

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

An Overview of the Monpas

The Monpas of Wangling, Jangbi and Phumzur villages are a homogenous and close-knit community that live and work in groups. Joint family systems are prevalent in these villages. It was noted during interactions with the villagers that most of the households are related to each other. It is believed that the Monpas of these three villages are members of a huge family whose members got married, moved out of the house and settled in the three villages. For hundreds of years, they have kept themselves isolated from the mainstream Bhutanese society and have been able to preserve their local culture and tradition. However, documentary evidence does not exist to corroborate this fact.

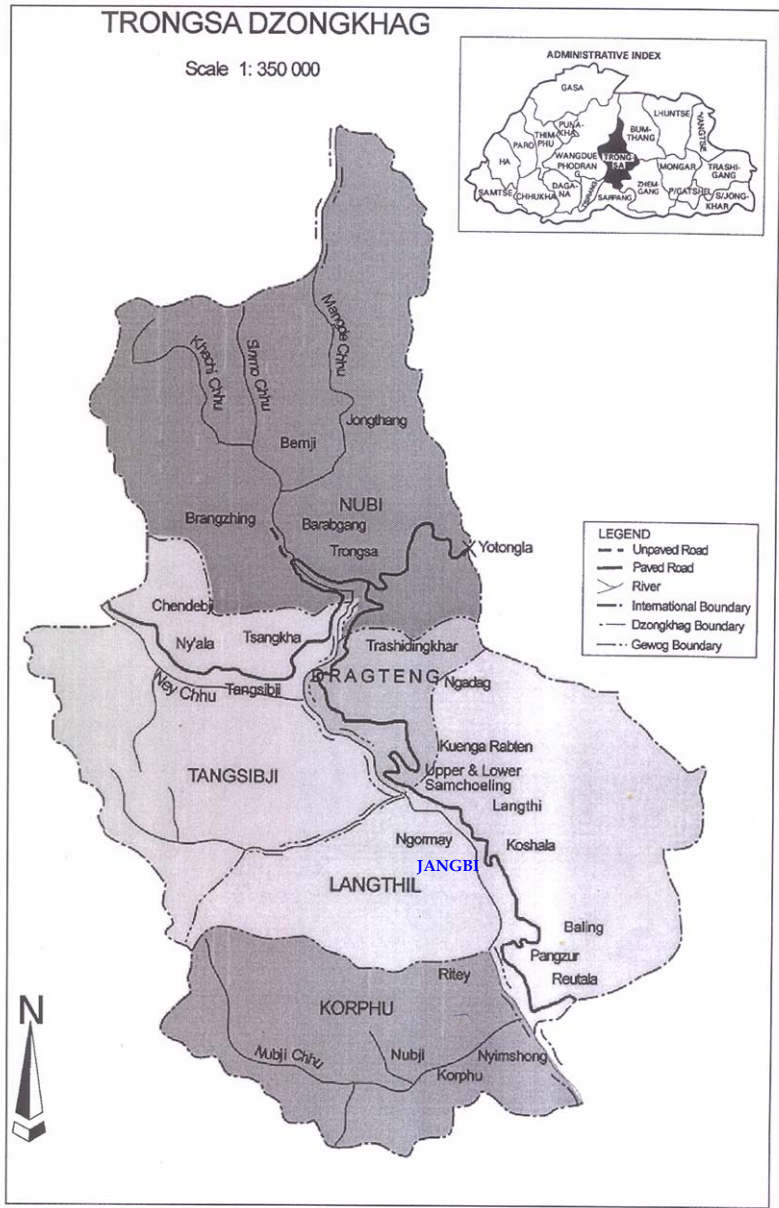
The term *Monpa* as explained by the Monpas of Wangling, Jangbi and Phumzur means “people of darkness”. This explains the isolation, low self-esteem and low socio-economic condition of this indigenous group of people as they see themselves. In general term, *Mons*, are referred to people without a religion and refers to the period before the advent of Buddhism in Bhutan. Buddhism was introduced in Bhutan by Guru Rimpoche in the eighth century.

