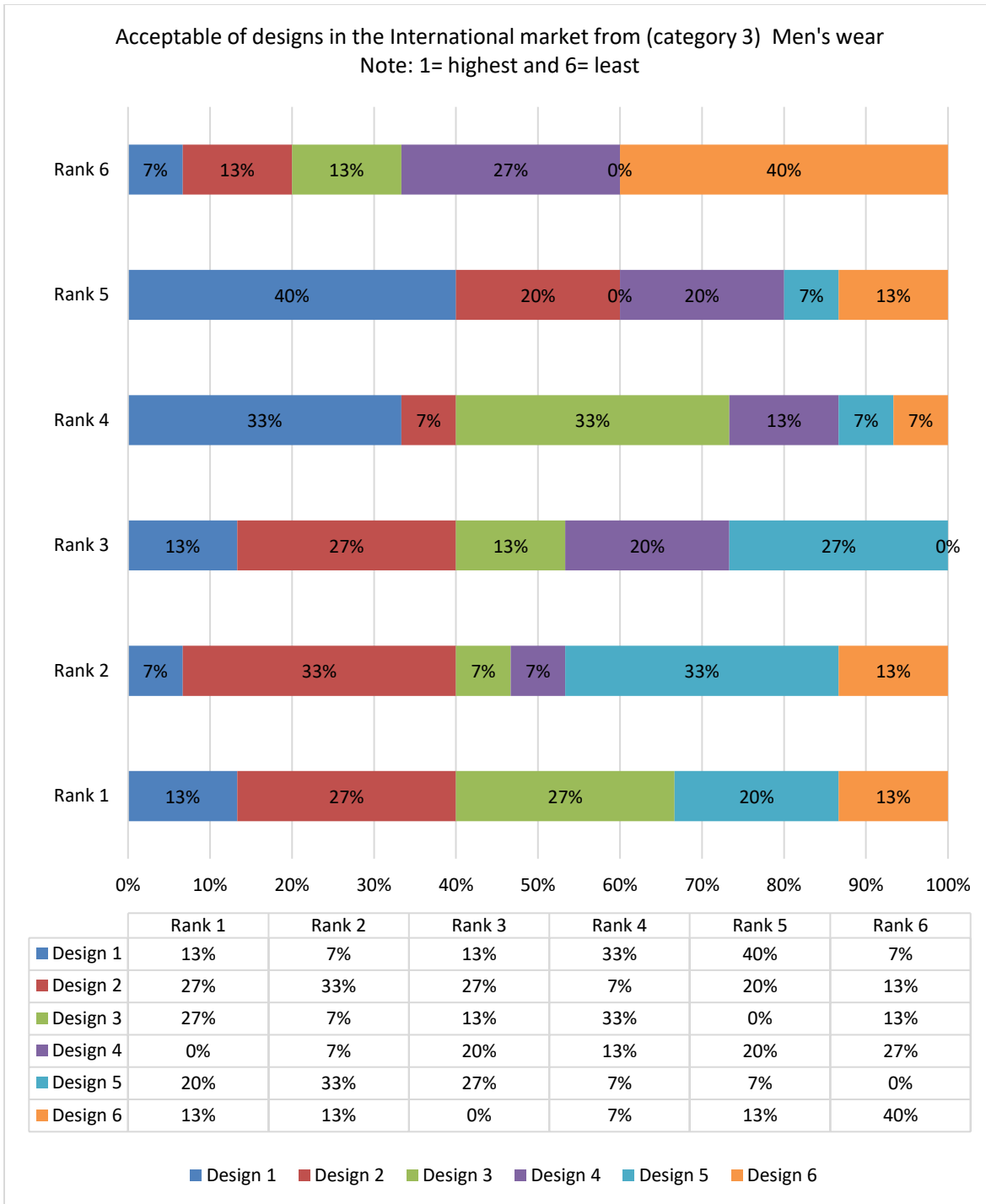
**Graph 4.42: Acceptable of designs in the National market (category 3)
Men's wear**

Rank	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6
Design 1	27%	20%	35%	47%	20%	13%
Design 2	20%	20%	20%	7%	13%	0%
Design 3	40%	7%	0%	27%	13%	0%
Design 4	0%	7%	33%	0%	13%	40%
Design 5	7%	33%	0%	7%	27%	20%
Design 6	7%	13%	13%	13%	13%	27%

**Table 4.8: Acceptability of designs in the National market (Category 3)
Men's wear**

4.5.6 g Acceptability of designs in the International market from (category 3) Men's wear

Graph 4.43 data reveals that Design 2 is the most consistently preferred across the top ranks, with the highest percentages in Rank 1 (27%), Rank 2 (33%), and Rank 3 (27%), making it the most acceptable design in the international market for category 3 men's wear. Design 1 shows strong preferences in Rank 4 (33%) and Rank 5 (40%), indicating versatility but not top favourite, with moderate support across all ranks. Design 3 also performs well, especially in Rank 1 (27%) and Rank 4 (33%), although it has no support in Rank 6 and lower support in other ranks, indicating a polarized preference. Conversely, Design 4 is predominantly least favoured, as indicated by its highest preference in Rank 6 (27%), though it shows moderate support in Rank 3 (20%). Design 5 is highly favoured in Rank 2 (33%) and shows moderate support in Rank 1 (20%) and Rank 6 (13%), suggesting a mixed pattern of preference. Finally, Design 6 is generally the least favoured overall, with its highest preference in Rank 6 (40%), despite showing moderate support in some higher ranks (13% in Rank 1 and Rank 2).

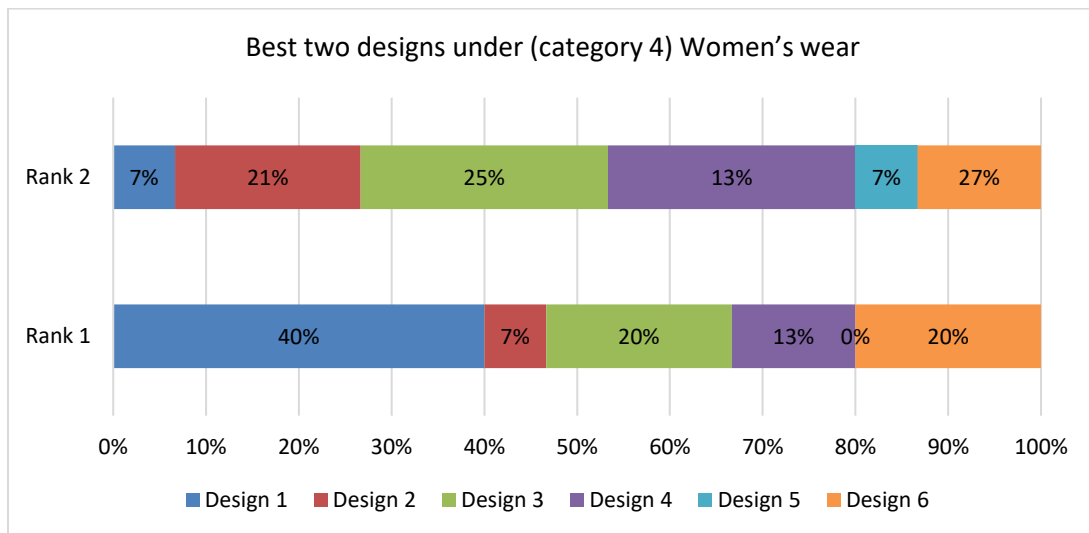


Graph 4.43: Acceptable of designs in the International market from (category 3) Men's wear

RESPONSES COLLECTED FOR CATEGORY 4

4.5.7 a Best two designs under (category 4) Women’s wear.

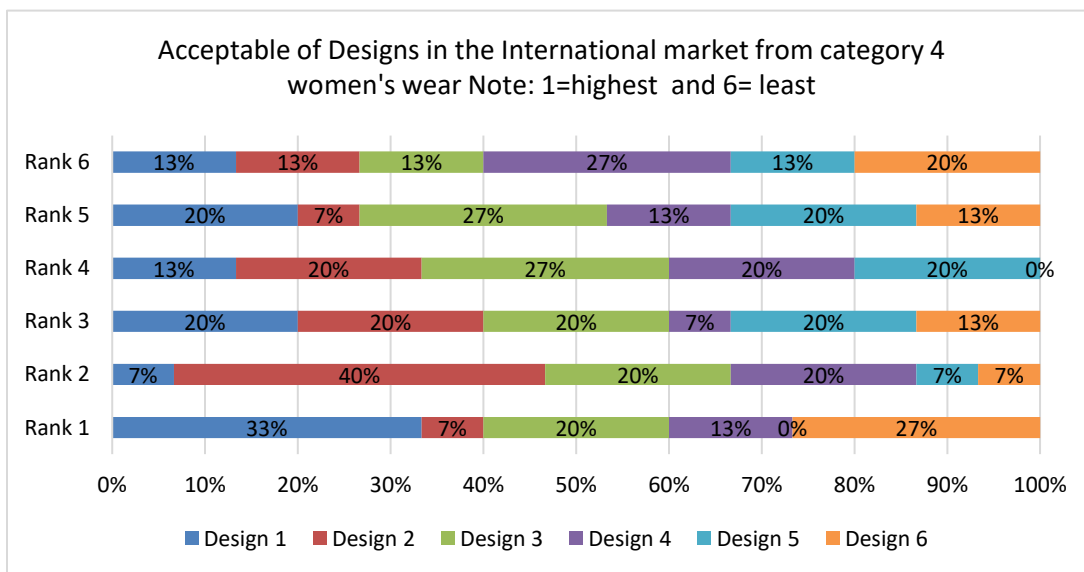
Based on the **Graph 4.44** data provided, Design 1 emerges as the most preferred choice, with 40% of respondents ranking it first. In contrast, it was rarely chosen for the second rank, with only 7% of the votes. Design 2 shows a different pattern, with a low preference for the first rank (7%) but a higher preference for the second rank (21%). Design 3 and Design 4 exhibit moderate and consistent preferences, with Design 3 being ranked first by 20% and second by 25%, and Design 4 being ranked least by 13% and second by 13%. Design 6 also has a higher preference, being chosen first by 20% and second by 27%. On the other hand, Design 5 was the least favored, receiving 0% votes for the first rank and only 7% for the second rank. Overall, Design 1 stands out as the clear favorite for the first position, while Designs 3 and 4 are the most commonly preferred for the second position, and Design 5 was not favored, While Design 6 was highly preferred in rank 2.



Graph 4.44: Best two designs under (category 4) Women’s wear

4.5.7 b Acceptable of Designs in the International market from (category 4) Women’s wear.

The **Graph 4.45 (Table 4.9)** data reveals distinct preferences for the six designs across ranks. Design 1 is the top choice for Rank 1 with 33% of votes, followed by Design 6 with 27%. However, Design 1 is less favored for Rank 2, securing only 7%. Design 2 stands out as the dominant choice for Rank 2 with 40%, while having a low preference for Rank 1 at 7%. Design 3 shows consistent but moderate preference across various ranks, notably holding 20% in Ranks 1, 2, and 3, and 27% in Ranks 4 and 5. Design 4 was moderately preferred in Rank 1 (13%) and Rank 2 (20%), but it is often ranked low, with 27% in Rank 6. Design 5, although balanced across middle ranks with 20% each in Ranks 3, 4, and 5, is not favored for Rank 1 (0%) and has a moderate presence in Rank 6 (13%). Design 6, while significant in Rank 1 (27%), is polarizing, as it also has a notable presence in Rank 6 (20%). Overall, Design 1 and Design 6 emerge as the most preferred for Rank 1, Design 2 is highly favored for Rank 2, and Design 5 was the least preferred for Rank 1, with Design 4 often ranked low, indicating varied preferences.



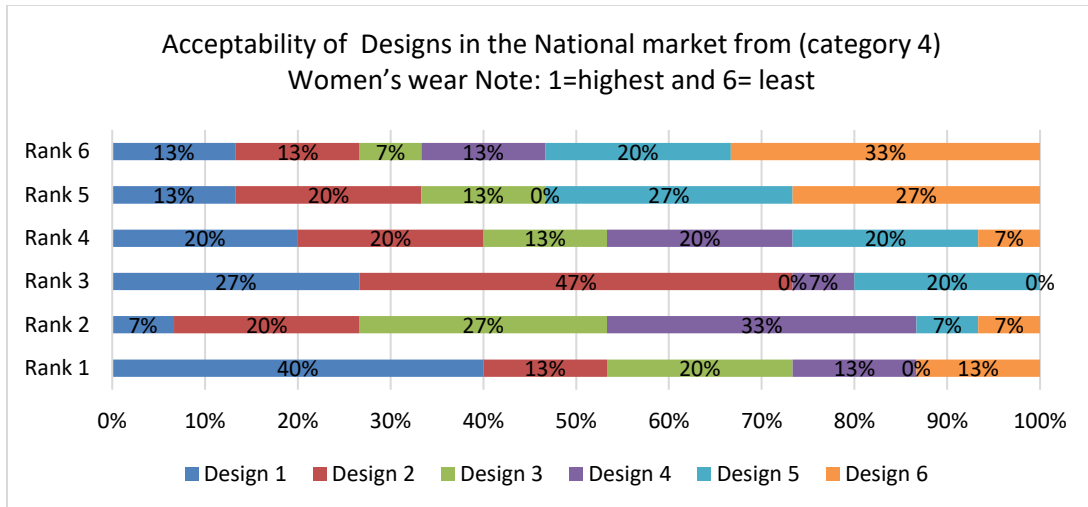
Graph 4.45: Acceptable of Designs in the International market from category 4 women's wear

Rank	Design 1	Design 2	Design 3	Design 4	Design 5	Design 6
Rank1	33%	7%	20%	13%	0%	27%
Rank2	7%	40%	20%	20%	7%	7%
Rank3	20%	20%	20%	7%	20%	13%
Rank4	13%	20%	27%	20%	20%	0%
Rank5	20%	7%	27%	13%	20%	13%
Rank6	13%	13%	13%	27%	13%	20%

Table 4.9: Acceptable of designs in the International market from (category 4) Women’s wear.

