

SANCTUARY: BHUTAN

Recommended

Zogib, Liza et al. Sacred Mandala: Protecting Bhutan's Sacred Natural Sites.

- How development and climate change poses a potential threat to sacred sites which, because they are cherished cultural and religious sanctuaries and have therefore been left largely undisturbed, are also places of significant biodiversity.

Altman, Karin. "Chapter 1: Textiles in the Cultural History of Bhutan." In *The Fabric of Life: Textile Arts in Bhutan -- Culture, Tradition and Transformation*. 9-91

- This book has good info on "Driglam Namzhag," Bhutanese systems of etiquette. Lends itself to thinking about the ways that societal rules for engaging with one another establish homogeneity that leads to the shared perception of Bhutan as a special place.

Phuntsho, Karma. *The History of Bhutan*. Noida, India: Random House India, 2013. (Reprinted by University of Chicago Press, 2014).

- Excellent history of Bhutan which accounts for both scholarly perspectives and traditional indigenous historical narratives.

Dasho Karma Ura. *Lonchen's Forests of Poetry and Rivers of Composition in Bhutan*. Thimbu: The Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH Research, 2016.

- Translator is a loyalist advocate for the royal family and the gross national happiness project (evidenced by the fact that the first edition of this translation was sponsored by Her Majesty Royal Grandmother Ashi Kesang Choeden Wangchuk, and published by a government office). The text is a Buddhist vision for a kind of utopian world described by Longchenpa. Longchenpa was in Bhumthang in exile in the 14th century establishing several Lings (literally "continents," or religious retreats). This work is interesting as an account of sanctuary because it represents the complex relationship between the religious authority derived from Lonchenpa's Tibetan nationality, and his status as an outsider/refugee. The book is also full of rich discussions of the constitution of the landscape as an immediate manifestation of the blessings of the Buddha and Buddhist activity.

Allison, Elizabeth Aileen. "Spirits and Nature: The Intertwining of Sacred Cosmologies and Environmental Conservation In Bhutan." *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, vol. 11, 2017, p. 197.

- Abstract: While religious belief and environmental practice can be at odds with each other in a reductionist paradigm, both are aligned in service of environmental conservation in the Himalayan nation of Bhutan. Government documents assert that the nation's unique sacred cosmology, a blend of Animism, Bön, and Vajrayana Buddhism, has protected Bhutan's natural environment, allowing about two-thirds of the nation to remain under forest cover. The widespread belief in spirits and deities who inhabit the land shapes the ways that resource-dependent communities conceptualize and interact with the land. Local beliefs reveal a deep affinity for and care of the landscape. In this way, local beliefs support the modernist goals of environmental conservation, while arising from a decidedly different ontology. The Bhutanese case highlights the potentials for both convergence and conflict inherent in the precarious intersections of traditional ecological knowledge and scientific epistemologies of the environment.

Additional Reading:

1. Allison, Elizabeth Aileen. "Waste and Worldviews: Garbage and Pollution Challenges In Bhutan." *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2014, p. 405.

- Abstract: The global trend toward urbanization has led to increasing waste challenges, especially in developing countries. Although Bhutan is still one of the world's least developed countries, its economy and capital city have grown rapidly during the past two decades, causing solid waste production to outstrip management capacity. The government instituted new waste management initiatives in 2007, but they gained little traction. Ethnographic research in communities across the country revealed competing paradigms about the identification of waste, the disposition of waste, and household practices of waste management. Vajrayana Buddhism, the dominant religion throughout much of the country, profoundly shapes local beliefs and practices. Local environmental imaginaries and cultural concerns about ritual pollution have conflicted with technocratic management protocols, leading to confusion and incompletely implemented policies. Waste management policies may be more effective if they engage with the values and practices inherent in a lived religion that contributes to cultural understandings of waste.

2. Allison, Elizabeth Aileen. "Spirits and Nature: The Intertwining of Sacred Cosmologies and Environmental Conservation In Bhutan." *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, vol. 11, 2017, p. 197.

