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Editorial Correspondence

Post Box 1111
Thimphu 11001, Bhutan
Tel: 975-2-321005, 321111
Fax: 975-2-321001
Email: cbs@bhutanstudies.org.bt

www.bhutanstudies.org.bt
www.grossnationalhappiness.com

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A Dharma Raja and a Mahasiddha: A Note on the Spiritual Relationship Between His Majesty King Ugyen Wangchuck and Togden Shakya Shri

*Sonam Kinga**

In 1917, King Ugyen Wangchuck (1862-1926) made an offering of forty thousand English pounds to Togden Shakya Shri (rtogs ldan shAkya shrI, 1853-1919), who was raising funds for renovating and re-consecrating Swayambhunath (phags pa shing kun) stupa in Nepal. Approximately a hundred years earlier, i.e., on the fourth day of the fifth month of Water Bird Year (1813), Lama Sangye Norbu initiated the renovation which took five long years. He was one in a line of more than twenty lamas appointed by Bhutan's Dharmarajas to the courts of Gorkha and later Nepal's kings. He served during the reign of King Girvan Yuddha Bikram Shah (1799-1816) (Padma Tshewang, 1995, p. 238). Exactly a hundred years later in 2017, His Majesty the King commanded support for restoring the Bhutanese temple within the precinct of the same stupa, which was badly damaged by the 2015 earthquake. Call it historical coincidence or karmic continuity, the royal patronage of this important Buddhist monument by the first and fifth Druk Gyalpos – separated by a hundred years – reminisces Bhutan's custodial rights over Swayambhunath and its monastic lands given as compensation to Bhutan by King Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1772 after the 16th desi, Zhidar relinquished Bhutanese control over the kingdom of Vijaypur at the former's request!

* Dr. Sonam Kinga was the Chairperson of the National Council of Bhutan, and currently serves in the faculty at the Royal Institute of Strategic Studies (RIGSS), Phuntsholing, Bhutan.

The three stupas of Swayambhunath, Boudhanath (bya rung kha shor) and Namobuddha (stag mo lus sbyin), all located in Kathmandu valley, Nepal, occupy a special place in Buddhist cosmology and thought. They are deemed indispensable for the Buddha Dharma and well-being of sentient beings. This preliminary discussion on the relationship between a great Dharma King and peerless Mahasiddha was first shared over social media on the occasion of Bhutan's 110th National Day celebrated at Haa as personalized mode of paying tribute to His Majesty Ugyen Wangchuck, whose enthronement as the First King is celebrated every year on 17 December. I drew my information primarily from the biography of Togden Shakya Shri written by Kathog Situ Chokyi Gyatsho. His biography was first carved on woodblocks in Bhutan and was commissioned by Lopen Sonam Zangpo (1892-1983), his foremost disciple. Recently, I had access to a few other publications which helped improved the earlier version posted online.

Shakya Shri was a highly learned yogi, “a spiritual luminary,” and a master for both Mahamudra and Dzongchen traditions. He was regarded as an incarnation of the Indian Mahasiddha Saraha. He saw the need for renovating these stupas both for the sake of Buddha Dharma and as means of counteracting the difficult times befalling Tibet then. He began with Swayambhunath raising funds with donations from the government of Tibet and patrons in Lhasa and other regions as well as offerings received from devotees. King Ugyen Wangchuck “in the glory of his matchless merit and power, opened wide the door of a sky treasure by sending Geshe Sherub Dorje to Shakya Shri with an offering of forty thousand pounds” (Gyatsho, 2011, p. 153) His Majesty's contribution eventually totalled seventy five thousand English pounds, and appears to have been a major part of the funds mobilized.

Shakya Shri did not go himself to Nepal but sent his two sons with a group of people after raising the required funds. The

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project began on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month of 1917 and concluded with a consecration ceremony on the fifteenth day of the third month of 1918. His sons and others associated with the renovation reported to Shakya Shri on their return to Tibet information about the dilapidated conditions of the other two stupas: Boudhanath and Namobuddha. Hence he made it known to them that renovating these two stupas was one of his last wishes for the sake of Buddha Dharma and sentient beings.

After his demise in 1919, his sons, disciples and devotees undertook to fulfil his wishes. As before, they began to raise funds from Tibet, and also from Sikkim, Kalimpong, Darjeeling and nearby places. Once again, His Majesty King Ugyen Wangchuck donated 13,700 pounds.¹ He wrote an appeal to the people of Bhutan to contribute to the raising of funds. The Bhutanese disciples of Shakya Shri then went to their native villages and raised £ 1,174 “In addition, the family of a deceased government official named Kazhi donated £ 2000 on his behalf to accumulate merit” (Gyatsho, 2011, p. 181). Holmes-Tagchungdarpa (2014) identifies him as *zimpon*. He must have been Kazi Ugyen Dorji, who was appointed as the chamberlain to Ugyen Wangchuck in 1911 (Damchoe Lhendup, 2008, p. 208). Renovation works began first with Boudhanath stupa in 1920 followed by Namobuddha stupa. It is important to note that Lopen Sonam Zangpo was one of Shakya Shri’s main disciples involved in the renovation. Holmes-Tagchungdarpa (2014, p. 114) notes that the Newari

¹ Holmes-Tagchungdarpa (2014) also refers to donation made by Ugyen Wangchuck. But she is not sure about the currency. She writes in a footnote (p.131) that “[i]t is difficult to know what type of currency the text mentions, as it only uses the term ‘sgor,’ which is literally currency. However, other sources from this time suggest that Indian and Chinese rupees were widely in circulation throughout Tibet and the Himalayas, though there was also Tibetan currency.” I have used English pounds as is mentioned in the translation of the biography on which this paper is based.

and Bhutanese were crucial agents in the renovation works. Their roles have not been sufficiently captured in Tibetan sources concerning the works.

The biography also mentions very briefly Shakya Shri's own contribution to restoration works in Bhutan and in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh. It is said that he offered thrice more than eighty ounces of gold to paint special statues of Guru Padmasambhava (Gyatsho 2011, p. 146). The exact location of these statues or the temples they are enshrined in are however, not specified.

How and when did the special relationship between King Ugyen Wangchuck and Togden Shakya Shri begin? When did they meet? Shakya Shri had predicted long ago that his teachings would spread to countries like India, Nepal and Bhutan, and to the regions of Lahoul, Lapchi, Tsari and other places. Lopen Sonam Zangpo, Lama Menlam Rabzang (1879-1945) and Drubwang Tenzin Gyatsho (1883-1966) were his principal students in Bhutan and those responsible for the transmission of his teachings. They too were sent by King Ugyen Wangchuck. Other Bhutanese students include Namdrol Yeshe from Bumthang, Lama Rabgye from Zhungar (Lhuntse), Nyima Yoezer and his brother from Dongzamkha (Dungsamkha), Rigdzin Dorje from Kurto, a certain Nampar Gyalwa as well as "the master of rituals of Chakar monastery in Bumthang." Buli Trulku was reportedly the first Bhutanese disciple of Shakya Shri (Gyatsho 2011, p. 135).

