



*Bhutanese girl, wearing traditional kira and jewelry  
Courtesy Bhutan Travel, Inc., New York (Marie Brown)*

if she did not agree. In the 1980s, divorce was common, and new laws provided better benefits to women seeking alimony.

Family life, both traditionally and in the contemporary period, was likely to provide for a fair amount of self-sufficiency. Families, for example, often made their own clothing, bedding, floor and seat covers, tablecloths, and decorative items for daily and religious use. Wool was the primary material, but domestic silk and imported cotton were also used in weaving colorful cloth, often featuring elaborate geometric, floral, and animal designs. Although weaving was normally done by women of all ages using family-owned looms, monks sometimes did embroidery and appliqué work. In the twentieth century, weaving was possibly as predominant a feature of daily life as it was at the time of Bhutan's unification in the seventeenth century.

Landholdings varied depending on the wealth and size of individual families, but most families had as much land as they could farm using traditional techniques. A key element of family life was the availability of labor. Thus, the choice of the home of newlyweds was determined by which parental unit had the greatest need of supplemental labor. If both families had a sufficient supply of labor, then a bride and groom might elect to set up their own home.



*The twelfth-century Chendibji chorten, a religious monument dominated  
by the Buddha's all-seeing eyes  
Courtesy Bhutan Travel, Inc., New York (Marie Brown)*

education was available only in India. Eventually, the private schools were taken under government supervision to raise the quality of education provided. Although some primary schools in remote areas had to be closed because of low attendance, the most significant modern developments in education came during the period of the First Development Plan (1961-66), when some 108 schools were operating and 15,000 students were enrolled (see Role of the Government, this ch.).

The First Development Plan provided for a central education authority—in the form of a director of education appointed in 1961—and an organized, modern school system with free and universal primary education. Since that time, following one year of preschool begun at age four, children attended school in the primary grades—one through five. Education continued with the equivalent of grades six through eight at the junior high level and grades nine through eleven at the high school level. The Department of Education administered the All-Bhutan Examinations nationwide to determine promotion from one level of schooling to the next. Examinations at the tenth-grade level were conducted by the Indian School Certificate Council. The Department of Education also was responsible for producing textbooks; preparing





*Weaving on a backstrap loom, an important home industry  
Courtesy Bhutan Travel, Inc., New York (Marie Brown)*

During most of the 1980s, the budget ran a deficit. Only in 1984, out of the four years between 1983 and 1986, did government revenues exceed expenditures, and revenues depended heavily on foreign aid. In other years, revenue shortfalls reached as much as Nu207 million (in 1985). In FY 1989, Bhutan's revenues of nearly Nu1.7 billion (US\$99 million) were exceeded by expenditures of nearly Nu2.2 billion (US\$128 million, of which US\$65 million were for capital expenditures).

### ***Monetary System***

The monetary system in the early 1990s was based on the decimal-system ngultrum, which was established as the nation's currency and first used to keep financial accounts in 1974. Prior to 1957, a nondecimal system using both Indian and Bhutanese rupees was employed, and the decimal-based rupee was the standard currency between 1957 and 1974. Since at least the eighteenth century, Bhutan had had its own coinage system, and the Indian rupee also freely circulated as a medium of exchange. Until the 1960s, however, most financial transactions were carried out using barter arrangements. Although Indian rupee notes were used extensively, in 1971 the government had to withdraw some 350,000 *tikchung* (a Bhutanese coin worth half a rupee) from circulation



*Threshing rice*  
*Courtesy Bhutan Travel, Inc., New York (Marie Brown)*

potatoes, chilies, vegetables, soya beans, pulses, and mustard. Horticultural crops included oranges, apples, and cardamom. Corn and rice were by far the most prevalent crops, producing 81,000 tons and 80,000 tons, respectively, in 1988. In the same year, a total of 51,000 tons of oranges, 50,000 tons of potatoes, 16,000 tons of wheat, 7,000 tons of millet, 4,000 tons of barley, and 4,000 tons of apples were produced. Total cereal production, however, only increased from 154,000 tons in 1979 to 205,000 tons in 1987.

Despite increases in paddy production, with 26,000 hectares under cultivation in 1989, rice was imported. Bhutan had once been an exporter of rice to Tibet, but its growing urban population plus the nonfarm immigrant and migrant population put a severe constraint on previous self-sufficiency in rice production. With a total cereal demand of 200,000 tons by 1987, some 20,000 tons of rice and 12,000 tons of wheat were being imported from India annually. Nonfood crops, such as jute, which was produced by fewer than 2 percent of Bhutan's farmers, also were grown. A small amount of tobacco was produced, with a reported crop of 100 tons in 1987, the same amount produced annually for nearly a decade.

### ***Animal Husbandry***

The most common livestock types traditionally and in the late





*Royal Bhutan Army camp at Tashi Makhang, Punakha District  
Courtesy Bhutan Travel, Inc., New York (Marie Brown)*

wings deployed primarily in border areas. The army also operated hospitals in Lungtenphug, Wangdiphodrang, and Yonphula.

Most if not all of the army's weapons in the 1980s were manufactured in India. Rifles, bayonets, machine guns, and 81mm mortars have been noted in the army's weapons inventory, but some were believed to be obsolescent. Figures on defense expenditures were not publicly available and, in budgetary information published by the Planning Commission, were found only in general government costs.

The army has traditionally been a small, lightly armed conscript force. The majority of its officers and noncommissioned officers were trained by IMTRAT, which was commanded by an Indian Army brigadier at the Wangchuck Lo Dzong Military Training School, established in 1961 in Ha District. Recruits were trained at the Army Training Centre established in 1957 at Tenchholing in Wangdiphodrang District. IMTRAT also offered a one-to-two-month precourse for officers and enlisted personnel selected for advanced training in India. Royal Bhutan Army cadets were sent to the Indian National Defence Academy at Pune, followed by training at the Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun, from which they were commissioned as second lieutenants. It was reported in 1990 that members of the Royal Body Guards (an elite VIP



*Traffic control on Norzin Lam, Thimphu's main street  
Courtesy Bhutan Travel, Inc., New York (Marie Brown)*

## **Legal System**

### ***Criminal Justice***

Bhutan's civil and criminal codes are based on the Tsa Yig, a code established by the *shabdrung* in the seventeenth century. The Tsa Yig was revised in 1957 and ostensibly replaced with a new code in 1965. The 1965 code, however, retained most of the spirit and substance of the seventeenth-century code. Family problems, such as marriage, divorce, and adoption, usually were resolved through recourse to Buddhist or Hindu religious law. In modern Bhutan, village heads often judged minor cases and district officials adjudicated major crimes.

Trials in the 1980s were public, and it was the practice of the accuser and the accused personally to put their cases to judges. There were no lawyers in Bhutan's legal system until the 1980s, and decisions were made on the facts of each case as presented by the litigants. Judges appointed by the Druk Gyalpo were responsible for investigations, filing of charges, prosecution, and judgment of defendants. Serious crimes were extremely rare throughout the twentieth century, although there were reports of increased criminal activity in the 1980s and early 1990s with the influx of