4.5.7 c Acceptability of Designs in the National Market from (category 4) Women’s wear

Graph 4.46 (Table 4.10) data reveals distinct preferences for the six designs across ranks. Design 1 is the clear favorite for Rank 1 with 40% of the votes and has a significant presence in Rank 3 with 27%. However, it is less favored for Rank 2, securing only 7%. Design 2 dominates Rank 3 with 47% and has a moderate presence in Rank 2 with 20%, but it has a lower preference for Rank 1 at 13%. Design 3 is well-regarded for Rank 1 (20%) and Rank 2 (27%), though it is absent in Rank 3. Design 4 is most favored for Rank 2 with 33% and maintains a consistent presence across other ranks, though it has lower percentages in higher ranks, indicating it is often a secondary choice. Design 5 is not favored for Rank 1 (0%) but has a notable presence in Rank 3 (20%) and Rank 5 (27%), along with a significant presence in Rank 6 (20%). Design 6 is polarizing, with equal preference for Rank 1 (13%) and a strong presence in Rank 6 (33%), indicating mixed opinions. Overall, Design 1 stands out as the most preferred for the top rank, Design 2 excels in Rank 3, and Design 6 is highly polarizing with strong likes and dislikes.



Graph 4.46: Acceptable of Designs in the National market from category 4 women's wear

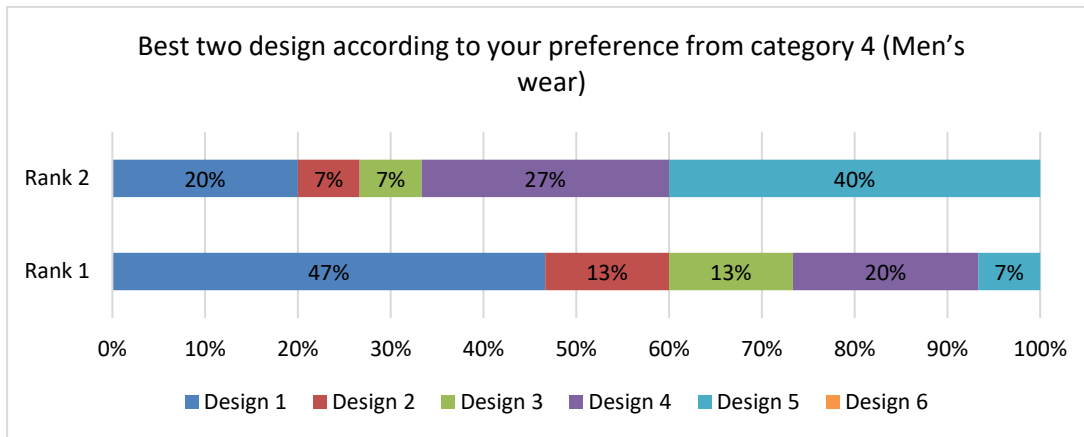
Rank	Design 1	Design 2	Design 3	Design 4	Design 5	Design 6
Rank1	40%	13%	20%	13%	0%	13%
Rank2	7%	20%	27%	33%	7%	7%
Rank3	27%	47%	0%	7%	20%	0%
Rank4	20%	20%	13%	20%	20%	7%
Rank5	13%	20%	13%	0%	27%	27%
Rank6	13%	13%	7%	13%	20%	33%

Table 4.10: Acceptable of designs in the National market from (category 4) Women's wear.

4.5.7 c Best two design according to your preference from category 4 (Men's wear)

On understanding the data related to selection of best two designs under category 4 men's wear **Graph 4.47** reveals distinct preferences for the six designs across two ranking positions. Design 1 is the clear favorite for Rank 1, securing 47% of the votes and also has a significant presence in Rank 2 with 20%. Design 4 follows with a balanced preference, being chosen by 20% for Rank 1 and 27% for Rank 2, indicating it is a strong second choice. Design 5, while not favored for Rank 1 with only 7%, emerges as the top choice for Rank 2 with 40% of the votes. Both Design

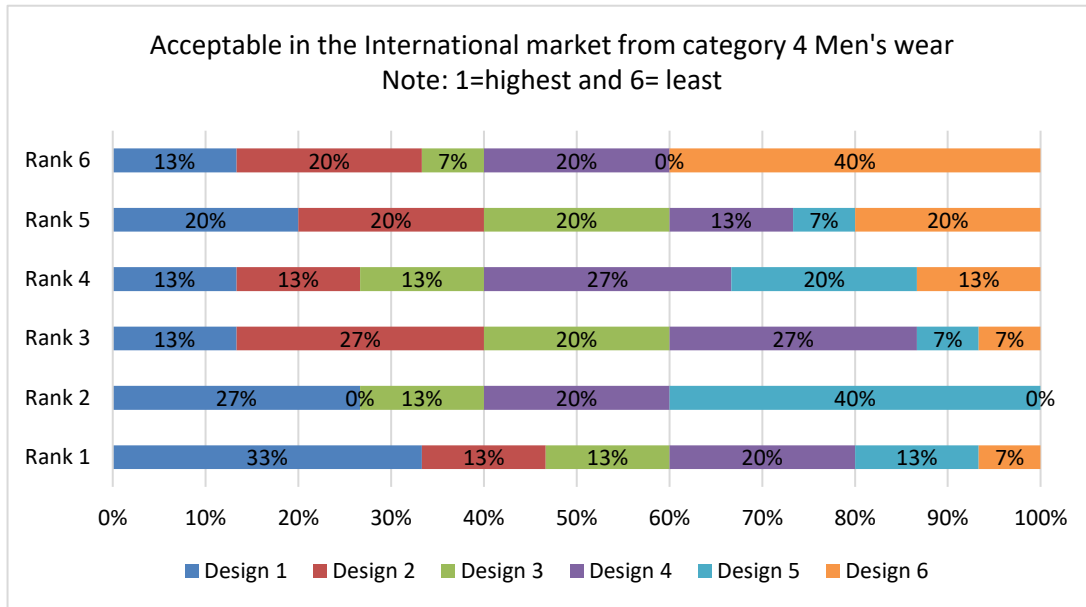
2 and Design 3 have moderate preferences for Rank 1 at 13% each and low preferences for Rank 2 at 7% each, showing they are not top contenders in either rank. Design 6, however, is the least favored, with no votes for either Rank 1 or Rank 2. Overall, Design 1 stands out as the most preferred choice for the top rank, while Design 5 is highly favored as a second choice.



Graph 4.47: Best two designs according to your preference from category 4 (Men's wear)

4.5.7 d Acceptable of designs in the International market from (category 4) Men's wear

On analysis of the data related to the acceptability of the designs in the International market for men's wear under category 4, **Graph 4.48 (Table 4.11)** Data reveals that the acceptability for Design 1 was the most preferred for Rank 1 (33%) and Rank 2 (27%), indicating strong overall preference. Design 4 was also acceptable, with 20% for Rank 1 and Rank 2, and significant presence in Rank 3 (27%) and Rank 4 (27%). Design 5 stands out for Rank 2 (40%) but is less preferred for Rank 1 (13%). Design 2 has mixed results, with notable presence in Rank 3 (27%) and Rank 5 (20%), but no preference for Rank 2 (0%). Design 3 has moderate preferences across various ranks, while Design 6 is predominantly disliked, with 40% of respondents ranking it last. Overall, Design 1 and Design 4 are the most balanced and favored designs, while Design 5 is highly favored for Rank 2, and Design 6 was the least preferred.



Graph 4.48: Acceptable of designs in the International market from (category 4) Men's wear

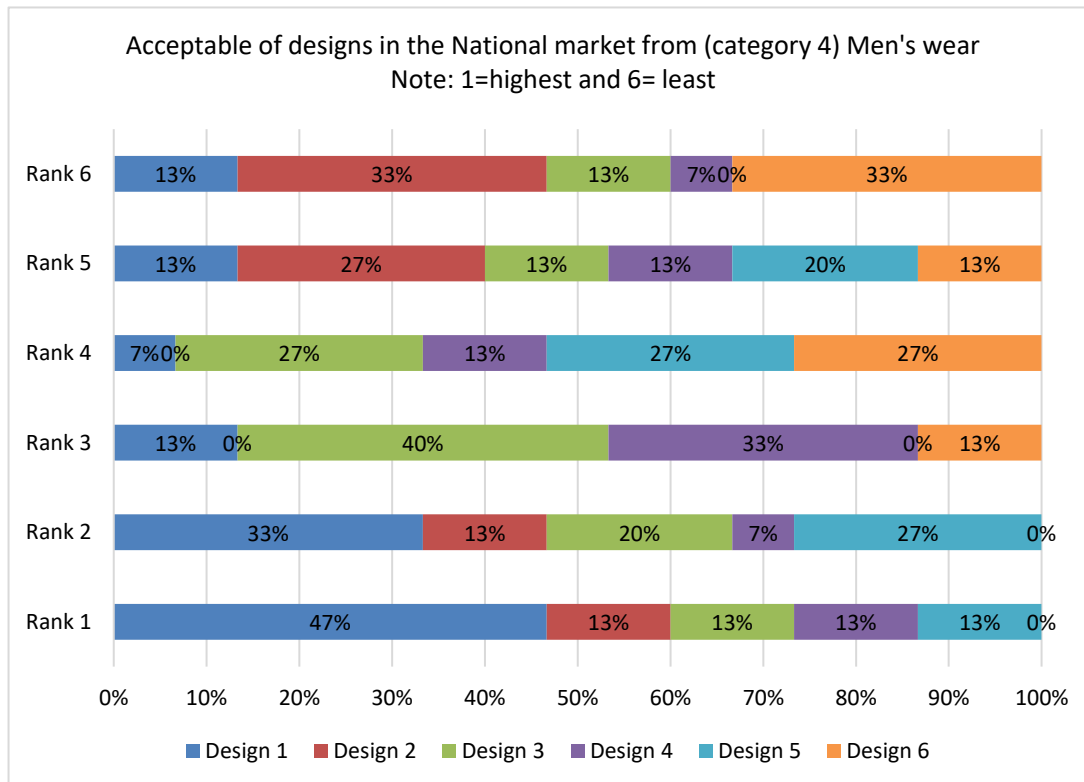
Rank	Design 1	Design 2	Design 3	Design 4	Design 5	Design 6
Rank1	33%	13%	13%	20%	13%	7%
Rank2	27%	0%	13%	20%	40%	0%
Rank3	13%	27%	20%	27%	7%	7%
Rank4	13%	13%	13%	27%	20%	13%
Rank5	20%	20%	20%	13%	7%	20%
Rank6	13%	20%	7%	20%	0%	40%

Table 4.11: Acceptable of designs in the International market from (category 4) Women's wear.

4.5.7e Acceptable of designs in the National market from (category 4) Men's wear

The **Graph 4.49 (Table 4.12)** data revealed distinct preferences for the six designs across various ranks for the acceptability of men's wear designs under category 4. Design 1 was

chosen for Rank 1, securing 47% of the votes, and also had strong support in Rank 2 with 33%, indicating overall high preference. Design 3 was highly favored for Rank 3 with 40% and maintained a moderate presence in Rank 2 (20%) and Rank 4 (27%), showing consistent mid-level appeal. Design 4 was well-regarded for Rank 3 (33%) and had a balanced presence across other ranks, including 13% for Rank 1 and 27% for Rank 4. Design 5 stood out in Rank 2 with 27% and Rank 4 with 27%, but it was not preferred in Rank 3 or Rank 6. Design 2 and Design 6 were less favored for higher ranks, with Design 2 showing significant presence in Rank 5 (27%) and Rank 6 (33%), and Design 6 having notable presence in Rank 4 (27%) and Rank 6 (33%). Overall, Design 1 was the most preferred design, especially for the top ranks, while Design 3 and Design 4 also showed strong support in the middle ranks. Design 5 was highly favored as a second choice, whereas Design 2 and Design 6 were less preferred, particularly for higher ranks.



Graph 4.49: Acceptable of designs in the National market from (category 4) Men's wear

Rank	Design 1	Design 2	Design 3	Design 4	Design 5	Design 6
Rank1	47%	13%	13%	13%	13%	0%
Rank2	33%	13%	20%	7%	27%	0%
Rank3	13%	0%	40%	33%	0%	13%
Rank4	7%	0%	27%	13%	27%	27%
Rank5	13%	27%	13%	13%	20%	13%
Rank6	13%	33%	13%	7%	0%	33%

Table 4.12: Acceptable of designs in the National market from (category 4) Women’s wear.