- **Abstract: While religious belief and environmental practice can be at odds with each other in a reductionist paradigm, both are aligned in service of environmental conservation in the Himalayan nation of Bhutan. Government documents assert that the nation's unique sacred cosmology, a blend of Animism, Bön, and Vajrayana Buddhism, has protected Bhutan's natural environment, allowing about two-thirds of the nation to remain under forest cover. The widespread belief in spirits and deities who inhabit the land shapes the ways that resource-dependent communities conceptualize and interact with the land. Local beliefs reveal a deep affinity for and care of the landscape. In this way, local beliefs support the modernist goals of environmental conservation, while arising from a decidedly different ontology. The Bhutanese case highlights the potentials for both convergence and conflict inherent in the precarious intersections of traditional ecological knowledge and scientific epistemologies of the environment.**

3. Allison, Elizabeth Aileen. "Spiritually Motivated Natural Resource Protection in Eastern Bhutan" in *The Spider and the Piglet: Proceedings of the First Seminar on Bhutan Studies*. Centre for Bhutan Studies, Thimphu 2004, pp. 529-563.

- Abstract: Bhutan's historical seclusion and relative lack of influence from industrialized, mass-media culture allow religion and traditional cultural norms to dominate and influence nearly every aspect of life, including resource use. In seeking to understand how internal motivations guide the use of natural resources and thus can contribute to biodiversity conservation, this study examined the ways in which both the formal teachings of Buddhism and the tradition of local and protector deities influence perceptions about and actions involving natural resources. In the homes of deities, resource use is prohibited according to tradition. Resources may not be taken from the deity habitats without facing the wrath of the deity. Because of these beliefs, villagers avoid deity habitats or "citadels".

4. Allison, Elizabeth Aileen. The Spiritual Significance of Glaciers in an Age of Climate Change. *WIRE's Clim Change* 2015. Doi: 10.1002/wcc.354

- Abstract: Climate change has largely been understood as a biophysical, economic, and political phenomenon. This approach has obscured the ways in which climate change also poses a challenge to human subjective understandings of self and society in relation to place, and in relation to perceptions of the sacred. Glaciers, as dominant features of high mountain landscapes, are sites of easily observable consequences of climate change, grounding the consequences of distant carbon emissions in material surroundings. They

are also sites of powerful sacred and symbolic meanings for local communities. This review examines three instances of glacial decline in sacred mountain landscapes, in the Peruvian Andes, the Nepalese Himalaya, and the Meili Snow Mountains of Yunnan, China. These examples show that glacial decline is not simply a material process, but also has important implications for the ways that local people understand themselves and make meaning in relation to their surroundings. Locally grounded values arising from particular experiences of the landscape, especially from those most at risk from effects of climate change, may offer new avenues of ethical reflection around climate change that can and should influence larger climate discourses.

5. Allison, Elizabeth Aileen. *Religion Inscribed in the Landscape: Sacred Sites, Local Deities and Natural Resource Use in the Himalayas*.

6. Allison, Elizabeth Aileen. *Enspirited Places, Material Places: The Sanctified and the Sacrificed in Modernizing Bhutan*. Doctoral Dissertation University of California Berkeley, 2009.

- Political ecology approach to environmental dilemmas that incorporates religion and spirituality as analytical variables.

7. Allison, Elizabeth Aileen. *Gross National Happiness and Biodiversity Conservation in Bhutan*.

- An essential part of Bhutan's development strategy is GNH. The health of the natural environment is a source of national pride in Bhutan. Bhutan 2020 document.

8. Altman, Karin. "Chapter 1: Textiles in the Cultural History of Bhutan." In *The Fabric of Life: Textile Arts in Bhutan -- Culture, Tradition and Transformation*. 9-91

- **This book has good info on "Driglam Namzhag," Bhutanese systems of etiquette. Lends itself to thinking about the ways that societal rules for engaging with one another establish homogeneity that leads to the shared perception of Bhutan as a special place.**

9. Caspari, Thomas. *Relevance of Soils for Gross National Happiness*.

- This document was created out of a seminar, discusses importance of soil in agriculture production and environmental conservation.

10. Fraser, Neil with Anima Bhattacharya and Bimalendu Bhattacharya. *Geography of a Himalayan Kingdom: Bhutan*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2001.

11. Gansser, Augusto. *Geology of the Bhutan Himalaya*. Basel: Birkhäuser, 1983.

- A classical field report on the previously largely unexplored region.

