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**Bhutanese architecture: Integration of architectural drawing and studies into  
the ASEAN core curriculum in the Department of Building Construction**

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**Abstract**

The core curriculum for ASEAN studies includes the realization of the value of the variety of styles of global and local links within the ASEAN community. The identity of people, ethnic groups, cultural heritage, religious beliefs and philosophy in the Asia-Pacific region is important to strengthen the understanding of co-existence based on respect for the value of the cultural diversity in the area.

The study of the housing culture of Bhutanese architecture can be integrated into the content of architectural drawing course in the vocational education program at the Department of Building Construction. Students can become knowledgeable about manifest and latent function of housing culture throughout the ASEAN community. The study of the distinctive identity of the functional architecture of Bhutanese architecture would examine the uniqueness in terms of symbols of religion, ethnic groups, spatial features and the wisdom of Himalayan civilization that is latent in its functionality. These attributes reflect their faith and are apparent in their architecture which gives meaning and value to the livelihoods of the people in the land of thunder dragon Himalayas.

Therefore, the integration of Bhutanese architecture studies as a pilot program in the ASEAN core curriculum of vocational education will enhance awareness and understanding about the ASEAN community and the Asia-Pacific identity. Another goal of the studies is to embrace the knowledge network and create a respect for cultural diversity and cultural property in Asia.

**Keywords:** *Bhutanese architecture, manifest and latent function, ASEAN core curriculum.*

## **1. Introduction**

In teaching and studies in vocational education courses for the ASEAN's Core Curriculum, integrated knowledge in all subjects with a quality and development of cross-border knowledge in the ASEAN community and Asia – Pacific region under Core Curriculum is needed. The 5 frameworks are 1) basic knowledge about ASEAN, 2) values and diversity, 3) contact the local regions and other countries around the world, 4) promoting accuracy and fairness, and 5) to work together for the good cooperation in the future. This will focus on the 4 areas of personnel, property, policy, and creativity.

This qualitative study is based on a documentary and literature study that is related to collected data in the area, an analysis of the data, summarization of knowledge, and leading to the integration of the knowledge acquired in reading and architectural drawings course. The samplings in this study were 60 students in the certificate level in the Department of Building Construction, Krabi Technical College, Vocational Education, Mini English Program (MEP) whose learning and enhanced understanding of co-existence was based on respect for the value of cultural diversity in the ASEAN community and Asia – Pacific region. It Included studies on the unique architecture that is meaningful in terms of religious symbols, ethnic group, and local wisdoms which latent in every part of the functional architecture that is meaningful and valuable to the lifestyle of people.

For this reason, this study has selected Bhutanese architecture with distinctive architectural identity in the region and integration into the teaching and studies under the ASEAN-Cultural Community (ASCC) and it supports the roadmap for an ASEAN Community, knowing ASEAN, realizing the value of identity and diversity, connecting

both local and Global, promoting Equity and Justice, and collaboration in working together for a sustainable future.

## 2. The identity of Bhutanese architecture.

Bhutan is a small country and nestling in the heart of the Himalayas and protected by a complex geography of high mountains and deep valleys. Bhutan is certainly one of the most mysterious countries in the world. Impenetrable jungle to the south and daunting ranges of snow-capped mountains to the north have long barred all access to this tiny kingdom for many centuries. In spite of many battles with the Tibeto-Mongol armies or the troops of British Empire stationed in India, the country has never been colonized since the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Bhutan has therefore kept alive its extremely rich heritage of traditions, which in broad outline resemble those of Tibetan civilization. The Bhutanese call their country “*Druk Yul*”, the land of the Thunder Dragon, or more exactly the land of *Drukpas* who forged its unity in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The *Drukpas*, a branch of the *Kayaupas*, took their name from the monastery of *Druk*, founded in 1189 by *Tsangpa Gyare* at a spot near Lhasa where legend says a dragon appeared.