It appears likely that King Ugyen Wangchuck's relationship with Shakya Shri began long before his enthronement as the first hereditary monarch of Bhutan. This, however, has to be confirmed. The biography mentions about the visit of Artsa Lama Ngawang Palden, another foremost disciple of Shakya Shri, to deliver his master's letter to King Ugyen Wangchuck. Dorji Gyeltshen (2010, p. 41) also mentions about Artsa Lam's

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visit to deliver the letter. The biography also notes that Shakya Shri received a letter from King Wangchuck to visit Bhutan. It is not very clear whether Shakya Shri had sent Artsa Lama in response to King Ugyen Wangchuck's invitation.

The visit of Artsa Lama and his activities in Bumthang are vividly described by Holmes-Tagchungdarpa (2014). The point of interest to note here is that both King Ugyen Wangchuk and Artsa Lama approved Tenzin Gyamtsho's submission to travel to Tibet and study under Shakya Shri. He had come to Bumthang at age 16 and was one of the top three students benefitting from His Majesty's sponsorship. He not only became one of the early Bhutanese disciples of Shakya Shri but a highly accomplished practitioner and lineage holder. On his return from Tibet, he was given a grand welcome by His Majesty and others. In Bhutan, he spread the teachings of Shakya Shri. He became the Vajra Master or Dorje Lopen of the state monastic order. He went back in 1918 as instructed by Shakya Shri to receive the last of teachings and empowerment. The 68th Je Khenpo His Holiness Tenzin Dendup is one of his principal disciples.

Shakya Shri sent Artsa Lama to Bodh Gaya in 1909. It was then that he visited Nepal, Varanasi and Himachal Pradesh and went back to Tibet. It is not clear whether he visited Bhutan before or after this trip to Bodh Gaya. The sequence of the biography's narrative suggests that the visit to Bhutan took place after his visit to Bodh Gaya. However, the lengthy footnote at the end states that he entered Tibet through Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh and passed away in Tsibri in Tibet. Therefore, his visit to Bhutan could not have taken place after the visit to Bodh Gaya. Indeed, Holmes-Tagchungdarpa (2014) suggests that the visit was a separate one since he had come to deliver a letter. He returned with Drubwang Tenzin Gyatsho to Tibet. Therefore, it appears that the visit to Bhutan took place before 1909.

It looks certain that King Ugyen Wangchuck and Togden Shakya Shri have met personally; what is not uncertain is the place where they met. In a brief biography in the “Treasury of Lives,” Jagar Dorji (2011) mentions that Shakya Shri visited Khenpajong in eastern Bhutan. There is no mention of an encounter between them there. However, if Shakya Shri indeed visited Khenpajong, it is possible that the meeting may have taken place there. The biography mentions that Shakya Shri returned to his hermitage in eastern Tibet after a visit, in 1909, to Chigchar and Tsari. At the hermitage, the biography notes that ‘he donated the offerings he had received (as parting gift from the king of Bhutan) to several masters, tulkus and local monasteries for their support.’ This at least affirms that they had met possibly at Khenpajong.

The relationship between them have certainly continued thereafter. King Ugyen Wangchuck had once “sent yaks packed with loads of rice escorted by thirty men, up through the perilous paths in the district of Lhodrak, as an offering to the siddha master. In an accompanying letter, the King explained that he had included an expensive bowl of Chinese porcelain in one of the sack of rice.” The men had the instruction to present the bowl immediately on their arrival but were not sure in which bag of rice it was concealed. A frantic search began in front of the master. Then the master is said to have pointed out the sack although there was no identifying label. When they looked in that sack, the porcelain was indeed found.

One of Shakya Shri’s foremost Bhutanese disciple was Lama Monlam Rabzang. Ugyen Wangchuck had entrusted him to do the painting works of murals inside the newly constructed Guru Lhakhang at Kurje. He was commanded to reproduce the works at Pelri Gonpa. However, he decided on a different set of motifs in consideration of the space. When Ugyen Wangchuck visited the Lhakhang to inspect the paintings, he found out about the different paintings and threatened Lam Monlam

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Rabzang to re-do the works in a month or face consequences. This led him to escape to Tibet and seek his future master Shakya Shri, of whom he had first heard during Artsa Lam's visit to Bhutan.

Another version describes how Monlam Rabzang was leading a group of people to Lhasa in 1900. They were deputed by Ugyen Wangchuck to make offerings to various monasteries and lamas in memory of his late consort Azhi Rinchen Pelmo. It was then that Monlam Rabzang is said to have heard about Shakya Shri, who was residing and teaching in Kham. He sent a letter to Ugyen Wangchuck informing him of his decision to stay back in Tibet and study with Shakya Shri (Dorji Gyeltshen, 2010, pp. 38-41).

Monlam Rabzang returned to Bhutan in 1919. Based on Shakya Shri's prophecy, he lived and taught in Tashigang, eastern Bhutan. Before his return, Ugyen Wangchuck reportedly learnt about Monlam Rabzang's scholarly and meditative accomplishments particularly in the practice of Naro Choedrug of Mahamudra tradition. He had commanded the Crown Prince Jigme Wangchuck to bring him back to Bhutan later after the completion of his studies and training in order to promote those profound practices in the country. However, Monlam Rabzang returned much ahead but chose to stay in Tashigang (Dorji Gyeltshen, 2010, p. 57. Translation mine).

What this brief article attempted to do was highlight some aspects of the close relationship between one of Tibet's greatest Yogi and Bhutan's first king, Chogyal Ugyen Wangchuck. His Majesty had undoubtedly been an important supporter and sponsor of Shakya Shri's projects. It was as a result of their relationship that the first shedra at Tharpaling, Bumthang was established at the beginning of the 20th century. His personal involvement in the training of Bhutanese under Shakya Shri led to the emergence of a class of Bhutanese yogis and

scholars, who fostered Shakya Shri's teachings in Bhutan, which flourishes to this day!

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Putting the Festival Participants Back into the Festival: Rethinking Communal Identity Formation in Buddhist Cham Festivals in Bhutan

Mareike Wulff⁺

Abstract

This paper investigates how the practice of communal festivals in Bhutan results in forming communal identity, with a focus on Vajrayana Buddhist cham₁ festivals. It seeks to close the gap between scholarly publications that address the formal content of festivals, and arguments for identity formation as an outcome of festival practices by centring the festival participants between these two positions. Drawing on the results of my long-term case study of the Korphu Drub, a cham festival performed by the Korphu community in Trongsa District, the paper shows how social actors carry out festival action in relation to their status and knowledge as community members throughout time. I trace the different age grades and genders in their lives coming along with specific social statuses, and connect these to the changing ascribed / achieved positions and works taken up during the festivals throughout one lifetime. This is to show how communal identity evolves as an ongoing process of reflexivity between the individual festival participant and his/her community. Last, I relate my observations to the concept of rites of passage and propose that the Korphu Drub can be understood as a substitute

⁺ PhD Candidate, Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany.

