

Contemporary Society in Bhutan: Tradition, Modernity and National Identity.

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Abstract

The Kingdom of Bhutan, situated in the Eastern Himalayas and sandwiched between India and China, is relatively isolated and little-known internationally. It is visited by no more than 7,000 foreign tourists per year. A landlocked country with a mountainous terrain and a basic infrastructure, it has, nevertheless, undergone considerable development since the 1960s. The most significant developments in terms of infrastructure have been the building of two main roads to connect the main towns on an east-west axis and a north-south axis, the ongoing extension of the electricity supply to towns across the country and the provision of telephone connections nationwide. In terms of social and cultural developments, a modern, English-medium education system was introduced in the late 1950s and employment was provided for the graduates from this system in the growing bureaucracy. In recent years, efforts have been made to develop a private sector in order to create new employment opportunities for the growing number of educated youths.

Modernization has brought little physical change to everyday life in the countryside. Subsistence farming is still the norm, modern machinery is almost completely absent and a cash economy is still in a rudimentary stage of development outside the towns. In the towns and the countryside alike, people are still guided by the moral wisdom and psychological support of the Buddhist monks, who hold a revered position in society. Traditional life is, therefore, still very much in evidence. However, nowhere is left completely untouched by the developments that have been taking place inside and outside the country.

This article is based upon my own observations and interviews with people during the many times I have spent in Bhutan since 1993. It gives a very general overview of how traditional and modern aspects of life are blended in contemporary Bhutanese society. It considers aspects of life and traditions that have scarcely changed in centuries as well as examining areas where modern developments clash with traditional ways of life and create issues that will need to be addressed into the future. The article also discusses the kind of policies a modern, developing nation implements in order to strengthen a sense of national identity based on traditional culture and values.

Keywords: Bhutan, contemporary society, culture, Buddhism, national identity

Introduction

It is necessary to examine, very briefly, what we understand by the phrase “traditional society”. In every country there are traditions passed down through generations that give that country its unique character: traditional ways of building, traditional crafts, clothes, food, and traditional ways of thinking. These traditions survive, in some form, however altered, through the ages. Japan is always cited as a good example of a country that has succeeded in preserving its traditions while, at the same time developing into a modern nation. Bhutan, conversely is not a ‘modern’ developed nation. A traditional way of life subsistence farming in small isolated mountain villages is still the norm. And yet, Bhutanese people whether they live in the city or in the country are experiencing dilemmas over how to adapt their social and cultural traditions to the demands of modern life.

What do we really mean by “modern” and what do we really mean by “traditional”? When we talk about modernity and, perhaps most importantly, when we make our judgments on it are we referring to the physical signs of “progress” such as shiny high rise buildings, or the latest Sony gadget, or are we contemplating more upon the changes in the structure of society and the quality of our daily lives? When we assess the pros and cons of modern life most of us feel a little ambiguous about it. We may well be excited by the modern conveniences but we may also feel a little panicky about the rapid pace of life in a modern society.

Similarly, the word, “traditional” is loaded with ambiguous feelings. There are many aspects of traditional life that we do not wish to return to: over-strict social values, the hard work in the fields, the poverty of the majority of people and the lack of medical care, for example. But the slower pace of life, closer relationships with the people around us, the closeness to nature: these are some of the positive aspects which make us feel nostalgia for the past. Japanese, Europeans and Americans certainly feel a sense of nostalgia for a time gone by when they visit Bhutan because these features are there in abundance.

When discussing modernity and tradition, it is necessary to differentiate between the economic and technological changes that come under the term ‘development’ or ‘progress’, and the social and cultural aspects of life that bind people together in a network of social relations and shape their perceptions, their thinking and their behaviour. These social and cultural mindsets are the enduring psychological features that could be said to constitute national identity. Economic changes are bound to force adaptations to established ways of thinking and doing but they seldom require completely new philosophies. In Japan, typically ‘Japanese’ ways of social and cultural interaction have remained and adapted to rapid economic and technological progress. In Bhutan, economic development and technological changes have come slowly and social organization seems little changed in a century or more. However, Bhutan has, since the late 1950s, been experiencing change in all spheres of life.

Economic and technological changes, as well as government development policies in areas such as education and employment have brought about significant social changes and new pressures. Naturally, Bhutanese people are in the process of reflecting upon the changes in society and adapting their thinking and their way of life but the result is, inevitably, a unique, Bhutanese mixture of the traditional and the modern.

