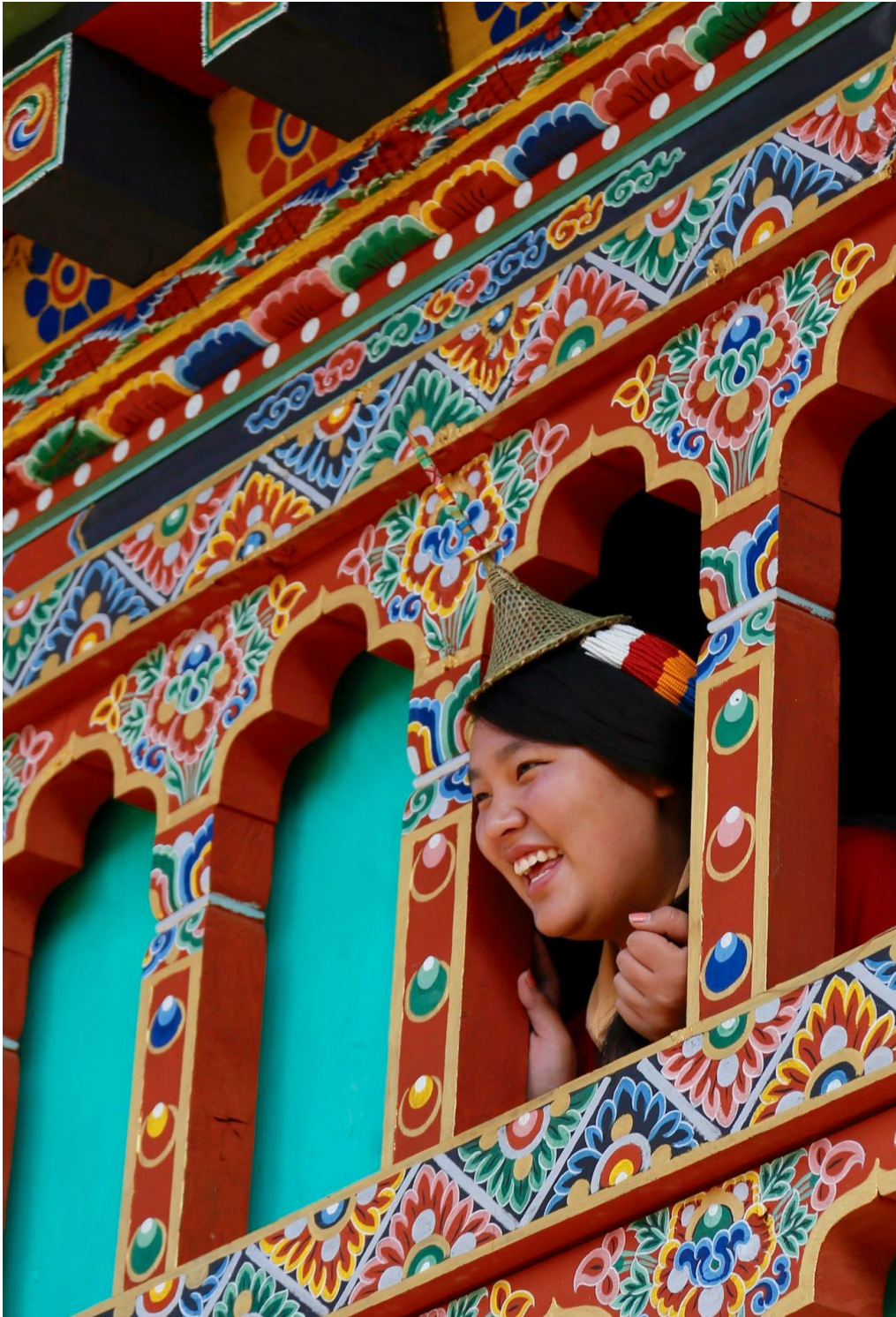


Bhutanese Identity

– *how different identities become one*



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Chapter 1 – Introduction

The kingdom of Bhutan (འབྲུག་རྒྱལ་ཁབ།) is a landlocked country in South Asia, situated South of the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China (TAR), and further bordered by the Indian states of Sikkim, Assam, West Bengal, and Arunachal Pradesh. This Himalayan state is relatively newly formed. The different areas that nowadays comprise Bhutan only got unified into this territory in 1616. This resulted in the unification of many different ethnic groups with their own vernaculars, customs, traditions, beliefs, and way of life into a supposedly homogenous kingdom.

Bhutan's recent history is exhilarating as it took only a few decades for the country to come out of the 'Middle Ages' and enter into modernity. The year 1959 marks the beginning of modernization in Bhutan, with the first major development project being the construction of motor roads from India's border to the capital Thimphu. Today, most villages are connected by road which significantly improved the communication throughout Bhutan. 1961 was the year the first five-year plan was developed at the end of which three hospitals were established.



Fig. 1. Map of Bhutan in the Himalayas as well as adjacent Arunachal Pradesh (India).

Today, even though the number of doctors is low – roughly only three doctors for every 10,000 people – the number of hospitals has increased to about 250. Before 1959 life expectancy and child mortality were respectively forty-five and 20 percent. Today, life expectancy has increased to an average of sixty-five and the child mortality rate dropped to about two percent.

1961 was also the year that a systematic postal service was introduced rapidly followed by telephone facilities. In 1971 Bhutan became a member of the United Nations. One of the most significant developments came with the introduction of tourism in 1974 and the start of Drukair services in 1983. In addition to the growing number of tourists, Bhutan's exposure to the outside world increased with the introduction of the television in 1999 and the internet in that same year. The fast improvement in modernization and communication has "a major impact on people's mobility and culture and led to an unprecedented sense of homogeneity, shared national identity and culture" (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 586).

Similarly, in the religious or spiritual area, a lot has changed since the start of the modern era. Whereas people found solace in animistic and shamanistic beliefs before the introduction of Buddhism in the 8th century which changed the attitude towards life as something that was dominated by the greater good of merit-making and enlightenment in some future rebirth. Nowadays, these views changed with the introduction of secular education which underestimates these strong beliefs in supernatural forces and superstitions. However, one should still not undermine the power and importance of religion and nature in present-day Bhutanese life.

This new era, however, has also faced some serious external threats. To

the South, the relation with India only improved after the 1949 treaty, where Bhutan agreed to let India guide its foreign policy and defense. Pursuant to the superseding friendship treaty of 2007 India's guidance on foreign policy remains mandatory to follow but leaves Bhutan free to decide on other matters such as military issues. Simultaneously, the relationship with China remains virtually non-existent – Bhutan and China do not have a diplomatic relationship – especially after some intense border disputes. One recent example is the Doklam dispute at the trijunction point of Bhutan, India, and the TAR (Sandeep Bhardwaj, 2017) which escalated in 2017. According to the foreign ministry of Bhutan, China tried to extend a road from Yadong, TAR, further southwards to the Bhutanese Army camp at Zompelri, bordering the Haa and Samtse *dzongkhag*. Moreover, in a press release, the ministry conveyed to China that the construction of the road was inside Bhutanese territory (Kuensel, August 30, 2017), a claim supported by India.

The latest dispute – over a different area in Bhutan – started on June 29, 2020, when China objected to Bhutan's application for a grant from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council for the Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary in Eastern Bhutan claiming it was "disputed" territory (The Times of India, July 6, 2020). Bhutan did get the funds but China's objection was seen as an attempt to intimidate as it was its first claim made on Eastern Bhutan. The government of Bhutan stated that "Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary is an integral and sovereign territory of Bhutan" (ibid).

Taking into account the history of Bhutan and its cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity, it will be very interesting if not challenging to research whether, and if so: how all of these

traditions came to be blended into one singular Bhutanese identity. In this thesis I will use the term *identity* as defined by the New Oxford American Dictionary:

The characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is to create a sense of belonging to a particular group that shared the same characteristics. These characteristics include amongst others, values, and systems of beliefs.

Culture in this thesis will refer to the general sense of customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social groups (ibid). Tradition can be defined as a long-established custom or belief that has been passed on from generation to generation (ibid). As such, *cultural tradition* in this thesis will be interpreted in the following way:

Customs, beliefs, arts, and social institutions of a particular nation, people, or social group that have been established a long time ago and have been passed down from generation to generation.

In this thesis, I will try to answer the question “to what extent and how did the distinct cultural, ethnic, and linguistic groups, who originated from valleys separated by natural barriers, and their cultural traditions, become one ‘homogenous’ constitutional monarchy?”. By looking into the history of the kingdom that shaped the country as it is today and taking into account certain factors that might have contributed to the self-awareness of Bhutanese people in terms of their distinct culture and identity, I hope to answer this. After looking into the history of Bhutan in Chapter Two, I will explore Bhutan’s demographics and the different cultural groups in Chapter Three. Chapter Four looks into identity and the

different components that might have formed the Bhutanese identity. I will touch upon some of the major components that have been named to be ‘typical Bhutanese’. Chapter Five discusses the questionnaire on the Bhutanese identity that I have distributed among Bhutanese from all over the country. The first part will function to create a background picture of the interviewee to put the rest into perspective. The second part will go deeper into the religious and linguistic preferences of the interviewee. The last part will focus on the Bhutanese identity and how the interviewee would describe this. The information provided by the questionnaires in combination with the literary background will come together in Chapter Six, the conclusion.

As this thesis is on Bhutan, I have chosen to use the Bhutanese terms. Most Bhutanese terms or names originate from Tibetan or Sanskrit terms, which I will refer to but not continue to use throughout this thesis. It should also be noted that most Dzongkha terms, the national language of Bhutan, have a variety of spellings as the language is facing difficulties being Romanized. As such, it could happen that I have chosen to use different spelling than other authors chose to. Moreover, Bhutanese names do not typically include a family name. Most Bhutanese have two or three names, mostly chosen by the lama of the temple in their proximity, but neither of these are family names. So, a person named Tenzin Dorji is not necessarily family of Pema Dorji although they could as well be. As such, I have chosen to directly use the name as it is in the bibliography. There are two exceptions. First of all, the royal family does have a family name, namely Wangchuck. This name with this spelling is only for the royal family. And second of all, most Lhotsampas have ‘family’ names that

trace back to the caste system. This means that amongst these people two persons with the same name are related in some way but do not have to be immediate family.

Lastly, due to the global Covid-19 pandemic and specifically, the lockdown that was enforced from March 6, 2020 in Bhutan, has made it increasingly difficult to conduct any face-to-face research. As such, the interviews I was hoping to conduct, changed into questionnaires that still provided me with a great amount of information.



Fig. 2. Thimphu main traffic circle during 'normal' times. Bhutan does not have any traffic lights after the population rejected the one traffic light they had.

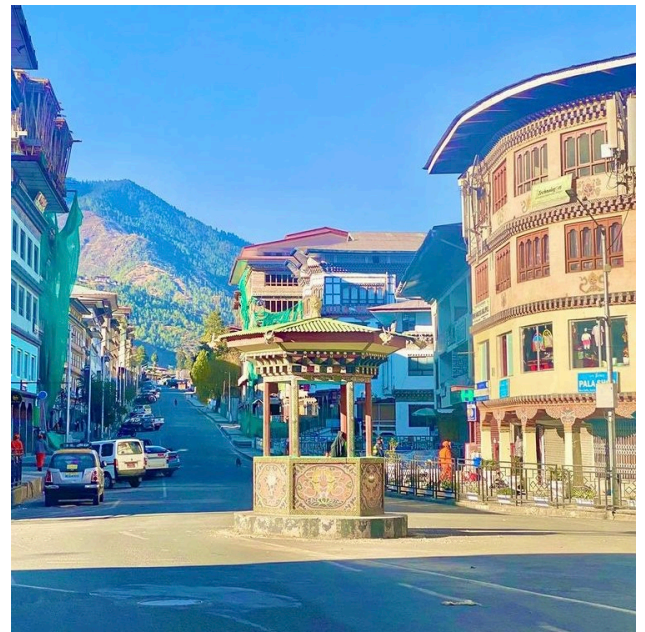


Fig. 3. Thimphu main traffic circle during the second nation-wide lockdown, December 2020.

Chapter 2 – A short history of Bhutan

2.1 Early history

Before the arrival of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to Bhutan in 1616, Bhutan as a country did not exist. The land was inhabited by scattered people, each of them with their own beliefs, customs, traditions, and language. This period is generally referred to as the end of the Pre-Historic Period (ལོ་རྒྱུས་གོང་རབས་) from which we lack any known written or even oral historical records. This period preceded the Early Historic Period (ལོ་རྒྱུས་མའི་དུས་ཚོན་) which roughly runs from the mid-7th century until the mid-17th century. From this period, we sporadically find historical records such as written and oral accounts as well as historical artifacts. The Early Historic Period can then be divided into the Early Diffusion (མྱ་དར་) and the Later Diffusion (མྱི་དར་) respectively corresponding to the two phases of the transmission of Buddhism to Bhutan. The start of the Early Diffusion and the earliest known link to Tibet is marked by the two Tibetan-built temples; Jampa Lhakhang in Bumthang and Kyichu Lhakhang in Paro ordered by the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo (མྱོང་བཙུན་གླུ་མ་པོ་, c. 605 – 650). Songtsen Gampo, the first of the three Dharma Kings¹, is credited for constructing a total of 108 temples to pin down the supine demoness on which Tibet lay and therefore enabling the spread of Buddhism and safeguarding the Tibetan civilization (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 79). Nevertheless, it was not until the arrival of

Padmasambhava, or Guru Rinpoche as he is best known in Bhutan, in the eighth century that Buddhism took root in Bhutan (Dasho Rigzin Dorji, 1989, 10). Guru Rinpoche is believed to have played an important role in the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet and later to have come down to Bhutan on the invitation of the King of Bumthang. The exact reason why Guru Rinpoche was invited is disputed. What is generally agreed on, however, is that the guru, known for his miraculous powers, organized a festival of ritual dances and with his magical powers, “he assumed eight manifestations in eight forms of dance in order to subdue the evil spirits” (Dasho Rigzin Dorji, 1989, 10). Following these events, the King of Bumthang and his subjects then converted to Buddhism which sparked the spread of the Nyingmapa school² and for some time became the dominant religion in parts of the geographical area that is now Bhutan. Although the multiple visits of Guru Rinpoche are generally accepted by the Bhutanese as a historical fact, there is no conclusive evidence for his visits to Bhutan even in early Tibetan sources. The earliest accounts, using a traditional Buddhist religious and historical approach, of Guru Rinpoche’s life are narrated in the biographical accounts, amongst which the most elaborate are known as *kathang* (བཀའ་མཐུན་). These texts are considered to be treasure texts hidden in the eighth century only to be revealed in later times. Later sources which narrate his arrival in central Bhutan are the treasure texts from the eleventh century onwards called

¹ The three Dharma Kings are considered to have established Buddhism in Tibet; Songtsen Gampo, Trisong Detsen and Ralpacan.