¹ Where necessary Dzongkha and Classical Tibetan terms are transcribed by using the Wylie transliteration system and given in brackets. These terms have additionally been transcribed into phonetics by using the THL's Online Tibetan Phonetic Converter (See link in References) for better readability. Khengkha terms, the vernacular oral language of Korphu community, are transcribed in phonetics and indicated by KH.

for missing rites of passage in Korphu, which additionally fosters identification with one's community.

Keywords: *age grades, agency, Bhutan, cham, communal identity, community, festival, liturgical rituals, rite of passage, status, Vajrayana Buddhism*

Introduction

Pema Dorji glances over the excited crowds. All members of his community have gathered in front of the temple ready to carry out their annual festival. Pema has been performing the main jester of the *Korphu Drub* (*skor phug sgrub*), Dawa Dragpa, for already twenty years in a row now. It is already getting dark when he enters the courtyard. While fixing the wooden mask of the deity in front of his face, he cannot decide where to look first. The first blazes of the bonfire light up the faces, giving the whole scene a magic touch. A glowing moon in the sky adds to it. To his left, he spots his nephew Wangdi T. wearing a blue *kapné* (*bkab ne*: ceremonial scarf). Why had nobody told him that boy got a promotion? His sight gets caught by a row of maiden beauties in their best attires, giggling loudly, moving their young bodies lasciviously, and getting ready for their first singing and dancing performance. He remembers them all as children not long ago. Time has passed fast. Only his niece P. Wangmo sitting with her newly married husband Pema P. and their new-born on the lap, is not dancing this year. Supporting the construction of a new house for them has cost him a small fortune. But someone had to step in for his recently deceased younger brother. Pema admires the in-laws of Tenzin, his wife's younger brother, through the small carved out eyes of the mask. Grandmothers and grandfathers happily chat after reuniting with their grandchildren mostly living in the capital. The whole family, dressed up in colourful new clothes, laughing and joking to each other, is attracting attention. Has the youngest daughter of the family who is married to a rich businessman from western Bhutan purchased the new clothes? Or were the new clothes bought with the income from cardamom? He sees the venerable *lama* (*bla ma*: monk priest, spiritual teacher) on his decorated

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throne. He has come from a faraway place and him conducting the rituals will be of extraordinary blessing for the community. Monks in red robes surround the *lama*, wearing new ceremonial hats. Each hat was sponsored by one civil servant from Thimphu. Dawa Dragpa is pleased to observe that the high *lama* has enough drinks in front of him. He overhears his lifelong friend Sonam and the other men audibly swaggering, by now drunken as always, jointly arranging the firewood. All at once he senses his colleague, the other *atsara* (*a tsa ra*), already in the middle of the events ironically commenting on everything, playing and competing for attention with many other actors on the stage. Atsara Dawa Dragpa jumps down the three stone stairs, hoicking up his arms and swinging the wooden phallus. He is also laughing. The wooden mask with the frozen sardonic grin never stops laughing. But then, it starts giggling from behind the mask. The deity is supporting him as it ought to be. His mouth opens on its own and filthy jokes flow out without effort. His show has begun. All the world's a stage. In this way or another, the first evening of the yearly celebration of the grand *Korphu Drub* and the *atsara*'s first run-out begin.

As can be understood from this ethnographic vignette², the people who carry out Buddhist *cham*³ (*'cham*) festivals like the *Korphu Drub*, are social beings who relate to each other. This

² This and the subsequent ethnographic vignettes were developed through long-term participant observation, household survey interviews in Korphu, as well as informal talks with the Korphupa, in between end of 2011-2019. I present the data as vignettes as they reflect my subjective reading of the observations I made. For the sake of anonymity, I have changed the names of the involved community members.

³ Although, *cham* festivals are the focus of my study here, the understanding of what *cham* dances are in particular is not of foremost importance for my approach. I adhere to the following brief explanation of *cham*: *Cham* are Tibetan Buddhist ritual dances, often using masks and other accoutrements like costumes and hand-held objects. They are performed by monks or lay men as parts of complex Buddhist festivals carried out annually at important dates of the liturgical calendar. The masks often represent deities of the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon and the monk performers often engage in Tantric meditation practices while performing the masks. The masks itself are considered to be *kuten* (*sku rten*), 'body emanations' of the deities they depict.

observation made me think about a potential correlation between the formal action festival participants perform and their intimate relationships as members of the same community. Communal festivals in Bhutan have attracted heightened attention recently, and various types of identity are ascribed to this practice as an outcome. My article offers one explanation how festival participants develop sentiments of communal identity by engaging in festival practice. Instead of relying on the formal contents, like liturgical action and mask dance performances (*'cham*), I propose that we need to look at the social lives of the actors to understand how festival practice fosters identification with one's community. In the following chapters I come up with a definition of identity useful for my inquiry, propose basic characteristics of *cham* festival participants in Bhutan and apply these to my case study of the *Korphu Drub*. Additionally, I relate my findings to the concept of rites of passage (v. Gennep, 1960).

Increased interest in communal *cham* festivals as facilitators of identity

Bhutan is rich in communal festival traditions. The beauty of the Bhutanese festival-scape lies in its diversity. Every single festival is a unique representation of the coalescence of distinct regional contexts, localised historical backgrounds, religious affiliations, and beliefs⁴. During the last two decades, Bhutanese and international scholars have been increasingly engaged in research on communal festival traditions in Bhutan. Besides books (Dorji Gyeltshen 2011, Huber *in press*, Phuntsok Tashi, 2011) and articles (Centre for Bhutan Studies, 2004' Dendup Chopel, 2009' Phurba, 2009; Pommaret, 2009; Schrempf, 2017, and many more), large-scale institutional endeavour has begun to document this rich and diverse

⁴ For a challenge of this notion see Schrempf, 2018.