In Bhutan today, modern influences from both outside and within the country are being blended by the Bhutanese people into new cultural forms. This article, focuses on the people and their way of life today. We begin with the **monks**, whose monasteries are at the heart of Bhutanese culture. This is followed by a description of the daily life of the **farmers**, whose way of life has, indeed, changed little over the centuries. Next, we will consider the **youth** of Bhutan: how they are educated and the jobs that are available when they graduate. Fourthly, we will look at **life in the capital city**, Thimphu, which has experienced the greatest change over time. Finally, the position and role of the **monarchy** in Bhutan is discussed. Having examined the traditional roles and lives of the different groups in Bhutanese society, and considered how they are affected by modern pressures and influences, this article concludes by considering how the government of Bhutan is involved in the conscious creation and consolidation of a modern national identity.

The Monks

The monks and their monasteries are the essence of Bhutanese culture. The official religion of Bhutan is Mahayana Buddhism, the same as that practiced by Tibetans. There are about 3,000 monks in Bhutanese monasteries today. Each family will aim to send one son to the monastery. They join at any time, from around the age of six.

It would be useful to take as an example the case of one twenty-five-year-old monk named Chorten. His name means 'stupa', the building where religious treasures are stored. He was born inside the stupa of the temple of Chorten Kora, Tashiyangtse, in the far east of Bhutan. His father was a '*lama*' (an ordained monk), a '*rimpoche*' (this means 'precious one', or, in other words a recognized teacher) who originally came from Tibet but who went to Bhutan after 1959, when the Chinese Communists annexed that country. His father was a typical preacher of the *Nyingma* sect, and had practiced 'emptiness yoga'. The Nyingma believe that since we can take nothing with us when we die, we should not place value in material belongings. As a monk, he spent his time wandering throughout Bhutan preaching Buddhism, and giving moral advice and spiritual help to the people. He never owned more than one '*gho*' (the traditional dress of Bhutanese men which looks like a knee-length kimono) though he was given many as gifts. He simply passed the extras on to the people who came to ask for his blessing.

Chorten himself is in the middle of a 3-year retreat, near *Taksang*, the 'Tiger's Den' temple, which is well known throughout the Tibetan Buddhist world. Meditation is considered

the gateway to enlightenment. Taktsang was built on the face of a steep cliff, at a height of 3000 metres truly a feat of engineering even by today's standards.¹⁾ It is built on the spot where *Guru Rimpoche* meditated. Guru Rimpoche was the monk (a reincarnation of Buddha) who brought Buddhism from India to Tibet and Bhutan in the Seventh Century. At that time the Tibetan king, *Tsongtsen Gompo* converted to Buddhism. The legend says that a wicked demoness was terrorizing the whole area of the Himalayas and so Tsongtsen Gompo built 108 temples in the same day all over the Himalayas in order to pin her down. The *Jokhang* temple, in Lhasa, was built on her heart. The temple known as the *Kichu Lakhang*, not far from the Tiger's Nest, in the Paro valley is one of the oldest in Bhutan. It is said to have been built to pin down the left foot of the demoness.²⁾ Today it is as busy as ever. People come to spin the prayer wheels that take their prayers up to the heavens.

The history, culture and religion of Tibet are all important sources for an understanding of the culture of Bhutan. Mahayana Buddhism came to Bhutan from Tibet. Bhutan's written history is mostly the history of the Tibetan monks who came either to escape the consequences of religious disputes or power rivalries in Tibet or simply to preach in a country where the people, from around the seventh century, welcomed and revered them. The most revered monk was the *Shabdrung Nawang Namgyal* who arrived in Bhutan in 1616 and is credited with uniting the country by means of his moral authority, rather than through military conquest. The system was similar to the Tibetan rule by the Dalai Lama: a theocracy. Temples were built all over Bhutan for the two main sects, *Nyingmapa* in the east and *Kagyupa* in the west.

The life of the monks has changed little over time. They receive an entirely traditional education, learning to read, understand and chant the Tibetan scripts, and to perform the traditional dances and rituals. They still have time for play, though. A high proportion of the monks in Bhutan are children and they spend their free time playing games in the courtyards of the monasteries just as the children in the lay state schools of Bhutan do. Each monastery has its own reincarnated lama who arrives there as a very young child (as young as three). He receives a special teaching, just as the Dalai Lama did, to prepare him for the day he will take over as head of the monastery. Whereas the usual monks wear red, he is adorned in special yellow robes which are often made of silk.