12. Gengop Karchung. *Masked Dance of Sumthrang Mountain Deity*.

- Abstract: Masked Dance of Mountain Deity (Tsän Cham) of Sumthrang Samdrup Chödzung in Ura, Bumthang is a unique performing art that has been inherited since the 15th century. When the 23rd 'Nyörab Jam'yang Drakpa Özer ('Jam-dbyang grags-pa 'od-zer; 1382–1442) planned to slip away to Tsari (Tibet) for meditation clandestinely, the Drak Tsän Dorje Dradül appeared and beseeched lama to stay at Sumthrang, simultaneously performing this masked dance along with four of his retinues. Consenting to the plea made by the deity, the lama then taught the dance to his disciples. The dance then became part of annual festival called Sumthrang Kangsöl held from 25th Day of 9th Month of the Bhutanese lunar calendar for 5 days. The dance is known by various names: Lha Cham (dance of god), Tsän Cham (dance of mountain deity), and Ta Cham (dance of horse) as the masked dancers ride horses. Today, some episodes of this dance is performed at Zhongmä lhakhang in Lhuntse Dzongkhag as this lhakhang was built by Jamyang Drakpa Özer. This paper will try to give detailed information on this unique festival, especially the Tsän Cham as it is critically endangered. Further, it will also try to bring out the historical accounts of the lhakhang and other associated sites. This paper will be based on limited available manuscripts, historical publications and other written sources which will be further supplemented with the existing myths and legends that are available.

13. Iwata, Shuji. *Glaciers of Bhutan --An Overview*. U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 1386, 2010.

- Inventory and description of glaciers and glacial lakes in Bhutan.

14. Karan, Pradyumna P., *Bhutan: A Physical and Cultural Geography*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967.

- An account of the economy, population, settlement and cultural patterns, transportation, trade, and development plans. A bit outdated probably, perhaps best referenced as a historical document.

15. Kuyakanon Knapp, Raim. Reflections on a Bhutanese Buddhist Environmental Narrative in Bhutanese Buddhism and Its Culture. Ed. Seiji Kumagai. Kathmandu: Vajra Books, 183 -207.

16. Nayar, Anjali. "When the Ice Melts" in Nature Vol. 461. October 2009.

- Popular article on glaciers and how climate change is impacting Bhutanese environment and culture.

17. Pema Lingpa. The Life and Revelations of Pema Lingpa. Translated by Sarah Harding. Boulder: Snow Lion, 2003.

- Pema Lingpa is an important saint in the Bhutanese Nyingma Buddhist tradition. He was a *gter ston* (tertön), or "treasure revealer." This text includes a translation of a text describing the incarnation stories of Pema Lingpa (chapter 1), and several of Pema Lingpa's textual revelations (ch 2-6). Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are revelations involving dialogues between Guru Rinpoche and female disciples.

18. Phuntsho, Karma. *The History of Bhutan*. Noida, India: Random House India, 2013. (Reprinted by University of Chicago Press, 2014).

- **Excellent history of Bhutan which accounts for both scholarly perspectives and traditional indigenous historical narratives.**

19. Pradeep K. Mool, Dorji Wanga, Samjwal R. Bajracharya, Karma Kunzang, Deo Raj Gurung, Sharad P. Joshi. *Inventory of Glaciers, Glacial Lakes and Glacial Lake Outburst Floods: Monitoring and Early Warning Systems in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region*. International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development in cooperation with United Nations Environment Programme Regional Resource Centre -- Asia and the Pacific, 2001.

- Inventory of glaciers and glacier lakes, of GLOF (glacial lake outburst flood) events in the region and their impact on downstream populations and investments. According to this report there are 677 Glaciers in Bhutan, covering an area of 1,317 square kilometers.

20. Development Challenges in Bhutan: Perspectives on Inequality and Gross National Happiness. Edited by Johannes Dragsbaek Schmidt, Springer 2017.

- Looks at GNH as a development strategy, and other challenges facing Bhutan's development. Essays contained within represent interdisciplinary perspectives on

nation-building in Bhutan. The introductory, titular chapter, and Part II “GNH, Equality and Inclusion/Exclusion” are good resources on GNH.

21. Schroeder, Kent. *Politics of Gross National Happiness: Governance and Development in Bhutan*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

- Abstract: The Himalayan country of Bhutan is implementing a multidimensional development strategy known as Gross National Happiness (GNH). The uniqueness of GNH and its accompanying governance framework has attracted significant international interest. Yet little is known about how GNH policies are actually implemented on the ground in the context of competing power dynamics among diverse governance actors. This chapter frames and contextualizes this issue. It further argues that analysing the role of Bhutan’s GNH governance framework in shaping power dynamics can provide broader insights for governance and human development. This chapter discusses the state-in-society approach as the study’s analytical lens and reviews the study’s methodology. It concludes with an overview of the book’s structure.

22. Sherpa, Tsering Rhitar and Mountain Institute (Nepal). *Beyul: The Sacred Hidden Valleys*. Sacred hidden valleys of the Himalaya: The Mountain Institute.

