5.2 Bhutan Case Study

The investigation of the markers of authenticity of Bhutanese hand-woven kira fell into two phases. The first phase encompassed the semi-structure interviews supplemented with an opportunity for visual research to establish commonalities among the different category of kira in order to identify elements that could be candidates as markers of authenticity. Phase Two while the final phase consisted of written closed-questionnaires with master weavers.

5.2.1 Phase 1

• Genesis of Bhutanese Weaving Practice

The study found that not all the weavers were familiar with the genesis of kira textiles. One of the expert weavers mentioned that weaving in Bhutan could be traced to a Chinese princess - Princess Wenchen or Ashi Jyazum (in the Dzongkha language) – who passed through Bhutan on her way to marry the Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo, in the seventh century. Grateful for the hospitality shown by the local communities, she taught the locals how to weave using back-strap looms.

An interesting comment was made by an apprentice weaver who said that according to her mother, Bhutanese people learned how to weave from observing a type of bird weaving its nest. The author suggests that these birds are ‘Weavers’ or ‘Ploceidae’ and their natural habitat includes Africa, South Asia (including Bhutan) as well as Southeast Asia. (The Internet Bird Collection, n.d.)

Some of the intermediate skilled weavers claimed that the golden age of weaving was during the periods of the second and the third kings in Bhutan.
• Examination of the Physical Characteristics of Bhutanese Hand-woven Kiras to Identify Markers of Authenticity

Comparison of Physical Characteristics between Bhutanese Hand-woven Kiras and Hand-woven Textiles from Other Communities
Machey hand-woven textiles were selected for comparison, as these are commonly available and produced along the borders of Bhutan. Of the 92% of weavers interviewed, all but one weaver (the novice), were able to explain the differences between these two textiles. The weavers cited the following differences:

- Looms. Bhutanese kiras are woven on back-strap looms while the Machey textiles are produced from horizontal frame-looms.

- Motifs and Patterns.
  - Quality. The quality of motifs in Bhutanese kiras is intricate, the design is delicate and the patterns are dense. These are woven with great accuracy based on the number of warp yarns. Motifs and patterns on Machey textiles do not exhibit such quality.
  - Diversity of Sizes. Motifs and patterns on Bhutanese kiras have a wide range of sizes making the overall design of the cloth more interesting. Motifs on Machey textiles do not offer such variations and are mostly uniform in size, giving the textile a ‘flat’ and less interesting look.
  - Method of Construction. Motifs and patterns woven by Machey weavers are made negatively (which means that back of the cloth faces the weaver) while the Bhutanese weavers weave them positively (the front of the cloth faces the weaver), enhancing the quality of these motifs and patterns. (Weaving from the front enables the weaver to see the motifs more clearly, therefore making fewer mistakes. There is more opportunity for error when weaving negatively as weavers are unable to see them until the cloth is taken off the looms, too late to correct the mistakes.)

- Number of Panels. Bhutanese hand-woven kiras have either two or three panels, depending on whether it is a half kira (two-panels) or a full kira (three-panel), and also on the type of loom used to weave the cloth. This results from the narrow widths of cloths woven on horizontal and back-strap looms. Both Machey kiras and kiras woven on the Lao loom consist of a single panel as they are woven on the wider horizontal frame looms.
Comparison Between Old and New Kiras

When asked to show old kiras, the interviewees presented a wide range of kiras for examination. These included kiras woven in cotton, cotton and silk, spun silk and ‘parachute silk yarns’; these were mainly kushuthara and aikapors kiras. 50% of these old kiras were made by the weavers’ grandmothers or older family members while others were gifts from the Royal Family. Most are heirloom pieces ranging from ten years to over a century. Table 20 shows the age distribution of these kiras. Weavers stated that these old kiras were part of the family’s treasures, kept in the ‘yanggam’ (Section 2.3.10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Kiras</th>
<th>Less than 10 Years</th>
<th>10 – 20 Years</th>
<th>20 – 30 Years</th>
<th>30 – 40 Years</th>
<th>40 – 50 Years</th>
<th>50 – 100 Years</th>
<th>More than 100 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Kiras</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20: Distribution of Age of Old Kiras Shown by Weavers

Design, Form, Motifs and Patterns

The differences between old and new kiras are illustrated in the Table 21 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Kiras</th>
<th>New Kiras</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motifs</td>
<td>Random, diverse and uneven spacing between motifs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aikapors</td>
<td>Each motif was executed in sets of 3 (Figure 45a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>Heavier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fringes</td>
<td>Before 1950s – more than 10cm; From 1960s to 1990 – not more than 3cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Width</td>
<td>Narrower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panels</td>
<td>3 Panels – Full Kira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border Design</td>
<td>Less elaborate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21: Differences between Old and New Kiras
There also exist some inconsistencies in the findings. For example, some experts noticed that there is a predominance of sepmah motifs today while kira of yester-year have more timah and hor patterning techniques. Others disagreed, stating that the reverse was true.

Interviewees also remarked that in the past, certain motifs such as the mask – shel-li-bok – and the tree-of-life – shing-lo - were reserved for royal kiras. Today, these motifs are also found on non-royal kiras, available to those who are willing to pay the high cost of a specially commissioned kira. Also, some of the old motifs and patterns are no longer woven today.
In terms of similarities between old and new kiras, weavers commented that the calculation for the lengths of kiras has remained the same because of the way that kiras are worn; folded and wrapped around the body (Figure 8). Hence, regardless of the physical build of the wearer, it is her height that determines the length of the kira.

As reported by all weavers, and observed by the researcher, most kiras were woven on narrow looms (such as those looms in Bhutan). Hence, all Bhutanese kiras (woven in Tibetan Horizontal Frame looms and Back-strap looms) will have seams as panels are sewn together to form a kira. Kiras woven on back-strap looms will have either three panels for full kira or two for half-kira. These seams run perpendicular to the body. In contrast, kiras woven on Tibetan horizon looms will have seam lines running parallel to the body, and depending on the width of each panel, some kiras have as many as 10 to 13 panels.

Therefore, an initial conclusion is that the following cannot be identified and used as markers of authenticity because these features are not consistent in both old and new kiras. These are:

- Motifs
- Weight
- Fringes
- Width
- Number of Panels
- Direction of Seams Lines
- Construction Techniques of Motifs and Patterns
- Borders and Border Designs

If woven on back-strap looms, the only similarity between old and new kiras is in the way that the length of each kira is calculated based on the wearer’s height.

Sources of inspiration also cannot be identified as a marker of authenticity because there is no one generic source. Rather, weavers said that they sought various sources for inspiration including referencing old kiras and examining new kiras worn during tsechus. If they were commissioned to weave a kira, weavers would discuss the design of the motifs, patterns and colours with their customers to be acquainted with the taste
and preference of the customers, and the context which the kira would be worn in order to design one that would be suitable and appreciated by their customers.

All of those interviewed said that they felt positively disposed to the change from full kiras (three panels) to half kiras (two panels) (Section 2.3.10). They explained that the half-kiras sell much better than the full kiras, because they cost less, and therefore increasing the volume of sales.

The study learned that 50% of those interviewed said that they would incorporate motifs and patterns from other cultures into their work. When asked to speculate whether older generations would approve of incorporating foreign designs into kiras, some said that they felt that they would not have minded as old kiras also incorporated motifs and patterns from other communities. For example, therpochay or ‘China Wall’ is one such motif that was essentially a Chinese motif seen on Chinese brocade (Figure 12) but commonly found on Bhutanese kiras in the past and also today. Therefore, it can be confirmed that authentic kiras need not consist of indigenous motifs and designs.

One possibility emerges for identifying physical markers of authenticity is that all kiras will have seam lines either running parallel to the body to perpendicular to the body, depending on the loom on which the kira was woven. However, when proposed as a marker of authentic kira, it was recognized that seam lines could be easily manipulated by cutting up industrially woven textiles into appropriate sized panels and stitching them together in a manner that resembles hand-woven kira textiles. Therefore, seam lines, by themselves, cannot serve as credible markers of authenticity.

**Colour**

Concerning using colour as a means to identify authentic kira, the study found that there is no one colour or a set of colours that can be used as a marker of authenticity. For a start, interviewees confirmed that background colours and colour combinations reflect different types of kiras (as explained in Section 2.3.10). The only type of kira that is free from such restrictive colour rules is the pesar kira (Section 2.3.10). As explained by an expert weaver, the colours for pesar kiras change according to local Bhutanese kira fashion trends, often led by the royals. Interestingly, it is possible to date pesar kiras by their colours, tones, shades and colour combinations, just as one would date a Western dress by its design, hemlines, style, etc. Furthermore, colours of kiras worn during
special occasions such as weddings would often reflect the astrological sign and associated colours of the wearer, thought to bring good fortune to the wearer.

Colours of the past and those of today are also different. For example, some colours in the past have totally disappeared from current pesar kiras such as shocking pinks or parrot greens. Also, there are more tonal differences in colours today than in the past. Contemporary kiras have a wide range of shades and tones within each colour while old kiras tend to have only single tone/shade of each colour. In terms of colour combinations, expert weavers added that old kiras often have more than 10 different types of colours within a kira. This compares with the average of five different colours in contemporary kiras.

In terms of taboo colours, the experts replied that there are no specific taboo colours for kiras in Bhutan. Rather, colour codes for different social classes are reflected in the colours for kabneyss (shoulder scarves for ghos) and rachus (scarves of kira outfits).