The Monpas were originally hunters and food-gatherers. The Monpa culture, tradition and practices are all intrinsically linked to the forests around them. The Monpas began to cultivate crops by gradually clearing some parts of the forests through the primitive slash and burn cultivation, known as *tseri*. Subsequently, they began to domesticate cattle and

maintained large areas of land for pasture locally known as *tsamdo*. After several decades, they began to adopt permanent cultivation, mainly dryland farming (*kamzhing*). In 1983, the RGOB introduced wetland cultivation (*chuzhing*) in these three villages. The Monpa people were trained to irrigate their land and cultivate paddy.

Cane and bamboo are the two most versatile natural resources available to the Monpas. The Monpas are traditionally weavers and they weave a variety of items for household use. Since a few years ago, they have also started to produce handicraft items for sale. Most Monpas have spent their entire lifetime in their village and forests around them. It was found that some of the Monpas have begun travelling outside their villages including their district headquarters, Trongsa, only in the recent times.

Monpa people by nature are very simple and carefree. They do not have the habit of saving and follow barter system within and outside their villages. Most of the households (92 percent) reported food shortage in the first three months of the Bhutanese calendar (February-April) before the winter crop harvest. In times of famine or food shortage, the Monpas go to Trongsa Dzongkhag Administration and seek *kidu* which they have been receiving until now as they are the poorest community in the district. Recently, after the initiation of a UNDP/GEF Small Grants project in 1999, the community has formed a cooperative and has also established a community trust fund. The Monpa community uses the fund cautiously during food shortage or to perform death rituals.



Geographical location

Trongsa dzongkhag comprises of five *geogs*- Bjakteng, Korphu, Langthil, Nubi and Tangsibji. The three Monpa villages Wangling, Jangbi and Phumzur fall within Langthil *geog*, which covers an area of 50,986 ha. One can reach Wangling and Jangbi, which are the nearest villages located on the bank of Mangduechhu following two hours walk from Tongtongphe. Phumzur is four hours walk from Tongtongphe. For the three Monpa villages, the nearest road head is Tongtongphe 56 km. from Trongsa, the dzongkhag headquarter. The three Monpa villages lie at 27°10'N latitude and 90°34'E longitude [MOA 1995]. The terrain is highly rugged. Wangling and Phumzur are located at an altitude of 1500 meters above sea level, while Jangbi is located at 1360 meters above sea level.



Phumzur village

Climate

Langthil geog falls within the subtropical agro-ecological zone of Bhutan with the temperature and rainfall pattern as given below.

Table 3.1: Maximum and minimum temperature and rainfall in Langthil

Parameter	MONTHS											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temp.												
Max (°C)	-	16.0	18.7	20.0	27.3	-	-	29.3	30.7	29.4	29.2	-
Min (°C)	-	8.7	9.4	11.0	17.9	-	-	22.1	21.6	22.7	7.3	-
Rainfall (mm)	-	22.6	1.5	27.7	114.3	-	-	203.0	80.3	-	-	-

Source: CSO, 2001

The climatic year consists of three distinct seasons: summer season (April to June); rainy season (July to October); and winter season (November to March). About 50 percent of the annual rainfall occurs over a short period between June and August, featuring a strong monsoon.

Vegetation types

The three Monpa villages are located in the sub-tropical valley on the western side of Mangduechhu, and are within the range of 1000 to 1500 meters above sea level. Chirpine (*Pinus roxburghii*) forest dominates the area with scattered broadleaved forests confined to ravines and depressions. The most commonly found species in the Chirpine forest include *Pinus roxburghii*, *Quercus griffithii*, *Quercus lanata*, *Albizia spp.*, *Desmodium spp.*, *Schima wallichii*, *Rhus javanica* etc. Broadleaved forest at the upper region of Jangbi and Phumzur had *Lithocarpus spp.*, *Cinnamomum spp.*, *Persea spp.*, and *Ficus spp.* The vegetation types include mixed broadleaf forest up to

about 1200 meters altitude, mixed conifer forest above 1200 meters, and bamboo and cane forest at an altitude of about 1500 meters.



