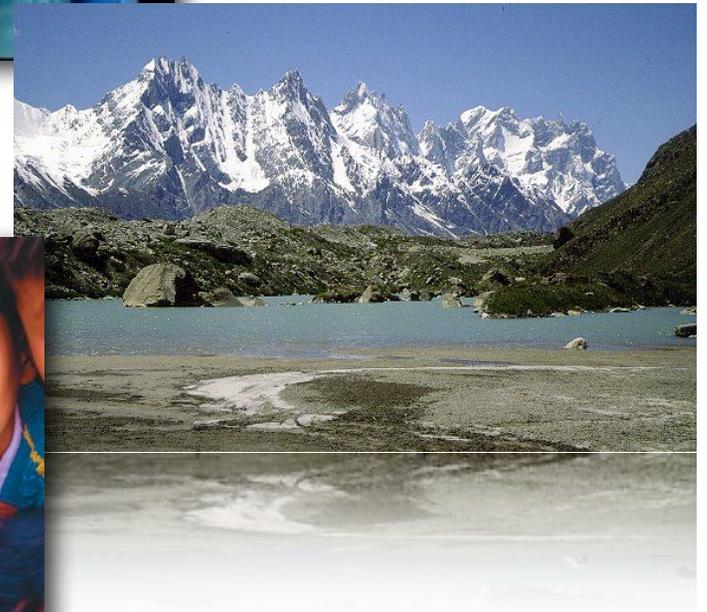




Bhutanese Culture

Courtney Imran



Des Moines Public Schools

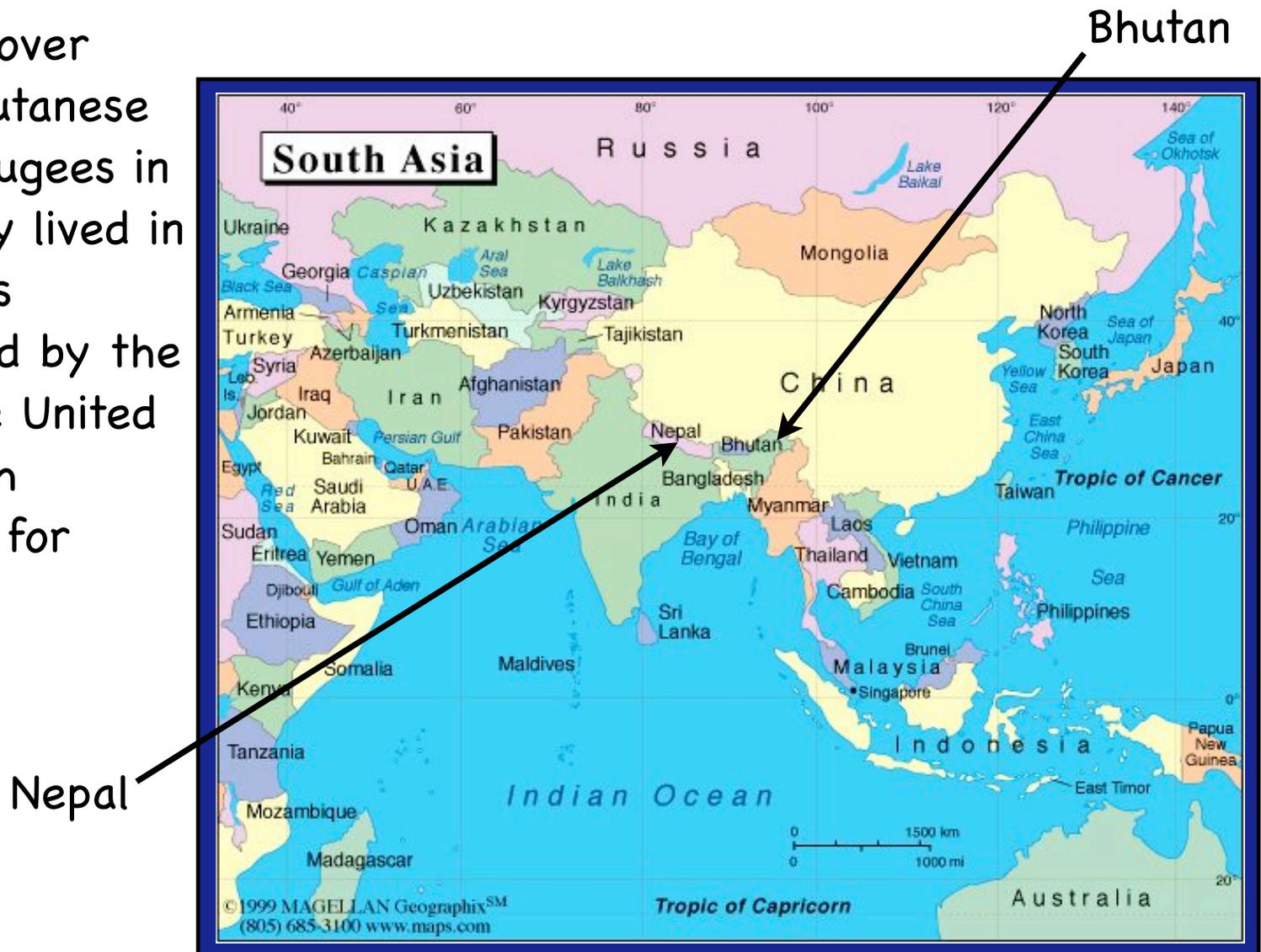
Map



The Bhutanese arriving in the United States originally lived in Bhutan. They fled that country in the early 1990s for Nepal. Nepal and Bhutan both share borders with India and China.

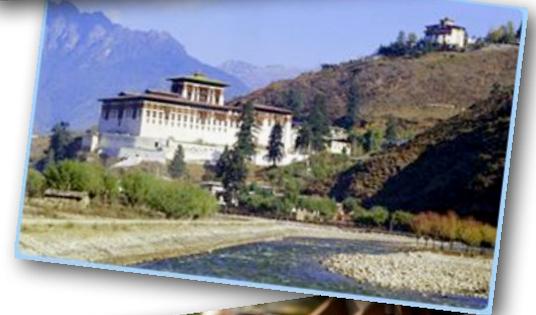
Population

Eventually, over 100,000 Bhutanese became refugees in Nepal. They lived in seven camps administered by the UNHCR, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.



History of Bhutanese Refugee Crisis

In the 19th century, the Kingdom of Bhutan invited Nepalese farmers to cultivate the southern region of Bhutan. In Bhutan, they are called Lhotshampas. These people were granted Bhutanese citizenship in 1958. In 1988, the country conducted its most accurate census up to that time in southern Bhutan. After the size of the Southern Bhutanese Lhotshampas minority became apparent, some Bhutanese politicians pressured the government to regulate the country's cultural life. Most Southern Bhutanese Lhotshampas lost their citizenship, and they were not allowed to use the Nepali language in public life. Additionally, all adults had to wear traditional Bhutanese dress.



Bhutan's "One Nation, One People" Policy

Bhutan's 1985 Citizenship Act strictly targeted the Southern Bhutanese Lhotshampas. The Southern Bhutanese needed to prove they resided in Bhutan prior to 1958 in order to maintain their citizenship. Since this was difficult, many people lost their citizenship. The 1988 census sought to enforce this law since it was only conducted in southern Bhutan, the home of the Lhotshampas. Following this, the king began to use laws and codes to prescribe aspects of northern Bhutanese culture throughout the country.

These policies led to demonstrations by the Southern Bhutanese Lhotshampas in September and October 1990. The government imprisoned and destroyed the homes of thousands in response to this, and consequently the refugee crisis began as people fled to Nepal.