² Nyingma tradition is the oldest of the four main schools in Tibetan Buddhism, considered to be founded by Guru Rinpoche. Termas – treasures or revealed texts – play a central role.

terchö (གཏེར་ཚོ་མ་). The texts are claimed to have been composed and hidden by Guru Rinpoche himself in the eighth century. However, they can only be dated as far back as the treasure-discoverer and can therefore not be taken as historical accounts from the eighth century. According to Karma Phuntsho, due to intense deification in those sources, some scholars have questioned the Guru Rinpoche's historicity but it is generally agreed on by historians on Tibet that he did live and played an important role in the transmission of Buddhism into Tibet in the Early Diffusion, based on the number of accounts. Recent scholarship based on ancient sources strongly suggests that Guru Rinpoche may have been venerated in rituals as early as the tenth century (Padmasambhava in early Tibetan myth and ritual: Part 1, Introduction). It is therefore likely that the traditional narratives contain largely true threads of Guru Rinpoche's life and activities (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 90).

With the enthronement of King Lang Darma (སླང་དར་མ་), who most likely reigned from 838 to 841 CE, Buddhist Tibet, however, witnessed the "systematic destruction of the Buddhist system through demolishing temples, removing statues, destroying texts and persecuting monks" (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 115). However, recent scholarship indicates that this persecution, if it took place, was limited to a withdrawal of state patronage of growing monastic institutions (Donald Lopez, 2002, 466) and that there is, in fact, some evidence suggesting that Lang Darma himself was initially a Buddhist king (Kapstein, 2006, 80). Nevertheless, during this period, the Tibetan Empire collapsed because of which Buddhism in both Tibet and Bhutan suffered greatly.

The Later Diffusion was marked by the revival of Buddhism in Tibet by the founding of new lineages during the late

tenth and eleventh centuries. It was during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that many Tibetan Buddhists from these new religious institutions made the journey down to Bhutan in search of opportunities for growth and expansion beyond Tibet. However, the main reason for many Tibetan visitors to travel South was "concerned with the religious, social and political situations in Tibet itself" (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 192). During this period, there was a paradigmatic shift in the Tibetan religious structure with the rise of many new traditions. The monastic centers depended heavily on the Tibetan economy which led to a constant rivalry among them to sustain and expand their particular tradition. The religious missions were efforts to establish new priest-patron relationships between Tibetan lamas and Bhutanese laities called *chöyön* (མཚོད་ཡོན་) and exchange various offerings. It was thus both economic pressure and missionary zeal that drove many Tibetans Southward.

One of the earliest and most important Tibetan Buddhist traditions to arrive in Bhutan is the Kagyu tradition. Once this tradition arrived in Bhutan, it got divided into the Lhapa Kagyu school and the Drukpa Kagyu school or the Dragon Kagyu school. It is from the latter that Bhutan got its name. The forerunner of this school was Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo (ཕ་ཇོ་འབྲུག་སྒྲོམ་ཞིག་པོ་, 1184? – 1251?) born in Kham, Tibet (Yonten Dargye and Sørensen, 2001, p. x – xii). He came into a struggle with the Lhapa Kagyupas but eventually won and firmly began to establish the Drukpa Kagyu tradition as the main religion in Western Bhutan with firm ties with the Ralung monastery in Tibet. Central and Eastern Bhutan were predominantly Nyingma affiliated except for Merak in the far East which was under the influence of the Gelugpa monasteries in Tibet.

2.2 Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal

During the Later Diffusion, many Tibetan monastic institutions were associated with leading families and clans. The hereditary transmission of position and power that was used was problematic, however. This eventually caused a monk called Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to flee Tibet for Bhutan. Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (འབྲས་བུ་དག་དབང་རྣམ་རྒྱལ་), born in 1594 in central Tibet to Mipham Tanpai Nyima, the sixteenth incumbent of Ralung monastery and holder of Drukpa lineage. Ever since his conception, his life was marked by several auspicious omens. Later, historians would rank him among the many incarnations of the Buddha of compassion, Chenrezig (Sanskrit; Avalokiteśvara). At the age of eight, he took his lay Buddhist vows, and the Sakya hierarch, Sonam Wangpo, conferred on him the title of Zhabdrung. By thirteen, Zhabdrung had finished his training and was enthroned at Ralung as the eighteenth Drukpa. However, here the disagreement started over who the real incarnation of Kunkhyen Pema Karpo, the fourth Gyalwang Drukpa (head of the Drukpa lineage) and the most famous and known of all, was. His rival Pagsam Wangpo, born in 1593, was endorsed by Lhatsewa Ngawang Zangpo, who was an important student and attendant of Pema Karpo. The rejection of Pagsam Wangpo by the Ralung hierarchs as the rightful incarnation split the Drukpa followers into two camps. At Ralung, Zhabdrung was installed while at Tashi Thongmon monastery, Pagsam Wangpo was installed with the support of the Tsangpa ruler and the Chongye group as the successor of Pema Karpo. Following a misunderstanding between Zhabdrung

with an important Karma Kagyu lama, Pawo Tsugla Gyatsho, the Tsangpa ruler demanded that the sacred religious relics at Ralung – such as the Kharsapani³ – should be surrendered to his rival. Zhabdrung refused and used his occult powers to eliminate the governor of Chongye following the Tsangpa ruler decided to eliminate Zhabdrung by dispatching an army at Ralung. At this time, a Bhutanese patron arrived at Ralung and advised the Zhabdrung to flee southwards. That night, Zhabdrung had a dream in which “he followed a large raven Southward and arrived at an unknown place” (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 217). The raven was understood to embody the raven-headed Mahākāla. At the age of twenty-two (by Tibetan reckoning), in the year 1616 in the standard version, Zhabdrung with a party of some thirty monks left Tibet for the land unknown.

2.3 Unification

From the Bhutanese border, he traveled towards Gasa and gradually made his way down to Thimphu. In Thimphu, they enjoyed a warm welcome from the Drukpa Kagyu followers in the area. The founding of Cheri in 1620 marked a new chapter for the Drukpa Kagyu tradition. Here, he created a monastic community, regulated by the framework he had drawn for Ralung. To strengthen his political domination and defense position, he embarked on the construction of his first *dzong* in Semtokha, just outside present-day Thimphu. This fortress-like construction took two years to complete and was finished in 1631.

³ The Ralung Kharsapani is a form of Avalokiteśvara with one face and two hands. The tertön Chokgyur Dechen Lingpa discovered this image made from a

bone of Yeshe Tsogyal – the principal consort of Guru Padmasambhava.

The second⁴ Tibetan invasion into Bhutan took place in 1634 from Bumthang, Gasa, and Paro. Even though Bumthang had not yet come under the domination of Zhabdrung, the Tibetans might have thought it had. The Tibetans occupied the Semtokha *dzong* without much difficulty but did not enjoy the final victory as the ammunition stored in the dzong caught fire and caused the fortress to collapse, which would be rebuilt later. Zhabdrung was determined to carry on with the task of building the state. He decided to build a larger *dzong* than the one destroyed at the confluence of the male and female rivers, Phochu and Mochu, in Punakha. Later, for Bhutanese, this was a prophetic choice based on a prediction made by Guru Rinpoche. The foundations for this *dzong* were laid in 1637.

At the height of its construction, in the same area a second *dzong*, the Wangdiphodrang dzong which was supposed to subdue the enemies to the south, was being constructed. The Punakha *dzong* was finished first and as soon as it was completed the precious relics brought from Tibet by Zhabdrung were placed here. Consequently, the Punakha *dzong*, or 'The Palace of Great Bliss' functioned as the substitute for Ralung.



Fig. 4. Punakha Dzong.

⁴ I will only go into the Tibetan invasions relevant to this thesis due to a lack of space.

The third Tibetan invasion of 1639 was merely justified by the Tibetans to eliminate Zhabdrung as they feared his magical power and his command over protecting deities. The Tibetan troops managed to surround both the new *dzongs* but failed to enter them. In the following years, Zhabdrung dedicated his life to strengthen his power base in Bhutan. In 1641, he took over the Do-*ngon dzong* in Thimphu and renamed it Tashichödzong. He made this the summer seat of his government and monastic community and therefore introduced seasonal migration between the *dzongs* in Thimphu and Punakha. The following years, Zhabdrung continued to construct *dzongs* in Paro, Dagana, Lingshi, and Gasa amongst others. In the period that followed, many Tibetan invasions occurred but every time the protection of the *dzong* turned out to be the saving of the Bhutanese soldiers.

During the last years of his life, Zhabdrung increasingly turned to religious and spiritual activities and left most of his duties to the *pönlops* – local governors. At the end, he fell ill, and during the tenth day of the third month of the Iron Hare, 1651, “he ‘entered into a retreat’ on the tenth day of the following month” (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 249). His death anniversary is celebrated on this day annually now. The *pönlops* in charge conspired to keep the death of the Zhabdrung a secret for fifty-eight⁵ years to prevent any internal struggle to arise (Imaeda, 2013, 112).



Fig. 5. Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal.

2.4 Zhabdrung's legacy

Before the 17th century, the geographical area of Bhutan nowadays consisted of a small number of agricultural communities, “independent of any higher civil authority” (Ardussi, 2004, 13). Halfway through the 17th century, Zhabdrung left the country with a vague sense of cultural and geographical unity. According to his biographer, Tsang Khenchen 1610 – 1684 (Ardussi, 2007,7), he justified this state-building on three different categories, all deriving from Buddhism. First of all, most of his life was based on prophecies, the first being his flight from Tibet to Bhutan. Moreover, his

⁵ In this thesis, I have decided to follow the dates used by Karma Phuntsho's as he is a leading scholar on Bhutan. However, different sources use

different dates or timeframes. For example, Imaeda chose to use fifty-four years in this case.

many victories over his rivals were interpreted as the “fruition of karma and the fulfillment of prophecies that an emanation of Avalokiteśvara should establish a new state for the welfare of its sentient inhabitants”, as Ardussi puts it (2004, 17). Secondly, the justification given for the gradual Bhutanese support for the Zhabdrung, partially by willing patronage and partially by conquest, was that Zhabdrung was the embodiment of a militant Avalokiteśvara. Zhabdrung himself answered to no higher authority but did create a subordinate position called *desi* which was semi-monastic. Lastly, just like other Himalayan states which held the Tibetan (religious) and cultural values high, it was seen to be the obligation of the civil head of state to maintain law and order so that its citizens could “devote themselves to leading a moral life and strive for a better rebirth” (Ardussi, 2004, 20).

The land corresponding roughly to modern Bhutan was then referred to as Lhokhazhi, referring to the southern country with four *kha* or entrances – Dungsamkha to the east, Dalingkha to the west, Tagtsherkha to the north, and Pasakha to the south with Punakha as the political center (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 255). In addition to territorial unification, Zhabdrung also promoted political unity under the religious banner of Drukpa Kagyu. The most visible legacy are the *dzongs* in which he established a dual system of religious and secular law. The religious law was based on the Buddhist monastic rules as found in the Buddhist scriptures. This became the core of religious law, rules, and regulations in his new state. The secular law followed the example of Songtsen Gampo’s legal codes. No legal document seems to have been written until 1729 and “the law was enforced through unwritten understanding and edicts, ordinances and

regulations on the behavior of officers, taxation, etc.” (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 257).

After Zhabdrung’s death, the office of ‘inner’ religious affairs – that took care of the monks and religious heritage – was passed on to the by merit appointed Je Khenpo (ཇེ་མཁན་པོ་) or chief abbot. He then became the head of the State Monk Body and continues to be today. The post of chief administrator responsible for ‘outer’ civil administration changed into the post of first Desi (ལྷེ་ལྷེ་དེ་) or regent after Zhabdrung’s death. Under him were three regional governors known as *chila* based in Paro, Dagana, and Tongsa. Each of them had a *pönlop* (དཔོན་ལོཔ་) master-ruler.

Under the Desi were also three *dzongpöns* (རྫོང་དཔོན་) or *dzong* rulers of the central seats of Punakha, Wangdiphodrang, and Thimphu. Another post was that of the *zhung drönyer* or state chief of protocol. The *dzongpöns*, *chilas*, *zhung drönyer* with the Desi at their head formed the cabinet of executive leaders who ruled the country (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 258). While all these changes could not have happened without the key role Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal played, it was certainly not the work of this one man alone. It was the result of a cumulative process that began as early as the introduction of Buddhism in the eighth century AD (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 207).