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festival-scape. Particularly the main inquiry of this article, Buddhist *cham* festivals, has caught much attention.⁵ UNESCO ascribed a dance called Drametse Nga Cham⁶ as part of the World Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2005 as the first ever entry from Bhutan or the Tibetan cultural world at large. National Library & Archives of Bhutan (NLAB) and the College of Language and Culture Studies (CLCS) have been conducting documentation surveys of the (in) tangible cultural heritage of Bhutan under the auspices of UNESCO. The two projects are on-going and have so far resulted in several publications (NLAB, 2016, 2018; CLCS, 2016) and development of a website (Cultural Atlas of Bhutan) in April 2007, which devote a big space for *cham* festivals. With a mission to document ancient dance traditions all over the world, Core of Culture, a US-based NGO, has video-documented all *cham* performances of several festivals in Bhutan (2004-2006). The videos are now accessible at the New York Public Library website. The National Museum of Bhutan in Paro has organised a series of colloquiums on intangible cultural heritage and published a few books on the subject. The museum has reserved one section in the museum for displaying *cham* masks.

One prime reason this much effort is made to investigate and document the events, the quotes below show: *cham* dances and their festivals are regarded as facilitators bringing forth sentiments of various types of identity.

⁵ The Royal Academy of Performing Arts (RAPA), initiated by the Third King of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji Wangchuk in 1954, has already started to collect *cham* choreographies from all over Bhutan and train its performers in these since the 1960s. Two books have been written by Bhutanese scholars (Nagphel, 1971/72, Sithal Dorji, 2000) listing the main *cham* of Bhutan and explaining their meanings. These works are only partly relevant for my approach here, as they feature *cham* dances isolated from their communal context and the complex festivals, which they are part of.

⁶ The dance originated in Drametse village in Mongar, a district in eastern Bhutan, and it is performed during many festivals across Bhutan.

Today, the dance has evolved from a local event centred on a particular community into an art form, representing the identity of the Bhutanese nation as a whole (UNESCO website entry about the Drametse Nga Cham).

Mask dances also help to preserve and promote a unique culture and tradition by maintaining national identity (Phuntsok Tashi, 2011).

Preservation of environment and culture are two pillars of the 'Gross National Happiness' (GNH), a concept which today guides many government policies. The general national policy as outlined in the document Bhutan 2020 – a Vision for Peace Prosperity and Happiness which refers to the need to protect and promote cultural heritage and to adapt Bhutanese institutions in ways which promote cultural awareness, conserve national heritage and strengthen cultural identity (Pommaret, 2003).

These publications seem to portray *cham* dances and festivals predominantly as flagships of the country, representing Bhutan's national and/or cultural identity to the outside world and competing on the international stage for its singularity. Other publications take a more introverted perspective by stressing its potential benefits to communities internally rather than focusing on (symbolic) outward representation:

Bhutanese intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, constantly evolves and renews itself with the passage of time, thereby providing a community with a sense of identity and continuity (National Library & Archives of Bhutan, 2015).

A festival is an important state and community affair, the holding of which is not only believed to bring good health and prosperity but also to maintain community cohesion and identity. (National Library & Archives of Bhutan, 2018)

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These processes of community-internal formation of identity are what I focus on in the following.

The *cham* studies already mentioned, whether it is a scholarly investigation or preservation effort, concentrate on the formal content and staging of festivals (action) rather than individual festival participants and their social lives.⁷ Despite the embeddedness in local contexts, common to all Vajrayana *cham* festivals is an underlying fundamental structure based on Buddhist *choga* (*cho ga*: Tibetan Buddhist liturgy or Sādhana practice). The studies focus particularly on this ritual action of the festivals. They enumerate chronology and type of *choga*, coupled with associated *méwang* (*me dbang*: fire empowerment) and *chöpa* (*mchod pa*: offerings), and all kinds of apotropaic activities like *gektré* (*bgegs bskrad*: a rite to dispel obstructing forces), *drakpö jinsek* (*drag po'i sbyin sreg*: wrathful burnt fire offerings), or *torjab* (*gtor rgyag*: the hurling of a sacrificial object), to name a few. The texts describe the various *cham* choreographies, associated costumes, masks and other accoutrements, and explain their esoteric meanings. They retell historical background stories of the localities, their *lhakhang's* (*lha khang*: Buddhist temple), and religious lineages and authorities.

It makes sense to refer to the formal content of festivals by focusing on 'symbolic representation's to the outer world and highlight the uniqueness of these festivals to ascertain group

⁷ In this context, I am deliberately excluding the studies that look at the Tantric practice of *cham*, which focus on the relationship between the Tantric practitioner and his tutelary deity (*yidam*) in question. The majority of lay *cham* dancers in the village communities of Bhutan do not carry out these highly advanced Tantric practices when performing *cham*.

⁸ This could be for example one social group distinguishing itself from another one by donning distinctive dresses and ornaments representing myth, history and ideologies and thereby becoming external markers of *identity*. See for example Pandya, 2002.

identity (national and/or cultural identity). But this is not everything. Is a sense of community spirit aroused only because the dance and ritual performances are unique in the world? What is meant by communal identity when referring to Bhutanese festival practices, besides the community representing its unique culture to the outside world? A 'community' carrying out a festival is, in the end, a conglomerate of individual social actors.

These detailed contents do not tell us much about how individual festival participants affiliate themselves with the practice; how they negotiate their identity in relation to their social environment/community, which ultimately develops a feeling of communal identity, belonging or cohesion stated above. Where do we find the individual social actors' touch point to the formal festival content? The contents of festival action are after all not living entities by themselves, but need a human being to bring them to life. What is the manuscript containing a Sādhanā without the human acknowledging its worth, reciting it with musical accompaniment? What is a *cham* choreography, without the dancer performing it, bringing the *cham* masks and costumes to life, and observers watching him? What are the lyrics of the folksongs without beautiful girls singing them and moving gracefully to the melodies?

But first, who are the festival participants? What determines who is carrying out what action? In the following, I present one aspect⁹ of how social actors, carrying out festival action, connect to the formal content of the festival to connect to their community and identify with it.

⁹ In my PhD thesis I identify various additional aspects of how social actors construct sentiments of identity.

Communal Identity

I start with a definition of identity the way I want to use the term. Identity is a broadly used and debated concept by sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists (Jenkins, 2014), all taking different perspectives, with some arguing to abandon the term as a category of inquiry (Brubaker/Cooper 2000, Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011). Because the term serves as a key factor for justifying large-scale documentation practices, I feel the need to address it. I shall not be concerned with national or cultural identity or with more philosophical Buddhist concepts of individual self-identity¹⁰, but with identity negotiated community internal.

Despite his focus on Post-Modern Societies, Anthony Giddens' (1984, 1991) works and his Theory of Structuration are, in parts, very useful for my approach.¹¹ In an effort to subsume the dichotomy of agency and structure *he defined (personal) identity as the permanent process of synchronising/ aligning the individual (social) position in relation to the social (structure); that is, an ongoing process of reflexivity between the two* (Elliot, 2014). Who am I, who do I aim to be, in relation to my social environment? Who do the others think I am or should be? How am I identified according to the cultural and social context I am

¹⁰ Barth (2010) described five aspects that constitute the individual's personality based on the religious and social context of Bhutan which are *so(k)*, *lungta*, *wangtang*, *la'* and *lü*.