Resettlement



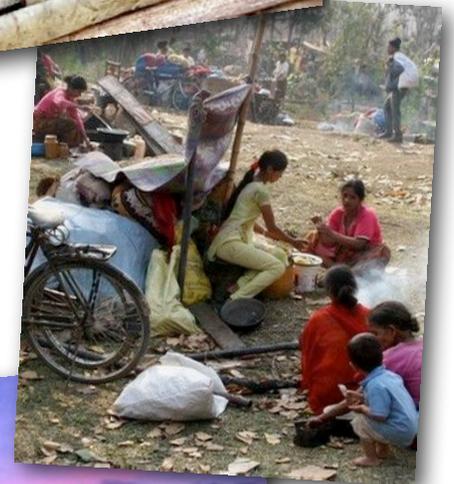
In October 2006, the US State Department announced that it would resettle 60,000 Southern Bhutanese Lhotshampas living in Nepalese refugee camps over the next several years. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden, and EU countries have also pledged to resettle the remaining 40,000 Bhutanese living in camps.

Since the resettlement declaration was made, between 15,000 and 20,000 Bhutanese have arrived each year since 2007. In the United States, they have found homes in places as diverse as Iowa, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and New York.

Bhutan

The current population of Bhutan is 682,321, and the capital is Thimphu. The national language is Dzongkha. Bhutan is in transition to a democratic government with a constitutional monarchy. King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck ratified the country's first constitution in June 2008. These changes have not led to any resolution for the refugee population in Nepal.

The majority of the population practices Buddhism or Hinduism. Amongst the refugees, most people follow Hinduism, Buddhism or Christianity.

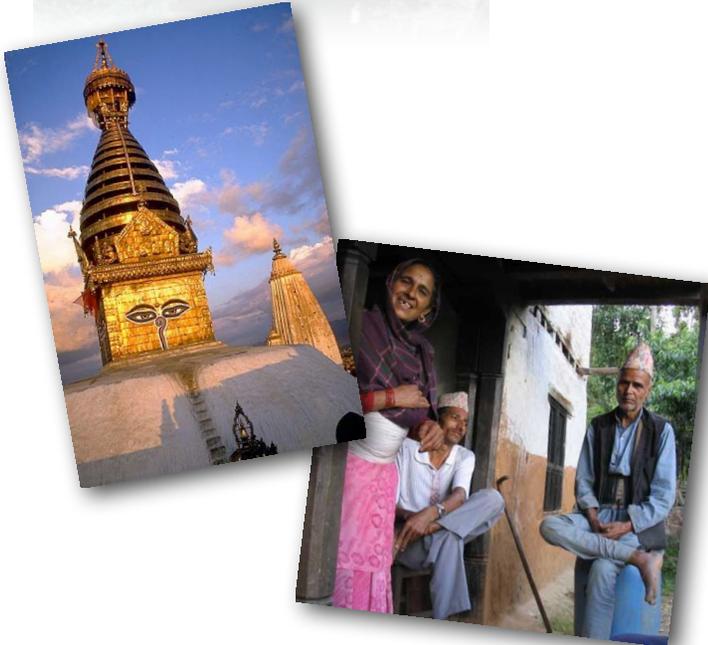


Nepal

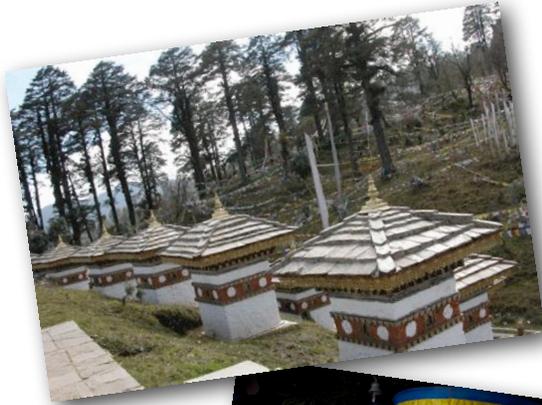
Nepal is a landlocked country bordered by India and China, and it is the world's only official Hindu state. 28 million people live in Nepal, and the capital is Kathmandu. The country is primarily agricultural, and 1/3 live below the poverty line.