2.5 Introduction of the monarchy

With the death of Zhabdrung, the concept of multiple reincarnations – his body, his speech, and his mind – was invoked by the Je Khenpo and the Druk Desi. The bodily reincarnations were initially his son and stepbrother succeeding him in 1651 and 1680 respectively. They however rarely

exercised authority in their own names but obeyed the religious and civil regents. The last person to be recognized as the bodily reincarnation died halfway through the 18th century but his speech and mind were recognized into the 20th century. This construction already shows the instability of the political system. This period witnessed Bhutanese thirst for expansion and they successfully conquered and controlled Cooch Behar in West Bengal in the early 18th century. However, this victory ended abruptly when the British took over Cooch Behar and at their turn invaded Bhutan in 1772. Failing to receive help from Tibet, the Druk Desi was forced to sign a treaty of peace with the British in 1774. Boundary disputes put a strain on the Bhutanese-British relations. Simultaneously, Bhutan witnessed its own turbulence with the continuous civil wars. In early 1864, the British sent a peace mission to Bhutan which they on their part rejected. Consequently, the British declared war at the end of that same year. This Duar War only lasted for five months and resulted in Bhutan's defeat as the Bhutanese did not have a regular army. Under the treaty of Sinchula, signed on November 11, 1865, the Bhutanese territories ceded territories in the Assam and Bengal Duars.

During this time, Ugyen Wangchuck (1862 – 1926) was appointed the Paro *pönlop* in 1878. Two years later, his father passed away and as his brother was not a “particular able person” (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 480), the weight of holding the power base his father had established and leading the country fell on Ugyen Wangchuck's shoulders. In order to consolidate power over the country, he appointed trustworthy relations at key positions. During this period, however, renewed internal tensions arose primarily between the pro-British *pönlop* of Tongsa

and the anti-British, pro-Tibetan *pönlop* of Paro. This led to the decisive Battle of Changlimethang at the end of the 19th century which resulted in the prevalence of Ugyen Wangchuck and an end to internal strife. He now could fully dedicate himself to consolidating the power with no rivals. At the age of twenty-four, Ugyen Wangchuck was the *de facto* ruler of Bhutan. The following years were marked by peace and leadership that was not driven by a selfish desire for power but by a genuine concern for the nation and its people. Ugyen Wangchuck retained a stable relationship with Tibet while nurturing his relationship with the British. While meeting the Younghusband Expedition in Chumbi and later in Gyantse, Tibet, the British found him a straight and honest young man and “he was for all practical purposes now acting as the main go-between and negotiator, with a genuine wish to peacefully resolve the conflict” (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 501). The Tibetans on the other hand often consulted him before meeting with the British. Bhutan and Tibet maintained a good priest-patron relationship, also called *chöyön*, which is the symbolic relationship between a religious figure and a lay person. For Bhutan, Tibetan religious figures would come to Bhutan to teach religious knowledge to the Bhutanese lay followers. Moreover, the sociopolitical setting in Bhutan since Zhabdrung's demise had significantly changed. The earlier political perception based on two centuries of theocratic rule had led to the belief that it would be unthinkable to have a layperson rule over the country. By the 19th century, however, political authority lay mostly in hands of power-hungry magnates and political leadership was no longer a religious affair. Similarly, the dual system of governance that Zhabdrung had created was no longer limited to the *dzong* area. Consequently, Ugyen Wangchuck

mostly controlled the country from outside the *dzong*. However, as stated by Karma Phuntsho, the most important factor leading to Ugyen Wangchuck becoming the first monarch was his personal traits. He is said to have possessed the characteristics of a king before even being crowned as one (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 517). In 1906, Sir Ugyen Wangchuck appointed his most trusted friend Ugyen Dorji as the *drungpa* – the head of a *dungkhag* or sub-district – of Haa. Ugyen Dorji wrote a letter addressed to the council of the state explaining the benefits of appointing Sir Ugyen Wangchuck as the King of Bhutan. The letter further argued that the absence of a King made it very difficult to maintain the rule of religious and secular laws in Bhutan. Roughly a year after the proposal was put forward, on 17 December 1907, Sir Ugyen Wangchuck was crowned as the first hereditary monarch of Bhutan in Punakha.

2.6 The monarchy's journey towards modernization

King Ugyen Wangchuck had many plans for the development of Bhutan but due to a lack of funds, most of them were not actualized. His most effective development plan was the foundation he laid for modern education. Until then, group education only took place in religious centers and therefore was almost only accessible to priests. The first two schools were founded in Bumthang, central Bhutan, and Haa, western Bhutan.

His son, Jigme Wangchuk, was born in 1905. At the age of eighteen, like his father before him, he got promoted to the position of Tongsa *pönlop*. The 1st Druk Gyalpo (ལྷུ་ཡོ་) or king passed away in 1926, and on 14 March 1927, Jigme Wangchuck was formally crowned as the

2nd Druk Gyalpo in Punakha. King Jigme Wangchuck mainly focused on the construction of new *dzongs*, the renovation of the Tongsa *dzong*, Tashigang *dzong*, and the Wangdiphodrang *dzong* and commissioned the renovation of many temples across Bhutan. The school program his father had set up was now expanding with new schools in Paro, Wangdiphodrang, and Tashigang. The 2nd Druk Gyalpo faced internal struggles as the monarchy was not yet stable and the power dynamics between the King, the Zhabdrung's incarnation, and other players were not settled. At the same time, the region witnessed fast-changing politics. China went through its Nationalist – Communists conflict, India saw the rise of the independence movement and later the predicaments of the Partition, and Tibet enjoyed its independence under the 13th Dalai Lama. Despite these tensions, King Jigme Wangchuck succeeded in strengthening the monarchy and steering the country towards a modern era. The last few years of his reign, the future of the kingdom looked promising. The young heir, Prince Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, served as the Paro *pönlop* from 1950 until he was coronated as the 3rd Druk Gyalpo in 1952. He was different from the past rulers in embracing a democratic approach. The 3rd King is popularly remembered as “the father of modern Bhutan” (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 565). Whereas the earlier economy was managed through a feudal system, during the second half of the 20th century, the King introduced modern legislative, judiciary, and administrative organs, monetization of the economy, development of modern infrastructures such as roads and hospitals, enhanced communication with the outside world and secularization of education (ibid). Moreover, the King initiated the Tshogdu (ཚོགས་འདུ་) or the National Assembly to share the decision-making process with

the country's people. Serfdom was officially abolished and former serfs were given land by the state in 1958. During that time, the country's population was made up of about twenty percent of Nepali immigrants. To completely diffuse the tensions, Nepali citizens were given Bhutanese citizenship and were strongly encouraged to assimilate into the mainstream Bhutanese culture. At the same time, due to China's occupation of Tibet, northern Bhutan saw an influx of Tibetan refugees.

Bhutan's people. In 2008, mock elections were held to familiarize the citizens and that same year, Bhutan saw its first democratic elections. Since 2008, Bhutan has transformed from a monarchy into a constitutional monarchy.

2.7 Transition to a constitutional monarchy

The 4th Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck (r. 1972 – 2006) continued the work of his father of sharing political power with the people of Bhutan only at the age of seventeen. He introduced the civil service in 1973 which led to the rise of a new middle class of administrators and professionals in contrast to the manual work of farmers. In 1981, the formation of the Dzongkhag Yargye Tshogchung (རྫོང་ཁག་ཡུལ་སྐོར་མཁའ་ལྷན་ཁག་) or district development committees was carried out. The decentralization process went a step further with the introduction of the Gewog Yargye Tshogchung (རྫོང་ཁག་ཡུལ་སྐོར་མཁའ་ལྷན་ཁག་) or county development committee. This led to the inclusion of community leaders and village elders in deciding the needs of the *gewog* – group of villages. In 2001, the King initiated the process of drafting the first written Constitution of Bhutan.

The King was only fifty-one when he abdicated. The 5th Druk Gyalpo Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck ascended the throne but was only officially coronated two years later in 2008. The 5th King focused strongly on the process of introducing parliamentary democracy to



Fig. 6. 1st Druk Gyalpo Ugyen Wangchuck.



Fig. 7. 2nd Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wangchuck.



Fig. 8. 3rd Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck.



Fig. 9. 4th Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck.



Fig. 10. 5th Druk Gyalpo Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.



Fig. 11. 5th Druk Gyalpo, Gyaltshun (queen) Jetsun Pema, and the Gyalsey (crown prince) Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck.

Chapter 3 – Bhutan and its ethnic groups

3.1 Bhutan's demographics

The territory of Bhutan is divided into twenty *dzongkhags* – districts – each consisting of *gewogs* – a group of villages – and a total of four *thromdes* – towns or cities. The *dzongkhags* possess several powers and rights such as regulating commerce, creating local governments, and running local elections under Article 22 of the Constitution of Bhutan (Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2008). All twenty *dzongkhags* have a *Dzongkhag Tshogdu* or a district council assisted by the *dzongdag* – the head of the *dzongkhag's* administration. Each *dzongkhag* also has a *dzongkhag* court headed by the *dzongkhag drangpon* or judge. Each *dzongkhag* has one National Council representative and National Assembly representatives are distributed among the *dzongkhags* according to their

registered voter population. As put Forward by the Election Act which states “that no Dzongkhag shall have less than two and more than seven National Assembly constituencies” (Election Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2008, 3).

The total population in July 2020 was estimated at 782,318 (The World Factbook – South Asia). According to the National Statistics Bureau, Bhutan's total population in 2017 was 727,145⁶ which showed an increase of 16% compared to the census taken in 2005 (Population & Housing Census of Bhutan, 2017,10). Thimphu *dzongkhag* has the highest density with a population of 138,736 and a land area of 2,067 km² leading to 67.1 persons per km². Gasa *dzongkhag* has the lowest population density with 1.3 persons per km² (Population & Housing Census of Bhutan, 2017, 16).

Figure 2.6 Population Density, Bhutan 2017

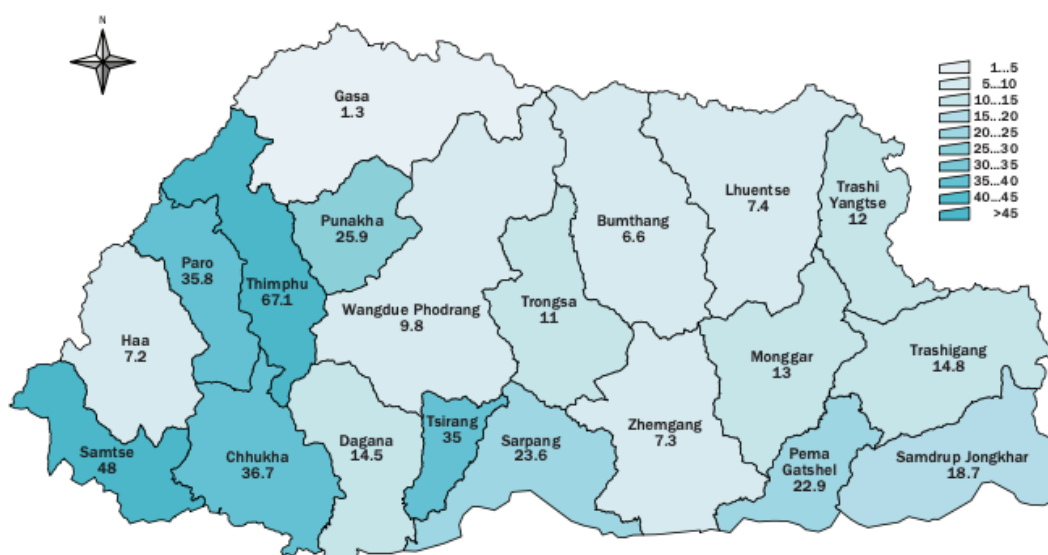


Fig. 12. Bhutan's twenty *dzongkhags* and their population density.

⁶ The total population as of 30 May 2017, was 735,553. However, this includes 8,408 non-

Bhutanese or tourists and will therefore not be counted towards the total in this thesis.

Languages

As will be shown later on in this chapter, different ethnic groups traditionally have their own tongue. As small as Bhutan is as a country, it has more than twenty different languages. Most of these languages are as “different as English and French” (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 51) while still sharing vocabulary, especially for technical and modern terms. The national language of Bhutan is Dzongkha, previously known as Ngalongkha. Until 1961, when Dzongkha officially became the national language, it was the vernacular of western Bhutan. Like all Bhutanese vernaculars, it was a spoken language as opposed to the only written language called *chökay* (ཚོས་སྐད་) or Classical Tibetan. Before 1961, all written correspondence was conducted in *chökay* when it got substituted (it never got replaced, much of the Bhutanese literature still is in *chökay*) by the introduction of written Dzongkha. This seems to have been a strategic move after the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959 to establish a unique cultural and linguistic identity. However, it faced and still faces many challenges as the majority of the population did not speak Dzongkha. Only about 24% of the total population speaks Dzongkha as their first language. Moreover, with the rapid modernization, Dzongkha is short of vocabulary to denote most technologic and scientific terminology. Even nowadays, while Dzongkha is being taught in schools, most Bhutanese face serious challenges with speaking and writing as it uses the Tibetan alphabet. With the introduction of the first secular schools during the reign of the 1st Druk Gyalpo, Hindi was chosen as the

medium of instruction because of the ready availability of textbooks from India (Van Driem, 1998, 7). During the reign of the 2nd Druk Gyalpo and the number of schools growing, a nationwide education program was set up that provided *chökay* and English as the medium of instruction in addition to Hindi. From 1961 onwards, most of the education is in English now except for the Dzongkha subjects. In 1986, the first Dzongkha dictionary was published and from 1989 onwards, the Dzongkha Development Commission (རྫོང་ཁ་ཁོང་འཕེལ་སྐྱོར་ཚོགས་པ་) has achieved a great deal of establishing new textbooks and learning aids.