Designs were further evaluated across all four categories to understand preferences based on the following statements:

1. Recommend these designs to others
2. Will purchase these designs
3. Idea of creating new outfits inspired by those worn by the Lepcha and Bhutia tribes of Sikkim
4. Fusion and modernity
5. Whether the new designs are age-neutral

And the responses collected for the same from the design practitioners and academicians.

4.5.8 Evaluation of designs for category 1 Women’s wear

The bar **Graph 4.50** for Category 1 designs for Women's wear shows evaluation based on several parameters. Data presents the evaluation of women's designs across five parameters: age-neutral designs, fusion of modern and traditional, acceptability of a new idea, purchase intent, and recommendation of designs to others. The responses are categorized into five levels:

Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Responses collected for Age-neutral designs 38%strongly agreed that the designs are age neutral while 44% agreed, 10 % were neutral 9% disagree the statement while 9% strongly disagreed. Overall data showed the majority of respondents (82%) either strongly agreed or agreed that the designs were age-neutral. A small portion remained neutral or disagreed.

Responses collected for Fusion of modern and traditional, 35% strongly agreed that the new designs are a unique blend of new and traditional silhouettes, while 30% agreed, 22 % remained neutral and 23% disagreed the statement, however there was 0% responses who strongly disagreed. It was observed that a significant majority (65%) agreed or strongly agreed that the designs successfully fused modern and traditional elements. A notable portion (22%) was neutral, and a smaller group (13%) disagreed.

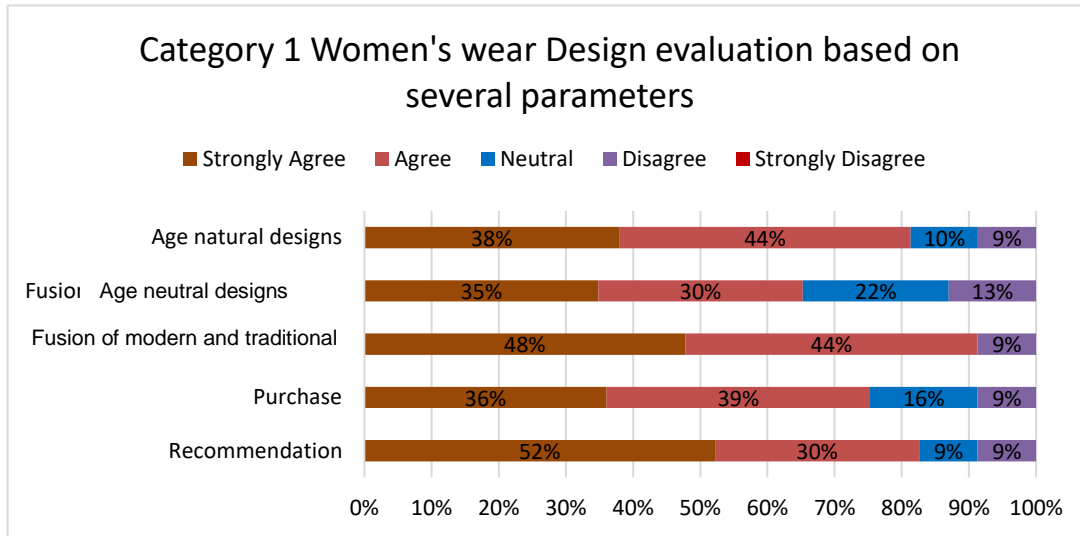
Responses collected for acceptability of new design, 48% strongly agreed and accepted the new designs, while 44% agreed, 0% stayed neutral with the concept of new designs, 9% disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed upon the concept of new designs. On the whole the concept of a new idea was highly acceptable, with 92% agreeing or strongly agreeing. A minor 9% disagreed, with no neutral or strong disagreement responses.

Data for the acceptability and purchase of new designs shows 36%of responses in favor of the purchase of new design, while 39% agreed, Data showed 16% responses towards neutral and 9% disagree and 0% strongly disagreed respectively. A large majority (75%) showed positive purchase intent, with some respondents remaining neutral (16%) and a small fraction disagreeing (9%).

Responses collected for the Recommendation of new designs showed 52% responded in favor of the designs, 30% agreed and recommend the designs, however 9% and 0% disagreed respectively. Over 80% of respondents were inclined to recommend the designs to others, indicating strong endorsement. A small portion was neutral or disagreed.

Overall, the data reflected a positive reception of the designs across all parameters, with the highest agreement for recommendation and the acceptability of new ideas. Age-neutrality and purchase intent also received substantial support, while the fusion of modern and traditional

elements saw a mix of agreement and neutrality. Overall, the feedback was highly favorable, suggesting the designs were well-received by the respondents.



Graph 4.50: Category 1 Women's wear Design evaluation based on several parameters

4.5.9 Evaluation of designs for category 1 Men's wear

The bar **Graph 4.51** for Category 1 designs for Women's wear shows evaluation based on several parameters. Data presents the evaluation of women's designs across five parameters: age-neutral designs, fusion of modern and traditional, acceptability of a new idea, purchase intent, and recommendation of designs to others. The responses are categorized into five levels: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Responses collected for Age-neutral designs 26 %strongly agreed that the designs are age neutral while 30% agreed, 30 % were neutral 13% disagree the statement while 0% strongly disagreed. Overall data showed the majority of respondents (56%) either strongly agreed or agreed that the designs were age-neutral. A 43% remained neutral or disagreed.

Responses collected for Fusion of modern and traditional, 52% strongly agreed that the new designs are a unique blend of new and traditional silhouettes, while 17% agreed, 26 % remained neutral and 4% disagreed the statement, however there was 0% responses who strongly disagreed. It was observed that a significant majority (69%) agreed or strongly agreed that the

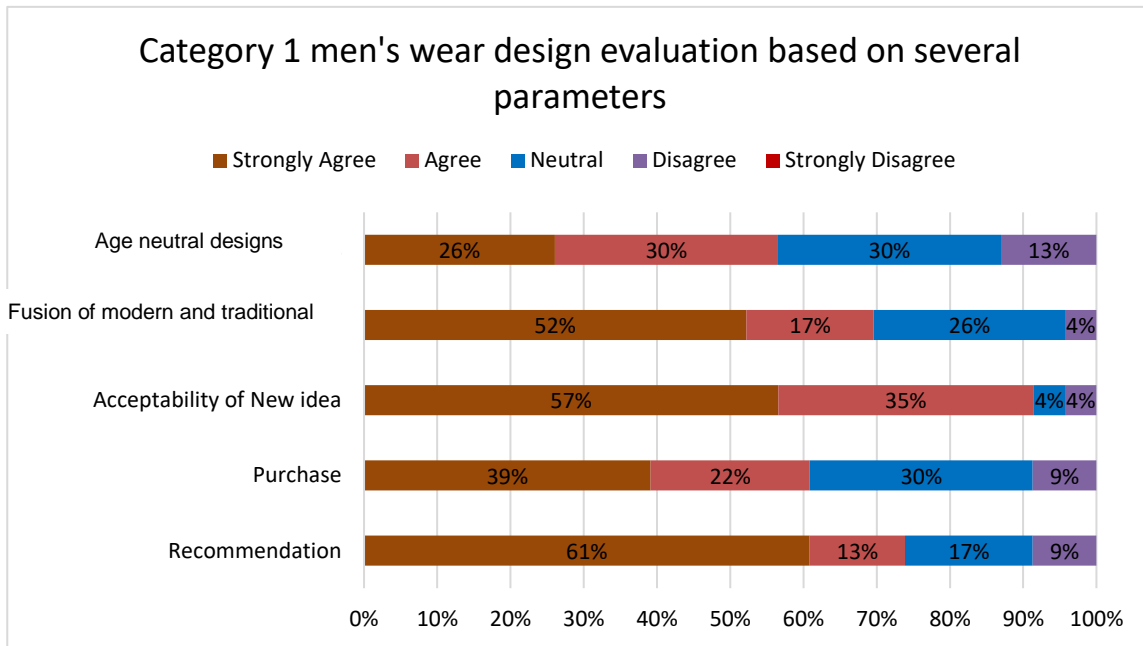
designs successfully fused modern and traditional elements. A notable portion (30%) was neutral, and a smaller group disagreed.

Responses collected for acceptability of new design, 57% strongly agreed and accepted the new designs, while 35% agreed, 4% stayed neutral with the concept of new designs, 4% disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed upon the concept of new designs. On the whole the concept of a new idea was highly acceptable, with 82% agreeing or strongly agreeing. A minor 8% disagreed, with no neutral or strong disagreement responses.

Data for the acceptability and purchase of new designs shows 39% of responses in favor of the purchase of new design, while 22% agreed, Data showed 30% responses towards neutral and 9% disagree and 0% strongly disagreed respectively. A large majority (61%) showed positive purchase intent, with some respondents remaining neutral (30%) and a small fraction disagreeing (9%).

Responses collected for the Recommendation of new designs showed 61% responded in favor of the designs, 13% agreed and recommend the designs, however 17% and 9% disagreed respectively. Over 74% of respondents were inclined to recommend the designs to others, indicating strong endorsement. A small portion of 26% was neutral or disagreed.

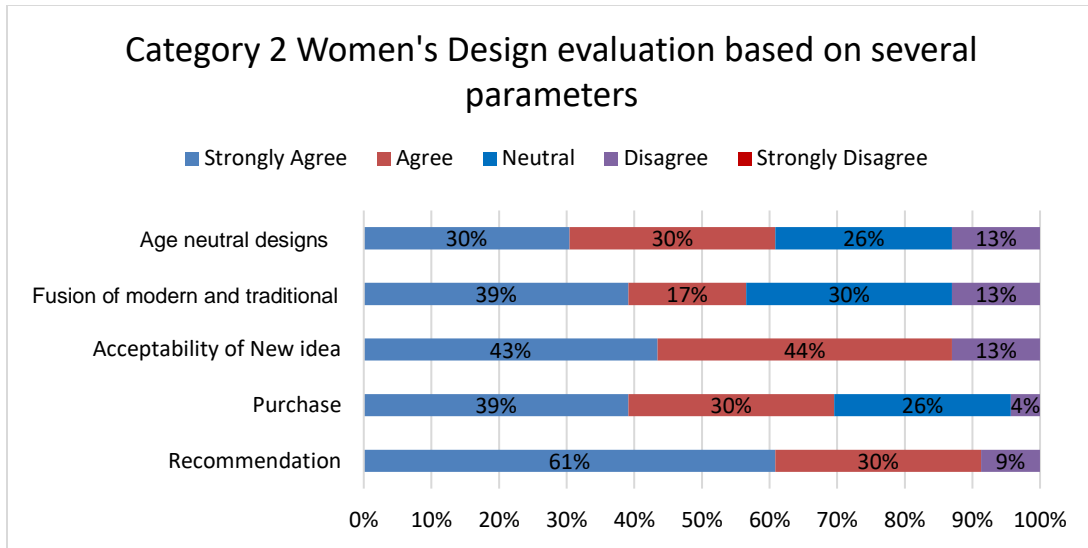
Overall, the data reflected a positive reception of the designs across all parameters, with the highest agreement for recommendation and the acceptability of new ideas. Age-neutrality and purchase intent also received substantial support, while the fusion of modern and traditional elements saw a mix of agreement and neutrality. Overall, the feedback was highly favorable, suggesting the designs were well-received by the respondents.



Graph 4.51: Category 1 Men's wear Design evaluation based on several parameters

4.5.10 Evaluation of designs for category 2 Women's wear

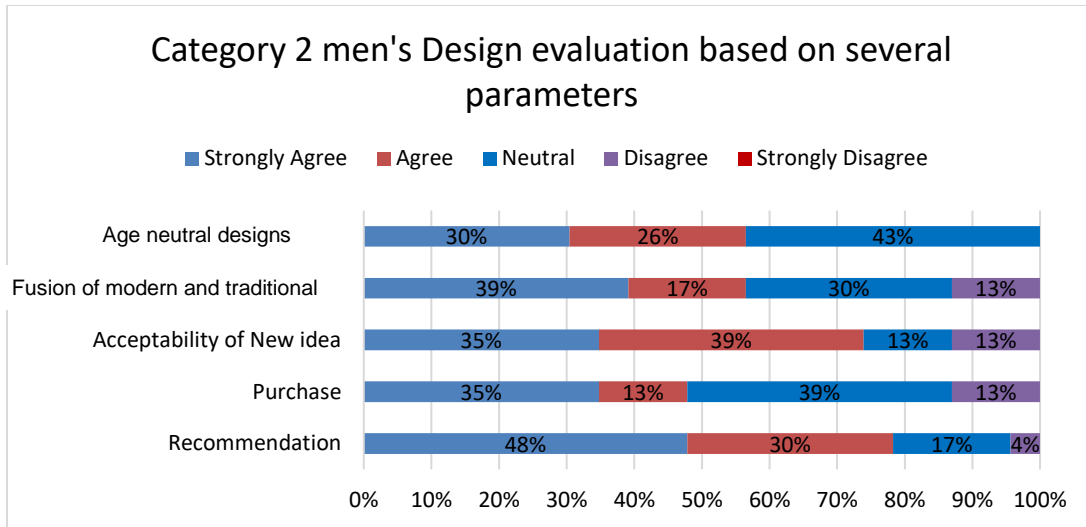
The evaluation of Category 2 **Graph 4.52** Women's Design based on several parameters revealed generally positive feedback from respondents. For the Age Neutral Designs parameter, 60% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed, with an equal split of 30% each, while 26% were neutral and 13% disagreed. The Fusion of Modern and Traditional" parameter saw the majority (39%) strongly agreeing and an additional 17% agreeing, totaling 56% positive feedback, with 30% neutral and 13% disagreeing. The Acceptability of New Idea parameter had a significant portion strongly agreeing (43%) and an almost equal portion being neutral (44%), with only 13% disagreeing. In the Purchase parameter, 39% strongly agreed and 30% agreed, indicating 69% positive feedback, with 26% neutral and only 4% disagreeing. The strongest positive response was seen in the Recommendation parameter, where 61% strongly agreed and 30% agreed, totaling 91% positive feedback, with only 9% disagreeing. Overall, the data indicated a predominantly positive reception across all parameters, with minimal disagreement and no strong disagreements, suggesting that Category 2 Women's Design was well-received among the respondents.



