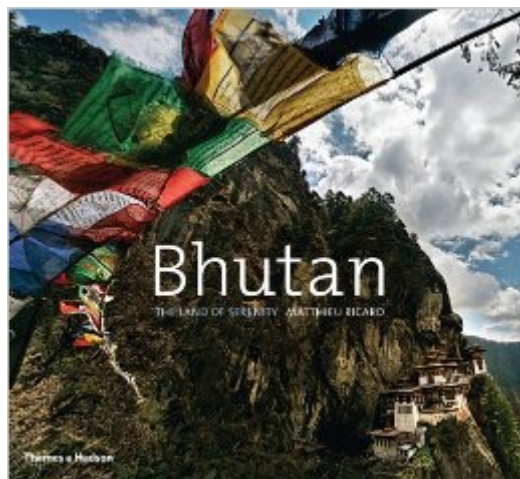


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Bhutan: The Land Of Serenity



Synopsis

“Color-drenched images . . . capture the vibrant rainbow palette of intricate Bhutanese weavings, ceremonial garb, painted pottery, and the ubiquitous wind-whipped prayer flags. Passport Magazine Tucked away between China and India in the heart of the Himalayas, Bhutan remains a uniquely distinct country. Few photographers have been granted permission to reside in this long-inaccessible kingdom, now a democracy, where life quietly unfolds to the rhythm of traditions amid the magnificent, unspoiled landscape. Matthieu Ricard, a monk and photographer, spent eight years in Bhutan with Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, a revered Tibetan Buddhist master, and has continued to return to the “land of the thunder dragon” throughout his life, discovering on each occasion another of its invaluable treasures. His experiences are recorded here in this exceptionally beautiful book, a voyage to the heart of Bhutan, a land where spirituality and daily life are intimately linked. 184 color illustrations

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Dalai Lama’s French interpreter since 1989, Matthieu Ricard lives in the Shechen Monastery in Nepal.

Beautiful pictures and captures the aura of Bhutan.

Beautiful!

Amazing information! Unfortunately, the design of the book undermines the text.

Having just visited Bhutan the contents of this book give a very insightful view of the country, historical and political, accompanied by beautiful photographs. A wonderful reference book which has made my trip come alive and will be a lasting memory of a very spiritual and interesting country. However, if you are looking for a guide book this book would not meet your needs.

Unlike other photo-narratives on this often-mythologized kingdom, this practicing monk takes a sober, almost detached approach that reveals his calm. After a decade in the company of the Dalai Lama's tutor there, Tibetan refugee Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, and now the Dalai Lama's French translator himself, French-born Ricard brings the same considered evaluation of Buddhist practice and culture that his sponsorship and appearance in the films "Brilliant Moon" and "The Spirit of Tibet" (see my Dec. 2012 reviews) demonstrate about his devotion to his mentors. What this has to do with Bhutan as a larger entity comes across more gradually, and the brief three pages introducing each of these eight sections of his brilliantly reproduced color photography, 1980-2007, convey this more vividly than the miniscule font (too small, let alone the captions even smaller) do in this admittedly handsome, compact text, translated by Ruth Sharman. About half of this content in words and images features or complements the surroundings of his dharma teacher in Bhutan. This complements Ricard's other treatments of him; it means that much of the photography documents monasticism and ceremonies around its operations. As for the country, this is not the best introduction, as no reading list, no map, and very little background is given about the region. The urbanization of many Bhutanese and the complications of modernization are barely glanced at. Intentionally, no doubt, but readers may want to consult other titles as well. The typeface is as noted tiny and may not be legible for some readers. The book is elegantly laid out, but rather small. You get much less attention to the natural landscape and everyday people, although some stunning depictions of scenery (not only the expected panoramic vistas--one of Everest on the plane's way from Kathmandu to Paro--but abstracted patterns in reflected water) introduce the terse overview of the nation and its situation as the last Tantric Buddhist realm. Taksang, the cover's Tiger's Lair, endures as the iconic image of the land, and its chapter shows it as before and then restored after the fire of 1998: it looks splendid in both incarnations. Sacred architecture and crafts show the incorporation of the spiritual landscape into art and costume, the Great Accomplishment ceremony, the intricate movements of dance and the composed presence of ritual. Ricard observes the "clear" lesson exemplified by such as the Trongsar five-day festival dramatizing the message of Buddhism:

"we are the architects of our own being." (153) While Ricard does not delve into his own manner of entry into such situations, one may assume his own position allows him a privileged status and a rare insider's perspective that allows him to bridge Himalayan contexts and Western expectations of what such mysterious presentations of Buddhism mean. Bhutan here shimmers more in its less commonly depicted textiles, paintings, and decorations that grace the inside walls of places perhaps prohibited to tourists, and his combination of exterior and interior illustrations works well to provide a Buddhist point of view.

Especially if you've had the honor of visiting Bhutan, this is a wonderful book. Gorgeous photos. Fair price, fast shipping. Excellent seller.

I don't know that this book would be particularly interesting to those who have not been to Bhutan. But if you have, it captures the color of the country.

Great photographs that tell a story of a beautiful country.

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