The language that is spoken by the largest percentage of people in Bhutan (28%) is Tshangla, or now popularly referred to as Sharchop, which is spoken by people from eastern and parts of southern Bhutan. As those parts of Bhutan are more densely populated (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 57), despite not being the national language, it is the most widely spoken vernacular. It, therefore, is one of the languages used by news broadcasts and radio stations.

The third most spoken language is Lhotsamkha (22%)⁷ which is mainly spoken by the Lhotsampas but widely used by the rest of Bhutan as well. Until the 1980s, the government supported the teaching of Nepali in southern Bhutan. However, as shown later, with the introduction of *Driglam Namzha*, it was dropped out of the curriculum.

Religion

Almost all northern Bhutanese are followers of Buddhism in whatever form and some southern Bhutanese of Nepali

⁷ All the percentages are provided by the CIA – World Factbook and are only included to give a general impression.

origin also follow Buddhism. Most southern Bhutanese are however Hindus. There is a growing number of Christians in the country. In Bhutan, religion permeates all parts of life (karma Phuntsho, 2013, 42).

3.2 The Highland Communities

The highland communities originate from the Alpine Highlands, which started around an altitude of 4000 meters. The vegetation includes stunted fir, juniper, dwarf rhododendrons, and medicinal herbs including the expensive *cordyceps*. The yak and sheep grazing in the wide meadows extend to the snow lines of the mountains perennially covered in snow.

To the north, there are three highland communities of Lingshi, Laya, and Lunana. Lingshi falls under Thimphu *dzongkhag* while Laya and Lunana fall under Gasa *dzongkhag*. These communities mainly herd yaks and cultivate barley, wheat, and buckwheat. In autumn, just before the snow closes their trade routes, some of them make their way down to the lowlands to sell their products. They speak dialects of Dzongkha which are not easily understandable to a Dzongkha-speaker. Both their tents and clothing are made of dark yak hair and sheep wool which places them much closer to Tibetan pastoral communities than to mainstream Bhutanese (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 37). According to a local myth, the people of this area claimed to be descendants of a group sent from Tibet as part of a scapegoat ritual.

To the east along the northern highlands, one finds the community of Lakha. The language they speak goes by the same name which is a Southern Tibetan language (Joshua Project: Lap, Lakha in Bhutan).



Fig. 13. Layap women during the Royal Highland Festival in Laya.

Further east, there is the village of Dur which is part of the Bumthang *dzongkhag*. They speak the language of herders, Brokpaikha.

The farthest east are the communities of Merak and Sakteng, falling under the Trashigang *dzongkhag*. They speak a language closer related to Dzongkha than any other language spoken around them. The most distinctive feature of their clothing is a hat made of yak hair with long twisted tufts. Just like the people from Lingshi, Laya, and Lunana, they have their own myth. According to this myth, they are alleged to have come from Tibet guided by the female deity Ama Jomo after they rebelled against a leader (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 38). The two communities of Laya – Lingshi and Merak – Sakteng form the border between Bhutan and Tibet and both trace their origins from Tibet.



Fig. 14. Traditionally dressed family from Merak Sakteng.

3.3 The Midland Communities

The Temperate Midlands is the cultural heart of Bhutan and is marked by broad valleys separated by high mountain ranges and rivers. These natural barriers historically led to ethnic and linguistic diversity in the country. Moreover, those valleys had easier access to especially Tibet which led people to travel there for trade, education, or pilgrimage. The altitudes vary from 1000 to 3000 meters and the climate is moderate. With the rise of altitude, the vegetation and animal species change gradually. In the lower valleys of Thimphu, Paro, Punakha, Tongsa, and Mongar, respectively falling under Thimphu *dzongkhag*, Paro *dzongkhag*, Punakha *dzongkhag*, Tongsa *dzongkhag*, and Mongar *dzongkhag*, the most common crops cultivated are maize, millet, chili, and a variety of vegetables and fruits. The people in the western valleys – Thimphu, Paro, Haa, Samtse, and Chukha *dzongkhags* – are most commonly referred to as Ngalong, also a term to refer to all native Dzongkha speakers. As of 2013 according to the most recent survey, Dzongkha had about 171.000 native speakers (Wikipedia – Dzongkha). Ngalong

translates to ‘early risers’ which is a reference to the people that got first introduced to the Buddhist teachings.

In the south-central *dzongkhags* that include Zhemgang, Tongsa, and Mongar, the ethnic group called Kheng is found. Their language, Khengkha, is mutually intelligible with Bumthangkha, they are closely related to the people of central Bhutan and have almost exclusive trade relations with Bumthang.

In the higher valleys such as Haa and Bumthang, falling under the Haa *dzongkhag* and Bumthang *dzongkhag*, they cultivate buckwheat, barley, and wheat. As touched upon earlier, Bumthang has an ethnic closeness to Tibet tracing back to the seventh century. Particularly the elites, their origin is Tibetan and later gave rise to prominent families in Bumthang.

In the eastern *dzongkhags* of Samdrup Jongkhar, Pema Gatsel, Tashigang, and Mongar, the main crop is maize. They speak a language called Sharchopikha or generally referred to as Sharchop which literally translates to the language of the east. The two remaining eastern *dzongkhags* are Tashi Yangtse and Lhuntse *dzongkhag*. Although the main language of the eastern *dzongkhags* is Sharchop, at least seven other local languages are spoken here, such as Kurtöp.

3.4 The Lowland Communities

The Lowlands stretch from the Terai belt up to the foothill of the Himalayan ranges up to an elevation of 1800 meters. The vegetation is mainly evergreen forests and jungles. The region has a subtropical climate with warm winters and hot, humid summers with a lot of monsoon rains that cause frequent landslides. The Lowlands are home to elephants, rhinos, Bengal tigers, and panthers amongst others. The heat, humidity, and the fear of malaria, kept the northern Bhutanese from entering this area. However, nowadays the lowlands are the gateway to India, the most important trading partner. Due to this, the urban centers along the border have grown significantly and made the population density higher than the valleys north of it.

The ethnic groups who lived here before the twentieth century are known as the Lhob and Taba Dramtep, which now falls under Samtse *dzongkhag*. These communities remained isolated from the rest of Bhutan until recently and are therefore very distinct from the mainstream Bhutanese culture. Their lifestyle is completely untouched by Buddhist or other outside influences that it has been speculated that they might be the last remnants of the earliest settlers in Bhutan (Knowledge Maps of Subject: Bhutan Cultural Library).

Apart from them, the biggest community is the migrant laborers from Nepal, brought at the turn of the twentieth century, now referred to as Lhotsampas. Although they are all referred to as Nepalis, they came from a diverse ethnic background stretching from Hindi-Indian castes, Brahmins, and Sherpas who consider themselves Tibetan (Buddhists). During the 1990s, a bitter conflict occurred between the people of Nepali origin and the Bhutanese government which sent

thousands of Nepalis into exile (Manchanda, 2009, 149). Many of them are living in refugee camps just across the border with Nepal, others fled elsewhere over the world. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, Article 6, states that "a person, domiciled in Bhutan on or before the Thirty-First of December Nineteen Hundred and Fifty-Eight and whose name is registered in the official record of the Government of Bhutan shall be a citizen of Bhutan by registration".



Fig. 15. Lhotshampa presenting a Bhutanese passport.

It still leaves Lhotsampas as a minority as citizenship rules are strict and many "Nepali-speaking people have not attained citizenship" (Freedom House – Bhutan – Political Pluralism and Participation). This most evidently means that those people are being turned away from voting and are stateless. The *Driglam Namzha* (ཐྱིག་ལམ་རྣམ་གཞག་) decree enforced in 1988 (Kuensel, August 16, 2015) is a code of conduct and ethics which requires all Bhutanese citizens to wear the national dress *gho* (for men) and *kira* (for women) for professional and government positions as well as students in their school-life and formal occasions from recommended to

mandatory. This was heavily resented by the Lhotsampas who complained about being forced to wear clothing that was not their own traditional clothes. This got overthrown by the Bhutanese government and Lhotsampas are required to wear the Bhutanese national dress on formal occasions. But despite this, the Lhotshampas or 'Southerners' still make up about 25 percent of the total population.

3.5 The Tibetans

One would expect many Tibetan refugees in Bhutan as the Kingdom is one that like Ladakh and Sikkim comes closest to Tibet. And indeed, Bhutan welcomed many Tibetan refugees at the end of the 1950s. Following an incident during the 1970s between the royal family and some high positioned Tibetans, thousands of Tibetan refugees who had settled in Bhutan fled to India. However, a great many of them stayed in Bhutan, renounced the right to return to Tibet and enjoyed "the same privileges as Bhutanese citizens" (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, 578). Today, however, a majority is still hoping to return to Tibet one day which, according to the Constitution of Bhutan, Article 6: 3, makes them unqualified to become Bhutanese citizens and lets them remain refugees (In Bhutan, Tibetan refugees yearn to join protests).

Perhaps the best-known person displaying her Tibetan descent is the Royal Grandmother Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck (1930 –). Born to a Bhutanese father and Sikkimese mother (A Brief History of Bhutan House in Kalimpong, 2008, 10), she has always proudly worn the typical Tibetan dress. She was born in the Bhutan House in Kalimpong and later got married to Jigme Dorji Wangchuck in 1951, a year before he

was coronated as the 3rd Druk Gyalpo. The Royal Grandmother Kesang Choden Wangchuck is the only living queen grandmother in the world.

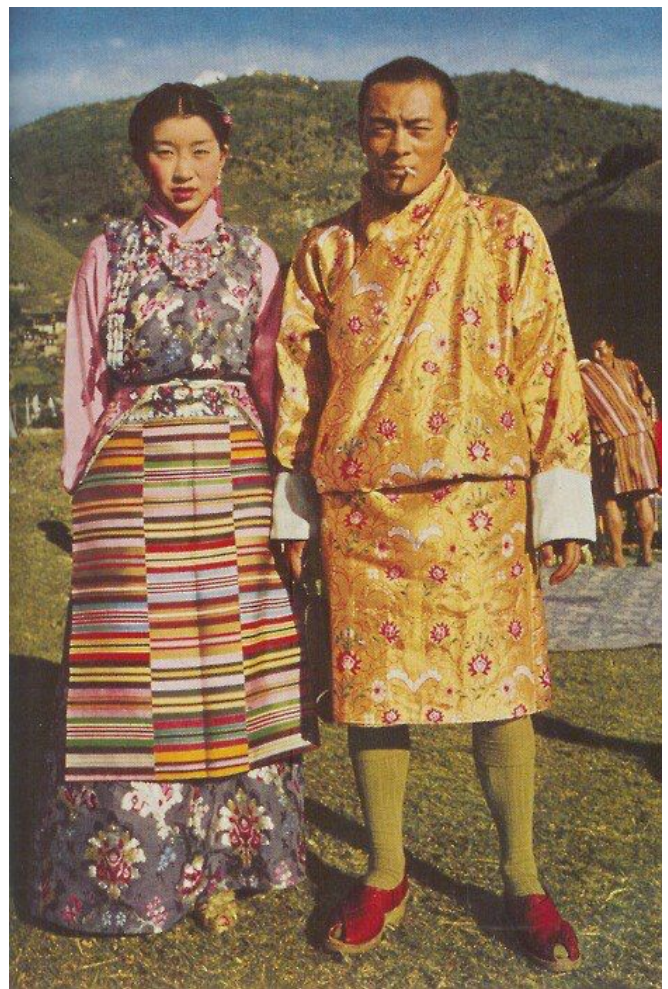


Fig. 16. The 3rd Druk Gyalpo with Gyaltson Kesang Choden, wearing the typical Tibetan attire.

Chapter 4 – Identity and its components

4.1 Introduction

The last Shangri-La. The Land of Happiness. Just a few names for the Kingdom of Bhutan. What do these names mean and how do they affect the outside, and maybe even the inside, perspective on Bhutan? It is important that the foreign perspective might have influenced the inside perspective. These names are the umbrella term for everything that “Bhutanese” culture and tradition are. And as culture and tradition both are very important sources for identity, it is valuable to consider whether these particular religions and traditions do represent what Bhutan is or not. Institutions like the Tourism Council of Bhutan and the Gross National Happiness Commission have promoted specific concepts about what Bhutanese culture, tradition, and therefore identity is. This chapter will explore why Bhutan got these names and the different components that together form this ideal.

4.2 Religion and identity

Article 3 “Spiritual Heritage” of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan states “Buddhism is the spiritual heritage of Bhutan, which promotes the principles and values of peace, non-violence, compassion, and tolerance”. Article 4 “Culture” of the Constitution states “The State endeavor to preserve, protect and promote the cultural heritage of the country, including monuments, places, and objects of artistic or historic interest, Dzongs, Lhakhangs, Goendeys, Ten-sum,

Nyes, language, and literature, music, visual arts, and religion to enrich society and the cultural life of the citizens”. Taking these two statements into account, it seems fairly obvious what is considered to be Bhutanese: Buddhism and everything material that is related to that. It has to be noted that Bhutan does guarantee freedom of religion but it also true that Bhutan *is* a Buddhist country (Tourism Council of Bhutan – Our People, Society & Religion) or at least wants to be known as one.