As for the person responsible for colour choice for kira textiles, most weavers said that it would depend on how the cloth is sold. If they were selling these on the open market, they themselves would determine the range of colours and in general, do not have a particular preference, often consulting on the prevailing colour trends (as described above). When kiras are specially commissioned, the choice of colours would be discussed at length with the customer. A sampling of the coloured yarns would be rolled around a stick for customer’s approval before weaving (Figure 46).

![Figure 46: Sample Colours for Kira](image-url)
When asked whether weavers were willing to try out new colours, 100% of respondents replied that they were. They gave reasons such as an inclination to experiment with new colours in order to see the results on kiras and the need to respond to new market demands. Such new colours have no meanings to the Bhutanese weaving community.

**Materials (Fibres and Yarns)**

The research determined that there is no particular type of fibre or yarn that is associated with authentic kiras. All of the weavers (100%) who participated in the study were able to describe the wide diversity of fibres and yarns used to weave kiras. These yarns are:

- Poly-Cotton. Or more commonly known locally as ‘teri-cotton’, imported from India and introduced to Bhutan about 12 years ago. The content of this yarn is about 60% cotton and 40% polyester;
- Reeled or Filament Silk. Called ‘seshu’ in Dzongkha, the majority of silk yarns are imported from India with small quantities also from Laos and China;
- Spun Silk. Also known as ‘bura’. Usage of bura or spun silk is limited; most commonly used in eastern Bhutan;
- Wool. Locally called ‘be’; weavers noted that the quantity of wool is limited;
- Mercerized Cotton. Weavers call this ‘Khaling Cotton’ as NHDC in Khaling was the first institution in Bhutan to import these yarns;
- Nettle. Also known as ‘Zowa’ or ‘ki’ in Dzongkha. This fibre is from south Bhutan. Quantities of this yarn are limited because of the difficulties in processing the fibres. Hence, it is not widely used to weave kiras.

When asked if these yarns were special, the majority said that they were because each has its specific characteristics and is employed for particular purposes. For example, silk yarns are expensive, used for formal occasions and most often kept as family heirlooms. From the weaver’s perspective, silk kiras command the highest return and they are easy to weave because the yarns are smooth and do not break easily. Even for customers who are unable to pay the high price of a silk kira, they would often request that motifs and patterns be woven in silk on a cotton base. This would enhance the status of the kira as compared with ones that are woven without any silk content, and especially sought for kiras that are used for important events such as tsechus and weddings.
Importantly, one of the experts claimed that these silk yarns (from India) are special in themselves because they are specifically spun for the purpose of weaving Bhutanese kiras. She explained that typical Indian silk yarns are too fine and soft for weaving Bhutanese kiras; it results in ‘floppy’ kiras that are not suitable for formal wear. Hence, typical Indian silk yarns need to be two-ply or more in order to produce the necessary stiff and dense texture for weaving formal Bhutanese kiras.

As for bura, most of the weavers said that kiras made from these yarns are warm and therefore mostly worn during winter. Bura yarns are also long lasting; hence, one can often find old kiras woven from it. Interestingly, weavers added that bura is also known as ‘non-violent silk’ because no insect lives were sacrificed during harvesting of the silk (as the caterpillars would have already transformed into moths, breaking out off their cocoons, before the cocoons are harvested). This fits into the Buddhist philosophy of non-violence and the preservation of all forms of life; thus is a popular yarn in Bhutan, especially for those who are pious.

The study also found that whether a yarn is hand or machine spun does not affect the authenticity of the kira. For example, hand-spun yarns have virtually been replaced by machine-spun yarns and yet, kiras using both types of yarns are seen to be authentic. Also, the quality of yarns has no bearing on authenticity of the kira. Weavers commented that silk yarns of the past were better as they were consistent in thickness, colour and lustre. However, they felt that today’s cotton yarns, especially those with polyester content were better, being stronger, and therefore less prone to breakage. Nevertheless, whatever the quality of the yarns, kiras woven from these yarns are all viewed as authentic by the weavers.

Asked if weavers were willing to weave kiras with new yarns, all but one (92%) said that they were willing to try, but only if certain conditions were fulfilled. For example, the yarn has to contribute to the longevity of the kira. This is important because kira weaving is extremely time consuming and labour-intensive work. Kira woven with poor quality yarns that have no longevity would not be worth their efforts. Finally, the usage of new types of yarn would also depend on the cost and the occasion that the kira would be worn.
Regarding the issue of whether the combination of old and new yarns affects the authenticity of kiras, the study drew mixed responses. Just half of the respondents (from all groups – experts, intermediate skilled and the apprentice) said that they were willing to combine old and new yarns and this would not affect the authenticity of kiras. The other half of the respondents said that they would not do so, stating that old and new yarns were not compatible as yarn sizes are different. They explained that the resulting kira woven with the combination of old and new yarns would not look good. However, they were not clear whether such a mix would affect a kira’s authenticity.

One expert weaver said that it was possible to combine old and new yarns, but it depended on the design and the organization of the weave structure. For example, when metallic yarns were first introduced to Bhutan in the 1990s, these new yarns were used to weave motifs whereas the base cloth was often woven from traditional yarns. Yet, such kiras are considered authentic. When this example was highlighted to other weavers, they also readily agreed.

Quality

When asked about the comparative quality of old and new textiles, a number of responses were noted in Table 22:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number of Weavers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old is Better than New</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New is Better than Old</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Change</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22: Distribution of Opinions Concerning Quality of Old and New Kiras

43% of the respondents across all categories felt that the quality of new kiras was better than that of old kiras. They cited improvement of yarns, that is, yarns today are finer than those of the past, enabling them to weave finer textiles with more intricate and detailed motifs and patterns. Also, because the back-strap looms are now mounted on frames instead of being attached to the walls, this has also improved the quality of kiras. (This will be elaborated in the Section Tools and Technology.)

43% of the respondents across all categories felt that the quality of new kiras was better than that of old kiras. They cited improvement of yarns, that is, yarns today are finer than those of the past, enabling them to weave finer textiles with more intricate and detailed motifs and patterns. Also, because the back-strap looms are now mounted on
frames instead of being attached to the walls. All of the weavers interviewed agreed that quality is very important in their weaving. However, it does not necessarily mean that poor quality kiras are not authentic. Rather, it depends on the usage. Poor quality kiras, perhaps those woven by novice weavers, are also authentic kiras but are usually worn at home or for informal occasions.

**Function**

When respondents showed their old textiles, they explained that most of these old textiles were specifically woven for special occasions such as tsechus (annual temple festivals). They reported that tsechus are important social occasions where everyone who attends will wear their best kiras or ghos. Weavers will weave the kira the year before and these are kept hidden, only to be revealed during the tsechus. During tsechus, weavers will look out for interesting new designs, motifs and patterns woven by others and admire them for their novel designs and quality. They may remember and copy these new designs when weaving their next kiras.

64% of those interviewed said that the functions of the kira have changed over the years. Today, the kira can be seen as a semi-finished product to be sewn into garments such as jackets, skirts and also life-style products such cushion covers, placemats, coasters, bags, bed covers, etc., mainly purchased by non-Bhutanese (Figure 47a & 47b). If a Bhutanese purchased them, it would normally be as a gift, presented to a non-Bhutanese.

![Figure 47a & 47b: Contemporary Life-Style Products with Kira Textiles](image)

With one exception, all weavers stated that they welcomed such new diverse uses of the kira as it increases the visibility and the marketability of kira textiles. As the demand for kiras increases, they are able to weave more and earn more money. Nevertheless, one
weaver differed; noting that such diversity of usage could dilute the uniqueness of kira textiles. All of the weavers (100%) interviewed said that they would not mind if a foreigner uses the kira for other purposes other than its original intention. Hence, as there are no specific usages for kira today, the function of a kira cannot be used as a marker to distinguish authentic kiras from non-authentic kiras.

**Examination of the Production Process of Bhutanese Hand-woven Kiras to Identify Markers of Authenticity**

**Labour**

The interviews revealed that only 43% of the weavers worked alone while 57% weave with others for company. ‘Weaving with others’ meant sub-contracting their work to other weavers and also engaging assistants. Most of their sub-contractors and assistants were Bhutanese and from their own communities.

When weavers started to learn to weave, they did not work alone; they helped their mothers or elder sisters to weave while these more experienced weavers mentored and guided them.

The interviewees believed that some weavers of the previous generations would have woven with others members of their own family or community. One of the intermediate skilled weavers recounted how weavers in her village would work together in the summer to spin yarns while in winter, they would retreat into their own homes and weave alone. However, another weaver’s experience was that they would weave alone in their own homes during the summer monsoon months while weaving together during the winter.

Respondents also clarified that there were no specific rules which would stop weavers working by themselves. The study found that this is especially true when weavers create special kiras such as those to wear at tsechus or submitting for competitions. When they weave such kiras, there is a tendency for them to keep their work secret. Whatever the detail of specific circumstances, weaving alone or with other weavers does not affect the authenticity of Bhutanese hand-woven kiras.
All weavers reported that if a kira is woven by a male weaver, the kira would be extra special (as men rarely weave). However, authenticity of a kira does not necessarily depend on the gender of the producer.