Mixed broadleaf forest

Wildlife

The most commonly found fauna around the forests of the three Monpa villages are: golden langoor, himalayan bear, leopard, sambar, barking deer, black panther, wild boar, ghoral, musk deer, bulbul, hornbill, pheasant, hill patrige, monal, cobra and other snakes. During the survey, the Monpas stated that the wildlife population has increased in the recent past because of hunting restrictions imposed by the RGOB following the Forest Act of 1969. Crop damage and depredation of livestock by wild animals was reported to be very common in these villages. During the study, many

stories of human and wildlife conflicts were narrated by the villagers.

Demographic structure

There are a total of 40 households in the three Monpa villages. Wangling and Phumzur have 16 and 15 households respectively, whereas Jangbi has only 9 households. The total population in the three villages was 261, with the maximum of 113 in Phumzur, 98 in Wangling, and 50 in Jangbi. Female per 1000 male ratio in Wangling and Phumzur was 1130 and 1054 and in Jangbi it was 667 (Table 3.2). Table 3.3 indicates the distribution of Monpa population by age. The distribution of the population is broad-based which is typical of any growing population. Those less than 14 years population constituted 31 percent, 15 to 66 years constituted 64 percent, and greater than 66 years a mere 4 percent. It is noteworthy to find that the population less than 14 years and 15 to 65 years was better than the national average of 42.1 percent and 53.6 percent respectively [CSO 2001]. The elderly population was found to be low indicating lower life expectancy.

Table 3.2: Village-wise distribution of Monpa population in Trongsa

Villages	Number of households	Population			Female per 1000 male
		Male	Female	Total	
Wangling	16	46	52	98	1130
Jangbi	9	30	20	50	667
Phumzur	15	55	58	113	1054
Total	40	131	130	261	992

Table 3.3: Distribution of Monpa population by age

Total	Infant Less than 1 yr	Children 1 to 14 yrs	Adults 15 to 45 yrs	Adults 46 to 66 yrs	Elderly 67 and above
261	8 (3)	74 (28)	126 (48)	42 (16)	11 (4)

Value in parenthesis indicate percentage



Young and old: The Monpas look forward to a better future



Monpa children: The future generation

Household size

Family size is directly related to the stage of socio-economic transformation of a community. Joint and large families are found mostly in traditional society. More than 50 percent of the households had 5 to 8 members, followed by 25 percent with more than 9 members. The average household size in the three Monpa villages was 6.5 members per household.

Migration

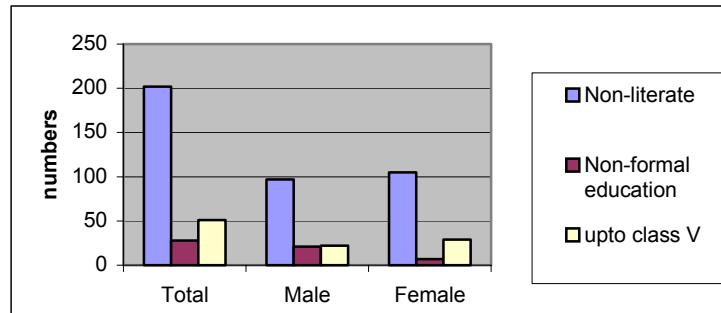
Migration is increasing in the Monpa community. In all, over a period of ten years, 24 people have migrated from the three Monpa villages to other parts of the country, mainly for employment, monastic education, and marriage. It is of

interest to note that although Jangbi village has the smallest number of households (9), but has an equal number of out migrants as in the other two villages.

Literacy

The literacy level of the Monpas is very low, one of the lowest in Trongsa district and the country as a whole. In total there were only 17 percent literates, who have studied up to Class V, and 9 percent had undergone non-formal education, primarily from monastic school. The remaining 74 percent were non-literates. All of the literates fall under the category of six to nineteen years age group, basically those who gained access to formal education after the Jangbi community school was established in 1996. Figure 3.1 shows that a higher number of men than women have gained basic literacy through non-formal education. However, there is increasing number of children, both female and male, attending school.