Graph 4.52: Category 2 Women's wear Design evaluation based on several parameters

4.5.11 Evaluation of design for category 2 Men's wear

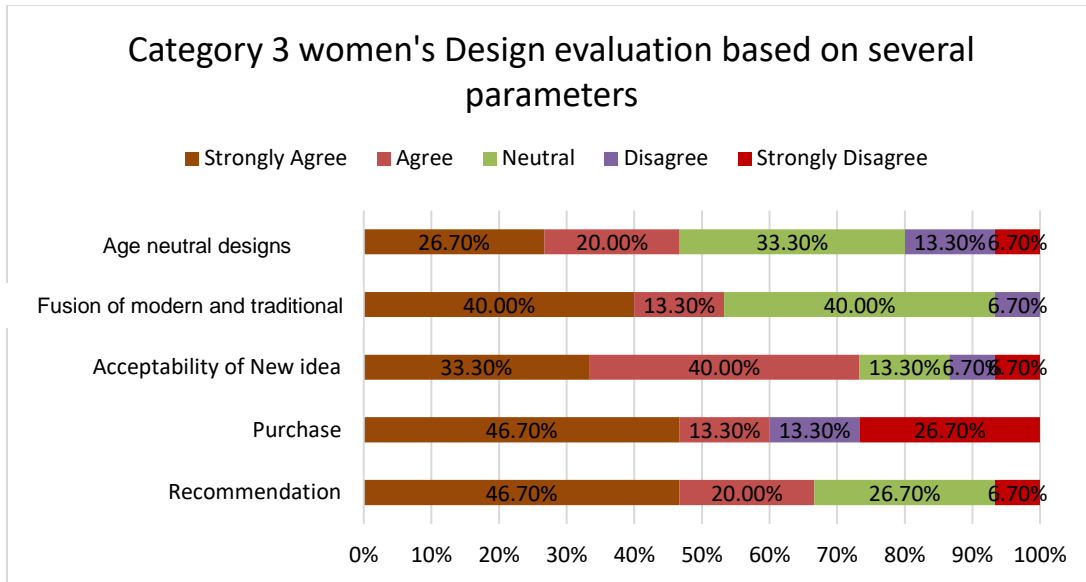
The bar **Graph 4.53** shows evaluation of Men's wear designs under category 2 shows the responses collected for various parameters. For the age neutral designs parameter showed 56% of respondent either strongly agreed or agreed, while 43% were neutral. While there was zero responses who disagreed. For the fusion of modern and traditional designs 56%strongly agreed and agreed and 30% responses were neutral about the fusion of designs, while 13% disagree. Overall, the data indicated a predominantly positive reception across all parameters, with minimal disagreement and no strong disagreements, suggesting that Category 2 Men's wear Design was well-received among the respondents.



Graph 4.53: Category 2 Men's wear Design evaluation based on several parameters

4.5.12 Evaluation of design for category 3 Women's wear

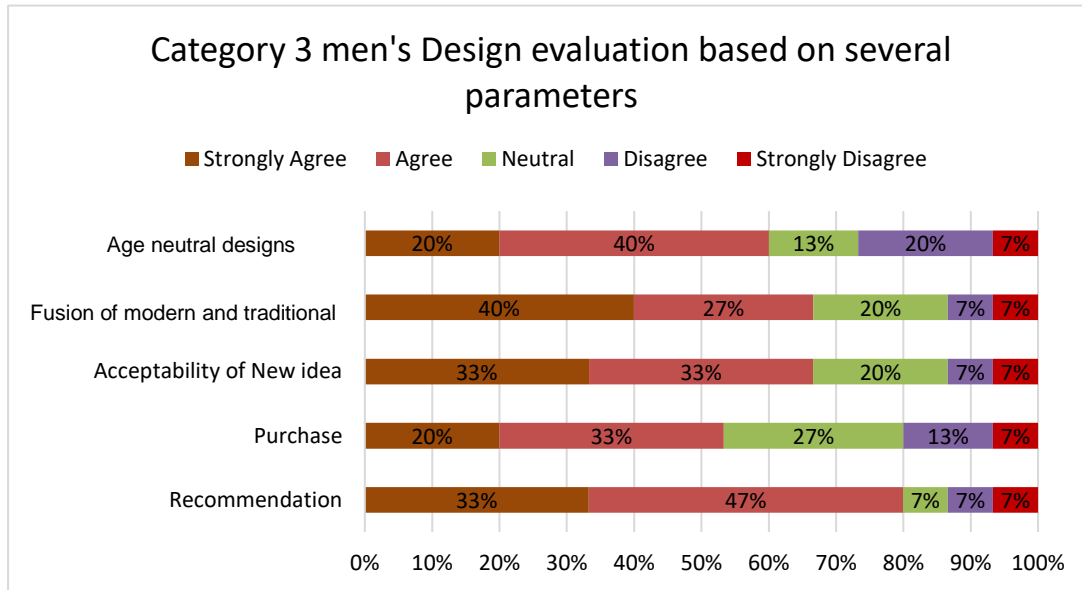
Diverse degrees of agreement and disagreement were observed among respondents for the evaluation of Category 3 Women's wear Design based on multiple parameters as shown in **Graph 4.54**. Regarding age neutral designs, most respondents were strongly in favor (26.7%) & neutral (33.3%). Positive input (strongly agree and agree) together accounted for 46.7% of the total, while negative feedback (disagree and strongly disagree) accounted for 20%. Positive comments about the blending of modern and traditional were plentiful, with 53.3% strongly agreeing or agreeing. Just 6.7% strongly disagreed, while a (40%) expressed neutral response. In terms of the new idea's acceptability, the majority (73.3%) agreed or strongly agreed. 13.4% of the comments were neutral, and 13.4% of the replies disagreed. In terms of buying intent, 26.7% of respondents strongly disagreed, while nearly 60% expressed a favorable intent (strongly agree or agree). There were 13.3% respondent choose to be neutral about the concept of the new designs. Lastly, a small fraction (6.7%) strongly disagreed with the design, while a considerable majority (66.7%) supported it. A neutral response with 26.7% respondents made up the recommendation parameter. Overall, the data showed overwhelmingly positive feedback for Category 3 Women's Design, especially in terms of purchase and recommendation, with comparatively lesser percentages of indifferent and negative responses.



Graph 4.54: Category 3 Women's wear Design evaluation based on several parameters

4.5.13 Evaluation of design for category 3 Men's wear

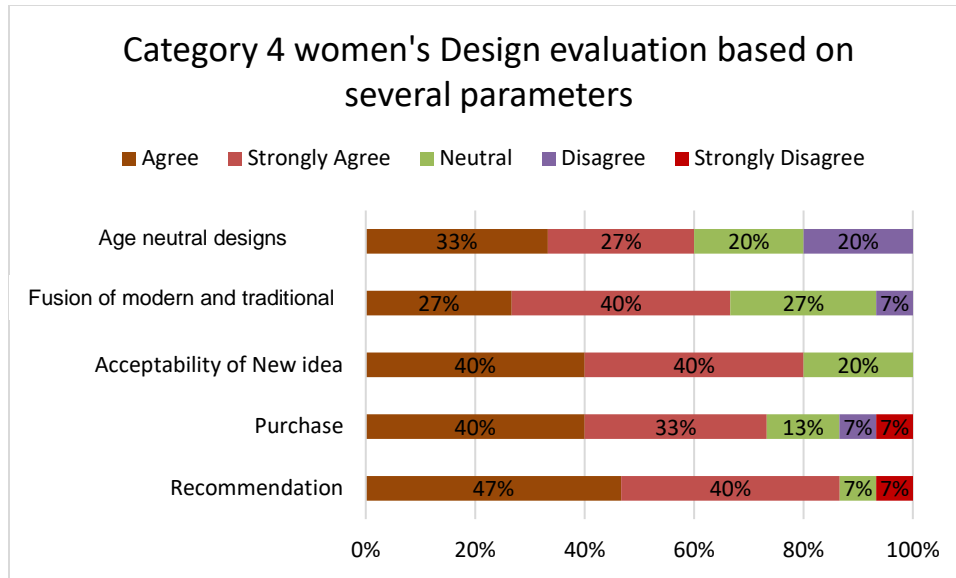
The evaluation of Category 3 Men's wear design based on **Graph 4.55** several parameters showed various levels of agreement and disagreement among respondents. For age neutral designs, 60% of respondents strongly agreed (20%) or agreed (40%), with 13% remaining neutral and 27% showing disagreement (20% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed). In the fusion of modern and traditional designs, 67% of respondents expressed positive feedback (40% strongly agreed and 27% agreed), 20% were neutral, and 14% disagreed (7% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed). Regarding the acceptability of new ideas, 66% of respondents either strongly agreed (33%) or agreed (33%), 20% were neutral, and 14% disagreed (7% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed). For the purchase parameter, 53% of respondents were positive (20% strongly agreed and 33% agreed), 27% were neutral, and 20% showed disagreement (13% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed). Finally, for the recommendation parameter, 80% of respondents would recommend the design (33% strongly agreed and 47% agreed), 7% were neutral, and 14% disagreed (7% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed). Overall, the data indicated strong positive feedback for Category 3 Men's Design, especially in terms of recommendation and acceptability of new ideas, with some neutral and negative responses.



Graph 4.55: Category 3 Men's wear Design evaluation based on several parameters

4.5.14 Evaluation of design for category 4 Women's wear

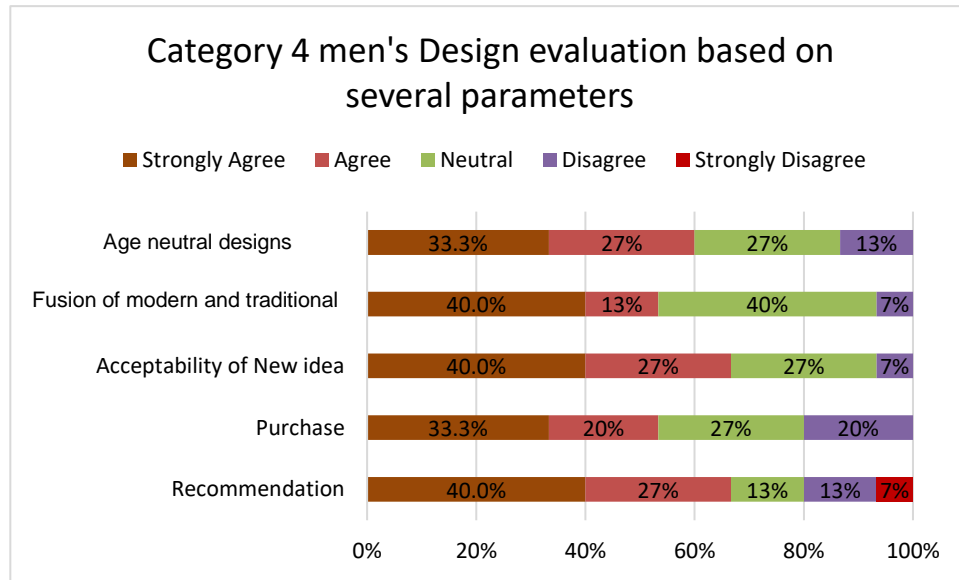
The bar **Graph 4.56** for Category 4 Women's Design evaluation based on several parameters depicted the evaluation of women's designs across five criteria: age-neutral designs, fusion of modern and traditional elements, acceptability of a new idea, purchase intent, and recommendation likelihood. For age-neutral designs, 60% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed, while 20% were neutral and another 20% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. In terms of the fusion of modern and traditional elements, 67% agreed or strongly agreed, with 27% remaining neutral and 7% disagreeing. The acceptability of the new idea was highly endorsed, with 80% agreeing or strongly agreeing, and only 20% remaining neutral. Purchase intent showed positive responses from 73% of participants, with 13% neutral and 14% disagreeing. Lastly, 87% of respondents indicated they would recommend the designs, reflecting strong endorsement, with only 14% disagreeing. Overall, the data reflected a positive reception of the designs across all parameters, suggesting that the designs were well-received by the respondents.