When asked if weavers would hire a non-member of the community to assist them in their weaving, only 35% said that they would, with 42% stating that they would not. The remainder (23%) were unsure. The reason weavers gave for not hiring non-Bhutanese was that only Bhutanese weavers have the disposition and patience to weave the intricate, delicate and complicated motifs, patterns and designs of kiras. Furthermore, only Bhutanese would be able to understand and appreciate the special requirements of kiras for specific occasions. Hence, it would be difficult to explain to a non-Bhutanese weaver the intricacies of Bhutanese kira (such as why certain kiras require the denser weft yarns while others do not).

Those who replied that they would hire non-Bhutanese said that ethnicity and nationality are not important as long as the weavers had the skills and competencies to weave kira designs, including the specific requirements for the various types of kiras.

Finally, when asked how they would respond to kiras being woven entirely by a non-Bhutanese artisans, 85% responded positively. They said that they would be pleasantly surprised to find a non-Bhutanese weaving kiras as Indian and Nepali weavers do not usually weave such textiles. Moreover, they would be surprised to find these weavers knowing the subtle differences of various kiras.

Therefore, it can be concluded that in the eyes of the kira weavers who were interviewed, authentic kiras do not necessarily have to be woven by a Bhutanese as long as the weaver appreciates the complexities and understands the specific requirement of the different types of kiras.

Skills
The study also concluded that the way which weaving skills are transmitted has no impact on the authenticity of Bhutanese kira. All of the respondents related how they learned weaving from their mothers; it was a skill that was passed down through the generations within their families. However, younger weavers also learned weaving skills from weaving institutions such as NHDC Khaling and the NIZC. Hence, there
exist a wide variety of ways which skills are transmitted and no one particular mode is significant in the production of authentic kira textiles.

With the exception of the apprentice weaver, all said that they have upgraded their skills since they started weaving. Some weavers learned new skills through attending workshops and training courses. Weavers cited both, personal interest and economic reasons for upgrading their skills. Thus, there is no compulsory standard set of weaving skills for a weaver to produce authentic kiras.

When asked if they would be willing to teach non-Bhutanese people traditional weaving methods, 64% or nine of the interviewees replied that they did not mind, thinking that it would signify that people from other cultures were interested in Bhutanese textile art. Two of the respondents said that they would be unwilling to do so on the grounds that foreigners might steal their ideas and jeopardize their livelihood.

Some weavers mentioned that it would be difficult to teach non-Bhutanese some non-technical aspects of weaving kiras as these may be difficult to express unless one was Bhutanese, however they were unable to expand further on this comment.

From this line of inquiry, it was revealed that neither the way in which weavers learned their weaving skills nor a possession of any particular skill standard would necessarily threaten the authenticity of kira textiles.

**Tools and Technology**

Proposing tools and technology as markers of authenticity would be complex as different types of looms can be used to weave authentic kiras, concurring with the description expounded in Section 2.3.10.

Other tools involved with weaving of kiras include:
- Warping Sticks - for warping up back-strap looms;
- Swift/Spinning Frame (Shithang);
- Rotating Winding Wheel (Chaphang) - for winding of yarns.

Just over half of the interviewees (57%) reported that the looms they are currently using are no longer the same ones as they started off with. New materials have made the new
loom sturdier, and along with this increased stability, the quality of kiras has improved. For example, warping poles were of wood but today are made of iron stakes, enabling the tension of warp to be more constant and evenly distributed. Bamboo sticks that were used to weave ‘hor’ patterns have been substituted with poly-pipes that are smoother, lessening the damage on the yarns.

One of the most significant changes in the Bhutanese back-strap loom has been the introduction of wooden frames, to which the loom is attached. This was pioneered in the 1990s (Figure 7). One of the expert weavers reported that this introduction was welcomed as it helped to improve the quality of the woven cloth, with weavers now being able to beat down harder on the weft to achieve the desired stiff texture, especially for the more formal kiras. (Previously, when the looms were attached to the wall, the weaver could not beat down on the weft yarns as hard because it would damage the wall, resulting in more ‘floppy’ kiras.)

Those weavers using the Lao horizontal frame loom said that these looms are more productive and efficient, producing textiles on a larger scale. This is attributed to the warping system where multiple lengths of cloth could be woven on a single warp, whereas the back-strap looms can only accommodate one length of kira for each warp. Moreover, the width of the textiles woven on the Lao loom is wider than those woven on back-strap looms. Such kiras woven on the Lao loom are woven in one piece without any need for stitching panels together.

However, the Lao loom is not suitable for producing traditional kira textiles, especially kushu thara kiras, because the resulting textile will be less dense as compared with kiras woven on the traditional back-strap looms. As a result, the textures of kiras woven on the Lao horizontal looms are limp and soft, unable to hold the folds of the kiras and thus not suitable for formal wear. Most often, the Lao looms are used to weave non-traditional textiles such as cushion covers, table runners, place mats, etc. Interestingly, weavers mentioned that textiles woven on the Lao loom are sold mostly to non-Bhutanese as they are unfamiliar with the subtleties of kiras and will therefore not be able to notice the difference.

All of the respondents stated that their looms are very special. They greatly respect their weaving tools as these enable them to earn an income. Symbolically, the loom
represents self-sufficiency through which they are able to clothe the family without having to purchase textiles. An often-used metaphor is that of the loom as a household treasure; they would like to pass on their looms to their daughters as family legacies.

In comparing hand-woven looms with industrial machine looms, weavers noted that textiles produced on industrial machine looms are thinner, softer and less dense. Also, the motifs appear ‘flat’ while those woven on the back-strap looms are ‘embossed’ and ‘pop out’ from the base cloth.

Finally, the majority of the weavers (71%) said that they would be more willing to try new types of hand looms which could further improve the efficiency of kira production, on condition that the resulting quality and texture would be similar with those produced on the back-strap looms. The apprentice weaver said, insightfully, that she would use the back-strap looms to weave traditional kira but new technology could be used to weave non-traditional Bhutanese textiles.

Therefore, in terms of being a marker of authenticity, this study concludes that any type of hand-loom is acceptable to weavers to weave authentic kirases. However, the texture of the cloth is extremely important and thus, only certain looms are suitable to achieve the required texture and quality that Bhutanese people appreciate. Significantly, Bhutanese weavers have an intrinsic relationship with their looms and they expressed their interest in passing the looms to the next generation. It expresses their intention for the continuation of weaving as part of Bhutanese culture and tradition.

Construction
The research showered that various construction techniques could be employed to weave authentic kira. However, each type of weave needs to correspond to a specific type of kira. For example, expert weavers said that twill weave is only used to weave mentha kirases on the Tibetan frame loom. The bird’s eye twill weave is exclusively used for check textiles only – serthra – also using the Tibetan frame loom. Kirases woven on the back-strap loom are always made using the plain weave or ‘bang-tha’. These include kushuthara, pesar, aikapor, etc.

Expert weavers also explained that it is not possible to deviate from these strict rules. For example, when asked what would happen if twill weaving methods were used for
aikapor (which is woven using plain weave), the response was that such textiles would not be aikapor kiras and it is not appropriate to do so. Therefore, with the strict weaving codes for each type of kira, there is no room for change or alteration in construction methods. This also indicates that different types of kiras have different characteristics and markers of authenticity.

In terms of weaving motifs, different methods are used and these include hor, timah and sapmah as described in Section 2.3.10.

The interviewees recalled that construction methods for weaving kiras have not changed since they started to weave, which for some is more than 40 years ago. These same methods were also used by older generations of weavers, attributable by some weavers to the use of the same type of loom.

However, a small minority (14%; two weavers) noted that construction methods had indeed changed - but only in a minor way. They noticed that today’s weaves are more dense and tighter than weaves of the past. This could be attributed to the newly introduced weaving frames (as described previously). They also said that because of UNDP projects, new types of weave have been introduced but these are only applicable for scarves and shawls, and not suitable for kira. When asked to explain, they said that the density of these new weaves is very low rendering the texture of the fabric loose and limp, not fit for kiras, especially for formal ones.

When asked if they would be interested in learning new weaves, most of the weavers responded positively (86% or 12 respondents). However, they cautioned that these new weaves might not be appropriate for kira textiles.

As the study found, construction techniques for each type of kira is clearly specified. Hence, there is no one universal construction technique that can be used to identify authentic Bhutanese hand-woven kira. Moreover, each type of loom is associated with a specific construction method. Finally, the study also found that for formal kiras, the stiff texture with high yarn density is very important.
Process of Making

The interviews revealed that although the main aspects of the weaving process are similar amongst all 3 groups of weavers, there exist some minor differences, especially between the experts and the intermediate skilled weavers.

Generally, because expert weavers design kiras themselves, their initial step is to decide the type of kira to weave. For intermediate skilled weavers, as they mostly weave on commission, designs and types of kira have already been determined by their customers. The apprentice weaver, as she is currently learning from her mother, is not directly involved in the weaving process.

The study found that the general process of weaving is similar to those described in Section 2.3.10. In terms of duration, a simple mentha kira may be completed in a couple of days while a complex kushuthara kira with intricate motifs and patterns may take up to a year.

A significant minority of the weavers (42%) said that the process of weaving has not changed over the years, with 35% noting some changes in terms of the preparation of the yarns. For example, the process to ensure colour fastness (boiling the yarns in vinegar) is a relatively recent adoption (they learned this technique through attending training workshops). Those weavers (35%) who reported the changes in the process of weaving reacted positively. They said that these new processes improved the quality of their textiles, enabling them to sell their kiras at a higher price.