Figure 3.1: Education by sex



A community school established in Jangbi in 1996, marked the beginning of formal education for the Monpas. The school now has been upgraded to a primary school (up to Class V). There are three teachers including the head teacher, and 36

students with 18 boys and 18 girls. The school also conducts non-formal education classes in the evenings for adults.



Jangbi community school established in 1996



Students at their art and craft class

Language

The local dialect of the Monpas is known as *Monkha*. *Monkha* does not resemble any other language of the country though it has roots in the Tibeto-Burman family, like other languages of Bhutan. Today, due to the cultural influence posed by the outside regions, *Monkha* is facing the threat of extinction. In Oalay, another locality where a few Monpas reside, only one woman speaks the language fluently. In Trongsa, all the Monpas speak *Monkha*. Besides *Monkha*, the Monpas of Wangling, Jangbi and Phumzur also speak *Dzongkha* the national language. Some of them also speak *Khengkha* and *Lhotsamkha*.

Dress

The traditional dress of the Monpas is called *pagay* and it used to be worn by all the Monpas up until a few decades ago. *Pagay* was woven with fibers from the gigantic nettle plant (*Giardina diversifolia*) locally known as *kulima*. The nettle plant grows in abundance in *tseri* land or wasteland. Fibers obtained from the inner bark of the giant nettle plant were used extensively for making *pagay*, ropes, bags, fishing nets, head bands etc. *Pagay* used to be worn like *kira* without *tego* by women, keeping the arms naked. *Pagay* when worn, stretches down to the knees for men and up to the toes for women. The back of *pagay* is folded by *kappa* over the waist and is tied with a *kera*. The dress was rough but once woven, lasted for several years.

The Monpas no longer weave *pagay* as it is far easier to buy dresses from Langthil or Trongsa. As of today, only two women in Phumzur, one woman each in Jangbi and Wangling know how to weave *pagay* from nettle plant fiber. However,

almost all the elderly people (40 years and above) had worn *pagay* when they were young. *Pagay* is no longer worn by the Monpas and is replaced by the national dress, *gho* and *kira*, as worn by all other communities in Bhutan. This changing trend in dress and tradition indicates the socio-cultural transformation of the Monpas. It is very interesting to note that the same is the case for another indigenous community living in the mountains of southern Bhutan – the *Doyas*, also known as *Lhops*. They used to wear their dress similar to the Monpas also woven from nettle plant fiber. This can be viewed as mainstreaming of this indigenous community, but at the same time one can foresee the risk of a permanent and complete loss of a treasure of knowledge, culture and tradition.



Pagay a traditional attire worn by Monpas in the past

Food habits

The food habits of Monpa people are very simple and their diet is mostly dependent on locally available food items. They occasionally visit the nearest road-head market at Langthil and buy essential commodities like salt, rice, or oil. They either buy these by cash or barter them with handicraft items, non-timber forest products, or dairy products.

Their staple food is maize and rice (red and white rice). The most common vegetables eaten by the Monpas are pumpkin, radish, brassica and egg-plant. Local wine, (*bangchang*) made of wheat, buckwheat, maize or some wild plants is consumed most of the time of the day. Even young children drink *bangchang* with their food. *Bangchang* is brewed by women in their homes.

(My Daily Life, narrated by Ap Nakari from Jangbi village)

"I get up at 5 am, prepare my breakfast (bangchang) and drink it. I go to my nearby field and plough. At 8 a.m., I go home, eat red rice and vegetables, mostly pumpkin, and drink bangchang. I go again to the field and plough. At 10 a.m. I leave the oxen for grazing and I come home. Subsequently, I go to forest for firewood collection into the nearby forest. Within half an hour, I return home with a back load of firewood. Fetching firewood is not a problem for my family as my house is near forest. At about 3 p.m., I drink bangchang, take rest for sometime, and weave basket collect cattle, tie them. I have 6 bulls and 15 cows. We used to have 80 cattle heads before, but now there is no one to take care of cattle and there is less fodder. My wife cooks food, I eat food together with family (my wife, mother-in-law, three sons, one daughter, and a cowboy). One of my son lives with my father-in-law and his second wife (my mother-in-law's younger sister). I go to sleep at about 8 p.m."