Bhutan is the only country in the world where *Mahayana* Buddhism (known as *Vajrayana* in its Tantric form) is the official state religion. The profusion of temples and monasteries throughout the country-(there are more than 2000 of them)-and the ubiquitous presence of red-robed monks indicate the important role that Buddhism plays in almost every aspect of Bhutanese life. Every district in the country has a *Dzong*-an enormous fortress-which houses the official monk body and several temples. And every village has a temple, around which life of the community revolves. In a country so deeply influenced by religious belief, a boy from each family would traditionally enter a monastery





**Figure. 1.** Map of Bhutan and Bhutan Flag. (Source; from, [http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/bhutan\\_map](http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/bhutan_map), serach on, March, 22, 2014)

Bhutan's official language is *Dzongkha*, spoken mainly in western Bhutan, but there are two other major languages-*Sharchopkha*, spoken in eastern Bhutan, and Nepali, in southern Bhutan, In addition, there are many as nineteen major dialects, which have survived in pockets, in isolated valleys and villages which are cut off from neighboring areas by high mountain barriers.

Bhutan's area is 38,394 square kilometres-about that of Switzerland-and its population is 552,996. So the population density is low-about fourteen person per square kilometer. Ethnic groups in Bhutan mainly consists of three races; 1) "*Sharchops*" are indigenous people, mainly in the east, 2) "*Ngalops*" are Tibetan, mostly in the midwest, and 3) "*Lhotshams*" are Nepalese, mostly living in the south.

Bhutan is unique in arts and culture , especially the architecture, temples, fortresses and residential buildings. Bhutanese architecture is based on religious beliefs that are rooted to Bhutanese expression literally. Government has given priority to respect for ethnic groups, religion, and the monarchy. In particular, the monarch has supported the focus of the people of Bhutan to have a gross national happiness (GNH) and emphasis on cultural preservation , cultural dress, religion, and assembly. It can be seen that anywhere in Bhutan an overview of the architecture is a unique and has a long history since 1,400 years ago. A highlight of the architectural history of is the *Chimi Lhakhang*, a Buddhist monastery in Punakha District, located near Lobesa. It stands on a round hillock and was built in 1499 by *Drukpa Kuenley*. *Chimi Lhakhang* is a very popular and revered temple that lies on the periphery of the fertile valley of Lobesa, where the borders of Thimphu,

Punakha and Wangduephodrang districts meet and dedicated to Lama *Drukpa Kuenley*, the Divine Madman. The temple is popularly considered to be a temple of fertility.



**Figure. 2.** *Panoramic landscape of Paro -surrounded by a complex geography of high mountains and deep valleys- and a fort is seen at the foothills is the fortress of Paro Dzong (know as the fortress of jewel) built by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1644. (Photo; Kitipong Tepjitara, Paro city, October, 11, 2013 )*