Coming back to Buddhism, it is very interesting to note that in Buddhism, there is no such thing as a fixed identity (Culture, Public Policy and Happiness, 2012, 84). The teachings of non-self or *anātman* in Sanskrit refer to the always-changing self as everything is impermanent. In other words, Buddhism can help you identify with a certain group of people or can help you get a sense of belonging, but will never *be* part of your identity.

Now for Bhutan, as a Buddhist country, the facts are that a big part of Bhutan’s population follows Hinduism and an increasing amount of people is following Christianity. These religions are present in every aspect of life. So, the answer to the question of whether Buddhism marks the Bhutanese identity would be not really. Surely, some Bhutanese would argue that Buddhism is a part of their identity but many others would contradict that.

4.3 Gross National Happiness (GNH)

The term Gross National Happiness (GNH) was first introduced by the 4th Druk Gyalpo in 1987. GNH directly opposes the idea of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a

measure of the development of a country. Since 2008, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, Article 9 "Principles of State and Policy" puts forward: "The State shall strive to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of Gross National Happiness". As stated by the 5th Druk Gyalpo "GNH acts as our national conscience guiding us towards making wise decisions for a better future" (Schuelka and Maxwell, 2016, 155). In Bhutan, GNH is considered as an alternative measure of approach for progress and development. However, no one could have predicted that the concept of GNH could also backfire: the concept is now taken by some Bhutanese as a checklist to which one measures their own happiness. In the survey, the respondents that scored the highest when it comes to happiness are civil servants. Hence, if you cannot be one, you will not be happy. So, instead of measuring the general development and happiness through GNH, people started taking the results to measure their own lives to and therefore their own happiness. Sadly enough, this sparked a number of suicides as people felt less and less satisfied with their lives. In 2015, the Ministry of Health (MoH) developed a suicide prevention action plan after it became evident that every month around seven people died by suicide (Suicide Prevention in Bhutan, 2015, iii). Unfortunately, suicide rates are still high due to a lack of awareness of mental health and availability of mental healthcare facilities.

GNH survey and results

The Centre for Bhutan Studies (CBS) has created GNH indicators to measure Bhutan's progress. They also developed and conducted GNH surveys in 2006, 2007, 2010, and 2015. The

questionnaire goes into sex, age, type of household, geographical area one originates from, level of education, spirituality/religion, relation to nature, employment, living standards, and health (Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH Research, third GNH survey questionnaire). The only results available are from the survey conducted in 2010 (GNH Survey Findings 2010). Provided below are some of the relevant or most interesting topics covered in the survey. The highest number of respondents were from Samdrup Jongkhar *dzongkhag*, the lowest number came from Gasa *dzongkhag* while Thimphu *dzongkhag* had the third-highest response.

Mean happiness

The respondents from Haa *dzongkhag* seem to be the happiest (6.49/10) while respondents from Pema Gatsel are the least happy (5.61/10). With the increasing level of education attained, the level of happiness also increased. Measured by occupation, civil servants (6.94/10) and monks (6.67/10) filled out to be the happiest while farmers (5.80/10) and national workforce employees (5.39/10) filled out to be the least happy.

The experience of contentment per *dzongkhag* is the highest in Gasa (often 34.1%) while the highest percentage of respondents never experiencing contentment life in Mongar *dzongkhag* (37.7%).

Living standards

The best quality of life is reported in Gasa *dzongkhag* (71.89%) while Chukha *dzongkhag* scores the highest when it comes to a very poor quality of life (11.47%). The mean annual household income is the highest in Thimphu

dzongkhag (Ngultrum 323.506)⁸ and the lowest in Lhuntse *dzongkhag* (Nu. 48.711).

Health

The self-rated health status is rated as 'excellent' most often in Haa *dzongkhag* (30.9%) while it is rated as 'poor' most often in Tsirang (3.9%).

The *dzongkhag* with the highest percentage of 'normal mental wellbeing' is Dagana (93.5%) while the highest percentage of 'severe mental distress' was reported in Pema Gatsel (10%). The mental wellbeing by occupation showed that the Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) and Royal Bhutan Police (RBP) employees have the highest percentage (96.5%) while the occupation with severe mental distress turned out to be national workforce employees (10.1%) and farmers (6.9%).

The *dzongkhags* with the highest suicidal ideation are Samdrup Jongkhar (6.1%) and Tongsa (6%), while the *dzongkhags* with the highest percentage of no suicidal ideation are Gasa (100%) and Haa (99.5%). The *dzongkhags* with the highest percentage of suicidal attempts are Chukha (0.9%) and Bumthang (0.7%).

Education

The *dzongkhag* with the highest literacy percentage is Thimphu (72.4%) while the *dzongkhag* with the highest illiteracy percentage is Tashigang (65%). Literacy by occupation is the highest among students (100%), civil servants (96.5%), and monks (92.3%) while the lowest among national workforce employees (24.7%) and farmers (29.4%).

Cultural diversity

95.2% of the respondents stated that they can speak their mother tongue very well and only 0.3% reported that they cannot speak it at all. 91.1% of the respondents find Bhutanese traditions important, while only 0.3% do not find them important. 51.3% take part in local festivals while 5.9% do never take part. 93.4% find *Driglam Namzha*, as explained earlier, very important and only 0.5% do not find it important.

Relation to nature

When it comes to feeling responsible for conserving the natural environment, 83.9% stated that they feel highly responsible and 0.5% do not feel responsible at all. Only 9% of the respondents stated they are aware and have a good understanding of climate change, while 33% is unsure what it is and 26% does not have any idea what it is.

⁸ €1 is approximately Nu. 80.

4.4 Language

Language is associated with identity as it gives one the tools to communicate with one's community. This draws back on the idea of Anderson (2006) and his imagined communities. It is imagined because even the members of the smallest nation will never meet or know all of their fellow-members, "yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 2006, 6). The notion of an imagined community creates a sense of belonging to a particular one. This then fuels the idea of nationalism, as Said (2001) puts it, "Nationalism is an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language, culture, and customs" (Said, 2001, 176).

In the case of Bhutan, this creates multiple imagined communities within one since there are many different ethnic communities with their own languages. As put forward in the book *Happiness – Transforming the Development Landscape* (2017, 264), "Distinct languages, dialects, and folklore can also have a symbolic importance for maintaining national identity and cultural distinctiveness". This internal cultural distinctiveness however is being threatened by both the enforcement of the new national language Dzongkha but more so by English. The different languages of Bhutan carry a "rich and diverse tradition of oral literatures, but these genres and the cultural values they embody may disappear if they are not promoted." (The Role of Culture Preservation in Bhutan, 2013, 1). One of the new initiatives developed by the GNH Commission has identified "National Key Result Areas (NKRA)" aiming on strengthening Bhutan's identity by preserving and promoting its culture and tradition. Part of this program is the promotion of the use of Dzongkha and

other local dialects (Bhutan Aims to Reinforce And Promote Its Cultural Identity And Traditions, 2019).

Chapter 5 – Questionnaires

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the answers provided by the questionnaire⁹ I have compiled and spread amongst Bhutanese that I have become familiar with or people they know during my time in Bhutan (July 2018 – 2020 end). The twenty people interviewed are all born in Bhutan spread over all twenty *dzongkhags*. Although I was able to conduct interviews with people from different parts of Bhutan, most of the respondents originated from the Western *dzongkhags*, the most densely populated region of Bhutan. Moreover, the majority of the respondents moved at least once. Most of them moved to a different *dzongkhag*, and often to a different zone. This might explain why different traditions and customs are blended as shown in the *findings*. Moreover, it is important to keep

in mind that most Bhutanese are raised, at least, bilingual and in most Bhutanese households, multiple languages are being used as if it all were their first language.

The main goal of this questionnaire was for me to find out whether or not the average Bhutanese agree with the fabricated foreign image of Bhutan. Moreover, it would be very interesting to see if people from various *dzongkhags* describe their perspective on Bhutanese identity differently and, if so, their reasons for it. Having lived in Bhutan for over two years made me realize that the Bhutanese culture is much more dynamic and diverse than it leads you to believe at first.

It is important to stress that the survey is subjective as it is merely based on people's own opinions, perspectives, and feelings. The analysis and interpretation as objective.



Fig. 17. Bhutan's four zones. From left to right; western (green), central (yellow), southern (pink), and eastern (blue) *dzongkhags*.

⁹ The questionnaire as such and all the answers are included in the appendices.

Regarding the questionnaire, because of the global Covid-19 pandemic and the nation-wide lockdown since March 2020, it has been a little more complicated to conduct insightful interviews than I had anticipated. However, the 20 interviews that I conducted in the form of a questionnaire have been really valuable to this research. However, although as many as 20 respondents have contributed to this overall research, some caution is needed when interpreting the overall generalizations. Out of the 20 responses, 13 of them were answered by female respondents and the rest by male respondents. Their ages range from 20 up to 30 years old and their professions vary from college students, graduates from any college in Bhutan, and candidates for the Royal Civil Service exam (RCSC).¹⁰

5.2 The questionnaire

The first part of the questionnaire is developed to create a background picture of every interviewee or respondent. It goes into where the parents were born, where the respondent was born and raised to put the rest of the questionnaire in perspective. The second part will go deeper into the religious and linguistic preferences of the respondent. The last part of the questionnaire focuses on the Bhutanese identity and how the respondent would describe this. This part is the most relevant to this research as this may or may not show whether respondents from different *dzongkhags* also have a different opinion or perspective on the Bhutanese identity.

Before proceeding to the findings, it is important to note that how I arranged

the different *dzongkhags* is different from the one in Chapter 3. The Four Zones that I have used in this chapter, is the common Bhutanese manner in which the *dzongkhags* are arranged. In Chapter 3, when looking at the cultural and linguistic zones of Bhutan, a horizontal divide was the most logical choice whereas in this Chapter, a vertical divide is the most obvious one looking at how the *dzongkhags* are arranged.

5.3 Findings

It was surprising that, even though the respondents originate from different parts of Bhutan with different traditions, languages, and customs, the majority of the answers show strong similarities. I will discuss the most relevant questions and answers below.

“Where were you born in Bhutan? Have you moved to a different dzongkhag?”

Out of the 20 respondents, eleven of them were born in the Western parts, four in the Central parts, one in the Southern parts, and four in the Eastern parts of Bhutan. All of the respondents originating from the Central, Southern, and Eastern parts, moved to the Western *dzongkhags*, most of them for study purposes. Out of the seven respondents from the Western parts who moved, three moved to the Southern *dzongkhags* while the other four moved within Western Bhutan.

¹⁰ The RCSC is the recruitment process for any professional position in Bhutan’s civil service.

“Which language(s) is/are spoken in your household? Which other language(s) do you speak? And which language do you feel most comfortable speaking in?”

Most Bhutanese are raised with multiple first languages. Therefore, there is no clear boundary between the first tongue and other languages that are being used. For example, for a person born in a Lhotshampa family in Thimphu, the language that is spoken in the household would be Lhotsamkha. The language used outside the house depends on who the person is talking to. If this person originated from the East, the conversation would be in Sharchop. People from Thimphu would be spoken to in Dzongkha. If the cab driver is from a Lhotshampa family, one would converse in Lhotsamkha, even though the passenger might not come from that background. If the cab driver is from Paro, it would be in Dzongkha.

The 11 respondents from the Western part use five different languages in the household: Dzongkha (7), Lhotsamkha (5), Sharchop (1), English (2), and Tibetan (1). One of the respondents mentioned they speak Dzongkha, Lhotsamkha, and English in their household. Another respondent uses Dzongkha, Tibetan, and English in their household.

However, it is wrong to imply that the same numbers would be true when it comes to the language the respondent feels most comfortable in. Of all 20 respondents, nine feel most comfortable speaking in Dzongkha, three in Lhotsamkha, one in Sharchop, and seven in English. The other languages the respondents use are Dzongkha,

Lhotsamkha, Sharchop, English, Hindi, Bengali, and Mangdeb¹¹.

The four respondents from the central *dzongkhags* use four different languages at home; Dzongkha (3), Lhotsamkha (1), Lunana language (1), and English (1). However, four respondents use Dzongkha most comfortably, one mentioned to also use Lhotsamkha, and one also English as the most comfortable language. The respondents from these *dzongkhags* know seven other languages too; Dzongkha, Lhotsamkha, Sharchop, English, Hindi, Korean, and Spanish¹².

The Southern respondent uses Lhotsamkha in the household and feels most comfortable using it too. The respondent also knows Dzongkha and Sharchop¹³.

The four Eastern respondents use four different languages at home; Sharchop (3), Dzongkha (1), Yangtsep (1), and Kurtöp (1). All of them named multiple languages they feel most comfortable speaking in. Three of them find Dzongkha the most comfortable to use, two Sharchop, one Hindi, one Yangtsep, one Kurtöp, and one English. Furthermore, the respondents speak Dzongkha, Lhotsamkha, Hindi, and English as well¹⁴.

Referring to the general GNH survey discussed in Chapter 4, more than 95% of the respondents stated that they were able to speak their mother tongue very well. Connecting this to the findings of the questionnaire, the question is raised which language would be considered to be the mother tongue. To most people, the language they were born in, would be considered to be their official mother tongue. However, as already mentioned, language in Bhutan is not a rigid thing. In fact, language is used extremely flexible throughout the country. Naturally, some

¹¹ The exact numbers can be found in the Appendix 2, under question 7, on page 47.

¹² Ibid, on page 51.