¹¹ While writing this article, I am aware of the fact that the sociological concepts, I am referring to are predominantly ethnocentric European/US American concepts developed in specific historical and social contexts of the authors, often relating to the changes from pre-modern to modern to post-modern societies in the global West. As Bhutan right now can be understood to be in a transitional period between a subsistence agricultural society towards a modern industrial market economy, it is not surprising that many of the sociologists I cite later on, can be rather associated with Western Modernity than Post-Modernity. Still, it is impossible to attach labels like Pre-Modern, Modern or Post-Modern society to Bhutan, because Bhutanese society at present, is none and all of these at the same time.

part of? Giddens approach mirrors mine as it caters to the individual festival participant as a member of a community who carries out formal festival action in relation his/her status/social position. When it comes to festival participation, the social actor oscillates between statuses/festival positions being ascribed to him/her by the community, and statuses/festival positions which he/she achieves out of self-interest, or a combination of both. Although Giddens talks about increased reflexivity due to modern communication media, my main point here is, that social statuses and festival positions are not static. Indeed, they are constantly negotiated and re-negotiated, changing over time in an interdependent process between the individual and his/her social structure.

Expanding the concept, I understand communal identity as the mutual and permanent process of synchronising/aligning individual (social) positions in relation to and as part of the social structure of the community in between the individual social actor and the members of his/her community.

In the following I explore, how we can view (the formal content of) festival practices as the intermediate between the individual social actor and the community in question as catalysts connecting the two and resulting in communal identity. That means, the festival participants identity is recognised by him/herself and the community by carrying out festival action in relation to his/her status, complying to the expectations and precepts of the community and/or according to his/her own achievements.

To trace the coming into being of communal identity through festival practice, I propose including the individual social actor as festival participant.

Taking the Festival Participants into Account

i. Three basic characteristics of *cham* festival participants: 'community', 'status' and 'knowledge' and their interrelationship

What can we ascertain about the properties of the social actors carrying out Buddhist *cham* festivals? First of all, to say the very obvious: all festivals are performed by groups of individual social actors, from dozens up to several hundreds. This assemblage of social actors carries out highly complex, highly diversified and specialised, as well as highly coordinated action simultaneously over the course of many hours or days, repeated annually over very long spans of time, in order to accomplish an event we call: festival. Three interrelated basic characteristics are important for our understanding of the social actors as well as the successful outcome of a festival, as we know it: community, status and knowledge.

Community: *Cham*-festival-performing-groups are not a random conglomerate of people. Most of the time, they bear intimate relationships to one another; as fellow monks of a monastic community; family members and neighbours in a village community, colleagues in a Dzong. Not only do they likely know each other personally, but are also commonly affiliated to a specific¹² place.¹³ I consider these groups of social

¹² There is no space to explore the topic of community membership in relation to Communities of blood and place in this article in detail. I define these in my upcoming PhD thesis. According to my analysis, there are different reasons for affiliation to the community, which can be a combination of actual residency, origin, census registration and/or active involvement.

¹³ At a first glance this might seem taken for granted, but consider a western Rock Music festival, in contrast, in which the spectators as well as performers are almost never affiliated to the place of venue, the spectators do not know the performers personally and are also not blood related to the majority of other festival participants.

actors carrying out *cham* festivals *communities* in the sense of Tönnies (1887, 2001)¹⁴ as *communities of place*¹⁵ (German: *Gemeinschaften des Ortes*), relating to people connected through a common affiliation to the same locality, and/or *communities of blood* (Ger.: *Gemeinschaften des Blutes*), relating to people affiliated with each other due to familiar relationships.

Status: Along with the communal type of social relationship that binds the festival participants to each other, the second characteristic of status is added.

Whatever action an individual social actor carries out (meaning, in which way he connects to the formal content of the festival) is, for one thing, determined by the quality of his or her relationships in the community. Another aspect is the quality of his/her knowledge-set, which will be discussed later. Put differently, festival action is carried out in relation to the social actors' status or social position he or she holds as member of a blood community or community of place. I am relying on Linton's (1936) classical structural definition of status, who described status hand in hand with role as an inseparable pair, in which status is referred to as a position in a social pattern, marking its rights and duties, while role stands for the 'dynamic aspect' of status, the associated and expected behaviours and actions. I am sticking here to the more simple and neutral concept of Linton, rather than the definition developed by others, such as Max Weber (2010), who understood status as the sum of one person's different social

¹⁴ Thank you Andrea Rota for mentioning Tönnies to me.

¹⁵ This might change soon. As some village communities lack festival performers due to rural flight, they hire *cham* performers from outside the community. Also, one exceptional example of a *cham* festival carried out by a group of people who cannot be considered a community of place, is the in 2012 newly established Dochula Druk Wangyal Festival. See David, Samuel, 2016.

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positions in society in combination with the amount of power and prestige attached to it. Rather than employing an understanding of status in a hierarchical stratification of the community, in this article¹⁶ I am interested in a more horizontal patterning and allocation of statuses which relate to gender and age grades¹⁷ (Bernardi, 1985).¹⁸ The term age grades labels the idea of an individual passing through different phases in life, which are associated with specific rights and obligations, strengths and needs, and therefore result in specific statuses and roles. Or to put it the other way round: a community (or society) is socially organised based on the different age grades of its members.

Knowledge: The third property of these social actors, holding specific statuses according to their age grades and gender in communities of blood and/or place, and performing a *cham*

¹⁶ One other type of social relationship in regard to a more hierarchical stratification of community is fundamental to all Bhutanese Buddhist festivals, known as *chöyön jinda* (*mchod yon sbyin bdag*). Bhutan inherited the principle from Tibet where it has been practiced for several hundred years. *Chöyön jinda* refers to the mutual relationship between Buddhist practitioners and lay sponsors, the *jinda* (*sbyin bdag*). As much as the 'professional' religious practitioners care for the mental well-being of the whole community (in the present and afterlife), the *jinda* look after the religious practitioners by 'feeding' and paying them for their service (*mchod yon*: remuneration of a priest for a religious service). All Bhutanese Buddhist *cham* festivals are built upon this underlying principle. We can observe three different types of communities carrying out *cham* festivals in Bhutan, in terms of type and number of social actors involved. These are lineage holder families of religious authorities or their beneficiaries (*chos rje* and *gdung*) performing festivals in their family-owned *lhakhang*, lay village and monastic communities staging festivals on village community level, involving one or more village communities, and finally the festivals carried out on a stately governmental level by communities of the *dzongkhag* (district) in a Dzong. See Seyfort Ruegg (1997) for a detailed history of *mchod gnas* and *sbyin bdag* in Tibet.