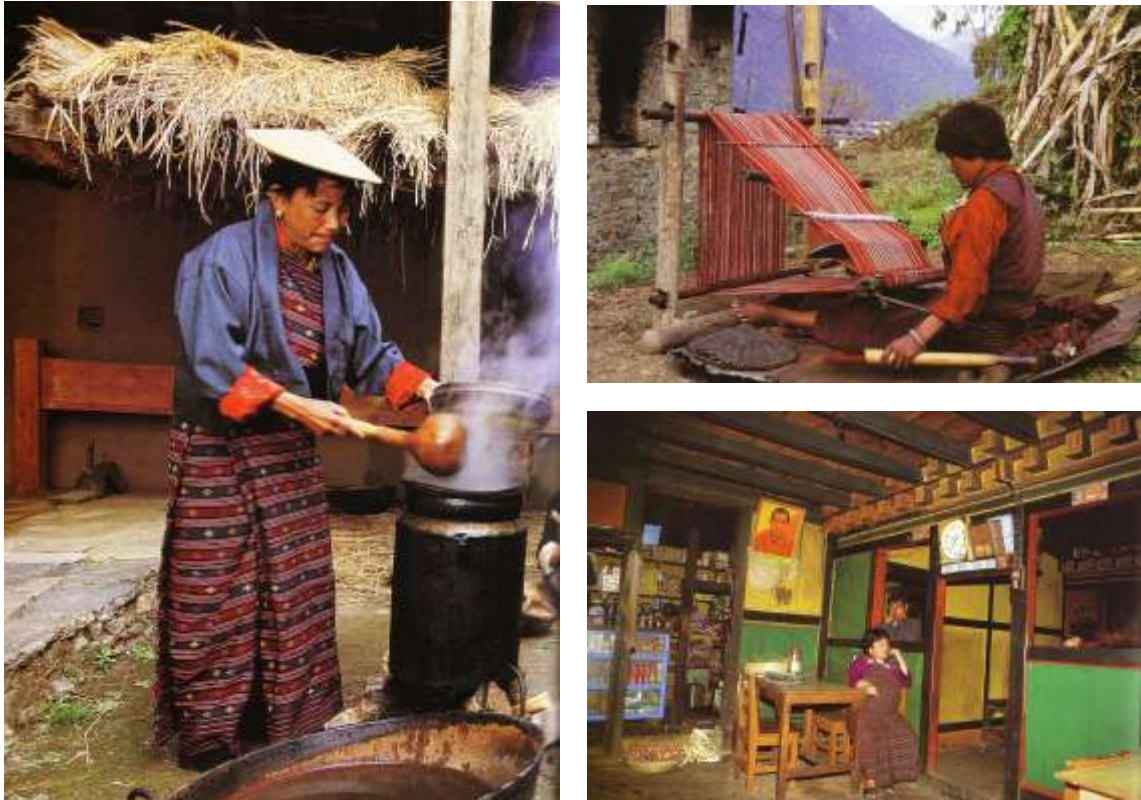
**Figure. 3.** *The traditional architecture of housing in Bhutan is a 2 storey house, on an attic floor for stored agricultural crops, residential area use on the second floor, and the ground floor for horse, cattle or sheep stables, and farming tool. (Photo; Kitipong Tepjitara, Paro city, October, 12, 2013 )*



*Figure. 4. Bhutan in October, with the sun throughout the month, Bhutanese is used the space on the roof for drying chillies and kept for cooking throughout the year. (Photo; Kitipong Tepjitara, Paro city, October, 12, 2013 )*

Residential architecture in Bhutan generally in the form and function of living is not different. The original inhabitants of the rural area is a 2 storey house, the downstairs is open plan for horse, cattle or sheep stables, and farming tools. The largest room on the top floor is a living room and a meditation room, these rooms are decorated with the most expensive items in the house, and has three parts, 1) It is a big room with Sadhana, 2) provides equipment for religious ceremony and this room is preparing for visitors as well as for hospice when visit the locals and in this room incorporated Buddha statue , and 3 ) guest bathroom, family member will not use this at all. The other area is the area for a host family to sleep together in a stuffy little room and use the bathroom outside every day. On the attic floor for storage of crops, forage for livestock, and to sleep in the summer.

The external form of Bhutanese architecture, whether it is a typical building or sacred monastery fortress are similar, but has a unique architectural design that is colorful and the walls are mostly focused on drawing in such a religious symbol. Especially for the most common of the painting, storytelling, the four friends that shows an elephant, monkey, hare and bird, which in Bhutan is considered as symbolizing, respectively, the four terrestrial habitats-the ground, the air, the underground and the sky. The fable underlines the virtue of cooperation, and the connections and interdependence between all creatures great and small, and all the elements, in nature's cycle.



**Figure.5 .** Left; Bhutanese is cooking in the kitchen that still used firewood to cooking, Top right; Bhutanese women are weaving for the family when unemployment of agricultural workers, Right below; In a typical house in the countryside with its simplicity. (Source; from, *Colours of Bhutan*, (p.46,48,51), by Dompnier, Robert., 2011, Jomo Publications.)