¹³ Ibid, on page 53.

¹⁴ Ibid, on page 55.

people would attach more value to one particular language as a marker of their identity. This is most present within the Lhotshampas which is again stimulated by their painful history in Bhutan.

“In what religious tradition were you raised?”

A generalization when it comes to religion in Bhutan is that the Northern part follows Buddhism, the central part practices both Buddhism and Hinduism, while the Southern part follows mostly Hinduism. However, considering how common it is for Bhutanese families to move from one to other parts of Bhutan, the religious boundaries are blurred at best.

The majority of the respondents, 15, practice Buddhism, three practice Hinduism, one follows both Buddhism and Shamanic practices, and one practices both Buddhism and Hinduism. All respondents from the Central and Eastern *dzongkhags* follow Buddhism while the respondents from the Western *dzongkhags* are the most diverse, seven follow Buddhism, two Hinduism, one Buddhism and Shamanic practices, and one Buddhism and Hinduism.

“In your opinion, what comprises the Bhutanese identity and is this identity important to you?”

First of all, all the respondents consider the Bhutanese identity to be something important. Secondly, the main

answer was that the Bhutanese identity is “wearing the national dress, speaking the national language¹⁵ and respecting our King”. Moreover, it is also “following the norms and values of our Buddhist country such as compassion and following the Middle Path¹⁶”, “our cultures and traditions” and it was stated that it is important to preserve this uniqueness. It was mentioned by many respondents that the Bhutanese identity means celebrating diversity and the unique character of the country.

As found by the GNH survey, over 93% of the respondents stated to find *Driglam Namzha* important. Surprisingly, only a few respondents to this questionnaire mentioned *Driglam Namzha* as being important or as a marker of the Bhutanese identity.

Subsequently, the most striking response to this question was from a Bhutanese Nepali respondent, who was born in Bhutan as were the parents. The respondent stressed the importance of celebrating diversity but also mentioned that “we should continue to strive for equality for people from different backgrounds”. This respondent mentioned that although the Bhutanese identity is important, the respondent never “really felt like a “true” Bhutanese mainly because of the fact that I do not possess an identity card”. Furthermore, not possessing an identity card means that one cannot own land or work wherever they please. “Thus, not having an identity card is always considered not ‘Bhutanese’ enough to be able to avail the facilities and opportunities one receives being a Bhutanese”. Some issues with the

¹⁵ Dzongkha

¹⁶ The Middle Way refers to the Buddhist understanding put forward by Gautama Buddha, avoiding the extremes of self-indulgence and asceticism which would lead to liberation.

Lhotshampas are already mentioned in Chapter 3, and this response made it once again painfully clear that a lot of improvement is needed.

“Are Buddhism, GNH, and a particular language part of the Bhutanese identity?”

17 out of 20 respondents consider Buddhism and Gross National Happiness to be part of the Bhutanese identity. The three respondents that did not consider Buddhism as part of the Bhutanese identity argued that “Buddhism is a philosophy and therefore cannot identify one”, and that “not the whole population of Bhutan follows Buddhism but still are Bhutanese”. The same three respondents that did not think of GNH as a marker of identity argued that “GNH is developed to balance the economic and social growth of Bhutan and as such it is a tool for the betterment of the Bhutanese society but not a marker of the Bhutanese identity”.

When it comes to a particular language that would mark the Bhutanese identity, some argued that since Dzongkha is the national language of Bhutan, it is part of the Bhutanese identity. However, others argued that since Bhutan has many local dialects and languages, this diversity is what comprises the Bhutanese identity.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

In this thesis, I aimed at answering the following research question: “to what extent and how did the distinct cultural, ethnic, and linguistic groups, who originated from valleys separated by natural barriers, and their cultural traditions, become one ‘homogenous’ constitutional monarchy?”.

Bhutan as a country came into existence in the year 1616 when Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal unified the territories that are now Bhutan. Preceding the unification, the different areas had little to no contact as they were separated by natural barriers such as high mountain ranges and rivers. Consequently, the different regions had developed their own distinctive traditions, customs, vernaculars, and ways of life.

After Zhabdrung’s death, Bhutan witnessed a turbulent few centuries with multiple wars, both against foreign powers as well as internal strives. These tumultuous times came to an end with the coronation of the first Druk Gyalpo in 1907. Arguably, only after the introduction of the monarchy did Bhutan become more of a homogenous country than it ever was. Now, the kingdom was no longer ruled by a purely Buddhist ruler, the Zhabdrung or his successors, but by a more neutral ruler, the Druk Gyalpo, the king. Perhaps, the monarchy has provided the different ethnic groups with an overarching institution that has given most people a sense of belonging.

6.1 Cultural and linguistic diversity

The three cultural zones of Bhutan are the Highland, Midland, and Lowland Communities. The Highland Communities speak a language that is not easily

understandable to Dzongkha-speakers and wear clothes that closely resemble those of Tibetan pastoral communities. The religion followed by the majority of the Highlanders is Buddhism. The Midland Communities form the cultural heartland of Bhutan. The people from this area are referred to as Ngalong-speakers, the native speakers of Dzongkha. The Midland Communities most closely resemble the stereotype of Bhutanese culture – they naturally wear the national dress kira and gho, speak Dzongkha, and are followers of Buddhism. The Lowland Communities are mostly comprised of Bhutanese Nepalis, referred to as Lhotshampas. Most people are followers of Hinduism, speak Lhotsamkha which closely resembles the Nepali language and traditionally wear sari for women and *daura-suruwal* for men.

There is a huge cultural and linguistic diversity within Bhutan. As made clear by the questionnaires, it is this diversity that most respondents considered to make the Bhutanese identity so unique. An example of this diversity is the many religious festivals celebrated throughout Bhutan. The public holidays in Bhutan are mainly related to auspicious Buddhist events or important days connected to the royal family. The only public holiday related to Hinduism is Dashain which originated from Nepal. Dashain is celebrated in September or October and is the most important family festival celebrated in the Hindu tradition. In short, Dashain symbolizes the victory of good over evil. The most important component of the festival is the *tika* blessing, given by the eldest family member. Dashain is considered to be a purely Nepali festival, even though non-Nepalis are sometimes invited to receive

the *tika* blessing and celebrate the festival with the Nepali communities.

Annually celebrated Drukpa Kagyu Buddhist festivals are called Tshechu (ཚེ་ཤེ་ཆུ་བཟུ་), which translates to “day ten”. Every *dzongkhag* has its own Tshechu, always held on the tenth day of a month of the Bhutanese lunar calendar. The focal point of every Tshechu is the Cham dances or masked dances. The Cham dances are mostly based on events connected to the Nyingmapa teacher Guru Rinpoche, who came to Bhutan in the eighth century, and other important Buddhist saints. The dances are typically performed by the monks from the dzong in which the Tshechu is being held. Most Tshechus will end with the unfolding of a large *thangka* painting, a *thongdrel*, “typically depicting a seated Padmasambhava surrounded by holy beings” (Tshechu – Wikipedia, April 2015). The mere viewing of the *thongdrel* is said to cleanse the viewer of accumulated bad karma and sins which is also the literal translation ‘liberation through seeing’. Tshechu is a Buddhist festival but attracts visitors from various religious backgrounds.

One should be aware however, that even though Dashain is a Hindu festival and mostly celebrated by Lhotshampas and Tshechus are a Buddhist festival, most importantly observed by Buddhists, they are not necessarily exclusive. As shown in Figure 17, an effort is being made by, amongst others, the Royal Family to bridge the gap between Lhotshampas and other communities.



Fig. 18. A Lhotshampa woman receiving the *tika* blessing from the 5th Druk Gyalpo during Dashain, 2019.



Fig. 19. Tshechu 2019 – monks performing a cham dance.

6.2 What makes you a Bhutanese?

Regardless of how the respondents described the Bhutanese identity, all of them stated that it was something important. The most recurring answer to the question what this identity comprises was wearing the national dress, speaking the national language and according to only a few it includes *Driglam Namzha*. The latter contradicts the findings of the GNH survey, in which over 93% of the respondents stated to find *Driglam Namzha* important as it sums up the most important characteristics of Bhutanese etiquettes and behavior. Another aspect that makes up the national identity are the Bhutanese traditions and local cultures. This is in line with the GNH survey in which over 91% of the respondents stated to find Bhutanese traditions important. 17 out of 20 respondents considered GNH and Buddhism to be part of the national identity. The latter is especially interesting considering that a considerable percentage of the population does not follow a Buddhist tradition but might only follow some of the philosophies such as compassion and simplicity. The national language Dzongkha was not necessarily considered to be an essential part of the national identity except by a few. An explanation for this is that Bhutan has over twenty different languages and most Bhutanese speak at least two or more of these languages. Bhutanese in general are extremely flexible and elegant when it comes to the use of different languages. As such, Dzongkha might be considered to be the most “Bhutanese” language as it is the national language, but it is only the native language of about 171.000 people. However, this does not imply that not more people know Dzongkha as it is a mandatory course in the school curriculum.

So, what makes you a Bhutanese truly? The best answer would be the shared values and norms in this Himalayan Kingdom. Most respondents mentioned the humble way of life, practicing compassion, and celebrating diversity is what makes one a Bhutanese. However, as pointed out by one Lhotshampa respondent, this diversity should be celebrated in a society in which people from all different backgrounds are treated as equals. The respondent mentioned to have never felt like a true Bhutanese as this respondent does not possess a Bhutanese identity card. Not possessing an identity card means not being able to avail the same facilities and opportunities one receives possessing an identity card. So, for this respondent, being Bhutanese is not just about feeling Bhutanese but also being acknowledged as a Bhutanese.

Furthermore, another important aspect is the shared respect and love that the people have for the royal family and especially the Druk Gyalpo. His Majesty, and in particular the 4th Druk Gyalpo, is considered to be a Bodhisattva King (Kuensel, February 20, 2016). This is most prominently connected to the major developments His Majesty introduced to Bhutan. However, the Druk Gyalpo in general is considered to be linked to some Buddhist emanation since he is the protector of the nation, although it is not clear to which bodhisattva in particular.

6.3 The roar of the Thunder Dragon

In just a little over half a century, Bhutan came out of the Middle Ages and rapidly developed into a country connected by motor roads, exposure to the outside world, access to the internet, and foreign products which consequently led to the changing mentality in younger generations. Until 1974, before the

introduction of tourism, and 1983, with the introduction of Drukair services, Bhutan was an isolated country with sporadic trade relations with mostly Tibet. The different valleys of Bhutan were separated and each community lived a self-sustaining life. With the opening-up and increasing popularity of the country to foreigners, Bhutan has struggled to preserve these different traditions and cultures and not to let it blend into one mainstream culture, heavily influenced by foreign cultures. The vision of the Tourism Council is therefore “To promote Bhutan as an exclusive travel destination based on Gross National Happiness (GNH) Values” (Tourism Council of Bhutan – Tourism Policy). Moreover, it states that the Royal Government has adopted very cautious approaches to the growth and development of the tourism industry in Bhutan and that it “is founded on the principle of sustainability, meaning that tourism must be environmentally and ecologically friendly, socially and culturally acceptable and economically viable” (ibid).

However, regional tourism, which includes fewer regulations, has seen many incidents that have led to the introduction of stricter rules. Most of these incidents were environmentally and culturally related. An example of the latter was an incident with an Indian tourist climbing atop of a chorten (The Bhutanese – Outrage over Chorten Incident).

Another issue is the ongoing friction between Lhotshampas and non-Lhotshampas. Even though the cultural and linguistic diversity is considered to make Bhutan unique, it does not take away the ethnic and religious tensions. Painfully, these tensions have led to a sentiment shared by some non-Lhotshampas who consider Lhotshampas to be second-class citizens.

Despite these ongoing challenges, Bhutan has proven to be more than

capable of coming together as a country when it is most needed. Bhutan declared the closing of its border on March 5, 2020, with the first Covid-19 case reported in the country. During the first few uncertain weeks, His Majesty traveled the country to ensure the basic needs of all Bhutanese citizens. Prime Minister Lotay Tshering actively participated in the distribution of, amongst others, free hand-sanitizer.



Fig. 20. Prime Minister Lotay Tshering (left) and a Desuup (right, dressed in orange) distributing free hand-sanitizer during the first weeks of the lockdown in March 2020.



Fig. 21. His Majesty (center) accompanied by the Prime Minister (left) touring the Southern border areas, May 2020.

Up to August 2020, only a little over 100 cases were detected when the first National Lockdown was announced following the first community transmission. For about a month, no one was allowed to leave their house except for the frontline workers like the military and Desuups who distributed essential items. The Desuung institution, literally translated to “Guardians of Peace” is a training program designed by the 5th Druk Gyalpo. It is expected from the Desuup to actively volunteer during disaster operations and participate in societal events (De-suung – Mandate).

6.4 Further research

Most Bhutanese are more than proud to be born in this Himalayan Kingdom. The institute of Desuung is a good example of this pride. Nevertheless, the tensions that arose after the 1990s regarding the Lhotshampas, leaves the last Shangri-La torn.

As has become evident, the cultural and linguistic diversity of Bhutan makes the Bhutanese identity as unique as it is. The issue of conservation and preservation during times of rapid modernization and increasing numbers of tourists remains a challenge yet to be tackled.



དཔལ་ལྷན་འབྲུག་གཞུང་།
ལྷོ་ཆེན་ཡིག་ཚང་།
ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE



August 11, 2020

Press release

Government announces nationwide lockdown

The government announces nationwide lockdown starting today, following report of a COVID-19 positive case in Gelephu, who came in close contact with people in Thimphu, Gelephu, Paro and those along the way.