Graph 4.56: Category 4 Women's wear Design evaluation based on several parameters

4.5.15 Evaluation of design for category 4 Men's wear

The bar **Graph 4.57** for category 4 Men's wear design evaluation on the bases of several parameters showed that across five criteria's, age neutral designs received 60.3 % who strongly agreed and agreed respectively, whereas 27% were neutral about the design being age neutral and 13% didn't find the deign age neutral. Second parameter responses for the fusion of modern and traditional 53% strongly agreed and agreed that the new designs have the equal balance of traditional and modern silhouettes, whereas 40% found to be neutral and 7% disagreed. For the acceptability of the new idea was highly endorsed, with 67% agreeing or strongly agreeing, and only 27% remaining neutral. Purchase intent showed positive responses from 53.3% of participants, with 27% neutral and 20% disagreeing. Lastly, 67% of respondents indicated they would recommend the designs, reflecting strong endorsement, with only 13% being neutral and 13% & 7% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Overall, the data reflected a positive reception of the designs across all parameters, suggesting that the designs were well-received by the respondents.



Graph 4.57: Category 4 Men's wear Design evaluation based on several parameters

4.5.16 Capsule collection evaluation

On the bases of the evaluation of the opinion collected for the new designs for the capsule collection, best two designs were selected from the four different categories

The best two selected designs under each category recorded were as a follows:

Category 1 Women: Design 1(Short dress category)

Design 2 (Long dress category)

Category 1 Men: Design 2 & 3

Category 2 Women: Design 1&2

Category 2 Men: Design 2&3

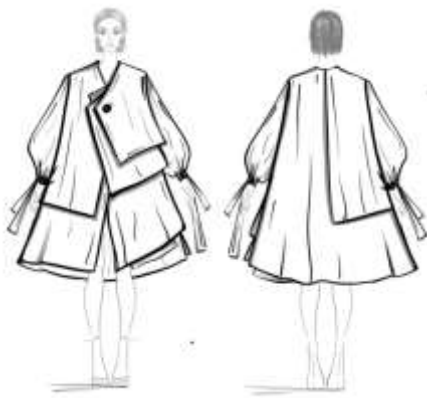
Category 3 Women: Design 1& 4

Category 3 Men: Design 1&5

Category 4 Women: Design 1&6

Category 4 Men: Design 1&5

Category 1 Women's Wear



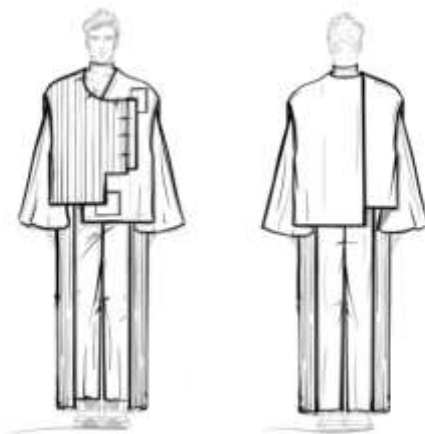
Short Dress: Design 1



Long dress: Design 2

Illustration 4.39 : Selected designs category 1 (Women;s Wear)

Category 1 Men's Wear



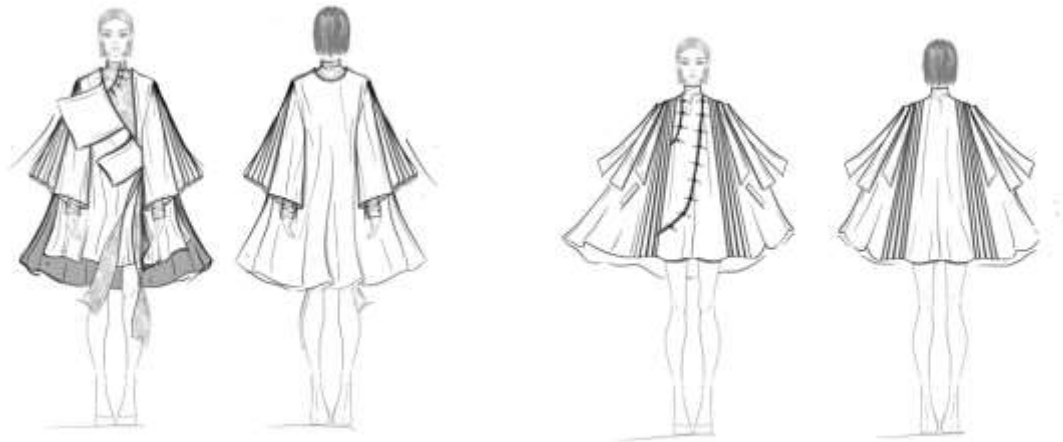
Design 2



Design 3

Illustration 4.40 : Selected designs category 1 (Men;s Wear)

Category 2 Women's Wear



Design 1

Design 2

Illustration 4.41 : Selected designs category 2 (Women;s Wear)

Category 2 Men's Wear

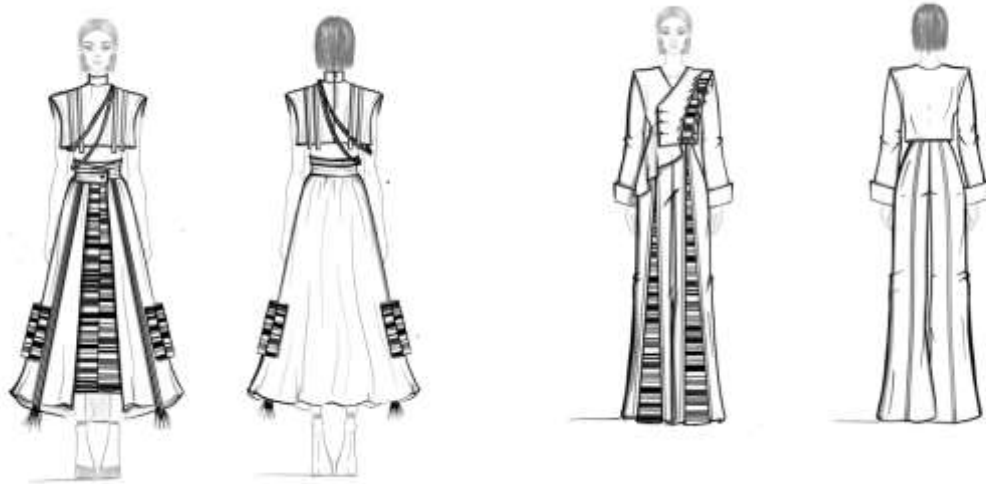


Design 2

Design 3

Illustration 4.42 : Selected designs category 2 (Men;s Wear)

Category 3 Women's Wear

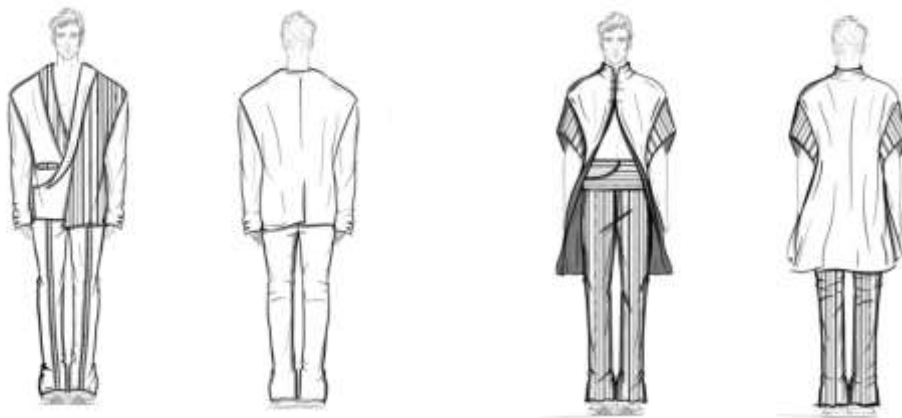


Design 1

Design 4

Illustration 4.43 : Selected designs category 3 (Women;s Wear)

Category 3 Men's Wear

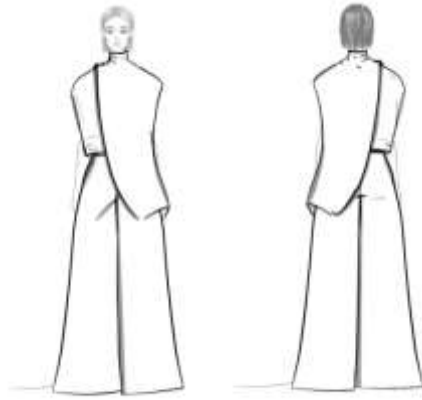


Design 2

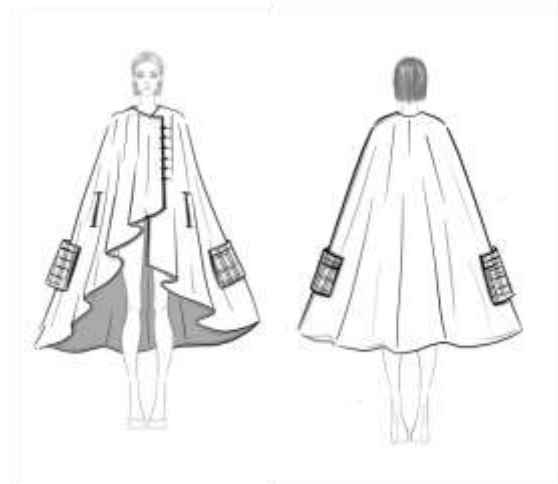
Design 5

Illustration 4.44: Selected designs category 3 (Men;s Wear)

Category 4 Women's Wear



Design 1



Design 6

Illustration 4.45 : Selected designs category 4 (Women;s Wear)

Category 4 Men's Wear



Design 1



Design 5

Illustration 4.46 : Selected designs category 4 (Men;s Wear)

Fabric procurement for the collection line was done from Sikkim. Fabrics like wool, lecpa weave fabric, traditional *pangdin* weave fabric and *Khoechin* fabrics were procured. Researcher has given emphasis of developing wool fabric by incorporating embroidered *tanga* designs on the fabric. Fabric design was also taken care of along with the garments. Final collection was made based on established anthropometric measurements, referencing Armstrong H.J. Size 6 for Women and Size 42 for Men. This was chosen as the standard template for the capsule collection,

The best two selected designs under each category recorded were as a follows:

Category 1 Women: Design 1(Short dress category)

Design 2 (Long dress category)

Category 1 Men: Design 2 & 3

Category 2 Women: Design 1&2

Category 2 Men: Design 2&3

Category 3 Women: Design 1& 4

Category 3 Men: Design 1 &5

Category 4 Women: Design 1&6

Category 4 Men: Design 1&5

A total of 16 garments were designed for the capsule collection, and preferences for these newly constructed designs were collected under four categories. The garments were created with feedback collected through an Opinionnaire in mind. The designed garments were endogenous, and preferences were collected for their acceptability among the masses and different markets. A Google form was prepared for this purpose and was distributed on various platforms to a diverse audience. The collection was also presented at the Northeast Festival 2023 in New Delhi to a larger audience and showcased through a ramp show at the Faculty of Family and Community Sciences to gather preferences and likability from various audiences.

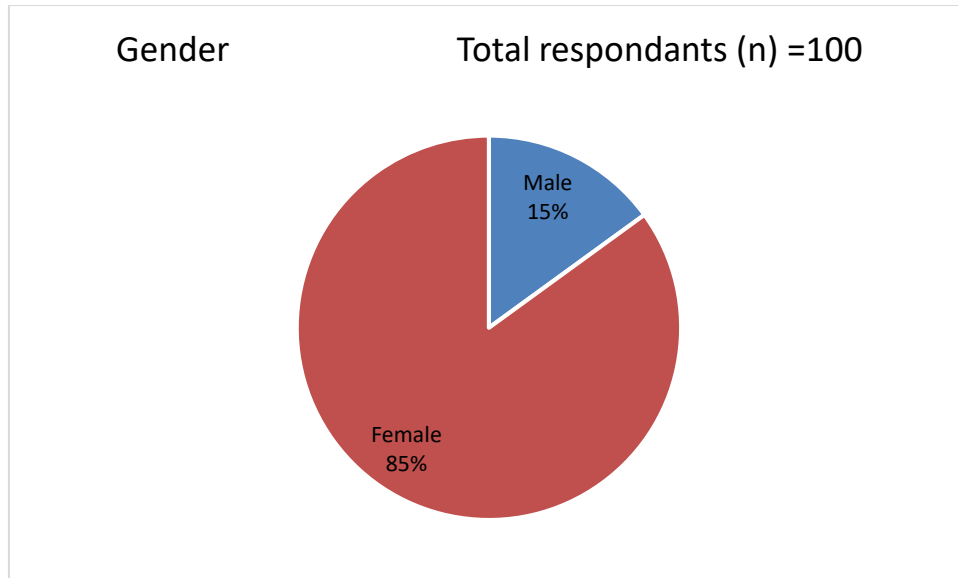
A total of 100 responses were collected and the analysis for the same was done. Responses were collected through Google form, for which QR code was prepared and was shared with the respondents. QR-code, directed the respondents to the goggle form. Hence, this supported to the concept of sustainability through paperless forms. **(Plate 4.210)**



Plate 4.210: QR code

4.5.17 Gender of the respondents

The **Graph 4.58:** data on gender distribution among respondents reveals a significant imbalance, with a substantially higher number of female participants compared to male participants. Out of a total of 100 respondents, 85 were female, constituting 85% of the sample, while only 15 were male, making up the remaining 15%. This indicates that the majority of feedback and preferences collected for the newly designed capsule collection were provided by female respondents. This gender gap suggest that the collection, its marketing, and the channels used to reach to wider audience through the Opinionnaire had a greater reach or appeal among women. This insight was important for understanding the demographic profile of the target audience and tailoring future collections and marketing strategies and acceptability of designs accordingly.