**Figure. 6.** Bhutanese house form has distinctive characteristics and unique with a decorative pattern around the building, most common of the painting is colorful and the wall are mostly focused on drawing in such a religious symbol. (Photo; Kitipong Tepjitara, Wangduephodrang districts, October, 13, 2013 )



**Figure. 7.** Punakha Dzong (Dzong: fortress-like structure in Bhutan that usually houses administrative offices as well as the residence of monks) is also a magnificent example of Bhutanese architecture, the external structure is intentionally austere, the richly decorated arcades, galleries, and balconies are typical features of the buildings inside a Dzong, and behind them are the monks' quarters and administrative offices. (Photo; Kitipong Tepjitara, Punakha, October, 13, 2013 )



**Figure. 8.** The pictures of the most common of painting, storytelling, the four friends that shows an elephant, monkey, hare and bird, which in Bhutan is considered as symbolizing, respectively, the four terrestrial habitats-the ground, the air, the underground and the sky, all creatures is mean nature's cycle. (Photo; Kitipong Tepjitara, Punakha, October, 13, 2013 )



### 3. The study of Bhutanese architecture into ASEAN's core curriculum in vocational institutions.

The study of Bhutanese architecture into ASEAN's core curriculum is valuable in vocational institutions because it combines learning and enhances understanding of co-existence based on respect for the value of cultural diversity in the area. The manifest function in residential architecture culture is for family member living, and the latent function of culture is significant in terms of religious symbols, ethnic group, spatial, and the wisdom of Himalayan civilization which is latent in all parts of the previous function and reflects the faith to appear in architecture that are meaningful and valuable to the lives of people in the Himalayas.

What allows Bhutanese architecture to remain strong is because people's lives were not changed by social conditions, and the Bhutanese way of life is simplified by instilling values of philosophy of gross national happiness. So this is why natural conservation been such a success in Bhutan when it has failed in neighbouring countries, despite all their laws and regulations to protect the culture and environment.

Therefore, this study is aim to integration of subjects and adapted to promote the identity of Bhutanese architecture into vocational education institutions in Thailand under the framework of the promotion of cultural diversity and heritage of the region by a pilot and trial in the ASEAN's core curriculum of vocational education.



**Figure. 9.** His Majesty the King of Bhutan and Her Majesty the Queen of Bhutan have promoted in several projects for conservation and culture, and architecture in Bhutan with sustainability benefits. (Source; from, <https://www.facebook.com/JetsunPema> [Queen Of Bhutan] search on, March, 22, 2014)



**Figure. 10.** *Bhutanese are believed to be one in order to maintain a environment that is associated with life on profoundly powerful which laid the foundation for spiritual conviction and cherish the environment of the country. (Source; from, <https://www.facebook.com/JetsunPema> [Queen Of Bhutan] search on, March, 22, 2014)*

#### 4. Conclusions.

The studies of Bhutanese architecture into ASEAN's core curriculum in vocational institutions are learning and strengthening understanding of co-existence based on respect for the value of cultural diversity in the area. And knowledge gained from the study of Bhutanese architecture, which can reflect the identity of the dominant in ASEAN community and Asia – Pacific region. The conclusions of the study are;

1. Bhutanese exist with consistency in ethnic groups and all citizens are believed to be one in order to maintain a culture that is associated with life on the profoundly powerful ways of religion which laid the foundation for spiritual conviction, preach to the people of Bhutan as simple, and have a strong belief with religion, love, and cherish the culture of the country.

2. The unique cultural traditions which give Bhutanese architecture its distinct identity are preserved through laws that require all Bhutanese to wear the national costume in public, and make it mandatory for all buildings, private and public, to follow the designs and rules of their superb traditional architecture (and this certainly does not rule out having every modern convenience inside). The traditional arts and crafts are encouraged, with the highest standards maintained through the regular patronage of the government and clergy, and through large projects for the restoration and renovation of *Dzongs*, monasteries, and historical architecture buildings.

In consequence, the instruction to strengthen awareness and understanding about ASEAN, Asia-Pacific identity is important for the management for education, and Bhutanese architecture is a form of culture that is unique and deserves to be included and

applied to educational institutions in Thailand.

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