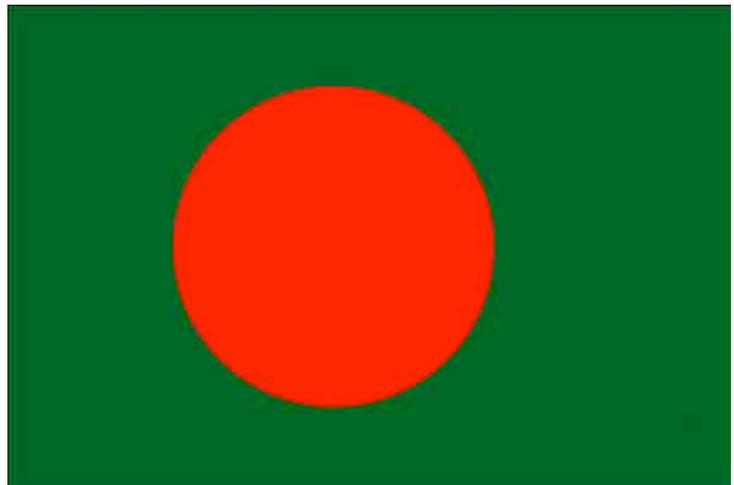


Exploring Bangladesh ...

Information and
Guide to Cultural
Artifacts



South Asia Institute

**The University of Texas
at
Austin**

Quick Facts

Official Name:	People's Republic of Bangladesh
Area:	144,000 sq. km. (Slightly smaller than Iowa.)
Population:	153, 546, 901 (July 2008 est.)
Religion:	Muslim 83%, Hindu 16%, Other 1%
Official Language:	Bangla (also known as Bengali)

Brief History

-from:

CIA: The World Factbook. "Bangladesh." Updated: 19 Jun 2008. 8 July 2008.

<<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bg.html>>

Europeans began to set up trading posts in the area of Bangladesh in the 16th century; eventually the British came to dominate the region and it became part of British India. In 1947, West Pakistan and East Bengal (both primarily Muslim) separated from India (largely Hindu) and jointly became the new country of Pakistan. East Bengal became East Pakistan in 1955, but the awkward arrangement of a two-part country with its territorial units separated by 1,600 km left the Bengalis marginalized and dissatisfied. East Pakistan seceded from its union with West Pakistan in 1971 and was renamed Bangladesh. A military-backed caretaker regime suspended planned parliamentary elections in January 2007 in an effort to reform the political system and root out corruption; the regime has pledged new democratic elections by the end of 2008. About a third of this extremely poor country floods annually during the monsoon rainy season, hampering economic development.

Tourist Brochures

1. Visit Bangladesh: Chittagong & Hill Districts

Chittagong is Bangladesh's chief port and is the main site for the establishment of heavy, medium, and light industries. The brochure describes several tourist attractions such as tombs, shrines, and museums. The brochure also includes a map along with travel and accommodation suggestions.



2. Dhaka

Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, is one of the world's fastest growing cities. The city showcases an interesting blend of old and modern architecture. The brochure features a large fold-out map, descriptions of tourist attractions, and facts about the city.

3. Kuakata

The city of Kuakata is famous for its fabled curative well waters and beautiful beach views of the rising and setting sun. The brochure features a list of tourist attractions such as festivals and the largest Buddha statue in Bangladesh.



4. Visit Bangladesh Tourist Poster

The Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation is a national tourist organization that advertises to bring foreign interest and capital into Bangladesh. This ad promotes a type of "ecotourism." Bangladesh is home to the longest unspoiled sea beach in the world, the largest man-made lake, hilly districts, and a large off-shore marine environment. The Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation endeavors to encourage tourism in Bangladesh, but at the same time to ensure that the beauty and balance of the ecosystem is maintained.

Language

Bangla (or Bengali)

Bengali is an eastern Indo-European language with around 211 million speakers in Bangladesh, Malawi, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Australia, the UAE, UK, and the U.S.

The Bengali alphabet is closely related to the Devanagari alphabet, which was originally developed as the writing system for Sanskrit, but was later used for many languages such as Hindi, the national language of India. The Bengali alphabet diverged from Devanagari around the 11th century.

The Bengali alphabet is also used to write the eastern India languages of: Assamese, Manipuri, Garo, and Mundari.