The Monpas use more than 80 different species of edible plants from forest for consumption. The most commonly used forest foods comprise of wild tubers, mushroom, fern, fruits, green leafy vegetables, cane and bamboo shoots. Food from wild plants form a major part of the Monpas' diet and is eaten either fresh, dried or cooked. The food from wild plants is also preserved by drying, baking or brewing it and consumed later when required. The elder members of the family teach the younger ones how and when to harvest, and how to prepare and store wild plants for food. Children also learn while they help their elder family members to perform these tasks.

Religious practices

Bonism was the main religion practised by the Monpas before the advent of Buddhist doctrines. But they still remain faithful adherents of the former religion. The officiants at ceremonies involving the supernatural are the *Bonpo* and *Bonmo*, the male and female *shaman*. The Monpas have also retained native animist religious practices. Animal sacrifice was practised until recently during the *Bon* rituals, though this practice is today substituted by the offering of boiled eggs. The Monpas of these three villages do have the stories of Guru Rimpoche who, they claim, visited their villages on his way to Bumthang. But their faith in *Bonism* remained. Altars are almost absent in the Monpa households. However, this trend is changing. Of late, most of the Monpas have begun to follow Buddhism and some of them have even joined the monastic school. Recently, they have constructed a *lhakhang* each in their villages.

According to *Bonism*, natural forces like forests, mountains, lakes, rivers, wind, sky etc. are the domains of spirits and disregarding these natural forces will lead to diseases and natural catastrophes. During the mapping of forest resources

by the Monpas, many sacred groves were identified in Wangling, Jangbi and Phumzur (Annexure). It is a taboo to cut trees from the forest considered sacred, as these are considered the domains of local deities locally termed as *duth*. Similarly, big rocks and trees identified by their ancestors are also considered the domains of local deities (*sadag* and *nye*) and are kept protected. It is believed that if sacred groves are disturbed, the local people will suffer illness and misfortune. The Monpas perform rituals twice a year, once in the summer and once in winter, welcoming rich harvest and to please their local deities by offering their first crops and *bangchang*. Thirty-two cups made of leaves filled with new crops are offered to the deities. This ritual is performed by *pawo*, male *shaman*. This symbolizes the welcoming of the forthcoming harvest and people from all the households celebrate together by eating and drinking.

The Monpas also perform annual rituals in their *lhakhang* by offering prayers to Guru Rimpoche. Religious offerings comprise of food, two cups of water, incense, white flowery seeds from the fruit of *Oroxylum indica*, butter lamp, one cup of rice, one cup of *ara*, and one cup of *suja*. After one hour of offering prayers, they offer prayers with *ara*, followed by offering of rice, fruits, puffed rice, and other available edibles. These offerings are then shared among the devotees and eaten. Prayers for a further period of half an hour are then offered to thank as well as bid farewell to the gods and deities.

Sites of cultural significance

The Monpas have a number of cultural and religious sites in their villages. Some of these sites are as follows:

- *Phuzur* (Phurba Zur): This site is on the way to Phumzur village. It is believed by the Monpas as well as other people in the country that Guru Rimpoche had placed his *purba* while traveling through this area.
- *Ugen Drak* (Guru's cave): This is another place of great importance both to the Monpas and others. It is believed that Guru Rimpoche rested one night in the cave on his way to Nabji.
- *Usha*: This site is a rocky cliff with an impression of Guru Rimpoche's head on it. It is believed to be very sacred by the local community. It is located below the Phumzur lhakhang.
- *Dupchu* (Dup chhu) meaning holy water. This place is located above the Phumzur Lhakhang. There is a big rock in the middle of which it has a hole. Water comes out of this hole and the local people believe that it was created by Guru Rimpoche.
- *Kubra* (*Kudra*): It is believed that Guru Rimpoche rested here for one night. There are some footprints on solid rock which are believed to be footprints of the angels who accompanied Guru Rimpoche.