In 1996, Maoists began a war against the government. The king dissolved the elected government twice (2002 and 2005), leading to widespread protests. In June 2008, King Gyanendra abdicated, and Nepal became a democratic federal republic, with the Maoists part of the democratically elected coalition government.

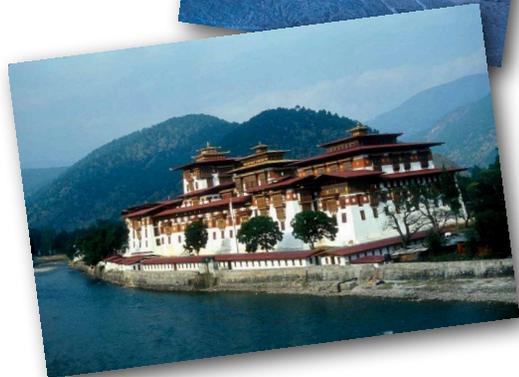
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/np.html>
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/country_profiles/1166502.stm



Buddhism in Bhutan



Prayer wheel



- *Mahayana Buddhism is the state religion of Bhutan.
- *Mahayana Buddhism supports the belief in the universal liberation from suffering.
- *Practitioners follow the teachings of Gautama Buddha.
- *Followers believe in bodhisattvas--enlightened beings that help people on Earth achieve nirvana.
- *Buddhism was imported to Bhutan from Tibet in the seventh century.
- *70% of the population of Bhutan follows Buddhism.
- *The government subsidizes monasteries, monks, and temples.
- *Some monasteries and monks possess political influence.
- *Women can become nuns.
- *People turn prayer wheels as a form of devotion.

<http://www.country-studies.com/bhutan/buddhism.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism_in_Bhutan

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahayana>

Hinduism in Bhutan and Nepal

- *The majority of the refugees follow Hinduism.
- *The Lhotshampas brought Hinduism to Bhutan when they emigrated from Nepal in the nineteenth century.
- *Hinduism is practiced in Southern Bhutan by the small number of Lhotshampas still living there.
- *The 2008 Bhutanese Constitution guarantees freedom of religion.
- *Southern Bhutanese, the Lhotshampas, follow many different forms of Hinduism.
- *The Hindu deities worshipped by the Southern Bhutanese Lhotshampas are Shakti, Vishnu, and Shiva.
- *Many Hindus perform puja daily. During a puja, people pray and make offerings. Pujas can be performed at home or in a temple. They are performed to show love, give thanks, or request intercession.
- *Many Hindus keep an icon or symbol of their deity in their home. This is usually kept at the place where puja is performed along with photos of deceased relatives.



Puja ceremony during a wedding

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Bhutan

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism>

Holidays-Dashain

Dashain is the most significant religious holiday for Hindu people with Nepalese ancestry.

- *Celebrates the goddess Durga's victory of good over evil
- *Lasts fifteen days
- *Held in late September or early October
- *Families exchange gifts
- *Children fly kites
- *Elders put tika marks on the foreheads of other family members on the last day of the festival.
- *Families sacrifice animals and eat the meat.
- *Homes are cleaned



Holidays-Tihar

Tihar is an important religious holiday for Hindu people with Nepalese ancestry. It is called the festival of light and occurs over five days at the end of October.

*Day 1: Food is laid out for crows, the messenger of death.

*Day 2: People honor dogs, the guardian of homes and the underworld. People put tika marks on the dogs' foreheads, and the dogs are given food and a garland.

*Day 3: The goddess Laxmi, the goddess of wealth, is worshipped during Laxmi Puja. People gamble and homes are cleaned and decorated with oil lamps. In the morning, cows are honored with garlands, food, and tikas.