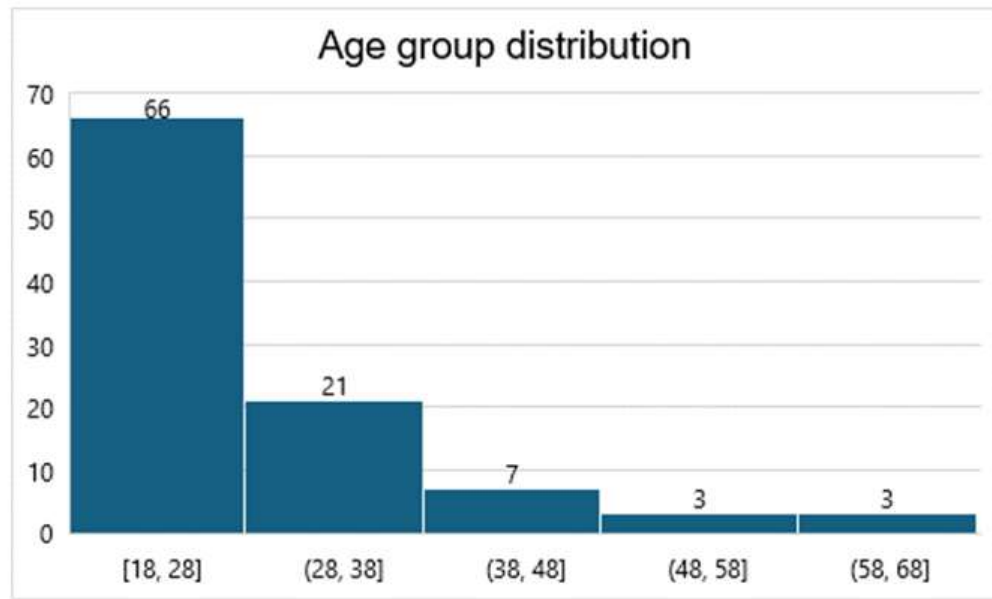


Graph 4.58: Gender of respondents

4.5.17 Age of the respondents

The age group distribution **Graph 4.59** of respondents for the collected data shows a clear preference towards younger individuals. Out of 100 respondents, the largest group of individual was between age 18 to 28 years, making up 66% of the sample. This indicates that a majority of the feedback came from young adults, likely those who are in their early adulthood, education, or starting their careers. The next significant age group was between 28 to 38 years, comprising 21% of the respondents. This group includes individuals who are more established in their careers and personal lives.

The next age group between 38 to 48 years counted for 7% of the sample, showing a moderate representation of mid-career professionals. The age groups 48 to 58 and 58 to 68 years were the smallest, each making up only 3% of the respondents. This distribution shows that the majority of the feedback was given by younger adults, with significantly fewer responses from older age groups. This suggests that the designed collection, its acceptability in the market. The opinionnaire were more appealing and accessible to younger individuals. Understanding this age distribution was crucial for tailoring future collections and marketing strategies to better target audience.



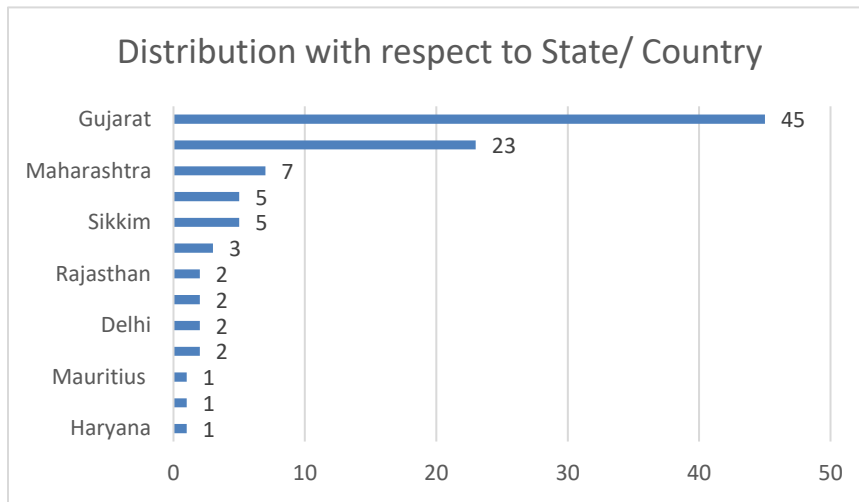
Age Group	Frequency
18 to 28	66
28 to 38	21
38 to 48	7
48 to 58	3
58 to 68	3
Total	100

Graph 4.59: Age group distribution

4.5.19 Locality of the respondents

The **Graph 4.60** data chart shows that 45 of respondents were from Gujarat, followed by a general Category labeled as India with 23 respondents. This data distribution shows a strong participation of individual from Gujarat in compare to other regions. Maharashtra shows a moderate representation with 7 respondents. West Bengal and Sikkim each have 5 respondents, indicating a balance of response collected from these two states. Madhya Pradesh has 3 respondents, while Rajasthan, Manipur, Delhi, and Assam each have 2 respondents, reflecting a smaller yet noticeable participation from these states. Mauritius, Karnataka, and Haryana each have 1 respondent, showing minimal international and domestic interest from these regions. Overall, the data shows a high concentration of respondents from India, with a minor

contribution from Mauritius. This distribution highlights the geographic diversity of the respondents, though it is skewed towards Gujarat region.



Graph 4.60: Locality of respondents

4.5.20 Awareness about the textiles and Costume of the *Lepcha* and *Bhutia* communities of Sikkim

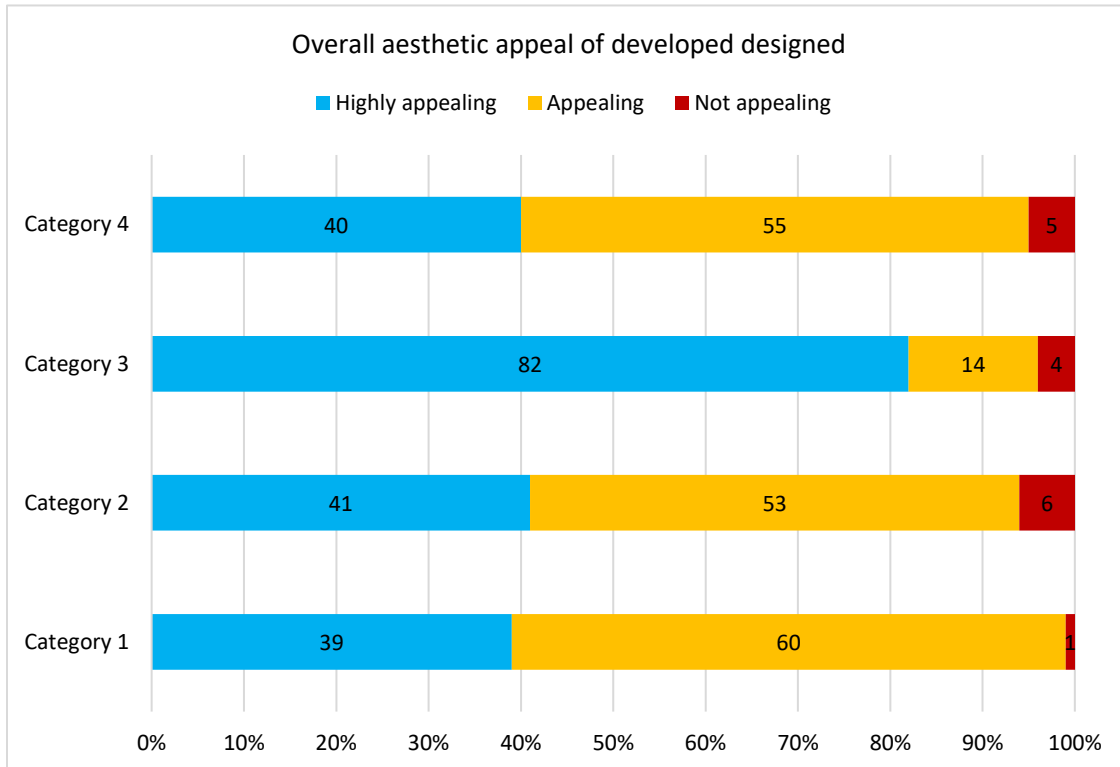
Data in **Graph 4.61** shows that 55 % of respondents were aware about the traditional textiles and costumes of the Lepcha and Bhutia communities of Sikkim State, whereas 47 % were not aware about it.



Graph 4.61: Awareness about the traditional textiles of Lepcha and Bhutia Tribe

4.5.21 Responses against the overall aesthetic appeal of capsule collection

Data in **Graph 4.62** shows responses collected against the overall aesthetic appeal of the new designs under various categories. Evaluation on likert scale shows the 39% of respondents find designs under category 1 highly appealing, while 60 % found them appealing 1% didn't find them appealing. Under category 2, 41 % responses were in favor of the designs and found the new designs highly appealing, while 53% found them appealing and 6% were did not find them appealing. Category 3 stood out the most, with an overwhelming 82% of respondents considering the designs highly appealing and 14% finding them appealing, resulting in a combined positive response of 96%, and only 4% not finding them appealing. Category 4 received a favorable reception as well, with 40% rating the designs as highly appealing, 55% as appealing, and 5% not finding them appealing. Overall, the data suggests that Category 3 designs were the most popular, followed by Categories 1 and 4, with Category 2 also being positively received but with a slightly higher percentage of respondents not finding the designs appealing. This insight is crucial for designers and marketers to understand audience preferences and focus on the elements that are most appreciated.



Graph 4.62: overall aesthetic appeal of capsule collection

4.5.22 Design preference in various categories

The data collected on the rankings (**Table 4.13**) of different designs under four different categories shows varied preferences. In Category 1, **Graph 4.63 (Plate 4.211)** Group 1 (G1) had a strong preference for Rank 1 with 65% of the responses showed liking towards it, whereas Group 2 (G2) had a more even distribution with 35% for Rank 2. Group 3 (G3) had a spread-out preference across all ranks, and Group 4 (G4) showed a preference for Rank 1 (35%) and Rank 3 (27%). In **Graph 4.64 (Plate 4.212)** Category 2, G1 preferences were spread out, while G2 showed a strong preference for Rank 1 (44%) and Rank 2 (31%). G3 favored Rank 2 (37%), and G4 leaned towards Rank 1 (39%) and Rank 2 (28%). In **Graph 4.65 (Plate 4.213)** Category 3 was again preferred for Rank 1 across all groups, especially in G1 (62%) and G2 (68%), showing its strong appeal. G3 and G4 also favored Rank 1 but had more varied preferences for the other ranks. In **Graph 4.66 (Plate 4.214)** Category 4, preferences were more balanced. G1, G2, and G3 showed no clear dominant rank, although G2 slightly favored Rank 1 (40%) and Rank 2 (32%). G4 had a stronger preference for Rank 1 (51%). Overall, Category 3 was the most favored across all other categories, particularly in G1 and G2. Category 1 also received significant support, while Category 2 had varied preferences with some strong top-rank choices. Category 4 had the most balanced preferences. This analysis shows the popularity and likeness of different designs across various age groups, with Category 3 being the most preferred overall.

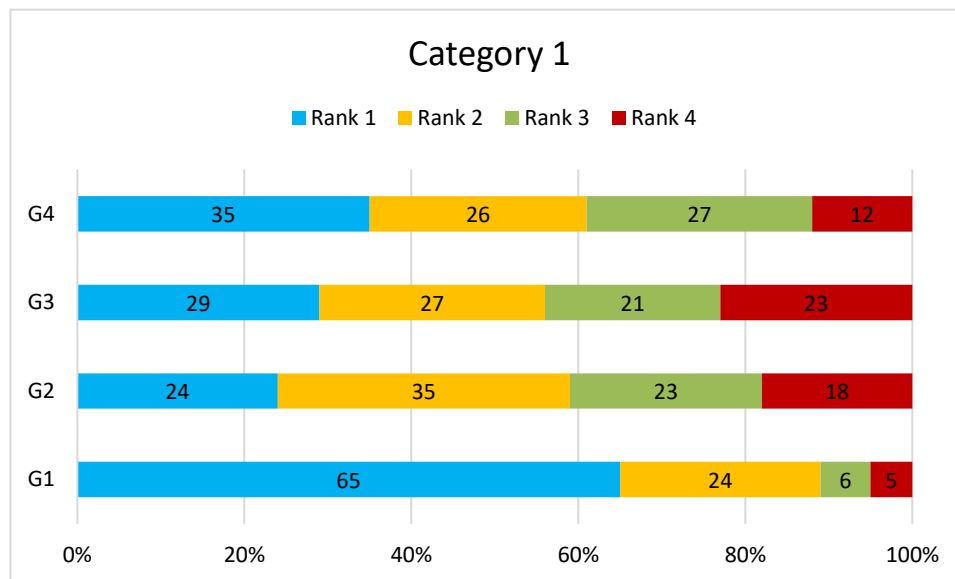
Table 4.13: Ranking for best garment under all four categories