In Bhutan, monks are free to leave the monastery at any time, without any stigma, and many of them do. It is at this point, however, that they become aware of how ill-equipped they are for life in modern Bhutan. They have missed out on the western-influenced education provided by the state. This education includes teaching in the medium of English so that all young Bhutanese are fluent in English. As a result, they cannot find any job in the government service or in private companies except rather menial, poorly paid ones. If they remain in the monasteries, however, they receive immense respect and are in great demand to perform rituals and give blessings. Most people in Bhutan today would still prefer to go

to a monk if they fell sick, rather than to a doctor.

The Farmers

Ninety percent of Bhutan's population of 657,548 is engaged in subsistence farming.³⁾ The country covers an area of 47,000 km² about the size of Switzerland, which has 6 million inhabitants. In such a sparsely inhabited country the houses are widely dispersed over the mountainous terrain. Each family has its own house and land. They grow rice, corn, millet, wheat and buckwheat, as well as a variety of vegetables of which chillies are the most important. Chillies, cooked whole with cheese provide the traditional breakfast, lunch and dinner. Farming is done by very traditional means. A bullock pulling a wooden plough is still a common sight. Bhutanese farmers work almost every day of the year in their fields.

Everybody in the countryside wears traditional dress.⁴⁾ The men's '*gho*' looks like a Japanese kimono but is pulled up and belted tightly at the waist so that a large pouch is available for tucking in the things they need to carry. The shirt, called a '*tegu*' is worn underneath the gho and folded out to form a white collar and wide cuffs. No Bhutanese man is without his knife, carried in the fold of his '*gho*' and used for all the daily chores. The women wear a '*kira*' which is a woven cloth wrapped around the body, belted very tightly at the waist and pinned at the shoulders with elegant brooches. They also wear a shirt underneath, called a '*wonju*' and a colourful silk jacket, called a '*tegu*' to complete the look. Men and women always carry a small wooden cup tucked inside their ghos and kiras since they are usually offered some home-distilled millet wine whenever they visit friends or as part-payment for help at harvest or other occasions.

Even today, in the countryside,⁵⁾ money is not strictly necessary, though it is becoming more integrated into daily life. Most people grow enough food for their own consumption and they often barter with the surplus. However, more and more farmers are experimenting with cash crops, such as potatoes, apples and vegetables for the markets in the two main towns, Thimphu and Phuntsoling. This is encouraged by the government.⁶⁾ Farmers are discovering more and more reasons for acquiring money. For example, they usually need to give their children some funds when sending them off to school, even though most basic costs are covered by the government. In addition, the government levies a land tax and operates a basic life insurance scheme, so money is necessary at least to pay these charges. Loans are also available from the government for such necessities as repairing a roof, replacing the traditional wooden shingles with corrugated iron (promoted to reduce environmental damage in the forests). Money needs to be found to repay these loans. The women weave their own clothes. A woman's kira takes one year to weave at home. In the past they kept silk worms and did the spinning and dyeing themselves using natural dyes but now they mostly buy Indian silk cocoons and spin and dye the thread or they buy spun and dyed thread. For women with access to the town markets, it is becoming more and more possible

to make extra cash from weaving.

In Laya, the highest village in Bhutan at 4000 metres, they depend heavily on the yak for their livelihood. They survive mostly on yak milk and cheese, yak hair for tents, clothes, and hats and they use yak dung for their fires. They come down to Punakha, at 1,800 metres, once or twice a year to exchange these yak products as well as dried rhododendron leaves (which are used to make incense) for rice, salt and flour. A generation ago this would be pure barter but nowadays money is involved. The economy of Laya also benefits greatly from an income generated by tourism.⁷⁾

This is not to say that the people do not know how to trade. In the past they did a bustling trade with Tibet. Bhutanese caravans used to travel back and forth right up to the 1950s. The Tibetans needed chillies and other food items. The Bhutanese returned with salt, the mysterious “cats eye” jewels, rugs and huge Tibetan silver coins. Such trade came to an official end when the Chinese arrived in Tibet and the Bhutanese closed their borders. However, it is impossible to actually close such mountainous borders and, even today, whilst most trade is done officially with India, unofficially such items as Chinese pottery, plastic plates, jewellery, thermos flasks and green canvas army shoes make their way to Thimphu. Goods from India and Bangladesh – mostly items of clothing – reach Tibet on the backs of small groups of friends crossing over at night.