Yet, in spite of these changes, some procedures remain the same. For example, the warping of the yarns, the weaving of the cloth and the finishing processes have remained unchanged over the years for all kira weavers.

57% disclosed that sub-contracting is part and parcel of the weaving practice in Bhutan. Sub-contracting normally occurs when the volume of orders increases and the principal weavers are unable to cope with the extra demand. It is also normal to ask another weaver to assist in the fringing of the kira once the weaving is completed or to seek assistance in the winding of the yarns. These contracts are usually given to other members within the community. However, a few of the expert weavers mentioned that
there have been rare instances where weavers from other Dzongkhags (provinces) were contacted and given the work. However, work always stayed within the country.

Most weavers felt that sub-contracting would not affect the intrinsic characteristics and the uniqueness of the kira. However, two expert weavers qualified their opinion, saying that it would depend on the skills of the sub-contracted weaver. If the weaver is poorly skilled, the quality of the resulting kira will be compromised.

Concerning symbolic or taboo acts related to weaving, expert weavers were able to furnish more information than intermediate skilled weavers. They said that if they were commissioned for an important kira, such as one ordered by the Royal Family, they would consult a monk or an astrologer to seek an appropriate day to warp the loom and bless the yarns with lighted incense sticks before warping, believing that these actions would help mitigate against mistakes during the weaving process.

With the exception of warping and weaving, there is no uniform process in weaving kiras and hence this cannot be considered as a candidate marker of authenticity. Sub-contracting some of the process of weaving will also not jeopardize the cloth’s authenticity. Finally, non-observation of special or symbolic acts will not render a kira inauthentic. At best, these cultural weaving practices demonstrate the intrinsic and strong linkage between textiles practices and the Bhutanese society, in what Adam (1984) called the ‘fabric society’.

• Examination of the Economy of Bhutanese Hand-woven Kira to Identify Markers of Authenticity

Forms of Exchange
43% of the respondents related that in the past, kiras were mostly made for their own use, while 57% remarked that kiras were also made for others; these could be in the form of direct sale, or less frequently, on commission. Kiras were also woven as gifts. Three respondents revealed that in the past, kiras were also presented as a payment of tax (Section 2.3.10). Such practices were more frequent in the East of the country.

58% of the weavers believed that the method of selling kira has changed over the years. They recounted that in the past, they would have to travel long distances to sell their
cloth. Customers would also go to the homes of expert weavers to view and purchase kiras.

Today, the weavers said that kiras are sold through different channels. Table 23 shows the distribution of different selling methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Weavers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shops/Stalls</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Network (Word-of-Mouth)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23: Distribution of Sales through Various Marketing Channels

Therefore, authentic Bhutanese kiras do not depend on any one particular means of trading as various methods are used to trade Bhutanese kira textiles.

Time and Value
In terms of the value of weaving kira textiles, everyone interviewed provided similar replies. They agreed that currently cotton, poly-cotton and silk yarns are imported, with the exception of spun silk – bura – which is produced in Eastern and Southern Bhutan. Also, the majority of wool yarns are imported with a small amount being produced in Bumthang – Central Bhutan.

Cotton, poly-cotton, silk and wool yarns are mostly purchased pre-dyed. Hence, the production costs and value added in the supply of dyed yarns are external to the Bhutanese economy.

Only a small percentage is sold as bleached yarn for weavers to dye. All natural dyeing is done in Bhutan. Weavers assessed that the added value of naturally bleached and dyed yarns is correspondingly higher in Bhutan than in other countries due to the intensity of labour involved. Bura yarns are also dyed within the country, using either natural materials or chemical dyes.

Chemical dyes are mostly from India with a small proportion imported from Japan or Europe. Although the cost of chemical dyes is substantially lower than natural dyes, the added value in dyeing is similar for both types.
All weaving activities and post-weaving processes are performed in Bhutan by native Bhutanese.

The perception of weavers as to the local/non-local components of various parts of the value chain is summarized in Table 24.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bhutan component (%)</th>
<th>Non-Bhutanese origin (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yarns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cotton</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poly-Cotton</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Silk</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Spun Silk</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wool</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Chemical</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Natural</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyeing Process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Chemical</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Natural Dyes</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaving</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Weaving Activities</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24: Proportions of the Weaving Value Chain as Reported by Interviewees

All those interviewed maintained that labour costs form the major component in the value chain and this is seen in the weaving of the kira. In terms of value, they believe that as long as more than 50% of the total value of the textile is added in Bhutan, the kira textile is Bhutanese. Taking kushuthara kira as an example, expert weavers said that the yarns only account for 20% of the value of the kira. The majority (80%) of the value of the kira owes its worth to the labour involved in weaving – a proportion which weavers maintain has not changed over the time since they started weaving. Interestingly, none of the weavers mentioned designing or the creative aspect of making kira as a component to increase the value of the kira.

Going back in time, the weavers were asked whether the proportion contributed by Bhutanese was different in the previous generation. 66% replied that it had been higher in the past. For example, they said that cotton used to be cultivated in Bhutan and spinning of cotton yarn would have taken place in the country before industrialized yarn was made available in south Asia. One weaver disagreed, and the other four interview participants were unsure of any changes in the value.
78% of the respondents reflected that if more processing activities were done in Bhutan, it would enhance the Bhutanese character of the textiles. They suggested that in the future, yarns could be produced in Bhutan. One of the dangers that they highlighted was that if more processes are carried out outside of Bhutan, the Bhutanese people might lose their weaving culture and traditions.

However, the respondents maintained that the authenticity of Bhutanese hand-woven kira is not solely dependent on the value of the textiles that is added within the country. Being produced within Bhutan would enhance the significance of the cloth but does not necessary determine is authenticity.

- Examination of the Context, Setting and Spirit of Bhutanese Kira Textiles to Identify Markers of Authenticity

**Site and Geographical Location**

Eight weavers (or 57% of the respondents) maintained that it is extremely important for kiras to be woven in Bhutan. They reasoned that weaving is part of Bhutan’s tradition passed down through the generations. Therefore, not only should Bhutanese wear their national dress – ghos and kiras – but it would be more ‘meaningful’ if textiles for these garments are also produced locally.

When asked to explain the word ‘meaningful’, responses could not explicitly state what they meant but suggested that kiras made in Bhutan are more ‘original’ and ‘special’ than those produced elsewhere. Furthermore, some weavers suggested that only Bhutanese weavers are able to contribute to being ‘meaningful’. When probed further, respondents could not elaborate on their opinions.

Another important reason, as expressed by respondents for kira to be produced within Bhutan, is economic. The weavers noted the key position of weaving in the generation of a cash income for rural weavers. Without weaving, the rural population in parts of Bhutan would fall into poverty.

36% (or five weavers) felt that weaving is important as they freely choose to do it. Significantly, they stated that they would not be comfortable with the idea of wearing a kira that was not made in Bhutan. When asked to explain further what this
‘uncomfortable’ feeling was, most weavers were unable to explain. Just the one person (7%) said that weaving in Bhutan (or not) is not important, saying that a kira is a kira, no matter where it is produced. Table 25 shows how weavers feel about kira produced outside of Bhutan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Will affect business or Loss of income</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Will not be happy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Cost of a kira will be cheaper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>No problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Kira will be less ‘Bhutanese’</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Loss of national skill or culture</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 25: Perceptions of Interviewees as to the Impact of Kiras Produced Outside Bhutan

Twelve weavers (86%) believed that a kira produced by a Bhutanese outside of the Bhutan would still be classified as ‘Bhutanese’ kira. This however seems to contradict the earlier findings where weavers reported that as long as 50% of the value of the textiles is woven in Bhutan, the kira textile is Bhutanese. A possible explanation is that both types of kira could be classified as Bhutanese, and the site where kirases are produced cannot be identified as a marker of authenticity.

Only two weavers felt that these will no longer be authentic to Bhutan. Further, 11 of the respondents (79%) answered that production of kirases by non-Bhutanese weavers in Bhutan are classed as genuine (the other three respondents disagreed) only if certain conditions are satisfied. When asked to elaborate on the nature of the ‘certain conditions’, none of the weavers could express themselves clearly except by saying that non-Bhutanese needed to know about Bhutan culture before being able to produce authentic kirases.

**Concept, Context and Meaning**

The weavers were asked what makes them most proud about their textiles. Expert weavers said that kira textiles are works of art in themselves. Weaving a kira is extremely labour-intensive and complex as the motifs and patterns are extremely elaborate and not easily produced. The ability to produce such a cloth makes them proud in itself. Those weavers who are involved in using natural materials to dye their
own yarns also attribute this skill and knowledge as something that of which they are proud.

Expert weavers maintained that their work offers a creative outlet through which they are able to express themselves by colours and designs. For example, the expert weaver who, in 2008, won the prize for Druk Air’s female cabin crew uniform represented her idea of happiness in the form of a textile design (Figure 48).

![Figure 48: Winning Textiles for Druk Air Female Cabin Uniform](RAO Information, n.d.)

Intermediate weavers recounted that they were most proud of the ability to self-actualize a kira; that is, they are able to imagine and design a kira and weave the design from their imagination. Also, upon completion of a piece of kira, they feel a sense of achievement and pride.

Both groups maintained that one of the factors that renders them most proud as a weaver is the ability to generate income from the sale of their textiles. Having a good reputation as a fine weaver makes them proud as customers are able to appreciate their work.