The government enforces restrictions on movement of people and vehicles within the Dzongkhags and beyond. Everyone is asked to stay home to protect themselves and their families from the disease, should there be undetected, rampant transmissions.

All schools, institutions, offices and commercial establishments will remain closed. Ongoing exams will be postponed, while the students and trainees in boarding facilities should continue to remain on campus and follow COVID-19 protocols.

The unprecedented lockdown is enforced to identify and isolate all positive cases, immediately breaking the chain of transmission.

The drastic yet extensive measures of lockdown now, complemented by strict public compliance, will help us achieve our target of combating the spread of the disease with efficiency, in a shorter period of time. This will enable the government to make arrangements to ease out the restrictions as soon as possible.

For proper coordination and implementation of the lockdown, the government held National COVID-19 Taskforce meeting at the Ministry of Health last night.

The taskforce, led by the prime minister, received guidance from His Majesty The King, who stayed with the team all through the night at the ministry.

Gyalyong Tshogkhang, Langjopakha, Thimphu
PABX: 02336727

Fig. 22. Press release from the PMO.



Fig. 23. Desuups organizing the distribution of vegetables during the Nationwide Lockdown in August 2020.

Glossary of Bhutanese Terms

Bibliographical accounts of Guru Rinpoche	བཀའ་ཐང་	Treasure texts hidden in the eighth century, to be revealed in later times.
Classical Tibetan	ཚེས་སྐད་	Until 1961, the only written language in Bhutan.
County Development Committee	གྲང་ལོག་ཡར་རྒྱས་ཚོགས་ཚུང་	Decision committee on <i>gewog</i> level.
Desi	ལྷ་ཤིང་	Regent responsible for civil administration.
Desuung	བདེ་སྤྱང་	Training's program to become a Desuup initiated by the 5 th Druk Gyalpo. The highest form of voluntary work. Literally translates to "Guardians of Peace".
District Development Committee	རྫོང་ཁག་ཡར་རྒྱས་ཚོགས་ཚུང་	Decision committee on dzongkhag level.
Driglam Namzha	ལྷོག་ལམ་རྣམ་གཞག་	Code of ethics and conduct that governs how citizens should behave as well as dress in formal settings. It also regulates cultural assets such as art and architecture.
Druk Gyalpo	འབྲུག་རྒྱལ་པོ་	King, head of state, of Bhutan. Translated ceremonially as Precious Ruler of the Dragon People.
Dzong	རྫོང་	Distinctive type of fortress that combines religious, social, administrative, and military functions.
Dzongkha Development Commission	རྫོང་ཁ་གོང་འཕེལ་ལྷན་ཚོགས་	Commission in charge of the promotion and development of the Dzongkha language.
Dzongpön	རྫོང་དཔོན་	Dzong rulers, prior to the unification controlled certain areas, but presently hold no office anymore.
Early Diffusion	སྔ་དར་	Earliest spread of Buddhism to Bhutan with the construction of Jampa and Kyichu Lhakhang, ordered by Songtsen Gampo.
Early Historic Period	ལོ་རྒྱུས་མའི་དུས་ཚན་	Period from the mid-7 th century CE until the mid-17 th century. The Early and Later Diffusion fall in this period.
Gho	བགོ་	Traditional and national dress for Bhutanese men.
Guru Rinpoche	གྲུ་ཏུ་འཛིན་པོ་ཆེ་	Guru Rinpoche or Guru Padmasambhava came from Tibet to Bhutan during the eighth century CE on the invitation of the Kingdom of Bumthang to subdue an evil demon. He is credited with the spread of the Nyingma form of Buddhism in Bhutan.

Je Khenpo King Songtsen Gampo	རྗེ་མཁན་པོ་ སྔོང་བཅའ་རྒྱལ་པོ་	Buddhist head abbot in Bhutan. (c. 605 – 650), first of three dharma kings credited with the spread of Buddhism in Tibet.
King Lang Darma	སྲིང་དར་མ་	(799 – 842), Tibetan King under whom the Tibetan Empire collapsed.
Kingdom of Bhutan	འབྲུག་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་	With the enthronement of the 1 st Druk Gyalpo in 1907, Bhutan is officially a monarchy.
Kira	དཀྱིར་	Traditional and national dress for Bhutanese women.
Lama	ལྷ་མ་	Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader.
Later Diffusion	ཕྱི་དར་	Revival of Buddhism in Tibet and the spread to Bhutan.
Lhakhang	ལྷ་ཁང་	Buddhist temple.
National Assembly	ཚོགས་འདུ་	Initiated by the 3 rd Druk Gyalpo to share the decision-making process with the country's people.
Ngultrum	དངུལ་ཀྲམ་	Ngultrum, currency of Bhutan.
Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo	ཕ་ཚོ་འབྲུག་སྐོམ་ཞིག་པོ་	Roughly €1 refers to 90 Nu. (1184? – 1251?), the forerunner of the Drukpa Kagyu school.
Pönlop	དཔོན་སློབ་	Local governors.
Pre-Historic Period	ལོ་རྒྱུས་གོང་རབས་	Period roughly until the 7 th century from which we lack any written or oral records.
Priest-patron relationship	མཚོང་ཡོན་	Symbolic relation between a religious figure and a lay person.
Rinpoche	རིན་པོ་ཆེ་	Religious teacher.
Terchö	གཏེར་ཚོས་	Religious texts narrating Guru Rinpoche's arrival in Central Bhutan, discovered during the eleventh century.
Terma	གཏེར་མ་	Religious treasure texts hidden in the eighth century to be discovered by tertöns.
Tertön	གཏེར་སྟོན་	Revealer of Buddhist treasures.
Tshechu	ཚེས་བཅུ་	Drukpa Kagyu festival held on the tenth day of the month of the Bhutanese lunar calendar in the regional dzong.
Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal	ཞབས་བྱུང་བཟའ་དབང་རྣམ་རྒྱལ་	(1594 – 1651), the Tibetan born who unified Bhutan in the year 1616.

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Appendix 1 – Questionnaire on ‘Bhutanese’ identity

This interview is meant to create a general picture of the individual’s opinions and perspectives about the ‘Bhutanese’ identity. The first part will function to narrate the background of the interviewee. The middle part will go deeper into the religious and linguistic history of the individual concerned. The last part of the interview will focus on the Bhutanese identity and how the interviewee would describe that.

- 1 Where were you born in Bhutan (specify gewog and dzongkhag)?
- 2 Where were you raised (specify gewog and dzongkhag)?
- 3 Where were your parents born and raised? (if Bhutan, specify gewog and dzongkhag)
- 4 Do you think the place where your parents were raised, influenced you in your upbringing? Please specify.
- 5 Have you ever moved to a different dzongkhag? Please specify. And if so: at what age?
- 6 Which language(s) is/are spoken in your household?
- 7 Which other language(s) do you speak?
- 8 Which language do you feel most comfortable speaking in?
- 9 In what religious tradition were you raised?
- 10 Do you practice any other religious traditions?
- 11 Please describe what the ‘Bhutanese’ identity is to you. Is this identity important to you?
- 12 In your opinion, is Buddhism part of the ‘Bhutanese’ identity?
- 13 In your opinion, is GNH part of the ‘Bhutanese’ identity?
- 14 In your opinion, is a particular language part of the ‘Bhutanese’ identity?

- 15 Do you think there is more than one 'Bhutanese' identity?
- a. If yes, why do you think so?
 - b. If not, why do you think so?
- 16 Do you think it matters where you were brought up on how you perceive the Bhutanese identity?
- 17 If you have ever moved to a different place, do you think your perception of what the Bhutanese identity is, has changed?
- a. If yes, in what ways?
 - b. If not, why not?

Appendix 2 – Questionnaire responses

Western *dzongkhags*: Thimphu, Paro, Haa, Samtse, Chukha.

Respondents: 11

Questions	Yes	No	Clarification	Number
1 Where were you born?			Thimphu	7
			Phuntsholing, Chukha <i>dzongkhag</i>	4
2 Where were you raised?			Thimphu	6
			Phuntsholing	2
			Phuntsholing and Gelephu (Southern Bhutan)	1
			Haa	1
			Paro	1
3 Where were your parents born?			Tsirang (Central Bhutan)	1
			Wangdue Phodrang (Central Bhutan)	1
			Tashi Yangtse (Eastern Bhutan)	2
			Samtse (Western Bhutan)	4
			Phuntsholing, Chukha <i>dzongkhag</i>	1
			Paro <i>dzongkhag</i>	1
			Phobji <i>gewog</i> , Wangdue Phodrang <i>dzongkhag</i>	1
			Bumthang (but grew up in different eastern and central <i>dzongkhags</i>)	1
			Pema Gatsel (but grew up in different central and western <i>dzongkhags</i>)	1
4 Do you think the place where your parents were raised, influenced you in your upbringing?	7		I think because my parents grew up in different parts of the country, I have been well educated about the different cultures, traditions, social dynamics, norms, and other cultural-specific aspects of the different parts.	
			For example, the idea of patriarchy was so deeply embedded in our culture and thinking and that influenced us too.	
			For me, my parents were very pragmatic in their way of thinking and did not follow the herd mentality which happens a lot in Bhutan. For me, it meant I went to school earlier than my peers.	
			Yes, my parents lived in the Southern part of Bhutan which exposed them, and later us, to Indian culture, music, language, etc. which makes me fluent in Hindi now.	
		Most people living in Thimphu are extroverts. My parents come from remote areas and were raised in a conservative family, which instilled those qualities in me while living in Thimphu.		
4		No, since I was raised somewhere else, it did not affect me.		

5	Have you moved to a different <i>dzongkhag</i> ?	7	Thimphu to Paro	2
			Phuntsholing to Thimphu to Gelephu	2
			Thimphu to Gelephu (Southern Bhutan)	1
			Phuntsholing to Thimphu for college (RTC)	1
			Phuntsholing to Haa to Thimphu for college (RTC)	1
		4		
6	Which language(s) is/are spoken in your household?		Lhotsamkha	5
			Dzongkha	7
			Sharchop	1
			Tibetan	1
			English	2
7	Which other language(s) do you speak?		Dzongkha (fluent or basic)	6
			English	10
			Hindi	4
			Lhotsamkha	4
			Sharchop	3
			Bengali	1
			Mangdeb dialect (central Bhutan)	1
8	Which language do you feel most comfortable speaking in?		Dzongkha	9
			English	7
			Lhotsamkha	3
			Sharchop	1
9	In what religious tradition were you raised?		Buddhism	8
			Hinduism	2
			Raised in both Buddhist and Hindu traditions	1
10	Do you practice any other religious traditions?	2	Buddhism	1
			Shamanic practices. My maternal side of the family upholds a tradition of worshipping a local deity, <i>yue-lha</i> , which cannot exactly be called Bonism but rather a form of localized Bhutanese religion.	1
		9		
11	Describe what the 'Bhutanese' identity is to you.		<p>To me, Bhutanese identity is wearing the national dress and speaking the national language. To respect our King and country.</p> <p>To me, Bhutanese identity is not just wearing the national dress and speaking Dzongkha. It is more about following the norms and values of our Buddhist country.</p> <p>I think Bhutanese identity would be our culture, language, tradition, and our way of living life. And I think it is important to preserve this uniqueness.</p> <p>To me, Bhutanese identity is a tradition, beliefs, ideas, culture, or any other practices that create a sense of belongingness and unity.</p>	

To me, Bhutanese identity means celebrating diversity and uniqueness and we have to strive for equality for people from different backgrounds.

To me being a Bhutanese is all about simplicity, compassion, and following the Middle Path.

Is this identity important to you?	11	1	Bhutanese identity is important to me, nonetheless, I never really felt like a “true” Bhutanese mainly because I do not possess an identity card. Thus, not possessing an identity card is always considered for me not to be Bhutanese enough to be able to avail of the facilities and opportunities one receives being a Bhutanese.
12 Is Buddhism part of the ‘Bhutanese’ identity?	9	2	Buddhism is not just part of the Bhutanese identity; it is the key factor that formed the basis of the identity. Everything that comes from within, like kindness, being humble and modest, is taught by Buddhism. Yes, it is as Buddhism is important to live a meaningful and happy life. Yes, as most Bhutanese practice Buddhism in some way. Yes, e.g. it is mandatory to wear gho/kira to the temple as it is considered sacred. Yes, religion, in particular Buddhism, is something crucial to Bhutan. But there are many Hindus all over Bhutan (including myself) and I think there needs to be more recognition for those following other religions than Buddhism. I think it is part of the Bhutanese identity as it is the state religion of Bhutan. No, Buddhism is a philosophy so it can identify anyone. No, because not all of Bhutan’s population follows Buddhism.
13 Is GNH part of the ‘Bhutanese’ identity?	9		It is a concept that is becoming our identity because the values that GNH upholds are becoming part of our lives. The efforts of conserving the environment, preserving our traditions, and striving for good governance (democracy) are all the efforts of GNH that we are carrying out. Because Bhutan is the only country that focuses on GNH rather than GDP. Yes, because GNH is mentioned in the Constitution of Bhutan. Yes, but I feel like people are also misusing it now.