The Youth

The lives of the people living in the mountains of Bhutan are actually changing drastically as a result of changes at the centre. The young people are leaving home and depopulating the countryside. The government is committed to educating all children. A modern, western-influenced, English-medium education has been provided only since 1958.⁸⁾ At that time, government representatives used to travel to the villages to find the children and bring them back to the boarding schools that were being set up in the main towns. In the early decades, children starting school at the age of 7, commonly found themselves in the same class as 13 year-olds who were being given a chance to catch up and get an education despite a late start. Now, more and more primary schools are being built right in the villages but, even now, the nearest school can be a day’s walk away, or more.⁹⁾

Education is undoubtedly a worthy objective, but the problem that the farmers face is a serious one. Once the children have received an education and got used to being away from their home high in the mountains, where life is indeed very harsh – they prefer to migrate to the capital city, Thimphu. So parents of, on average, 8 children find only one or two left at home to help with the farming. Conversely, the city is facing a population increase with all its attendant problems.

For today’s generation of young people, competition is tough. Until recently, anyone graduating from the later grades of high school or from university, would have expected to get

a job within the government bureaucracy. Nowadays, that cannot be guaranteed. Private companies exist but cannot yet offer the same security that comes with a government job. The youth of Bhutan are facing insecurities of a different kind from those of their parents: these are modern insecurities about employment and future opportunities.

City Life

As might be expected, it is in the city where modern influences are most apparent. There are no shiny high rise buildings, no Mc Donald's and no traffic lights yet. But television broadcasting came to Bhutan in 1999, just in time to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the king's coronation. The broadcasts reach only the city and its limits and there are not enough programmes to fill more than a few evening hours per day. Thimphu inhabitants can watch the news and a few newly-made Bhutanese dramas. Prior to the inauguration of the television broadcasting service, however, many city-dwellers had already begun to put up satellite dishes. Prior to that, most of them owned a television set and video player and the video rental shops were doing a good business. Once the Bhutan Broadcasting Service had introduced its own television service, the government decided to grant licences for the provision of cable tv services. Suddenly Thimphu's inhabitants found themselves linked up to about 40 international channels for the price of 350 Ngultrum (\$US8). The Bhutanese government has not shown itself averse to receiving influences from the outside world. Mostly, such influences are seen as a force for good. However, concern has recently been expressed in the national newspaper, *Kuensel*, as to the averse effects television may be having on Bhutanese society and some researchers are focusing on the topic.¹⁰⁾

Thimphu is still a very small city. It has a population of about 50,000 but that population is swelling rapidly. A few years ago it was only 30,000. More and more young people are arriving to go to newly opening private schools that cater to those who could not get into the one junior college in Kanglung, in the east. Those who have already graduated want to stay and get a job with the government. Others come looking for work or the comforts of city life. The city is the 'honey pot'. This is a common phenomenon all over Asia. Cities like Dehli and Shanghai are predicted to double the size of their population in the next few decades. But, whereas in many Asian countries it is the poverty in the countryside that forces unskilled farmers to leave, in Bhutan it is mainly the success of the national education policy that has caused the influx. This creates tensions that are, in some ways, different from those in other Asian cities. They are tensions which need to be addressed urgently by the government.

Signs of modernity, then, are mostly to be found in the city. However, we should be careful not to judge the condition of the country just by its city. Anyone visiting Bangkok, Thailand, today would undoubtedly judge Thailand to be a modern country. However, just one statistic reveals the limits of this impression. In Thailand today, of all the cars sold,

80% of them are used in Bangkok. The countryside is barely touched by the physical aspects of modernization. This is also the case in Bhutan. But that is not to say that society outside the city is not facing changes, the biggest one being the depopulation of the countryside by the educated youth.

The Monarchy

The existence of the Bhutanese monarchy serves to illustrate clearly how, when we talk about tradition and modernity, all is not what it may seem. Nothing could be more traditional than to be a country with an absolute monarch. However, the Bhutanese monarchy is, actually, very new. Just as the monarchy was going out of fashion elsewhere in the world, the Bhutanese monarchy was created, in 1908. The idea was copied from the British in nearby Calcutta. It seemed an ideal way of recognizing the power which had, in reality, become concentrated in the hands of one man: the Tongsa Penlop, *Jigme Namgyal*. Bhutan had been united and ruled since the early Seventeenth Century by the Shabdrung and his reincarnations. Like in Tibet, he was the religious leader of the country. He wrote the laws. Two men were then chosen to supervise the affairs of the country. The “*Je Khenpo*” was responsible for all religious affairs and temporal affairs were supervised by the “*desi*”. The *desi* appointed two “*Penlops*.” The Paro Penlop administered the western districts and the Tongsa Penlop represented the government in the east of the country. Gradually, the strongest of these penlops took over the real power. A knighthood was bestowed upon the Tongsa Penlop by the British in recognition of his assistance as an intermediary in their negotiations with Tibet. This recognition from outside the country helped give him the claim to legitimacy within Bhutan. Bhutan is now in the reign of its fourth king from the same family. However, even today the king and the “*Je Khenpo*” have their separate domains, the temporal and the religious.