Finally, all three groups of weavers attribute their sense of worth and pride to being part of living cultural heritage. Interviewees said that their skills have been transmitted from generation to generation and yet, these are not archived skills but an intrinsic part of everyday life in Bhutan. One of the expert weavers explained that their skills are a
living heritage, enabling them to make a living while the products – kiras – are a fundamental component of everyday life in Bhutan and an integral part of Bhutan’s identity and contributing to GNH.

5.2.2 Phase 1(a)
This section reports on observations of kiras at Dochu-La Tsechu to recognize the different types of kiras and to help determine common characteristics of kiras. Common elements amongst the different kira types could be proposed as candidate markers of authenticity.

• Colour
As described in Section 2.3.10, the colours in kiras are one of the key methods of identifying and classifying the different sub-groups of kira. Observation of kiras at the tsechu was an opportunity to physically examine if there were common and shared colours that could be proposed as markers of authenticity.

Figure 49a: Sethra (Rust/Orange), Figure 49b – Mathra Pesar (Red), Figure 49c – Sethra Dokhaha (Yellow with Black Plaid), Figure 49d – Kushuthara Ngosham – Pesar (Blue), Figure 49e – Kushu Thara Mapsum – Pesar (Red).

Figure 49 a – e are samples of kiras observed at the tsechu. Women at the tsechu wore different types of kira. Kiras come in a wide diversity of colours with no single dominant colour. Thus, colours cannot be used as a definitive marker of authenticity because of the way in which kiras are classified. Rather, each type of kira has its own distinctive, dominant colour as elaborated in Section 2.3.10.
However, given the flexibility of creating new kira textiles for kushuthara – pesar kiras (Section 2.3.10), it was considered worthwhile exploring whether predominant colour could be a marker of authenticity for this category of kira textiles.

The analysis identified a wide range of colours and colour combinations for kushuthara pesar kiras. As discussed previously in Section 4.2.1, the tones, shades, tints and the colour combinations shed light on the age of the kira. Interviewees commented that older kira (those woven before 2000) are normally woven with strong and bright primary colours. The colour combinations are often complementary in nature (combining colours from the opposite side of the colour wheel) as seen in Figure 50a.

![Figure 50a (Left): Older Kushuthara Pesar with Strong Primary Colours with Complementary Colour Combination & Figure 50b (Right): Newer Kushuthara Pesar in Soft Tonal Analogous Colour Combination](image)

In contrast, colours of newer kiras – such as those woven in the period between early 2000 and 2010 - were mostly in softer muted tones and shades. The colour combinations consist of analogous colours. Figure 50b is an excellent example of the typical colour combination of pesar kiras created during this period.
However, in the past couple of years, weavers reported that there has been a return to vivid colours favoured by Bhutan’s new Queen – Ashi Jetsum Pema. The differences between these new colour combinations and those of the past (such as in Figure 50a) is in the sophistication of colour combinations. An example is shown in Figure 51. Finally, older kiras tend to have multi-colours as shown in Figure 50a (as many as 10 different colours) while newer kiras will have less than five colours (Section 4.2.1).

Figure 51: Newer Kushuthara Persar with Stronger Colours and Colour Combination

This observation and analysis on colour confirms that different types of kira are classified according to their dominant colours. However, within the more innovative kiras such as kushuthara pesar, colours cannot be used as a physical marker of authenticity as there is no single colour, or a set of combinations that is able to characterise the kushuthara pesar kira. Therefore, it can be concluded that colour cannot be used as a universal characteristic to identify kira and therefore, it is not a marker of authenticity.

• Yarns
The types of yarns used were also examined to explore whether these could be employed as markers of authenticity. Although challenging, as it is difficult to visually identify yarns, there are several key insights to verify the yarns used in kiras. For example, if a kira is densely patterned, such as kushuthara, there is a high probability that it will be woven in silk (as shown in Figure 49d & 49e). The reasons have been given in the discussion on Phase One - the process and time taken to weave such a kira is expensive and it will be more valuable if the kira is woven in silk rather than in other types of yarn.
When wool yarns are used, it is highly likely that the seams of the kira are parallel to the body (refer to Section 2.3.10) such as the hotha-jalo – pesar in Figure 52. Such cloths are produced on Horizontal Frame Tibetan looms (Figure 5).

![Image](image1)

Figure 52: Hotha-Jalo – Pesar

Motifs and patterns woven with silk yarns are intricate with delicate and well defined details. Often, when the photograph is enlarged, the details of the motifs and patterns are visible as in Figure 53. Also witnessed in Figure 53, the background of the kira is dull and matt. This could indicate that the background is woven with cotton or poly cotton yarns.

![Image](image2)

Figure 53: New Style Kira with Silk Motifs on Cotton or Poly Cotton Background
If hand-spun cotton or spun silk yarns are used, motifs and patterns are large and the yarns are thick and coarse as shown in Figure 54.

![Figure 54: Older Traditional Kushuthara with Motifs and Patterns woven with Coarse Yarns such as Cotton or Spun Silk](image)

Also, as silk is reflective, silk kiras and motifs will give a lustrous appearance (Figure 55). Finally, the observations strengthen the findings in Section 4.2.1 where weavers stated that most people attending the tsechu put on very good quality kiras as it is an important occasion. As silk is seen as the most valuable yarn, the study found that most kiras had some element of silk; even for the most humble of kiras with a cotton or poly cotton background, the motifs were woven in silk.

![Figure 55: Kushukhara Mapsham - Pesar with Silk Motifs and Patterns](image)
These observations and analysis show that a multitude of yarns have been used to weave kiras. No one single type of yarn could be identified as the dominant yarn for weaving the base textiles or the motifs. Therefore, it can be safely concluded that the type of yarn cannot be used as a marker of authenticity for hand-woven kira textiles.

- Motif Weaving Techniques.

In Section 2.3.10 and the analysis in Phase One showed that different types of kira employed different patterning techniques - thimah, sepdamah techniques (supplementary weft / extra weft design), and hor (supplementary warp / extra warp design). This section explores whether such techniques of weaving motifs and patterns could also act as markers of authenticity.

All of the interviewees in Phase One stated that the age of kushuthara kiras could be inferred from the different types of motifs and patterns woven in. However, different opinions existed concerning older and newer kushuthara kiras having more or less timah or sepdamah motifs. The study found that during this particular event, old kushuthara kiras were mostly woven using the thimah technique while sepdamah techniques are more frequently found on newer kushuthara kiras. Samples such as shown in Figure 56 of an old kushuthara jamgsham kira with a predominance of thimah motifs while Figure 57 illustrates a new kushuthara pesar kira woven entirely with the sepdamah technique.

Figure 56: Old Kushu Thara Jampsham Pesar
Hor techniques are exclusively employed to decorate motifs and patterns of aikapor kiras (Figure 58).

Although the patterns in Figure 57 and Figure 58 appear similar, the difference is to be found in the fringing. As the aikapor technique is basically a supplementary extra warp technique, these extra warp yarns in different colours are noticeable on the fringe of the kira in Figure 58 (these are of a lighter green than the background textile yarns which are woven in darker green). The kira in Figure 57 is woven using the sepmah - supplementary extra weft technique - and therefore, these extra yarns are not visible on
the fringe; the colour of the fringe is the same as the background colour, which comes from the warp yarns of the underlying textile.

Therefore, it can be concluded that weaving methods for motifs are related to the type of kira, and as there are no universal techniques in weaving motifs and patterns, it is unlikely that these could be used as markers of authenticity of hand-woven kira textiles in Bhutan.

- Fringes

Another hypothesis that was investigated was whether fringes on kiras are a common characteristic of all hand-woven kiras. During the tsechu, kiras were observed with and without fringes. The example of a metha kira in Figure 59 did not have fringes, being consistent with information provided in Section 2.3.10.

In contrast, it was noted that all kiras woven on back-strap looms would have fringes. However, the study found that the length of the fringe differs greatly, confirming the findings of Phase One. Figures 60a, 60b, 61a and 61b show the differences in the length of the fringes of the kira. Figure 60a and 60b is woven in silk and the longer fringe is a testament to its prestige as a silk kushuthara while Figure 61a, 61b show a New Style Kira, perhaps woven in Khaling with cotton / poly-cotton as the underlying material which has shorter fringes.
Figure 60a & 60b: New Kushu Thara Mapsham Pesar with Fringe Details

Figure 61a & 61b: New Style Kira - Khaling with Fringe Details

- Direction of the Seams

It is necessary for individual pieces of cloth to be joined together in order to form the requisite sized kira because of the narrow width of hand-woven kira textiles (See Figures 6, 8 and 9). Examination of the seams offers another possibility of this being a marker of authenticity of hand-woven kira textiles.
From observations made during the tsechu, two types of seams for kira textiles were identified, those running perpendicular to the body (Figure: 62a and 62b) and those running along the length of the body, as shown in Figure 52, 63a and 63b respectively.

Figure 62a & 62b: New Style Kira and Evidence of Seam

Figure 62a and 62b illustrate a New Style Kira with seams sewn perpendicular to the body indicating that the textile is woven on a back-strap loom. This confirms the findings in Phase One.

On the other hand, Figure 63a and 63b is an old hortha – pesar. The seams of this kira run parallel to the length of the body. It can be concluded that the yarn of this kira was wool and that it was woven on a Tibetan horizontal frame loom (Figure 6, Section 2.3.10).