*Day 4: People perform different ceremonies depending upon their denomination of Hinduism. Many men get together to sing to other people.

*Day 5: Brothers and sisters honor each other for the joy and protection they bring. They put tika marks on each other's foreheads and exchange garlands.



Food

Most practitioners of Hinduism do not eat beef because cows are considered significant within their religion. Also, many Hindus are vegetarians, and many non-vegetarians may abstain from meat during specific holidays. Likewise many people fast as a prayer offering or abstain from food during certain holidays.

Rice is a staple crop in Nepal and Bhutan. People eat it with beans, vegetables, soft cheese, homemade pickles, and meat. In Bhutan, Tibetan chilies are eaten. Tea is popular in Nepal and Bhutan. Food in both countries is influenced by China and India.

Hinduism values cleanliness in all aspects of life, and some people are reluctant to eat food cooked by strangers. As a result, many people prefer to eat at home. Traditionally, people eat with their hands, but most are familiar with Western cutlery.

<http://www.everyculture.com/A-Bo/Bhutan.html>

<http://www.everyculture.com/Ma-Ni/Nepal.html>



Life in Refugee Camps



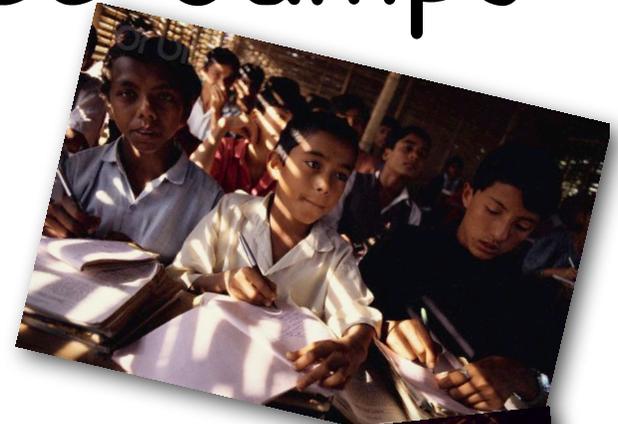
- *Rations are distributed every two weeks, and children and adults receive the same amount of food.
- *At one time, 14 Southern Bhutanese Lhotshampas died per day from malnutrition.
- *The International Red Cross provides basic medical care.
- *High rates of suicide, drug abuse, rape, depression, and alcoholism exist.
- *The UNHCR has ceased distributing clothing and bathing soap.
- *Refugees are prohibited from working in Nepal.
- *Many girls are sold and forcibly trafficked from the camps for prostitution.
- *Teenagers and older children serve as heads of households after parents die.
- *They are not allowed to build permanent structures within the camps.

http://www.chhahari.com/bhutan/bhutan_tour.html

<http://www.bhutanese-refugees.com/index.php?id=11>

Education in Refugee Camps

- *The Southern Bhutanese Lhotshampas refugees helped establish their own education system in the camps in Nepal.
- *English medium programs are run with Southern Bhutanese staff.
- *In 2006, 37,403 students attended school in refugee camps.
- *Class sizes are large.
- *Students must secure scholarships and fund their own education for grades 11, 12, and university outside the camps. Scholarship funds are limited.
- *Students study Dzongkha, the Bhutanese national language.
- *Teacher pay is low in the camps, and so the turnover rate is high.



Links

Please copy and paste these links into your browser in order to view the websites.

Bhutanese Refugees: The Story of a Forgotten People

<http://www.bhutanese-refugees.com/index.php?id=1>

United Nations News Dispatch

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,,BTN,4562d8cf2,491946b81e,0.html>

Transitioning to Life in the United States

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27983985/>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7372916.stm

<http://www.tcdailyplanet.net/article/2008/05/05/other-face-bhutan-report-latest-refugee-arrivals-u-s.html>

<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/08209/899595-85.stm>