			<p>Yes, our country is defined by this concept as the 'Land of Happiness'.</p>
		2	<p>I do not think I know enough about GNH to answer this question. However, to the outside world GNH is a huge part of the 'Bhutanese' identity.</p> <p>No, I do not think so. GNH is a philosophy that started in Bhutan but is now popular in many other countries.</p>
14	Is a particular language part of the 'Bhutanese' identity?	8	<p>Since the government introduced Dzongkha as the national language, it is part of the 'Bhutanese' identity. The ability to speak and converse with others makes it our identity.</p> <p>Any language spoken in Bhutan is part of the Bhutanese identity as it holds a specific way of living in Bhutanese society.</p> <p>Even though I do not speak Dzongkha very fluently, it is a big part of the 'Bhutanese' identity.</p> <p>Yes, all local dialects spoken are part of the 'total' identity.</p>
		3	<p>No, but all local dialects and cultures are a huge part of what makes one a "Bhutanese".</p> <p>No, all languages or dialects with different traditions form our identity. But these languages are from Bhutan which makes it part of the Bhutanese identity as a whole.</p>
15	Is there more than one 'Bhutanese' identity?	8	<p>Yes, I do feel like there is more than one Bhutanese identity because of the complexity of many different cultures within Bhutan. So, there are many Bhutanese identities within one big identity.</p> <p>Yes, I believe. Even though Dzongkha is the common language, people throughout the country speak different languages that are connected to a different culture and tradition.</p> <p>Yes, but there is little to no recognition on this matter. Outsiders expect "us" to look a certain way, follow one specific religion, and to be "happy people". This is a generalization and not everybody can relate to this.</p> <p>Yes, there are Bhutanese who do not understand Dzongkha, but because our King has traveled to all parts of the country, I believe it created a sense of belonging.</p> <p>Yes, because our identity is not only defined by the languages we speak but also our dress, food, cultural festivities, games, etc. and the most important is our personality.</p>
		3	<p>No, because even though people have different languages and religions, we follow the same culture and tradition.</p>

No. the Bhutanese identity is composed of different cultures and traditions that are unique to each other but this does not mean that each is a different type of Bhutanese identity. We need all these different traditions to make up the overall Bhutanese identity, otherwise, it would not make sense.

16 Does it matter where you were brought up on how you perceive the 'Bhutanese' identity? 9

Yes, because all these different cultures and traditions within Bhutan shape one differently. How I perceive my identity has everything to do with when, where, and how I was brought up. If any of these factors differed, my perception would have been different.

Yes, e.g. there is a big difference between people being raised in urban or rural areas. They live in completely different areas that shape their daily life.

Yes, but maybe even more than the place, I would say it is the privilege of receiving the Bhutanese identity. For example, a person who has an identity card can start a business whenever which is not the case if you do not possess one. Hence, there is a gap between privileged and non-privileged. I feel like the non-privileged are motivated, striving for equality, and opportunities that others do not even have to think about.

Yes, the place where we were raised is considered a significant place to identify which part of the Bhutanese identity we belong to.

2

17 If you ever moved to a different place, did your perception of the 'Bhutanese' identity change? 4

I became prouder of being a Bhutanese after I spent a year in Europe. Especially because the only positive comments people would make about Bhutan, made me realize how great and special our country is.

Yes, it made me realize that we have to preserve our unique culture while making some changes, e.g. equal opportunities for everyone.

Yes, it made me realize how peaceful, privileged, and happy we are though it is not a developed country. So Bhutanese identity to me is related to kindness, strong culture, and religion.

7

No, because I have never moved to a different place.

I have lived my whole life in Bhutan and my foundation is based in Bhutan with all its traditions and cultures. If I ever move out, my perception might change for the better for I have accepted and made peace with all the dark sides of my country.

Central *dzongkhags*: Gasas, Punakha, Wangdue Phodrang, Dagana, Tsirang.
 Respondents: 4

Questions	Yes	No	Clarification	Number
1 Where were you born?			Punakha	2
			Bajo, Wangdue Phodrang <i>dzongkhag</i>	1
			Lunana, Gasas <i>dzongkhag</i>	1
2 Where were you raised?			Punakha	1
			Bajo	1
			Thimphu	1
			Lunana	1
3 Where were your parents born?			Punakha	1
			Bajo and Punakha	1
			Zhemgang (Southern Bhutan)	1
			Lunana	1
4 Do you think the place where your parents were raised, influenced you in your upbringing?	3		Yes, my parents were raised in Central-western Bhutan which is believed to be a culturally indigenous and more conservative community compared to other parts. And this is how I was raised.	
			Their lifestyle and language influenced me.	
5 Have you moved to a different <i>dzongkhag</i> ?	4	1		
			Thimphu for college (RTC)	1
			Bajo to Phuntsholing (Western Bhutan)	1
			Punakha to Thimphu	1
			Lunana to Punakha (during Winters) and later to Thimphu for college (RTC)	1
6 Which language(s) is/are spoken in your household?			Dzongkha	3
			Lhotsamkha	1
			Lunana language (a nameless language similar to Tibetan)	1
			English	1
7 Which other language(s) do you speak?			Lhotsamkha	3
			Sharchop	3
			English	3
			Hindi	2
			Dzongkha	1
			Korean	1
			Spanish	1
8 Which language do you feel most comfortable speaking in?			Dzongkha	4
			Lhotsamkha	1
			English	1

9	In what religious tradition were you raised?		Buddhism	4
10	Do you practice any other religious traditions?	4		
11	Describe what the 'Bhutanese' identity is to you.		Bhutanese identity is all about the national dress, language, <i>Driglam Namzha</i> , and understanding GNH. To me, it is having compassion and kindness. To me, it means everything started from religion, traditional and cultural values we possess. For example, religion preaches to be compassionate and kind which is an important aspect of our life.	
	Is this identity important to you?	4		
12	Is Buddhism part of the 'Bhutanese' identity?	3	Yes, there is a great influence of Buddhism on Bhutanese society.	
		1	No, because many Bhutanese follow a different religion.	
13	Is GNH part of the 'Bhutanese' identity?	4	GNH is built on Bhutanese cultural and traditional heritage.	
14	Is a particular language part of the 'Bhutanese' identity?	4	Yes, Dzongkha as it is the national language.	
15	Is there more than one 'Bhutanese' identity?	3	Yes, identity can be made up of so many things, e.g. religion, social values, cultural norms, etc.	
		1	No, all the different cultures make the one 'Bhutanese' identity.	
16	Does it matter where you were brought up on how you perceive the 'Bhutanese' identity?	3	Yes, I think the emphasis on stressing the Bhutanese identity is much higher in urban areas as these areas are more influenced by other cultures.	
		1		
17	If you ever moved to a different place, did your perception of the 'Bhutanese' identity change?	1	It has not changed as such but I got deeper insides when I moved to different parts of Bhutan and interacting with people who have a different culture.	
		3	As long as we have a great king, my perception will not change. No, some traditions and cultures are different but the Bhutanese identity will remain the same.	

Southern *dzongkhags*: Bumthang, Tongsa, Sarpang, Zhemgang.

Respondents: 1

Questions	Yes	No	Clarification	Number
1 Where were you born?			Gelephu, Sarpang <i>dzongkhag</i>	1
2 Where were you raised?			Gelephu, Sarpang <i>dzongkhag</i>	1
3 Where were your parents born?			Gelephu and Tsirang (Central Bhutan)	
4 Do you think the place where your parents were raised, influenced you in your upbringing?	1		Yes, especially the place where my father grew up (Gelephu) influenced me a lot because of the beliefs that the community used to have. E.g. boys were given more priority than girls.	
5 Have you moved to a different <i>dzongkhag</i> ?	1		Gelephu to Thimphu for college (RTC)	1
6 Which language(s) is/are spoken in your household?			Lhotsamkha	1
7 Which other language(s) do you speak?			Dzongkha Hindi	1 1
8 Which language do you feel most comfortable speaking in?			Lhotsamkha	1
9 In what religious tradition were you raised?			Hinduism	1
10 Do you practice any other religious traditions?		1		
11 Describe what the 'Bhutanese' identity is to you.			Bhutanese identity to me is the uniqueness of the culture and customs that make us different from others.	
Is this identity important to you?	1		This identity is very important for us to be known all over the world.	
12 Is Buddhism part of the 'Bhutanese' identity?	1		In Bhutan, we have a mixed religion but since every Bhutanese follows it directly or indirectly, it can be called part of our identity.	
13 Is GNH part of the 'Bhutanese' identity?	1		It gives Bhutan a very unique identity.	
14 Is a particular language part of the 'Bhutanese' identity?		1	Bhutan has so many different languages along with which come different beliefs and customs. Altogether, it is part of our identity.	
15 Is there more than one 'Bhutanese' identity?		1	No, I think that all the different cultures, dresses, languages, food, and the variety of people are exactly what the 'Bhutanese' identity is.	

16	Does it matter where you were brought up on how you perceive the 'Bhutanese' identity?	1	Yes, it makes a difference in an individual's life. People who were born in Southern Bhutan are mostly Nepalis which means they follow Hinduism very strictly and the children are raised and shaped accordingly.
17	If you ever moved to a different place, did your perception of the 'Bhutanese' identity change?	1	People living in different parts of the country have different kinds of exposure. E.g. people living in Thimphu are not very typical Bhutanese as there is so much influence from other cultures like western and Korean, hence the perception changes and as does the surrounding (buildings, type of cars, etc.).

Eastern *dzongkhags*: Lhuntse, Tashi Yangtse, Tashigang, Mongar, Pema Gatsel, Samdrup Jongkhar.

Respondents: 4

Questions	Yes	No	Clarification	Number
1 Where were you born?			Menbi, Lhuntse <i>dzongkhag</i>	1
			Shongphu, Tashigang <i>dzongkhag</i>	1
			Phonemey <i>gewog</i> , Tashigang <i>dzongkhag</i>	1
			Yangtse <i>gewog</i> , Tashi Yangtse <i>dzongkhag</i>	1
2 Where were you raised?			Menbi	1
			Shongphu, Phuntsholing (Chukha) and Thimphu	1
			Phonemey and Thimphu	1
			Yangtse	1
3 Where were your parents born?			Menbi, Lhuntse <i>dzongkhag</i>	1
			Shongphu, Tashigang <i>dzongkhag</i>	1
			Phonemey, Tashigang <i>dzongkhag</i>	1
			Yangtse <i>gewog</i> , Tashi Yangtse <i>dzongkhag</i>	1
4 Do you think the place where your parents were raised, influenced you in your upbringing?	4		Their way of life had a big influence on me. It might have influenced me in the sense that it taught me to be humble as life in the village is peaceful and humble.	
5 Have you moved to a different <i>dzongkhag</i> ?	4		Menbi to Thimphu for college (RTC)	1
			Shongphu to Phuntsholing (age 14), to Thimphu (age 16) to Punakha (age 18)	1
			Phonemey to Thimphu (age 6)	1
			Yangtse to Thimphu (age 18)	1
6 Which language(s) is/are spoken in your household?			Sharchop	3
			Kurtöp	1
			Yangtsep	1
			Dzongkha	1
7 Which other language(s) do you speak?			Dzongkha	3
			English	3
			Lhotsamkha	2
			Hindi	1
8 Which language do you feel most comfortable speaking in?			Dzongkha	3
			Sharchop	2
			Kurtöp	1
			Yangtsep	1
			Hindi	1
			English	1

9	In what religious tradition were you raised?		Buddhism	4
10	Do you practice any other religious traditions?	4		
11	Describe what the 'Bhutanese' identity is to you.		<p>The Bhutanese identity for me is the backbone of the nation.</p> <p>Bhutanese identity to me is our unique culture and tradition, religion, and our way of life.</p> <p>To me, Bhutanese identity is something still holding on to the rich tradition and cultures while also changing while time passes by.</p> <p>My Bhutanese identity gives me a home and a sense of belonging to my country.</p>	
	Is this identity important to you?	4		
12	Is Buddhism part of the 'Bhutanese' identity?	4	<p>It can be part of the Bhutanese identity as it is practiced in everyday life by the Bhutanese in general.</p> <p>Yes, Buddhism shapes our thoughts and actions of how we treat other beings with compassion and understanding.</p>	
13	Is GNH part of the 'Bhutanese' identity?	3	<p>The way GNH teaches us to work towards achieving self-happiness without hampering other people's happiness is what differentiates us from the rest.</p>	1
			GNH is developed to balance the economic and social growth of Bhutan. As such, it is just a concept for the betterment of society and does not fall under the Bhutanese identity.	
14	Is a particular language part of the 'Bhutanese' identity?	4	<p>Yes, our national language Dzongkha.</p> <p>Yes, language is a way of learning other people's cultures and traditions and understanding feelings and emotions. Through this, we come to understand their identities.</p>	
15	Is there more than one 'Bhutanese' identity?	4	<p>Yes, because there are so many different cultures in Bhutan, each with their own architecture, dresses, food, etc. and these are all part of an identity.</p> <p>Bhutan is divided into several <i>dzongkhags</i> and every region has its own unique identity.</p> <p>Yes, Bhutanese identity would differ based on different ethnicities and perceptions of different people of Bhutan.</p>	
16	Does it matter where you were brought up on	4	<p>Yes, back in the villages, life is simple and quiet, there is not much exposure and you automatically learn how to be humble. But due to modernization, especially in urban areas, life is so</p>	

how you perceive the 'Bhutanese' identity?		much influenced by western and other foreign cultures. So, this will definitely affect how one perceives the Bhutanese identity.
17 If you ever moved to a different place, did your perception of the 'Bhutanese' identity change?	1	<p>I have never moved but if I were to move to a western country, my perception of Bhutanese identity would change but I would never forget my roots.</p> <p>3 No, because all these different Bhutanese identities or cultures make up the one Bhutanese identity.</p> <p>No, the only difference I see when visiting other places is another culture and tradition, but the way we think about identity as a country as a whole is the same.</p>