Figure 63a & 63b: Older Hortha – Pesar and Evidence of Seam
From the information presented (in Section 2.3.10), kiras without seams imply the weaving of the kira in one piece. This study hypothesise that these could be either woven on Machey, Lao frame looms or they could be industrially machine woven. As this tsechu is an important event, such kiras were not found as the use of such cloth would be deemed inappropriate.

Therefore, the direction of seams in a kira could be used as one of the markers of authenticity in identifying hand-woven kiras regardless of the way that seams are laid on the body, whether positioned perpendicular to (as in textiles woven on the back-strap looms) or parallel to the body (as for textiles woven on the Tibetan frame-looms).

• Borders at the Foot / Along the Selvage of the Kiras.

It might also be possible that the presence of a border at the foot or along the selvedge of the kira might be a marker of authenticity of hand-woven kira textiles (Figure 9). However, example kiras in Figures 49a, 49b, 52, 59 and 63 do not have such borders. These are kiras woven on the Tibetan horizontal frame loom. All other kiras previously illustrated in this thesis have borders. Hence, the presence of a border is not characteristic of all kiras and, therefore, it cannot be used as a marker of authenticity.

Borders on kiras woven on back-strap looms vary greatly in design and style. As reported in Phase One, old kushuthara kiras have narrow borders, with a low density of the patterns and widely spaced the motifs. Examples of such borders is shown in Figures 50a and 54. Interviews with weavers revealed that very old kiras could be distinguished by a yellow line running through the border as illustrated in Figures 54 and 64. New kiras have wider borders, the pattern density is high and the designs are complex as shown in Figures 50b, 51, 55, 57 and 60a. It is interesting to note that in Figure 64, a new shardong thara - Pesar does not have a yellow line running through the border.
• Other Characteristics.

The findings have shown that designs, motifs and patterns are not reliable indicators of authenticity for hand-woven kiras. This is because different categories of kira have different designs. For example, there are plaid kiras as well as stripes as in Figures 65 and 66, both belonging to different categories (Section 2.3.10).
Moreover, within the same category of kira, designs may be different, each narrating different stories about the kira. For example, in general, older kiras tend to have large numbers of diverse motifs while motifs on newer kiras are more uniform and evenly spaced. Figure 67 is an excellent example of an older kushuthara ngosham with a wide variety of motif designs while Figure 68 is an example of a newer kushuthara ngosham pesar kira with repetitive, uniform and monotonous motifs.
In terms of density of motifs, when comparing kiras within the same category, older kiras are more heavily covered in motifs, patterns and designs while newer kiras have a lower density. For example, Figures 49b and 66 are both menthra pesar – plaid kiras with a red background with motifs and patterns. However, the design density is higher for Figure 49b than in Figure 66 indicating that the one in Figure 49b is an older kira than Figure 66.

In the newer hybrid kiras, especially those initiated and produced by NHDC in Khaling (Section 2.3.10), the identification of markers of authenticity is even more difficult as kiras have not only a combination of new and old elements, they also straddle different design categories. Therefore, it is difficult to identify commonalities between them. For example, Figures 69a, 69b and 69c all illustrate New Style Kiras, perhaps woven or inspired by NHDC Khalling. These kira designs combine both stripes and motifs woven in the sepmah technique. However, the dominant colours of these kiras are not typical of the traditional kira categories.
However, one commonality among all these kiras is that the placement of the motifs, patterns and strips is horizontal, running perpendicular to the body. This horizontal placement of designs could also be used as an indicator of authenticity for hand-woven kira textiles but it would be easily copied.

5.2.3 Phase 2
Reviewing all the information obtained from the literature review, and analysing the reports from weavers from Phase One, it can be clearly established that there are different types of kira and within each type, there are sub-categories, each with its own characteristics and particular features. This phase aims to identify and confirm if there are commonalities among all kiras.

All six expert weavers agreed on the following characteristics of kira textiles:

- Matha (Figure 59)

Characteristics of the matha kira woven on back-strap looms are shown in Table 26:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Only cotton, poly-cotton, silk and spun silk yarns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Fringe and border designs at the selvage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motif/Pattern/Design</td>
<td>Plaid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Weave</td>
<td>Plain or twill weave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>Only white, green, blue, red and yellow/orange.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 26: Characteristics of Matha Kiras Woven Back-Strap Looms
Table 27 shows characteristics that will not appear in matha kiras when woven on back-strap looms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Border edge designs, continuous band or designs and motifs on the main body of the kira.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Motif/Pattern/Design and Construction Techniques | Stripes, shinglo motifs, patterns or design  
Any type of motifs, patterns or designs using timah, sepmah or hor construction methods. |
| Base Weave                              | Birds-eye weave                                                                |

Table 27: Characteristics of Matha Kiras That Will Not Be Found In Kiras Woven On Back-strap Loom

Table 28 demonstrates the characteristics of matha kira textiles woven on Tibetan horizontal frame looms are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Only poly-cotton, silk and wool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motif/Pattern/Design</td>
<td>Plaid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Weave</td>
<td>Plain, twill and bird’s eye weaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>Only colours are white, green, blue, red and yellow/orange.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 28: Characteristics of Matha Kiras Woven on Tibetan Horizontal Looms

Characteristics that will not be found on matha kiras woven on Tibetan frame looms are displayed in Table 29. These are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Form                                         | Border-edge designs  
Continuous band on the main body of the textile |
| Motif/Pattern/Design and Construction Techniques | Stripes and shinglo motifs  
Thimah, sepmah and hor |

Table 29: Characteristics of Matha Kiras That Will Not Be Found Woven on Tibetan Horizontal Looms

- Sertha (Figure 49a)

Characteristics of sertha kira woven on back-strap looms are shown in Table 30.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Cotton, poly-cotton, silk, and spun silk yarns only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Fringes and border selvage design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motif/Pattern/Design</td>
<td>Plaids only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Weave</td>
<td>Plain weave or twill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>Red and yellow/orange</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 30: Characteristics Of Sertha Kiras Woven on Back-strap Looms
Table 31 illustrated the characteristics details of sertha kira that are not typically found on kiras woven back-strap looms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Border edge designs and continuous bands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motif/Pattern/Design and Construction Techniques</td>
<td>Stripes or shinglo designs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timah, sepmah and hor construction technique.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>Green and Blue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 31: Characteristics Of Sertha Kiras That Will Not Be Found In Kiras Woven On Back- Strap Loom

As sertha kiras can also be woven on Tibetan frame looms. The characteristics of these textiles are as follows in Table 32.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Poly-cotton, silk and wool yarns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motif/Pattern/Design</td>
<td>Plaid only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Weave</td>
<td>Plain and twill weaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>Red and yellow/orange</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 32: Characteristics Of Sertha Kiras Woven on Tibetan Horizontal Looms

Table 33 shows sertha kira textiles woven on Tibetan frame looms will definitely not have the following elements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Border edge designs, continuous band or designs and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motifs on the main body of the kira.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motif/Pattern/Design and Construction Techniques</td>
<td>Stripes, shinglo motifs, patterns or design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Any type of motifs, patterns or designs using timah,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sepmah or hor construction methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Weave</td>
<td>Whites, greens and blues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 33: Characteristics Of Sertha Kiras That Will Not Be Found Woven on Tibetan Horizontal Looms

- Kushuthara (Figure 54)

Kushuthara kira can only be woven on back-strap looms. Table 34 summarises the following characteristics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Cotton, poly-cotton and silk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Fringes, designs on the border</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>selvage, a continuous band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>running through the textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with designs concentrated on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the main body of the kira.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motif/Pattern/Design and Construction Techniques</td>
<td>Stripes are commonly featured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timah and sepmah techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>used to decorate the textiles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Weave</td>
<td>Only plain weave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>Only White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 34: Characteristics of Kushuthara
Notably, the features illustrated in Table 35 are not characteristic of kushuthara kiras:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Wool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Weave</td>
<td>Twill, birds eye weave</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 35: Characteristics That Are Not Typical of Kushuthara Kiras

- Kushuthara Jam Sham (Figure 56)
Kushuthara jam sham kiras can only be woven on back strap looms. In Table 36, the characteristics of this textile are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Cotton, poly-cotton and silk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Fringes, designs on the border selvage, a continuous band running through the textiles with designs concentrated on the main body of the kira.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Motif/Pattern/Design and Construction Techniques | Stripes as part of the design  
Timah and sepmah techniques used to decorate the textiles. |
| Base Weave                            | Only plain weave                                                              |
| Colour                                | Interestingly, white was cited as the base colour for this textile. However, other sources such as Myers (1994), Adams (1984) and Bartholomew (1985), identify the base colour for this kira as green. In the present study, only 3 experts cited green as a base colour for this kira. |

Table 36: Characteristics of Kushuthara Jam Sham

- Kushuthara Pesar (Figure 57)
Kushuthara Pesar kira textiles are only woven on back-strap looms with the following being characteristics identified by experts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Cotton, poly-cotton, silk and spun silk yarns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Border edge design, fringes, border selvage design and the main designs will be featured on the body of the kira. In contrast with the experts’ assertion, the researcher observed that most of this type of kira seen at the tsechu Phase 1(a) do not have the border edge design )(Figures 68a, b &amp; c).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motif/Pattern/Design and Construction Techniques</td>
<td>Timah and sepmah construction techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Weave</td>
<td>Only plain weave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>A wide range of colours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 37: Characteristics of Kushuthara Pesar
All 6 experts agreed that birds’-eye weave was not a characteristic for the base weave for kushuthara (and its sub-categories) kiras.