Inside view of the Phumzur Lhakhang

Phumzur Lhakhang is highly revered by the Monpas as Guru Rimpoche is believed to have passed by this site during his visit to Bhutan in the eighth century. This Lhakhang received statues and religious items from Bumthang Kurje Lhakhang in 1999. It is believed that Guru Rimpoche visited Kurje, Phumzur, Kubra and Nabji during the eighth century. The Monpas perform rituals for all these *nye* in Phumzur Lhakhang on the 10th and 15th day of the first, second, sixth, eighth and tenth Bhutanese months.

Traditional healing

Traditional healing practices both for humans and livestock are very popular among the Monpa community. The Monpas used more than 30 species of medicinal plants for curing human and livestock diseases. In the three villages, six *pamo* and three *pawo* were found to be practising their traditional healing. It was also noticed that *pamo* do not consume pork or eggs, since it is believed that eating pork and eggs diminish their power of healing. Most Monpas still prefer traditional practices to cure sickness. Superstitious and orthodox in nature, the Monpas believe that the cause of their sickness is not exactly due to their poor health, sanitation and hygiene but are due to evil spirits and bad *karma*. Recently, however more and more Monpas have begun to believe and use modern medical amenities. A Basic Health Unit was established in February 2002 in Jangbi that also extends its services to the other two Monpa villages.

The Monpas now are no longer hunters and food gatherers. They are witnessing tremendous economic and social changes in their own community.



Sick grandmother and her family



Pamo performing a ritual to cure the sick grandmother

Marriage system

Monpa people have equal preference for both female and male children, though some would prefer daughters since

they would remain at their parent's home after marriage. By contrast, boys go to their in-laws' house. Parents do not play a major role in the marital decisions of their children.

Normally, when an eligible bachelor finds a bride, and they agree to marry, he begins living in the bride's home. He continues to stay there as a family member and works for the house. However, this trend of the groom always living in the bride's home is changing. It is increasingly observed that the relocation of a spouse is now primarily dependent on the shortage of working members in a house, wealth of the concerned families and their mutual agreement. After a period of three years, the bride's parents send a man to the groom's house with the following message "Your son is in my house, his eyes are not blind, his legs and hands are not broken. Do you need him back?" If the groom's parents do not want him back, the man continues to live in the bride's home.

Traditionally, if the groom's parents want him back, they have to go to bride's house with *chanjey* (meat of one whole cattle) and two other men, and apologise. These days, local wine has replaced cattle meat. After the acceptance of apologies, the groom's parents take back the groom and *naem* (daughter-in-law) to their house. All the relatives and neighbours are invited when a *genja* is signed by the groom's parents which states that the daughter-in-law will not be mistreated, that all property including cattle, house, land and any other assets in the house is transferred to her name, she being the new owner of all these assets. This also ensures that the man does not divorce his wife. If the man marries again, he moves out of the house leaving all his property to his previous wife. The daughter-in-law can then marry again and bring her new husband to the house. These days, land and property are given more often to one favourite son, daughter-in-law or are

divided among all daughters-in-laws. The Monpas are a homogenous and cohesive community and intermarriage between first cousins is customary. Intermarriage with outsiders is very rare.

Key livelihood occupations

The Monpa people of Wangling, Jangbi and Phumzur are intimately associated with the forests. Their needs are minimal and most of these are met from the nearby forests. They depend on wild tubers and fruits whenever their crops fail. They weave cane and bamboo handicraft items for cash income. Some households depend on resin, tapped from Chirpine trees, which they sell to earn cash. The small number of livestock they have are also entirely dependent on the forest for grazing.

From times immemorial, the Monpas have been engaged in weaving bamboo and cane products. The finished products were bartered with grains in the surrounding villages. They also had the tradition of paying annual tax (in the form of handicraft) to the Princess of Indocholing (who owns most of the *tsamdo* in the Monpa villages). In return, they are allowed to graze their cattle in her *tsamdo* and also would receive food grains in times of crop failure. With time, the Monpa began practising shifting cultivation. However, this was not absolutely easy due to the close proximity of forests around the *tseri* land and destruction of the crops by wild animals and birds. In the recent past, the RGOB policy began to discourage the practice of *tseri*.