¹⁷ I thank Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy for making me aware of that my ethnographic vignettes are all about age grades.

¹⁸ There are differences in power in-between the different statuses relating to different age grades, but power relations and structures are not the focus of this study.

festival collaboratively, is *knowledge*.¹⁹ All festival participants need specific knowledge in order to being able to conduct the event together. This is implicit and explicit knowledge, explicitly learned tasks or knowledge acquired through socialisation in the community. This also refers to more theoretical or intellectual types of knowledge, for instance how to interpret rituals or knowing about the background information of the festival. At the same time different types of body knowledge are required, implicitly and explicitly. Body knowledge, such as how to move the body during the dances, or skills/dexterity like moulding dough-made sacrificial objects.

Each social actor requires explicit and/or implicit knowledge types, although not all participants need to know the same in terms of amount, specialisation and kind. These distinct 'knowledge-sets' of the individual social actors are interlinked with each other, and partly overlap. The participants do not only need to know their own part, but have to know how to act in correlation/accordance with other participants. Leaving aside the 'experts', even an 'observing participant', solely watching the action, needs to know exactly when to appear at the festival ground, what to wear for which occasion, where to sit, facing which direction, and how to behave properly in general. Even if the participants have specialised knowledge and skills, a festival could not be performed, if the participants do not know how to act in relation to one another. It could not also be performed, if they knew which action to carry out in relation to each other (e.g. the chronological order of different actions), but lack the in-depths skills and knowledge to carry out something very.

¹⁹ I explore the topic of knowledge; the types of knowledge and the ways how it is transmitted throughout time in my PhD thesis.

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To understand the linkage of status and knowledge in a community of blood and/or place, when it comes to festival participation, we need to come back to Linton, who distinguished between society ascribed statuses and individually achieved statuses. An ascribed status refers to a social position assigned by society, like gender or race, or positions ascribed in relation to age grades. An achieved status refers to a social position that a person occupies voluntarily by personal ability, achievement, virtues and choices. And, in fact, these two overlap when it comes to festival participation and the community members taking up festival positions.

I consider a festival position as the role taken up during the festival, combining the social actor's status (based on age grades and gender) and knowledge-set at varying ratio. These are the actions and works carried out by a specific social actor during the festival.

The age grade and gender of the community member (ascribed status/structure) determines which range of optional festival positions are potentially 'open' for him or her at a certain point in time. He/she opts for one specific festival position according to his or her abilities and achievements.²⁰

There are two types of festival positions. Some of the festival positions are statuses carried over from everyday non-festival

²⁰ This, in my opinion, leads to the toleration of (ritual) mistakes or action not carried out properly during a festival by a social actor. The higher the aspect of ascription, the higher the tolerance of the performer not carrying out action perfectly. For instance, a *lama*, who occupies an ascribed status as 'incarnate' *lama*, irrelevant of his abilities, has to occupy a certain festival position. Community members might not be happy, if the *lama* does not perform according to their expectations, but he still will be assigned the position and work. While the social actors who occupy festival positions, which involve less ascription and more personal achievement are more likely to be exchanged with someone who can do better, if they fail to perform well.

time. The *tshogpa* (*tshogs pa*: elected village representative) and *maili ama* (KH; female head of household; DZ: *nang gi aum*), among others, will carry out formal festival action related to their status and role as a *tshogpa* and *maili ama* alike in daily routine, representing the community as a whole and the individual households. The group of ladies constituting the *mani amo* (KH; folk dance and song performers) in Korphu are also called into action whenever a high-ranking guest is visiting the village throughout the year. The monks and *gomchen* (*sgom chen*: a lay Buddhist priest in Bhutanese context) are part of the *chöpa* (*chos pa*: dharma practitioner), the liturgy performing group, and therefore also take up a festival position equal to their everyday life status and role.

The second type of festival positions are reserved for the festival time and not enacted during the rest of the year, although the social actor taking up the festival position does this in direct relation to his²¹ status and knowledge-set. These are the positions, like the *champa* (*'cham pa*: *cham* performer) or *atsara* (*a tsa ra*: jester-like characters, who are in Korphu considered emanations of their local deities) who represent the intangible community members, like the *yül lha* (*yul lha*: territorial local deities) of Korphu, or other intangible beings 'taking part' in the festivals, like the deities of the Buddhist pantheon. Other festival-only-positions, like the *lai'berpo* (KH), who carry out organisational works behind-the-scenes are also not enacted during the rest of the year.

All the positions during the *Korphu Drub* which are leading the different groups, like the *champon* (*'cham dpon*: *cham* dance master) and *chamjug* (*'cham mjug*: second dance master, lit. 'tail of dance', as the *champon* dances first in the row of all *champa*'s and the *chamjug* as the last one), *sedpem* (KH: female

²¹ These are positions exclusively taken up by men.

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leader of the female folk dance and singing group), *la-tsap* (*bla tshab*: representative or officiating monk; in Korphu responsible person for the liturgy performing group), Atsara Dawa Dragpa (leading jester in Korphu) are achieved festival positions, needing a lot of personal commitment. One of the central characteristics of subsistence agricultural societies is all members have similar knowledge and skills in terms of type, in contrast to (post-)industrial societies in which task specialisation and diversification is in demand. Interestingly, we can see that the *Korphu Drub* festival positions support task specialisation.

To summarize, *cham* festivals are carried out by communities of blood and/or place. Each and every action carried out in a Bhutanese communal *cham* festival, is not carried out by a festival participant ‘accidentally’, but always in relation to the social actors’ status in combination with his or her knowledge-set.

Merging these three characteristics of festival participants, knowledge, community and status, in order to perform a festival, the social actors constitute a patterned-knowledge-community.²² Ascribed and achieved statuses are merged into festival positions.

²² We could even apply the concept anthropologists call a *Community of Practice* (Wenger, 1998). A Community of Practice can be basically defined as a group of people, who share a common interest and therefore informally (in contrast to formalised education) exchange and share knowledge about it; practically as well as intellectually. The main characteristics are, according to Wenger, (1) mutual engagement; (2) a joint enterprise; and (3) a shared repertoire. Although Community of Practice is a very useful concept in order to explain how knowledge is successfully transmitted and shared in a *cham* festival, further on I stick to my term of patterned-knowledge-communities, because in relation to Bhutanese community festival practice, the factors of a community of blood and/or community of space, as well as status in relation to age grades play a decisive role and have to be included.