Ager, Simon. "Bengali Alphabet." Omniglot: Writing Systems and Languages of the World.. Copyright 1998-2008. 8 July 2008. <<http://www.omniglot.com/writing/bengali.htm>>



5. Anek Para Anek Ananda (a Bangla language primer)

This Bangla language primer features short stories and alphabet charts in both Bangla and English. The first half of the book is in Bangla, and the second half follows in English.

6. Tee-shirt featuring Bangla Alphabet

This tee-shirt proudly displays characters from the Bangla Alphabet.



7. Darjeeling tea

Darjeeling tea comes from the Darjeeling region in West Bengal., Darjeeling tea has been prized for its flavor above all other black teas; and this preference is especially notable oh in the United Kingdom. The tea is thin-bodied and light colored with a floral aroma. Its flavor is characterized by a musky spiciness.



Folk Art

8. Nakshi Kantha

-from:

Bengal Crafts: Showcasing Bangladeshi Nakshi Kantha . “History.” 11, July 2008.

<<http://www.bengalcrafts.com/History.html>>



Nakshi Kantha are embroidered quilts, bedspreads, wall hangings, and pillow shams made by artists in rural Bangladesh. *Nakshi Kantha* is a folk art that has been passed down through generations of Bangladeshi families. Scholars believe the word *kantha* originated from the word *ketha*, which describes quilts made from old *saris* (traditional Bangladeshi dresses) and *dhotis* (traditional Bangladeshi skirts). Eventually, artists began to add *nakshi* (embroidered designs) to the *ketha* as a form of both individual and cultural expression. *Nakshi Kantha* quilts are lightweight to compliment the tropical climate of Bangladesh.

The embroidered designs of *Nakshi Kantha* originated in the traditional art of *Alpanas*, ritualistic floor drawings made for worship and celebration. These motifs blend symbols derived from past and present Bangladeshi religions and scenes from everyday life, such as fishing boats, rivers, flowers, trees, and people. Some *Nakshi Kantha* artists tell a personal story through their unique imagery.

Artisans of all social classes originally practiced *Nakshi Kantha*, but today primarily women of low-income families practice the art form. Producing and selling *Nakshi Kantha* allows women to contribute to their household income while working at home where they can care for their children. Artists typically work in groups to create *Nakshi Kantha*; family members often collaborate on larger pieces. Practicing *Nakshi Kantha*, therefore, serves as a family event through which artists proudly express their culture in a beautiful and functional form.

9. Brass Deer

Bangladesh is home to various types of deer. The sambar deer, which is the most widely spread species in the world, can be found in the wooded hills in the east and north-east. The chital deer, or spotted deer, is often seen in grassy forest glades. Barking deer are smaller, and are known to bark like dogs during the breeding season or when they are alarmed.



Virtual Bangladesh. 17 Aug 2006. 14 July 2008.

<http://www.virtualbangladesh.com/bd_geog_animals.html>

Crafts made from Seaside Resources

Bangladesh is home to thousands of coconut trees. The seaside landscape also provides resources such as conch shells that are often made into crafts or jewelry.



10. Boat Made from Coconut Shells



11. Bird Made from shells



12. Butterfly Made from Shells

Clay

There are six hundred and eighty villages in Bangladesh devoted to the manufacture of pottery. These potters sculpt their clay into various forms, making many utilitarian items such as pots, and many decorative items or toys for play. There is also a large industry in Bangladesh for the creation of images of deities. This is a very intricate type of work that requires careful modeling and molding skills.

Glassie, Henry. [Art and Life in Bangladesh](#). Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997.



13. Clay Frog

Bangladesh is home to a very large frog population. They help balance the eco-system by eating many of the mosquitoes that transmit prevalent diseases such as Malaria.

14. Clay Masks

There is an old tradition of using masks in Bangladesh. In ancient times, the mask represented a respect or fear of mythical beings. Today, masks are still used in Bangladesh as representations of gods or goddesses in rituals, as characters in dramas or operas, in festivals, and as toys. The masks are made from various materials such as wood, clay, pulp, etc.



Khatan, Shahida and Mizanur Rahaman. [Folk Art Album: Selections from Bangla Ghar, The Folk Art Museum of Tofael Ahmad](#). Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2004.



15. Clay Pot (Kalshi)

This is an example of a miniature clay pot, or *kalshi* from Bangladesh. Though the *kalshi* is for practical use, and more ornate clay items may serve a decorative purpose, the Bengali potter refers to both items as art or *shilpa*.