The Monpas are engaged in this cash generating activity especially during their free time. Handicraft items are sold generally in the nearest market, Langthil and Trongsa, and

occasionally in Thimphu. In 2000, the Monpas formed a cooperative and, through the assistance of the RGOB and UNDP/GEF Small Grants Programme have received training and exposure in the manufacture of improved bamboo and cane handicraft items, following which their involvement in this activity is more systematized and productive. A community trust fund has been established.

More than 60 percent of the total Monpa population is involved in farming. The same percentage of people weave handicraft in their non-agriculture season and leisure time. Twenty-three percent of them tap resin from the Chirpine trees and sell it to the local dealer in Langthil. Thirteen percent of the population are dependent (below seven years), and 15 percent are school going children. Six percent of them are clergy members, one percent traditional healers, and another one percent are service holders.

The Monpas have switched over to settled agriculture very recently. Farming is at subsistence level with the majority of the Monpa population engaged in it. Recently, two men were employed by the RGOB as a messenger in Wangling and a non-formal education teacher in Jangbi Community School. Four people work as labourers and one as carpenter in Thimphu, the capital city of Bhutan.

Although more than 60 percent of the population practise agriculture, their main source of cash income is handicraft followed by resin tapping. Figure 3.2 shows that handicraft production is the highest source of cash generation with 57 percent total income. Resin tapping, though practised by a relatively small population, accounts for another 23 percent of cash generation followed by agriculture (8 percent), working

as labourer (8 percent), and sale of livestock products (4 percent).

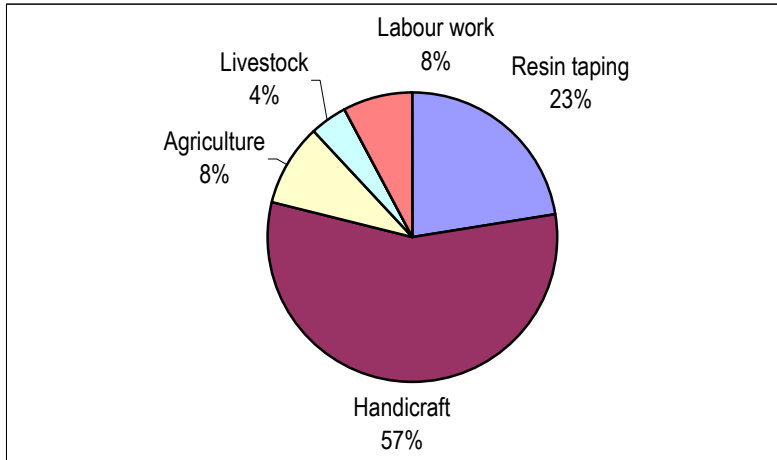


Figure 3.2: Sources of cash income of the Monpas

It was observed that most people from Phumzur weave handicraft products whereas most people from Wangling tap resin, for cash income. It was also observed that Phumzur has the highest population with 113 people but have only 21 percent of the people involved in cash generation activities. Whereas, Jangbi has the smallest population with 50 people but 36 percent of them are involved in cash income generation activities. Wangling village has 98 people and 30 percent participated in cash generation activities. This is directly associated with proximity of these villages to the road head and facility for marketing of finished products.



Cane and bamboo baskets making their way to Langthil



Cane and bamboo handicraft items: An important source of cash income



Resin tapped from Chirpine trees: collected at Langthil

Eighty-nine percent of the Monpas save less than Nu.1000 (US\$ 20) in a year, and only 11 percent of the people save Nu.1,000 to 5,000 (US\$ 20 to 100). None of the households reported annual saving of more than Nu. 5,000 (US\$ 100). Most expenditure is incurred on clothes and food and some expenditure on social ceremonies, household items and taxes (land and house).

Gender-based values and practice at the household and community level

The Monpas with their distinct culture and traditions over a long duration of Bhutanese history is of immense significance. For hundreds of years, the Monpas have remained in the remote Black Mountains with minimal interaction outside their society. Their life and livelihood in the past were simple and sparse. They are now experiencing social transformation slowly but steadily.