**ii. Patterned-knowledge-communities throughout time:
Adding a diachronic perspective**

In order to fully understand how social actors, as members of patterned-knowledge-communities, connect to festivals, we need to add a diachronic perspective to our inquiry. Obviously, human beings change from year to year while walking through their life. Existing studies, which focus on the formal content of festivals, are rarely diachronic. While some studies mention concern over the changes that some festivals undergo (or have undergone in the recent past), the focus is largely on changing formal festival content, rather than changing (eg., aging, etc.) festival participants. A festival is figured as a unique set of actions, carried out in a specific chronological order. Presented this way, the annual performances of festivals seem to be a yearly replication of the same. I argue that the notion of annually repeated festival activity observed during community-based festivals, seemingly understood as identical 'replication', is a predominantly etic perspective. I propose that for the insiders (the local participants), although they might not be able to explicitly express this themselves, the reiteration of the festival is primarily a constant in relation to which actual individual evolution is made visible, rather than reoccurrence of the same. Even though the contents of festival action might not change from year to year, the humans carrying them out, do. To understand how the festival participants connect to the formal content, the festivals have to be seen as a series of connected events throughout time, rather than singular events.

For our understanding of statuses throughout lives, Merton's (1968) concept of status-sequences is useful. Merton elaborated Linton's concept of status and role by proposing that throughout one life or career a human pass through sequences of (ascribed and achieved) statuses, which he called status-sequences. Not only that humans constantly change

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their statuses²³ as they grow older but also specific statuses come in a fixed order and are not reversible. A son becomes a father; a father becomes a grandfather; a grandfather becomes a great-grandfather.²⁴ This leads us again to the status-sequences which are connected to specific age-grades or age-classes (Bernadi, 1985); in relation to the age grade of a community member, specific statuses are ascribed.

Additionally, when considering status-sequences of 'professional careers', the knowledge-sets of social actors change throughout time. A pupil might become a student; a student might become a post-graduate; a post-graduate might become a professor, which relate grossly to achieved statuses. In relation to the knowledge-sets of the festival participants: many of the types of knowledge required, cannot be acquired in a short space of time, but need many years of practical training and intensive study, and are therefore cumulatively acquired.

An interested and eager-to-learn *cham* performer learns more dance steps and choreographies from year to year, and is entrusted with more difficult and significant dances gradually, for example *cham*'s representing the high-ranking deities of the Buddhist pantheon. Finally, he might acquire the position of the leading dance master, the *champon*.

²³ Merton also introduced the concepts of *status-set* and *role-sets*. A role-set is understood as the set of different behaviours ascribed to one role; like a medical doctor is expected to behave differently towards a patient, nurse or fellow doctor. By status-set the set of statuses one person possesses simultaneously is understood; like being a mother, daughter, lecturer and wife at the same time.

²⁴ Of course not every son becomes a father, and not every father becomes a grandfather, but once a child or grandchild is born, these statuses are usually ascribed, and cannot be reversed.

Here we are back at the merging point of ascribed and achieved statuses which result in festival positions. While a festival participant walks through life and is ascribed specific statuses according to his/her age grade, at the same time he/she voluntarily achieves specific festival positions according to his/her individual interest and ability to build up a knowledge-set over a long span of time needed to carry out a specific position in the festival. In the style of Merton, I call the status-sequences of festival positions 'festival-position-sequences'.

The case study: One Lifetime Narrated Through the *Korphu Drub*

To summarise and finally come to my case study: individual festival participants as members of patterned-knowledge-communities, take up festival positions and carry out action according to their status and knowledge-set. As social actors' statuses and knowledge-sets successively change throughout time, the festival participants undergo festival-position-sequences.

The ethnographic data I refer to was gathered in the community of Korphu in Trongsa district. I have observed and participated in their festival four times over the course of eight years (2011-2019). The festival related terms I use are Korphu-specific terminology (the *Korphu Drub* is related to Tertön Pema Lingpa and Korphu community speaks Khengkha), which might be different in other communities that follow other Buddhist lineages, speak other local languages, and have other localised histories. However, I propose that the main underlying principles are the same. The *Korphu Drub* is performed annually for a period of five to seven days in the last month of the Bhutanese calendar (which falls roughly in between mid-December-mid-January in the Gregorian

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calendar). This is the time of the year when Korphupa²⁵ take a break from their agricultural obligations. Korphu community has roughly 300 registered members, of which many are not permanent residents of the village but only come back to the village for the festival once in a year.²⁶

A member of Korphu community will participate in the *Korphu Drub* multiple times throughout his lifetime, maybe even every year. The festival happens once a year as many years as a Korphupa lives from the beginning of his/her life until his/her death. As the Korphupa wanders through his or her life, changes and grows from one status into the next one(s), his or her festival positions change, as we will see in the following ethnographic vignettes.

Although I present the different age grades²⁷ in the following synchronically, my research took a diachronic perspective. I followed many community members' biographies over the course of eight years and could watch how they grew from one status and festival position into the next one. Additionally, during my household survey interviews, I inquired which festival positions my interviewees and their family members had taken up in the past throughout their lives.

²⁵ Korphupa is the demonym for community members originating from Korphu.

²⁶ Korphu village was only reachable by foot until 2016 and is since then connected to the main road running from Trongsa in the North, via Zhemgang to Gelephu in the South. I could observe an increase in festival participation of non-resident Korphupa since the road up to the village was completed.

²⁷ The designation of the age grades I refer to in the following, are chosen by me, in order to roughly structure the stages in the lives of the community members. In reality, community members grow from one phase into the next fluently, and the timings of the transitions differ from individual to individual a great deal.

Childhood

Beginning of life. Entering the community

Jiga is almost one year old and it is her first *Korphu Drub*. In the morning she receives all the blessings of water sprinkled over her head. She is lifted high into the air so that her forehead is in contact with the huge *tongdröl* (*mthong grol*: lit. 'Liberation upon Seeing', an over-dimensional big *thangka*, religious scroll painting). Her mother percusses her whole body with sticky dough to get rid of all bad influences. Small pieces of sweet *tshog* (*tshogs*: purification practice that involves food offerings, which are distributed after completion and commonly called *tshog*) are crumbled into her toothless mouth. When the mask dancers perform, Jiga is held upright on the lap sitting in the first row of the observers absorbing the whirling colours in front of her, listening to the loud beats of the drums. Her uncle carries her underneath the burning wooden gate in the evening to get rid of potential harms awaiting her in the coming year. In the late night closely tied to her grandmothers back, she is swirled around when her grandmother sings, dances and drinks *ara* (*a rag*: locally distilled alcohol made of rice, maize, potato and/or barley) with the friends and neighbours coming to their house to celebrate. The small one is arriving in the community – in its centre.

Children participate in the festival right from the very beginning of their life. They are not excluded from any of the activities, but are taken everywhere the adults go, any time of the day without distinction. The families ensure that the small ones, the most vulnerable members of the community, receive all of the blessings. The festival is one of the first options to strengthen the bonds with the territorial, birth and protective deities for the course of one's whole life. In huge contrast to many Western families who try to shield away their babies from uproar, the *Korphu* families expose their offspring to all sensual stimulations happening during the *Drub*. Their whole bodies get involved, they bodily connect to the community. The

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sensory stimuli the small ones are exposed to during the festival are without doubt much more extreme than what they experience during daily life. The several huge bonfires, the colourful mask dances, the loud activities happening during night time, emotionally impress the new mortals and likely remain part of their earliest childhood memories during their lives.