Categories	Group	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Total
Category 1	G1	65	24	6	5	100
	G2	24	35	23	18	100
	G3	29	27	21	23	100
	G4	35	26	27	12	100
Category 2	G1	40	23	17	20	100
	G2	44	31	20	5	100
	G3	29	37	22	12	100
	G4	39	28	15	18	100
Category 3	G1	62	18	11	9	100
	G2	68	19	7	6	100
	G3	45	17	16	22	100
	G4	61	13	14	12	100
Category 4	G1	38	23	26	13	100
	G2	40	32	18	10	100
	G3	30	28	27	15	100
	G4	51	17	16	16	100

Category 1: Layered Lore's



Plate 4.211: Designs from Category 1

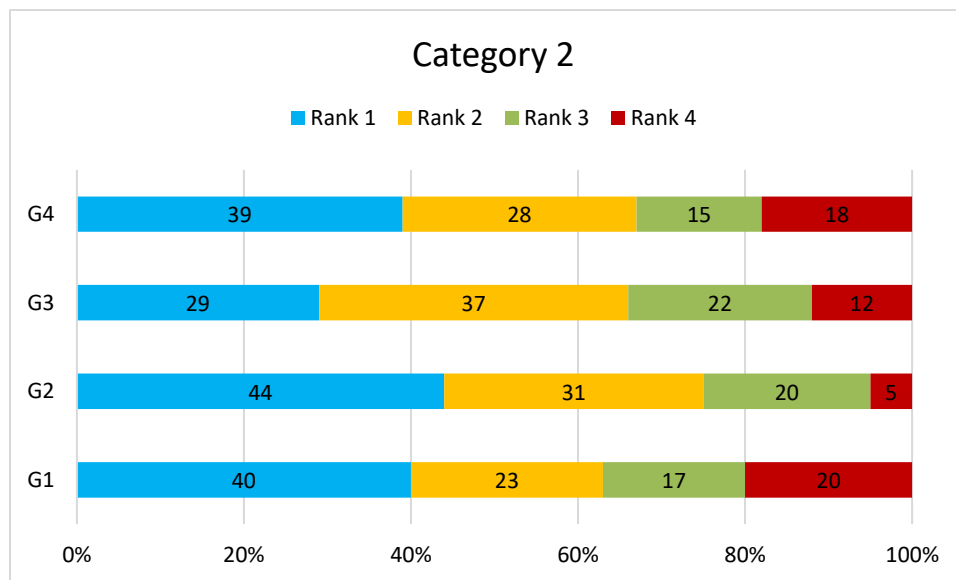


Graph 4.63: Design preference in Category 1

Category 2: Colour Narratives



Plate 4.212: Designs from Category 2



Graph 4.64: Design preference in Category 2

Category 3: Tribal Analogues

FRONT



BACK



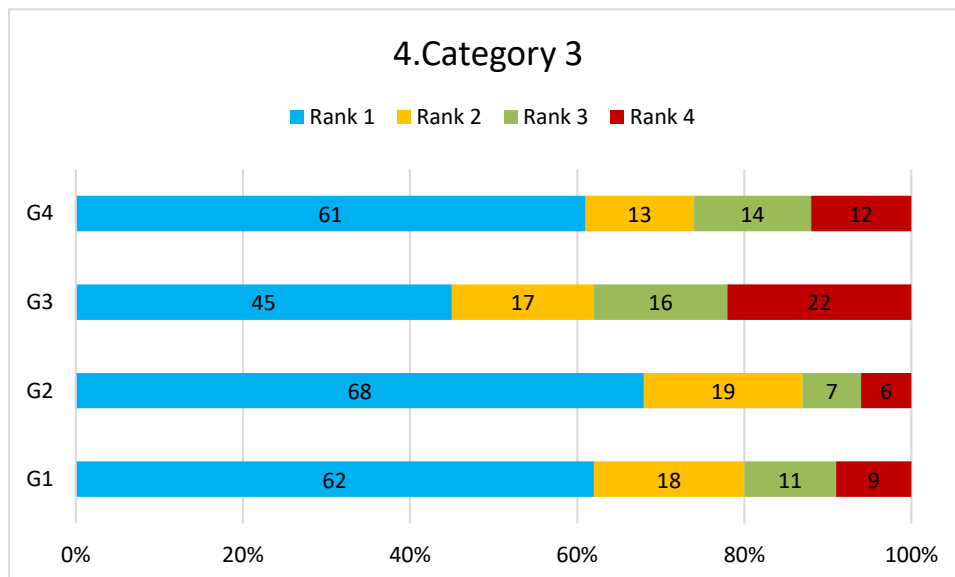
G1

G2

G3

G4

Plate 4.213: Designs from Category 3

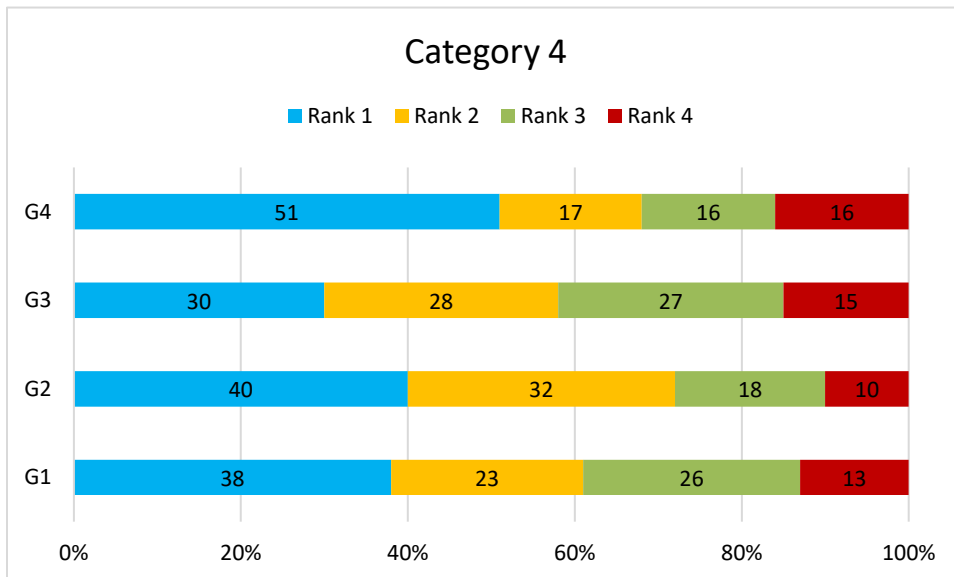


Graph 4.65: Design preference in Category 3

Category 4: Spiritual Sojourn



Plate 4.214: Designs from Category 4

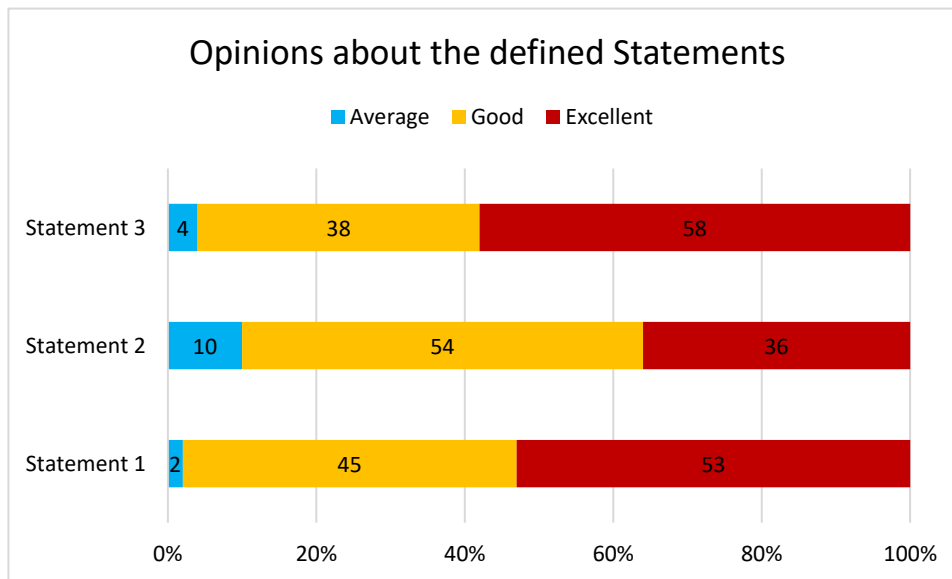


Graph 4.66: Design preference in Category 4

4.5.21 Design opinions for various statements.

Statement 1	The selection of Colors is appropriate
Statement 2	Styles are trendy for the youth
Statement 3	Perfect blend of traditional and modern silhouettes

The data **Graph 4.67** for opinions regarding three statements on likert scale reveals varying levels of liking among respondents. Statement 1 received very positive feedback, with 53% of respondents rating it as Excellent and 45% as Good, leaving only 2% who rated it as Average. This indicates a high overall liking with Statement 1. Statement 2, while still positively received, had 54% of respondents rating it as Good, 36% as Excellent, and a higher percentage of Average ratings at 10%, suggesting a slightly lower level of liking compared to Statement 1. Statement 3 was the highest-rated, with 58% of respondents considering it Excellent and 38% rating it as Good, and only 4% rating it as Average. This indicates very high liking with Statement 3. Overall, Statement 3 emerged as the most favored, followed by Statement 1, with Statement 2 receiving relatively lower, yet still positive, feedback.



Graph 4.67: Opinions about the defined Statements

4.5.23 Traditional silhouettes mixed with contemporary designs help preserve Sikkim culture and introduce its fashion beyond the state

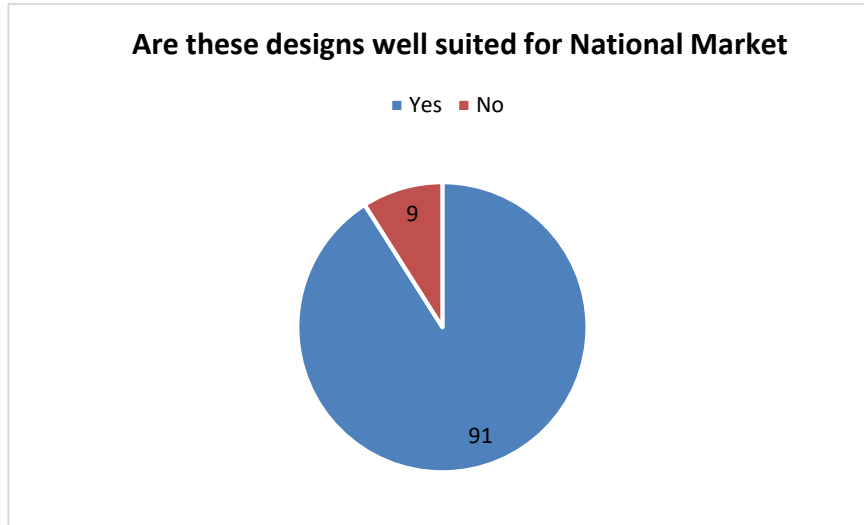
The bar **Graph 4.68** shows the responses for the Traditional silhouettes mixed with contemporary designs under all four categories. Data shows 98 % responses liked the designs, whereas only 2% were not in favor.



Graph 4.68: Fusion of Traditional and Contemporary

4.5.24 Acceptability of designs in National Market

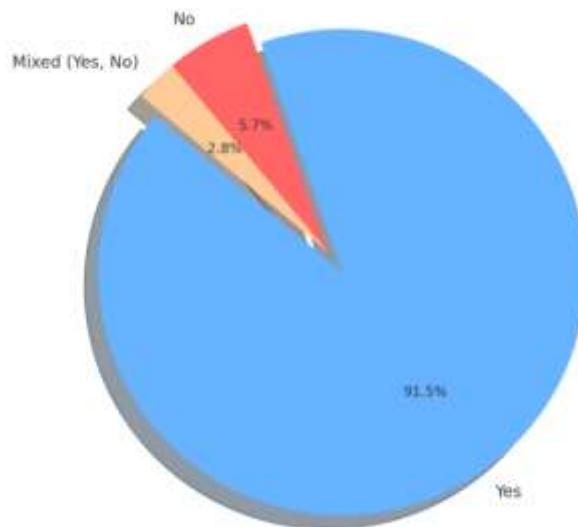
The bar **Graph 4.69** shows the responses for the acceptability of designs in national market under all four categories. Data shows 91 % responses liked the designs, whereas only 9% were not in favor.



Graph 4.69: Acceptability of designs in National Market

4.5.25 Acceptability of designs in International Market

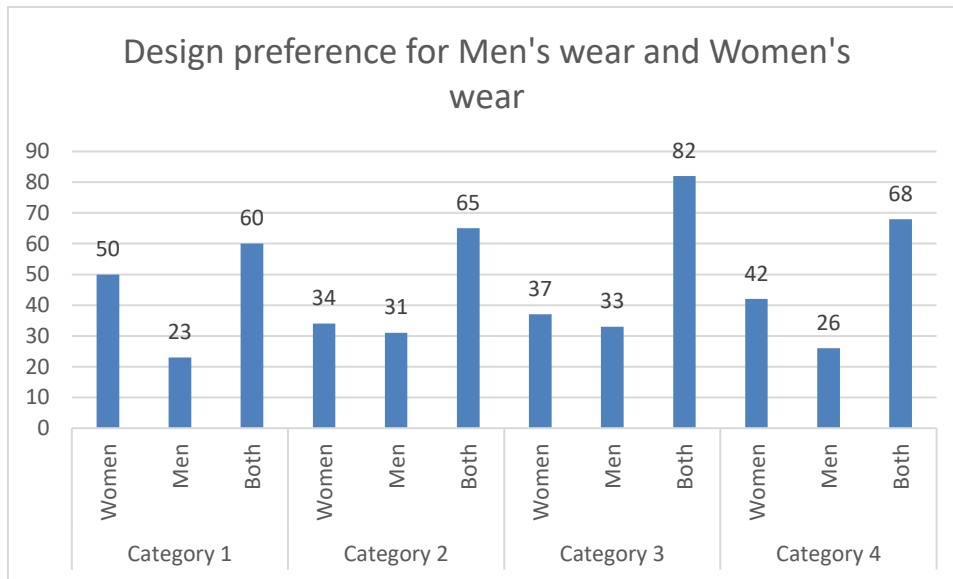
The bar **Graph 4.70** shows the responses for the acceptability of designs in national market under all four categories. Data shows 91.5 % responses liked the designs, and agreed to the acceptability of designs in international market, whereas only 5.7% were not in favor, and a small percentage of 2.8% had mixed view point about it.