- Aikapur

All aikapur kira textiles are only woven on back strap looms. Characteristics of these kiras are shown in Table 38.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Cotton, poly-cotton, silk or spun silk yarns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Fringe and the border selvage designs are present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Motif/Pattern/Design and Construction Techniques | Stripes are present  
Shinglo motifs designs may or may not be present.  
Hor patterning technique is compulsory |
| Base Weave                    | Only plain weave                                                              |
| Colour                        | A multitude of colours                                                        |

Table 38: Characteristics of Aikapor

Table 39 shows characteristics not present in aikapor textiles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Wool yarns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base Weave</td>
<td>Birds Eye weave</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 39: Characteristics That Are Not Found In Aikapor Kiras

- Size of Kira

The expert weavers identified that the width per panel of kira is between 59 and 60cm wide and the length is about two and a half metres long. Concerning textiles woven on the Tibetan horizontal frame loom, each panel is only 25 to 26cm wide while the length is between 11 to 14 metres long.

5.2.4 Discussion

The fundamental judgment on whether a Bhutanese kira is to be considered as ‘authentic’ or not can be analyzed from two perspectives. The first is through Goodman’s (1976) theory where authenticity is only applicable to works with no notationality system (i.e., ‘autographic’ works). From this perspective, Bhutanese kira might not qualify as these materials have a highly developed notationality system; each type of kira adheres to its particular form.

However, because weavers are free to employ different motifs, patterns, designs and colours within each kira type, it could be argued that each kira is particularized and
exclusive. This proposal would conform to Benjamin’s (1936) concept of aura where aura is present in only one piece of work, and in this way, it is authentic.

This study adopts the view that Bhutanese kira is and can be authentic in spite of its heavily prescribed notationality system as, within each kira type, weavers are free to change and innovate. This itself – the ability to innovate – is a hallmark of authenticity (Gassier, 1995; Maruyama, et al., 2008; Moreno and Littrell, 2011; Grunewald, 2002; Cohodas, 1999).

Recalling the various theories on authenticity described in Chapter Two, one of the means of identifying authenticity is through the examination of its physical characteristics. Using this framework and referencing the results discovered, this study aims to identify those physical characteristics that are universal in all kiras, proposing that these be considered as the markers of authenticity.

Analyzing the responses from Phase One, it would appear that there are no universal physical characteristics that could be proposed as markers of authenticity. For example, the study found that motifs, patterns, designs, forms, weight and details such as fringes and selvage borders and border designs are not applicable because no one feature is common among all kiras. In terms of colour, different types of kiras have different background colours, except pesar and New Style Kiras from Khaling where any combination of colours are possible. Similarly, different types of yarns are used and no one specific yarn can be singled out for weaving authentic kiras. The quality of a kira and the way that a kira is used also do not determine authenticity.

However from the visual research in Phase One (a), three significant and common physical characteristics are found for all hand-woven kiras. The first is that all hand-woven kiras have seams and these seams lie perpendicular or parallel to the body of the wearer. Secondly, the placement of motifs, patterns and designs are found to lie horizontally, running perpendicular to the wearer’s body. Finally, the size of kiras are within a universal range (for the back-strap loom, each panel is between 59 – 60cm wide and the length is about two and a half metres long, while for those woven on the Tibetan frame loom, each panel is only 25 to 26cm wide while the length is between 11 to 14 metres long).
Recalling the Object Being Theory (Sagoff, 1978) of authenticity, these three physical features could be proposed as markers of authenticity in the identification and recognition of genuine Bhutanese hand-woven kira textiles. Practically, these markers could be especially useful for the untrained eye, such as tourists who intend to purchase authentic hand-woven kira textiles as souvenirs.

Conversely, a moment’s consideration would indicate that such markers are not adequate to determine whether a textile is an authentic piece of Bhutanese hand-woven kira. For example, unscrupulous traders could easily use narrow or cut up industrially machine woven textiles or Machey hand-woven cloth and sew these textiles together in a manner that would physically resemble hand-woven kirases when worn. Therefore, other markers are needed to complement these initial proposals.

Importing the notion of ‘Liberal Concept’ (Cohen, 1988[b], 1993) when examining authenticity, the study found that labour, skills, tools and technology, construction and process of making are also not definitive markers of authenticity for Bhutanese kira textiles. For example, there is no specific type of loom mandated to produce kira, albeit each would produce different qualities of kira. Furthermore, Bhutanese weavers themselves do not discriminate against non-Bhutanese in weaving kirases, although they would be surprised that they would be able to weave kirases. Also, no specific skills are required to weave authentic kirases. In terms of construction methods, it would depend on the type of kira and the loom used. Lastly, producing an authentic kira need not necessitate a weaver having to weave an entire kira by his or herself nor does weaving in isolation or the company of other weavers impact on the authenticity of the cloth.

Examining authenticity from the economic aspect, the research concluded that the ways in which kirases are exchanged does not impact on their authenticity. Significantly, Phase One found that there was a definite agreement that weaving must be physically performed in Bhutan and at least 50% of the value in producing kira must be within the country. However, the value of imported textiles, such as the Machey textiles woven by Indian communities living along the border, could also be increased through import duties, rent of shop, salary of service staff, etc. These could be conceived as value addition within the borders of Bhutan rendering Machey textiles authentic Bhutanese kirases. Furthermore, acknowledging the porosity of the border, it is not inconceivable that some of these communities could actually be weaving within Bhutan itself.
Therefore, proposing that the value of the product be used as a marker of identifying authentic kira textiles would require the notion to be more closely specified. Such clarity is especially important for programmes such as the Seal of Origin and the Bhutan SEAL for which the current criteria are somewhat vague and unclear.

From the perspective of the weaver, the study noted that there are no uniform rituals, rites, activities and process that all weavers practice in order for their textiles to be deemed authentic. Hence, Performative Authenticity (Zhu, 2012) does not apply to this case.

Exploring Existential Authenticity (Wang, 1999) - what weaving means to the weaver, markers of authenticity can be identified. However, these are not necessarily tangible markers. For example, weavers in all categories (expert, intermediate and novice) recount that weaving symbolizes self-sufficiency. It instills a sense of pride to know that they are able to clothe themselves and their family through their own handiwork. Weaving is also a means of income generation. However, this commercial aspect of weaving represents only a small part of their involvement in weaving. More importantly, for all of them it is a way of life and a form of Bhutanese cultural identity. It is a tradition that has been handed down from one generation to another. Some advocate that weaving is a vocation, wanting to pass on the knowledge and skills to the next generation.

Therefore, it would initially appear that there are no universal physical markers of authenticity for Bhutanese kiras. This is due in part to the numerous sub-categorizations of kiras within each category of kira. Establishing physical characteristics and markers of authenticity for each category and sub-category would seemingly be possible but it would be a complex and complicated process.

However, examining the intangible qualities of kiras, all weavers expressed that they find their work meaningful and fulfilling. Framed within Dutton’s (2003) Expressive Authenticity theory and from the Object: Subjective / Abstract perspective, this study proposes that both the tangible and intangible aspects of authenticity need not be exclusive but are intrinsically connected. More importantly, the physical markers of authenticity can be identified through examination of the cultural background where the
contextual framework of Bhutanese society could assist in identifying the physical markers of authenticity of Bhutanese kiras.

- **Kiras Within the Context of Driglam Namzha and Bhutanese Social Ethos**

  As explained in Section 2.3.3, Driglam Namzha is the formalized cultural code for Bhutan, providing Bhutanese with a clear and concise cultural identity. All citizens are required to abide by its policies, governing cultural expressions and behaviour. However, Driglam Namzha does not explicitly define or regulate Bhutanese textile design, motifs, patterns and usage. Even so, one can contend that within an unregulated, non-explicit, non-defined domain one can still use the code as a means to help elicit the markers of authenticity of Bhutanese hand-woven kiras.

  As informed by the Secretary of Information and Communication, Dasho Kinley Dorji, the ethos of Bhutanese society is very formal. Social propriety directs all aspects of life where rules of behavior, inter-actions, conduct and expectations are managed. Within the framework of this research, the underlying foundation of social propriety can be well understood through Adam’s (1984) articulation of Bhutan being a ‘Fabric Society’ (p2) and Myers and Bean’s (1994) narrative. Therefore in the context of social propriety, ‘appropriateness’ is a variant and all variables of kiras are possible; it merely depends on the context, occasion and the wearer relationship with others. Under such circumstances, most Bhutanese women own several types and qualities of kiras in order to wear the right one for the right occasion.

  In Bhutan’s overarching cultural context, the researcher realised through studying his reflective journal that rather than giving definitive responses of either ‘yes’ or ‘no’, respondents in Phase One peppered their answers with ‘it depends…’, ‘on condition…’, ‘if appropriate…’. For example, when asked if they would use new yarns to weave kiras, they said they would only if certain conditions were satisfied.