A National Identity

The concept of monarchy may be an old one — even if it is newly created — but the concept of “nation-building” is quite new, especially in Asia where precise borders were non-existent before the western colonialists drew them. If we look at Southeast Asia after independence, from the late 1940s on, the countries there have all been engaged in a process of nation-building. Benedict Anderson, in his book, “*Imagined Communities*” shows how *national*—rather than many *local*—“traditions” have been deliberately created where they did not actually exist before, in order to instill a sense of cultural similarity and, therefore, a single national identity in newly independent nations.¹¹⁾

Bhutan was never colonized but, with a relatively short history as a monarchical system and, as it opens up to global influences, the process of nation-building through an attention to

“cultural preservation” is a major theme in government departments. Many of the concepts introduced by the Bhutanese government reflect themes introduced in Thailand in the Twentieth Century as a means to instill a sense of national identity in all its people. In recent years a variety of cultural concepts have either been introduced or reinforced. These include the ‘motto’ called the “*Tsawa Sum*” or ‘Three Main Concepts’ “Country, King, People”¹²⁾. The traditional etiquette known as “*Driglam Namzhag*” is being given renewed emphasis in school and in government offices.¹³⁾ Instead of G. N. P., the King talks of his country’s “Gross National Happiness” quotient. This phrase has impressed the UN and NGO representatives in Bhutan and is now regularly quoted in official documents so that it is beginning to take on the form of an official and uniquely Bhutanese ideology for development.

Any modern nation state needs a substantial body of traditional art, literature and folk culture to define its identity. In the field of the arts, orally transmitted tales and folk history are now being written down. Schools in the traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan are flourishing, with government support. Language is at the crux of issues of national identity and in Bhutan there is a carefully considered language policy. Dzongkha, the national language is being developed to cope with modern demands and to ensure that it is not over-ridden by English, which is in common use in Bhutan. Dzongkha has recently been given renewed attention in the government. It is now supposed to be used as the first language in governmental affairs. Since Bhutan has 14 or more dialects, Dzongkha is not automatically the language of choice for many functionaries. They are now more accustomed to using English as the working language.¹⁴⁾

Conclusion

In Bhutan, then, the traditional and the modern quickly fuse. Bhutan may be a land-locked country but its people are by no means isolated. The fact that a high percentage of its young people speak fluent English gives them access to all the knowledge of the outside world. Like young people everywhere, they are loath to be held back by anything. The modern media is available to them through satellite and they enjoy the same music and television programmes as youngsters everywhere. The Bhutanese government, on the other hand, is using the same modern media to promote the importance of the traditions of a country that has a rich culture and history, without attempting to block out foreign influences (as has been the case in many other developing countries) The Bhutanese government’s policies are guided by a two-pronged approach to development: economic and technological improvements on the one hand, balanced and complemented by a policy of ‘cultural preservation’ which centers on the promotion of traditional, Buddhist interpretations of social and environmental harmony.¹⁵⁾