Graph 4.70: Acceptability of designs in International Market

4.5.26 Design acceptability for Men’s wear and Women’s wear

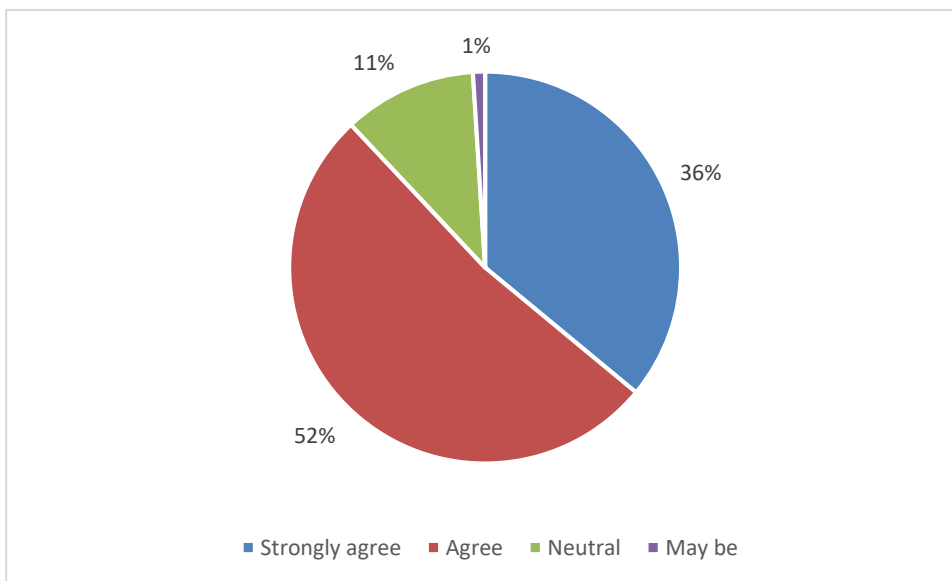
The **Graph 4.71** data on the frequency of preference for different categories among women, men, and both groups shows results, In Category 1, 50 % likes women design more compared to men which was 23%, whereas there were 60% respondents who liked both the designs . Under category 2, 34% liked Women design and 325 liked men’s design more, while on the other hand 65% which was the highest preference was received for both the designs . Category 3, 83% liked deigns for both the genders, where as 37% liked women’s designs more than the men’s design which received 33%. Under category 4, 68 % preferred deigns for both the genders, compared to women’s and men’s design which received 42% & 26% respectively. Overall, the data indicates that all categories were most favored when both genders were considered together. This highlights the broad appeal and versatility of the designs across different gender groups.



Graph 4.71: Design preference

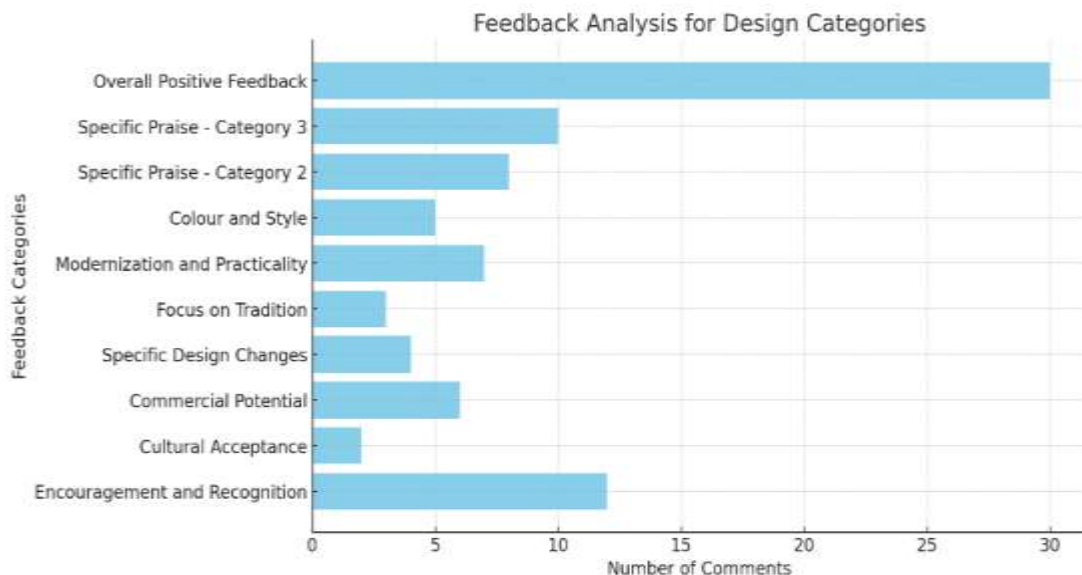
4.5.27 Opinion of respondent towards rethinking the tradition through modern silhouettes will help in taking the Sikkim culture beyond the state and will provide a global market

The pie chart **Graph 4.72 on likert scale** illustrates the respondent's percentage of union regarding a statement. 36% of the responses strongly agreed, indicating a significant portion of the respondents felt very positive about the statement. 52% agreed, showing that the majority of respondents had a positive, yet slightly less intense, agreement with the statement. 11% of the responses, represents those who neither agreed nor disagreed, remaining impartial. The smallest segment of 1%, indicating a very small portion of respondents were uncertain or indecisive. Overall, the data showed that a substantial majority of the respondents (88% combined for "Strongly agree" and "Agree") had a positive perception, while a smaller portion was neutral or undecided.



Graph 4.72: Responses towards rethinking the tradition through modern silhouettes will help in taking the Sikkim culture beyond the state and will provide a global market

There were few feedback and comments which was collected from the respondents. **Graph 4.73** shows the feedback about the overall designs of the capsule collection. The bar graph illustrates the analysis of comments and suggestions given for various design categories. The majority of feedback falls under Overall Positive Feedback, with 30 comments representing strong approval of the designs. Specific praise was notably high for Category 3 (Tribal Analogues) with 10 comments and Category 2 (Colour Narratives) with 8 comments, highlighting their popularity. Comments on color and style were also positive, with 5 remarks appreciating the concept. Suggestions for improvement focused on modernization and practicality (7 comments) and ensuring the designs maintain traditional authenticity (3 comments). Specific design changes were recommended in 4 instances. The potential for commercial success and cultural acceptance received 6 and 2 comments respectively, indicating interest in the marketability and local resonance of the designs. Additionally, 12 comments offered encouragement and recognition for the work, reflecting appreciation and support for the creative effort towards the designs highlighting the cuts and styles of traditional costumes of lepcha and bhutia costumes in contemporary wear for the youth.



Graph 4.73: Design collection feedback

4.5.28 Display of Collection

As a part of the study researcher designed a capsule collection of 16 new androgynous clothing. The main objective of developing the collection was to create awareness of the existing two communities of Sikkim and two introduce new designs in the market taking inspiration from their traditional silhouettes for the future generation. Designing keeping in mind the traditional and modern forms which will go well with the modern day fashion. The researcher displayed the collection on various platforms to showcase the developed collection. The designs were very well received by the audience. The list of places of display of collection is as below:

a. Capsule collection at Northeast Festival, New Delhi

The representation of capsule collection among the audience through a fashion show in Northeast festival. Delhi (**Plate 4.215**) displayed creativity and elegance, featuring the innovative design collection inspired by the Lepcha and Bhutia communities.

The vibrant colors, innovative designs, and bold silhouettes reflect a blend of contemporary trends and timeless classics. The collection bridges the gap between tradition and modernity, proposing innovative approaches. By reintroducing traditional textiles and costumes of the Lepcha and Bhutia communities with a contemporary twist, drawing inspiration from the traditional cuts and styles, Models showcased a variety of styles, with each outfit telling its own story.

The audiences were fascinated by the intricate detailing, luxurious fabrics, and unique accessories that complemented each look. The event left a lasting impression with its stunning visuals and helped create awareness about the hidden gem of Sikkim. The audience appreciated the concept and was thrilled by the innovative idea.

Designs were endeavors to provide these communities with a global platform. Efforts strive to ensure that the rich heritage of Sikkim finds resonance not only within its borders but across the broader cultural spectrum. The audience looks forward to many more creative designs like these and some local brands seek collaborations.

The researcher's designs were appreciated and very well received by the audience. The youth audiences were keen to customize the designs according to their body measurements. The event

was covered by National and local media (Plate 4.216, 4.217) which further added awareness about the Sikkim state and its design culture. Sikkim today covered the researcher's work which had acted as a booster for spreading awareness about the Sikkim state and its communities. Some visitors, later on, contacted the researcher personally for future collaboration because it was covered in the media.



Plate 4.215: Researcher along with the models. Snippets from Northeast festival

Picture courtesy: Northeast festival
<https://www.instagram.com/northeast.festival/?hl=en>

b.Department of Clothing and Textiles, Faculty of Family and Community Science, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara

The same collection was also presented at The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara. in order to collect the responses from the region which shares a different culture compare to the Northeast region of India. Main focus was on collecting the responses from the youth and their preference and acceptability of the new designs. These Androgynous fashion garments were showcased in Mrunalini Devi Puar Auditorium in Faculty of Family and Community Sciences (**Plate 4.218**). Students and faculty from the university were invited, for which and preference invite was designed and send across the university premises. Students and Faculty members from the university attended the preference show and give there feedback and filled the Google form which was shared through the QR code.



Plate 4.218: Researcher along with her guide Dr. Anjali Karolia and Models presenting her capsule collection at the Faculty of Family and Community Sciences preference collection.

c. Sutr Santati, National Museum Delhi

In order to introduce Sikkim art and craft to the wider audience researcher has taken effort to reintroduce *lepcha* weave in form of an art piece “Bodhi Sutra” which was designed using *thangka* painting and nettle (*Sisnu*) fiber, indigenous to Sikkim, dyed in indigo. This art piece was displayed through Sutra Santati exhibition at National Museum, New Delhi.

Abheraj Baldota Foundation in association with the National Museum organized an exhibition as part of Azadi ka Amrut Mohotsav to celebrate 75 years of Indian Independence. The exhibition represented over hundred textiles by seventy five participants. The main feature of this exhibition was to highlight the diverse interpretation of the beautiful textile craftsman ships from all over India, designed to 242 celebrate Indian artisans and to promote Indian crafts. The researcher’s art piece was selected for display at the exhibition. The art pieces were designed keeping in mind the theme of the exhibition. Art piece “Bodhi Sutra” (**Plate 4.219**) was conceptualized and designed keeping in mind the sustainability accept. It was woven on loom with indigenous natural fiber locally known as sisnu or sorhing (Nettle) by the master weaver Sujata Bhujel and hand painted by *thangka* artist Gyaltzen Zimba in Sikkim. "Bodhi Sutra" was inspired from Buddhism and unique Buddhist Culture. Art piece was an amalgamation of rich facets and teachings of Buddha through various symbols like Dharma Chakra, Lotus and Unalome along with free flowing river Teesta from the sacred land of Buddha- Sikkim. The heart of the painting speaks out a strong thought in Lepcha script which means “Faith and Prayer both are invisible, but they make impossible things happen”.

This art work is enthused from the one of the most recited poems in the Buddhist tradition "tsok lu" (song of feast) written by Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa. The exhibition was curated by Mrs. Lavina Baldota, Abheraj Baldota Foundation and it was visited by renowned designers, textile and art conservators, people from the design fraternity, students, Researcher, media and people from various backgrounds. The piece was appreciated by many known faces like renowned fashion designer Manish Malhotra, Maharani Radhikaraje Gaekwad of Baroda and many others (**Plate 4.220**).



Plate 4.219: Art piece for Bodhi Sutra



Plate 4.220: Researcher in conversation with Mahrani Radhika Raje, Manish Malhotra, Lavina Baldota , National Museum, New Delhi

4.5.ii Develop design catalogue.

On the basis of these new designs, a design catalogue was developed (**Plate 4.221**). This catalogue served as a look book, drawing inspiration from the traditional textiles and costumes of the Lepcha and Bhutia communities. This catalogue was a quick reference guide for students,

researchers and design enthusiast thereby increasing awareness about the Sikkim state and its textile and costume design culture. Book covers all aspects of Lepcha and Bhutia culture starting from introduction to the State to their cuisine, festivals and leading to their costumes, textiles and design Innovation.



Plate 4.221: Catalogue

Link to the catalogue: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-0_2pftm0BuI1-wsyTLm0YrXKtar-Hn6/view?usp=drive_link