  Using kiras as garments for formal occasions as an example, the appearance of the dress is very important: it must be neat, clean and tidy. The front fold of the kiras must be stiff and sharp. The entire kira must be straight and the fabric should not be easily creased. A good kira for these formal events should be able to hold its form. Such kiras are usually kushuthara and aikapur woven in silk, profuse with design. The weight is heavy and the texture stiff, colours contrasting to show off the design of the kira. On the
other hand, characteristics of such formal kiras need not be present in kiras for everyday wear, which are lightweight and easy to maintain. The designs for such kiras need not be elaborate. Neatness and being presentable are important; hence, being crease-free is an important quality.

The subtle difference and tacit knowledge about the various qualities and characteristics of kiras is ingrained among Bhutanese women. Hence, reflecting upon weavers’ responses in Phase One, it is little wonder that they would be surprised if a non-Bhutanese understood and appreciated the special requirements of kiras for specific occasions. In addition, they too express the difficulties encountered in teaching non-Bhutanese the non-technical aspects of kira weaving. Therefore, one can understand the comment of one of the respondents in Phase One who said that kiras woven on the Lao loom would only be sold to non-Bhutanese as foreigners are unfamiliar with wearing a kira and will therefore not be able to notice the difference. Therefore, if foreigners were to weave kira, it would be imperative for them to know about the ‘social and cultural conditions’ of Bhutan before being able to weave an ‘authentic’ kira.

• Intangible Characteristics of Kiras: Appropriateness of Kiras Relating to Their Social/Cultural Context

It is important for weavers weaving kira textiles to know the context in which the kira will be worn when designing and weaving the material, so as to give it the appropriate quality and characteristics. This research suggests that the notion of ‘appropriateness of use’ is a criterion in the identification of the physical markers of authenticity for hand-woven kira textiles.

In order to weave the ‘appropriate’ quality and characteristics of a kira, the weaver must use the corresponding quality of materials, employing suitable technologies and relevant skills to produce the kira textile. This research proposes the appropriate quality of yarn, the density of weave and type of loom as possible contenders for markers of authenticity.

In addition, this study suggests that the pride of weavers in the weaving of kiras while incorporating the philosophy of Gross National Happiness is manifested through the high quality of craftsmanship, sophistication of designs, neatness, cleanliness and the
ways in which finished kiras are presented. These could also be proposed as markers of authenticity of kira textiles.

- **Yarns**
  Kiras woven with poly-cotton yarn or silk yarn are both equally acceptable and will produce authentic kiras. However, the quality of the yarn is an important consideration in the production of kiras for wearing at specific events. For example, silk yarns are appropriate for formal kiras while poly-cotton yarns are used for casual kiras. Also, it is important to consider the type of yarns that befit the social status of the person wearing the kira as discussed earlier (Section 2.3.10).

  For example, kushuthara kiras are prestigious (Section 2.3.10) as confirmed by observation, with many upper class women and royals wearing this type of kira for a formal occasion. Physical examination of these kiras has confirmed that they are stiff and heavy. Expert weavers explained that such textures are needed in order to maintain the folds of the kira. Hence, most kushuthara and aikapur kiras are woven with silk yarn as these are able to produce the hard and stiff texture (as noted in the expert weaver’s account in Phase One). Furthermore, these kiras are expressions of wealth as silk is expensive and kushuthara and aikapur kiras are expensive to weave.

  Kushuthara and aikapur kira textiles take a long time to weave because of their complex designs, making them expensive to produce. Therefore, silk yarns are preferred, as they add more value to the cloth than using cheaper types of yarn. Silk yarn must, however, be of a good quality. For example, colourfastness is extremely important so that the colours do not bleed and destroy the design when washed. As a high investment item, the yarns for the kira need to be durable, standing the test of time in order for the owner to pass on the garment to future generations. Therefore, although it is not inauthentic for kushuthara or aikapur kiras to be woven in cotton or poly-cotton yarn, it is far more common to see such kiras made in silk.

  Kiras for every day casualwear require the textiles to be less heavy and stiff. As noted earlier, they should be easy to maintain. Therefore, poly-cotton yarns are highly preferred as the resultant material is light-weight, does not crease easily and the colours do not bleed.
Although yarns themselves cannot be identified as an objective marker of authenticity, the appropriateness of yarn and the quality of yarn could be proposed as markers of authenticity for specific types of kira.

- **Weave Density and Types of Looms**

When weaving a kira, the weaver needs to consider the weave density. High-density weaves render the textiles stiff and heavy, which are appropriate for formal kiras. Less densely woven kiras are suitable for everyday activities.

The density of the weave of a kira is directly related to the loom used in weaving. Weavers in Phase One maintained that textiles woven on horizontal frame looms do not produce the necessary weave density that will be stiff enough for formal kira textiles. Also recalling the findings from Phase One(a) formal kiras, such as kushuthara kiras, pesar and jam sham, and aikapur are only woven on back-strap looms. This could be attributed to weavers being able to increase the density of the weave without having to be restricted by the number of reeds on the beater (beaters on back strap looms have no reeds; rather it is just a sword, see Figure 7, item ‘m’). This also explains the predominance of warp-faced kira textiles.

In order for the textiles to acquire such a high density, it is necessary for the weaver to beat the weft yarns down hard so as to compact them. If the width of the textiles is too wide, the pressure in beating down the weft yarns will be dispersed over the wider material. Therefore, it is important for the width of the textiles to be narrow, especially for textiles woven on back-strap looms. This explains the narrow width of kira textiles and the need to stitch these panels together to form a kira. The result is that the placement of designs, motifs and patterns is horizontal and lies perpendicular to the body.

It is also important to note that because the tension of the back-strap loom is created by the weaver’s body, the length of the textiles woven on such a loom is dictated by the length of the weaver’s legs (the distance between her back and the foot brace). Hence, the maximum length is two and a half metres (as the warp yarns are looped to double the length) As a result, these panels are stitched length-wise and when worn on the body, the seam-lines lie perpendicular to the body.
There are fewer restrictions on the warp length with textiles woven on the Tibetan horizontal frame looms. Each panel, although narrower than textiles woven on the back-strap looms, is longer. When stitched into panels for kiras, they are sewn lengthwise, parallel to the body. Both these types were noted in the photographs taken in Phase One(a).

The study proposes that the change in technologies or modification of the back-strap loom is inconsequential when considering authenticity as long as it does not jeopardize the appropriate quality of the kira textiles and its weave density. When wooden frames for the back-strap looms were introduced in the 1990s, they enabled weavers to beat down the weft yarns harder, allowing the density of the cloth to be increased. Such changes and modifications were welcomed as they enhance the quality (stiffness) of kushuthara and aikapur kiras.

On the other hand, horizontal frame looms, although able to weave Bhutanese motifs and patterns, were not appreciated because the results were ‘flat’ and the quality poor. Motifs and patterns woven on the back-strap looms are ‘embossed’ and textured; they ‘popped’ out – a quality that is suitable and appreciated by the locals.

- Pride in Work and GNH
Finally, because hand-woven kiras are an intrinsic legacy of, and relate to, the identity of Bhutanese people, all those interviewed commented that a sense of pride in their work is intrinsically bound to the inherent value of hand-woven kira textiles. This is manifest in many ways: the quality of the craftsmanship, the sophistication of the designs, the techniques by which motifs and patterns are woven, the neatness in the work (on the reverse side of the textiles), cleanliness of the final product and even in the way in which the textiles are folded and presented to the person who has commissioned or purchased the textiles.

Those interviewed contended that weaving is not merely for clothing and generating an income for the family. More significantly, weaving is a way by which Bhutanese tradition and cultural heritage can be conserved, nurtured and developed. Collectively, weavers feel that hand-woven kiras are not only symbols of the past but are living traditions today, widely practiced throughout the country with the results worn on a daily basis by nearly every Bhutanese woman in the country. Weavers are proud of their
skills, wanting to transmit this knowledge and skills to future generations as a way of preserving and continuing this heritage.

This resonates with the concept of GNH where emphasis has been placed on the preservation and promotion of cultural values, diversity and resilience. GNH is a development concept (of which Bhutan is associated globally) and as weaving is an indispensable part of Bhutanese culture, it has become a humble but key cornerstone of the physical manifestation of GNH. Contributing to this national GNH brand instills pride among weavers, possibly even being acknowledged as a marker of authenticity for hand-woven kira textiles. Significantly, this endorses views advocated by those arguing that cultural and historical integrity are important signifiers of authenticity (Littrell, et al., 1993; Mauss, 1990).

5.2.5 Interim Conclusion
To summarize, there exist three common physical elements in all hand-woven kira textiles - seam lines, the horizontal placement of designs when the kira is worn and the dimensions of the kira. These are necessary indicators of a hand-woven kira but by themselves, are not sufficient to be credibly and convincingly identified as markers of authenticity.

Other considerations need to be included such as those from the weavers’ perspective as promoted by the likes of Maruyama, et al., (2008). From the makers’ standpoint, intangible characteristics such as the appropriateness of the kiras in relation to the social/cultural context where it is worn will yield more plausible results. The tangible manifestation of this concept is through the appropriate quality of yarn, density of weave and the looms on which the textiles are woven. The intangible perspective that also needs to be included when examining whether a textile is authentic is the pride embedded when weaving a kira. This is manifested through the quality of the workmanship, the design, the way in which the motifs and patterns are executed, the neatness and cleanliness of the textiles and finally, the way in which the kira is folded and presented to the person commissioning or purchasing the textiles.

It is a combination of these markers: the physical objective indicators and the understanding of the use of the kira enables weavers themselves to identify the authenticity of a Bhutanese hand-woven kira.