- A film and conservation project that looks at the concept of “Hidden Lands” as an indigenous Himalayan principle of environmental conservation. See a shortened version of the film here: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beyul>

23. *Education in Bhutan: Culture, Schooling, and Gross National Happiness*. Edited by Matthew J. Schuelka and T.W. Maxwell. Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues, Concerns and Prospects, Vol. 36. 2016.

- Account of the history and development of both religious and secular education in Bhutan, looking at the ways that education has been mostly shaped and driven by indigenous theories and practices of education.

24. Dasho Karma Ura. *Lonchen’s Forests of Poetry and Rivers of Composition in Bhutan*. Thimbu: The Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH Research, 2016.

- **Translator is a loyalist advocate for the royal family and the gross national happiness project (evidenced by the fact that the first edition of this translation was sponsored by Her Majesty Royal Grandmother Ashi Kesang Choeden Wangchuk, and published by a government office). The text is a Buddhist vision for a kind of**

utopian world described by Longchenpa. Lonchenpa was in Bhumthang in exile in the 14th century establishing several Lings (literally “continents,” or religious retreats). This work is interesting as an account of sanctuary because it represents the complex relationship between the religious authority derived from Lonchenpa’s Tibetan nationality, and his status as an outsider/refugee. The book is also full of rich discussions of the constitution of the landscape as an immediate manifestation of the blessings of the Buddha and Buddhist activity.

25. Spoon, Jeremy. *Everyday Buddhism and Environmental Decisions in the World’s Highest Ecosystem*.

- As Tibetan Buddhists from the Nyingma sect, the Khumbu Sherpa generally view the landscape as sacred and protected by various deities and spirits. Beliefs that humans can earn protection by following certain religious practices have traditionally provided beneficial environmental outcomes. Changing economic conditions, including those driven by foreign tourism, however, have reduced the prevalence of changed the character of these religious beliefs and practices. Mixed quantitative and qualitative research conducted in 2004-2007, 2008, and 2011 showed both generational and market-driven changes related to how consultants conceived of the relationship between humans and nonhumans and which environmental taboos they observed. Everyday Buddhist knowledge and practice appeared to focus on fewer spiritual entities and to be hybridizing with more secular belief systems. For Sherpa who are not following place-based religious traditions, economics may motivate less sustainable decisions; other Sherpa will likely continue their practice or utilize new knowledge to support sustainable environmental behavior.

26. *Lonely Planet Bhutan (Travel Guide)*.

- Travel guide on Bhutan.

27. Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche. *Mugwort-born* (Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche’s memoir-in-progress). <http://mugwortborn.wpengine.com>

- A popular blog by a famous Bhutanese lama. See especially: EPISODE FOUR: Hidden Lands, which describes his experience of growing up in a hidden land: <http://mugwortborn.wpengine.com/project/episode-four-hidden-lands/>

28. Dwyer, Chris. “Bhutan’s Dark Sense of Humour” in BBC Travel, 2/28/18. <http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20170223-bhutans-dark-sense-of-humour>

- A popular article on funny Bhutanese road signs.

29. Bacon, Charlotte. "A Forgotten Prayer, Answered." The New York Times. 12/29/2010.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/01/fashion/a-forgotten-prayer-answered-modern-love.html>

- NYT article on Chime Lhakhang, a fertility temple in Bhutan.

30. Gosling, David. *Religion and Ecology in India and Southeast Asia*. London: Routledge, 2001.

- See Chapter 5 on "Ecology and Buddhism," especially section on Bhutan, p. 82

31. Wang, Sonam Wangyel et al. *Former Attitudes Towards Conservation in Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park, Bhutan*, 2006.

- Report on survey of 274 households to assess farmer's perceptions of the Park management policies around resource uses. How socioeconomic and demographic variables affect these perceptions.

32. Wangchuk, Kesang and Jigme Wangdi. "Signs of Climate Warming Through the Eyes of Yak Herders In Northern Bhutan." *Mountain Research and Development*, Vol 38, Iss 1, Pp 45-52 (2018), vol. 38, no. 1, 2018, pp. 45 - 52.

- Results of a questionnaire conducted to understand Yak Herders perspectives on how the mountain landscape in which they live is changing in the face of global warming.

33. Zogib, Liza et al. Sacred Mandala: Protecting Bhutan's Sacred Natural Sites.

- **How development and climate change poses a potential threat to sacred sites which, because they are cherished cultural and religious sanctuaries and have therefore been left largely undisturbed, are also places of significant biodiversity.**