Glassie, Henry. [The Potter's Art](#). Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Kaisa Grass Weaving in Bangladesh



Kaisa grass products are a popular export from Bangladesh. These are woven from split palm leaves and kaisa grass. The skilled artisans' only tool tends to be a needle and his or her own hands.



Kaisa grows during the monsoon season

17. Kaisa Grass Mats and Baskets

on

16. Kaisa Grass Earrings

the banks of rivers. The grass is typically two to three feet high when it is mature. When the artisans cut the grass, they leave the roots intact so that the plant will rejuvenate in the next season. The artisans then thoroughly dry the grass in the sun. They maintain a stockpile to use throughout the year. It is not uncommon to see piles of kaisa grass for sale in local markets.

[Dhaka Handicrafts: Working for the Artisans.](#) 23 July 2008.

<http://www.dhakahandicrafts.com/Grass/Grass.html>

Bamboo in Bangladesh

Bamboo is used extensively in Bengal to make a variety of handicrafts. The Bamboo of Bangladesh has the quality of hard wood, and a durability and lightness that makes it suitable for many uses.



[Bangalinet.com.](#) "Bamboo Works." Copyright 1999-2008. 15 July 2008.

http://www.bangalinet.com/art&craft_bamboo.html

18. Bamboo Pencil Holder

Jewelry in Bangladesh

Many women in Bangladesh hold particular beliefs concerning their jewelry adornment. This is an old tradition which may have its roots in jewelry being used a form of protection from evil spirits and ominous powers. Examples of current day beliefs concerning jewelry adornment are: a married woman who does not wear Jewelry may bring misfortune to her husband, and a wife should not wear a nose ring after the death of her husband.

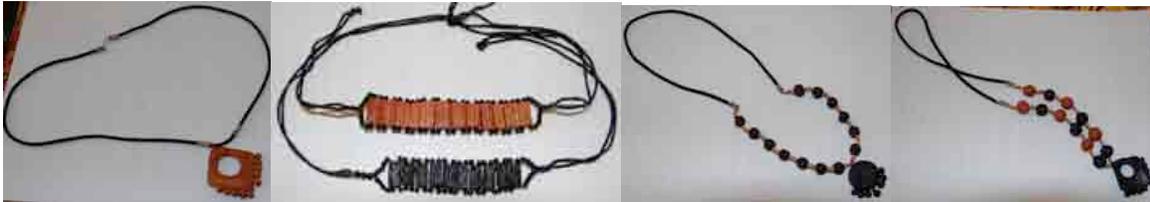
Bengali jewelry may be made from many different materials such as: flowers, fruits, seeds, conch, glass, brass, bell-metal, gold, gems, pearls, stones, etc. These various bracelets, necklaces, and earrings are examples of Bengali jewelry made from several of these various materials.

Khatan, Shahida and Mizanur Rahaman. [Folk Art Album: Selections from Bangla Ghar, The Folk Art Museum of Tofael Ahmad](#). Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2004.

19. Bracelets



20. Necklaces



21. Earrings





22. Birds in Bangladesh

The Kingfisher, or *Machhhranga*, (pictured top, yellow) is a common bird of Bangladesh. There are about ninety different species of this bird.

The Doel, also called the Magpie Robin, (pictured bottom right, gray with white stripes) is the national bird of Bangladesh. This is a very common bird in Bangladesh. It is typically unobtrusive and silent. Mating season is the exception for their typical quiet behavior.

23. Cycle Rickshaw



The cycle rickshaw is the least expensive mode of transportation in Bangladesh, and sometimes, in larger crowded cities such as Dhaka, it is the only way to navigate the very crowded streets. Many of the rickshaw drivers in Dhaka work long twelve hour days to earn two or three dollars a day.

Alam, Shafiq. [Yahoo News](http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20080624/wl_asia_afp_lifestylebangladeshenvironmentlabourtransportrickshaw). "Bangladesh Rickshaws get Modern Makeover." 23 June 2008. 17 July 2008.
<http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20080624/wl_asia_afp_lifestylebangladeshenvironmentlabourtransportrickshaw>



24. Bengali Village Woman Doll

This doll depicts the traditional style of dress for a Bengali village woman.

Quick Artifact Reference Guide



1. Visit Bangladesh Brochure



2. Dhaka Brochure



3. Kuakata Brochure



4. "Visit Bangladesh Before Tourists Come" Poster



5. Anek Para Anek Ananda (a Bangla language primer)



6. Tee-shirt featuring Bangla Alphabet



7. Darjeeling Tea



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