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- 1) One of the buildings burned down in 1999 after a butterlamp was accidentally knocked over. It took several years to rebuild.
 - 2) Pommaret, F. 1994. *Bhutan*. Hong Kong : Odyssey Guides.
 - 3) Royal Government of Bhutan official web portal. 2004. <http://www.bhutan.gov.bt>
 - 4) Myers, D. K. and Bean, S. S. (eds.) 1994. *From the Land of the Thunderdragon: Textile Arts of Bhutan*. London : Serindia Publications.
 - 5) Rhodes, Nicholas. 'The monetization of Bhutan' *The Journal of Bhutan Studies* Vol 2, no 2, winter 2000. Thimphu, Bhutan: Centre for Bhutan Studies.
 - 6) The amount of involvement in monetary exchanges varies from area to area and depends on villagers' proximity to market centres. See also Brauen, M. 1997. 'A village in central Bhutan.' in Schicklgruber, C. & Pommaret, F. (eds.) *Bhutan: Mountain Fortress of the Gods*. London: Serindia Publications.
 - 7) For a detailed analysis of the numerous cash dealings of the inhabitants of the highest village in Bhutan, Laya, see Gyamtsho, Pema. 'Economy of yak-herders.' *The Journal of Bhutan Studies* Vol 2, no 1, autumn 2000. Thimphu, Bhutan: Centre for Bhutan Studies.
 - 8) A Jesuit priest already teaching in Darjeeling was invited to Bhutan to set up the English-medium education system, based on the system already being used in the missionary schools in India. See Solverson, Howard. 1995. *The Jesuit and the Dragon: The Life of Father William Mackey in the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan*. Outremont : Robert Davies.
 - 9) Dorji, L. 2000. 'English-medium instruction in schools in the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan: tradition and modernity.' *Journal of Humanities*. Vol 48. Kyoto. Kyoto Women's University Jinbun Gakkai. Jinbun Ronso.
 - 10) Rapten, Phuntso. 'Mass Media : It's Consumption and Impact on Residents in Thimphu and Rural Areas.' *The Journal of Bhutan Studies*. Vol 3 no 1 Summer 2001.
 - 11) Anderson, B. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (Revised Edition) London. Verso Books.
 - 12) For a thorough explanation of the cultural and religious philosophies influencing Bhutanese government policies see Ura, Karma. 1997. 'Tradition and Development' in Schicklgruber, C. & Pommaret, F. (eds.) *Bhutan: Mountain Fortress of the Gods*. London : Serindia Publications.
 - 13) *Driglam Namzhag (Bhutanese Etiquette): A Manual*. 1999. Thimphu, Bhutan. National Library (Special Commission for Cultural Affairs) The forward to this manual, written by Sangay Wangchuk, acting director of the Special Commission for Cultural Affairs states that, whilst driglam namzhag constitutes all the ancient Bhutanese customs of behaviour, they had never before been written down. Wangchuk expresses a wish that this manual "will serve as a significant foundation in the process of cultural preservation and cultural synthesis in our society."
 - 14) The first edition of the *Dzongkha Handbook* was published by the government in 1986 and revised in 1996.
 - 15) See Ura, Karma (1997) and also Wangyal, Tashi. 'Ensuring social sustainability: can Bhutan's Education system ensure intergenerational transmission of values?' *The Journal of Bhutan Studies*. Vol 3 no 1 Summer 2001.

ブータンの現代社会：伝統、近代性そしてナショナルアイデンティティ（国民意識）

ルイーザ ドージ

概 要

ブータン王国は東部ヒマラヤに位置し、インドと中国に挟まれていて、かなり孤立し国際的には余り知られていない。年間7000人の外国人旅行者が訪れるにすぎない。山岳地帯での内陸国で、基本的なインフラ基盤を持つ国ではあるが1960年代以来かなりの発展をなしてきた。インフラ面での最も重要な整備は東西及び南北の主要都市を結ぶ2本の幹線道路の建設や国内いたるところへ現在拡大しつつある電気供給、全国規模の電話回線の接続などに見られる。社会的文化的発展に関しては、1950年代後半に導入された英語を媒介とする教育システムで、このシステムの卒業生が行政機関でその数を増やしている。最近では、教育を受けた若者の増加に対処して新規の雇用機会を作るために、民間企業を発展させる取り組みも行われている。

近代化は地方における日常生活には物理的な変化をもたらしていない。自給自足農業が今なお普通で、近代的な機械は殆ど見られず、現金経済は都市以外では未発達段階である。都市でも地方でも同様に、人々は社会の中で尊敬される立場にある僧侶の道徳的教えや精神的支えによって導かれている。したがって伝統的な生活が今なお非常に顕著に見られる。しかしながら、国内外の進歩に全く影響されないところはない。

この論文は私が1993年以来たびたびブータンに滞在した際に行った現地の人とのインタビューと私自身の観察に基づいたもので、現代のブータン社会の中で伝統的生活と近代的生活がいかに融和しているかを考察したものである。また何世紀にも亘り殆ど変化が見られなかった生活や伝統面を考察するとともに、どんな領域で近代的発展が伝統的生活様式と衝突しているか、また将来に向かって取り組む必要のある問題を引き起こしているのは何かを検討した。この論文はまた伝統的文化と価値観に基づいて、ナショナルアイデンティティ（国民意識）を強化する為に近代的発展途上国が行う政策をも述べている。

キーワード：ブータン、現代社会、文化、仏教、ナショナルアイデンティティ（国民意識）