The Monpa community is a matriarchal society with female members inheriting land and property. However, this trend is changing slowly. Many people mentioned that these days both son and daughter demand land and property. The

daughter-in-law is very powerful in the Monpa household and so are the parents of the daughter-in-law. Unlike the other matriarchal societies in Bhutan where the daughter inherits the property, the Monpa community follow a unique property inheritance system where the daughter-in-law receives the household property. This was explained thus: the bride's parents are powerful (since the son chose to marry their daughter) and so to make the bride also powerful and please her parents, property is legally transferred to her name in the presence of the village elders. Some parents explained that this system was practised to give the daughter-in-law security as she leaves her own home and moves into her husband's house. This ensures security to the daughter-in-law and that the husband does not leave his wife. If the husband marries again, he does not get any property but moves out of the house. The daughter-in-law can then marry another man and bring her new husband to the house.

In the Bhutanese legal system, all landed property as well as the house are registered in the name of the head of the household. Any transaction of household property can legally be done only with the consent of the *sathram* holder. The property ownership pattern was found to be positive for women in the Monpa community as compared to most parts in the country except in the rural areas of western Bhutan where the property ownership pattern shows 60:40 female/male share [PCS 2001]. However, the study revealed that most household decisions are made by the male members. Male members take household decisions in most households (55 percent) followed by female members (30 percent) and joint decisions were taken in 15 percent of the households. Land was owned both by male and female members of the community with a ratio of land holding at 49:51. Land is

inherited from parents. All cultivated land is registered and it is illegal to cultivate unregistered land.

The Monpa parents give equal preference to both female and male children. It was found that in 93 percent of the households, children themselves made decisions on their marriage followed by 5 percent of the households where both parents decided the marriage of their children and in 2 percent households, family elders decided children's marriage. It was found that parents did not play a major role in the marital decisions of their children.

It is worth mentioning that there is a fine line of division of work and activities. Men are involved primarily in outdoor activities like firewood collection, fodder collection, making and selling handicraft items and other household and farm produce, representing the household in meetings and in *saptolemi*. Women were mainly involved in activities such as cooking, fetching water, tending cattle, kitchen gardening, and collecting non-timber forest products. Both men and women work in the field, take care of cattle and attend to sick children (Table 3.4). It was interesting to note that many of the tasks among male and female members overlapped, particularly manure collection and cattle related works, which are mostly done by women in other parts of the country. Also it was found that firewood is collected mostly by male members, adults (59%) and children (13%), as compared to women which was only 8 percent. This is again different from other parts of the country where, women collect firewood for household consumption.

Table 3.4: Gender-wise division of labour (percentage from sample size)

Activities	Male adult	Female adult	Both adult	Male children	Female children	Both children
Firewood collection	59	8	15	13	0	4
Kitchen garden	0	58	25	3	11	3
Cooking	0	85	4	1	8	1
Water collection	1	38	19	15	18	8
Fodder collection	45	6	10	34	1	3
Cattle related work	3	10	43	10	10	22
Ploughing	76	0	1	23	0	0
Field work	4	3	80	4	1	8
Handicraft	79	6	6	8	0	0
Manure collection	0	33	67	0	0	0
Attending children and sick	3	1	95	0	0	1
Attending meeting	70	5	5	16	3	0
Shaptolemi	52	1	3	28	16	0
Selling farm products	73	0	10	18	0	0

A PRA exercise was undertaken to analyze gender-based access to resources and decision making about its use. It can be seen from Table 3.5 that women and men seem to have equal access to and use of most resources. Women have access to and control over poultry and vegetables, men have access to and control over livestock and cash. Both women and men have access to and control over household items, religious items, crops, land and house. This practice of access and control over resources and decision making differs from the practice in many other Asian countries. At the same time, some similarities can be seen, like the control of cash and livestock with menfolk, although women spend more time

tending to cattle. It was also found that legally women own the land and property, but household decisions are taken mostly by men.

Table 3.5: Gender-based control of household resources

Resources	Control of resources		
	Male	Female	Both
Land			X
Livestock	X		
House			X
Religious items			X
Cash	X		
Poultry		X	
Vegetable		X	
Household items			X
Crops			X
Labour		X	