Entering the genders

The little boy and girl look like miniature versions of their parents. Hardly being able to walk by themselves, they are dolled up in shiny new traditional dresses for the first time in their short lives. The girl wears her mother's necklace, which looks over-dimensional considering her size and showcases a precious brooch of her grandmother above her handwoven precious *kira* (*dkyi ra*: traditional female Bhutanese wrap skirt) with flowery design. She is recognisable as a female now. The boy dons tiny hand-crafted boots with elaborate embroidery and a shiny bright silken *gho* (*bgo*: traditional Bhutanese male dress, knee-lengths robe, tied with a belt). He is recognisable as a male now.

The *Drub* is the one occasion in a year during which the community members purchase not only new and often expensive clothes to be worn during the festive days, but also strictly stick to formal Bhutanese attire. When the toddlers are between one and two years old, many of the parents make sure that they are also dressed up properly in traditional apparel. By putting the children in the official dress, wearing a *kira*, or respectively *gho*, their gender is exposed. The toddlers are publicly recognisable as females and males by their community, maybe for the first time in their lives.

Becoming visible. Entering the stage

Jigme is the son of the *champon*, the dance master, and around six years old. Together with some other small boys, he gathers

experience on stage as one of the minor *atsara*, trying to imitate the jokes and habits, style of performance of the two senior *atsara*. Shielded by the small masks in front of their faces, they contest with each other trying to attract the attention of the audience. They fool around, the stage is a big playground to them. Jigme enjoys that all the villagers look and laugh at him. He has arrived in the consciousness of the community.

In-between the main programmes of the *Drub*, loud speakers are put up in the courtyard. Soon afterwards, modern Bhutanese tunes fill the compound. With great excitement the community observes the seven-years old daughter of Sonam Yangden getting ready for her showpiece. The little girl, perfectly dressed up, starts her play-back performance, copying modern singers and dancers who can be watched on a daily basis in several of the Bhutanese TV shows.

Little Karma is waiting for his friends to finish their performance. Meanwhile, he had sneaked into the room of the *lhakhang* where the colourful *tormas* (*gtor ma*: sacrificial object) are prepared. Not everyone is made to be on stage. He is unconsciously kneading the little chunk of red-tinted butter the *gomchen* had given him, carefully observing the subtle fingers of the *gomchen* moulding flowers, trying to copy the delicate shape. Next to him is his other friend having a high colour, ambitiously trying to get a sound out of the beautiful *jaling* (*rgya gling*: double-reed horn wind instrument, used for Buddhist liturgy) making cacophonous noise. Who would have thought that it is so difficult to play the instrument properly? Karma takes away the *jaling* from his friend to find out for himself.

Performing the role of a small *atsara* is the first chance to get on to the stage in front of the community. No fixed choreographies are required, no discipline to be maintained, and no routine to be observed. One only requires the will and wish to perform and summon up the courage to present oneself in front of the crowds. The role of a kid *atsara* is an option to introduce the boys to the mask dances. Just like her male counterpart, the girl performs for the first time in front of the

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community by her own choice, and also encouraged by her parents without any obligations to follow. According to interest and talent, other kids are attracted to other festival works. The kids are lured into the responsibilities of adult life through game. The positions the children take during their childhood in daily life as well as during the *Korphu Drub* are identical. They are protected, are present in all action, and are playfully introduced to the rules and obligations of community life and participation in the festival their interests and talents are taken into account.

Youth. Teenage times

Assisting the maili ama, learning responsibility

A twelve-year-old Zangmo is always by the side of her mother. When her mother brews the special *ara* for the *Drub*, she fetches water in containers from outside. When it is their household's turn to offer lunch to the *chöpa (chos pa)* in the temple, she cuts vegetables and meat for hours in the morning. At lunchtime, she makes one round after the other, pouring out tea to all the ritual experts continually advised by her mother. She blushes when the elders jokingly teach her how to hold the tea pot properly or praise her for talking gently. Afterwards, she can be seen carrying dishes to the water tap for washing.

Learning to be a performer, becoming responsible

The whole community starts cheering excitedly when Jigme enters the courtyard disguised in costume and mask as one of the ground cleaning deities, a *Ging (ging)*. Despite his face being hidden behind a mask, everybody recognises him. Around thirteen years old, he is the youngest of the *Korphu champas* and it is the first time he performs a *cham* publicly during the *Korphu Drub*. Every failed step is responded with laughter and every successful jump answered with exuberant applause from all. The

community is happy to see their offspring join and continue their community tradition.

The teenage girl assisting her mother and the first-time dancer are entering the phase in their lives in which the community expects them to learn from adults, assist and help them with the physical heavy works and slowly being able to take over small responsibilities for their assigned works. Mistakes are mostly generously overlooked as long as active participation is fulfilled.

Being a performer, taking responsibility

Whooping screams resound through the dark and chilly air of the nights before the *Drub* starts. Yeshey and the other young men are rehearsing for the *cham* dances in the courtyard of the temple. The boys jump barefoot around the bonfire burning in the centre. Chasing each other, shouting the rhythm and sequence of steps in unison. Trying to outperform each other. It is difficult for the responsible *champon* and *chamjug* to instil discipline to show up in time at the dancing ground and rehearse with full concentration. Yeshey learns how to dance the mask dance performances step by step. Each year he is introduced to more complicated and complex choreographies and is entrusted to play more sacred characters. The next morning after having partied with his friends all night long, he has to be driven out of bed by his colleagues. The social pressure is high. Having been a member of the *champa* group a couple of years, Yeshey cannot pull out without a reasonable excuse at this point. During the formal *cham* performances, the childish behaviours of the teenage boys suddenly disappear. Dressed up in their ceremonial attire, they turn into beautiful young men performing with serenity and dignity.

Sangay Yangzom is one of the female folk singers and dancers. Even as a student studying in India, she comes home to attend the *Korphu Drub* every year. She has learned under her mother's and grandmother's guidance to sing the old songs of the

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community. This year it is her family's turn to provide a female dancer for the festival. She is the one. She wears the most precious skirt owned by her family and moves lasciviously. Her ripe teenage body is attracting the young men of the community who are looking for a wife to start a family. They curiously observe her blushes when she is given a phallic cake that promises her fertility in the future. *Mani amo* is a demanding responsibility. The girls are the first ones of all to get up at night and gather at the guest *lama's* house to sing a wake-up song for him. And they accompany the *lama* back to his house late at night, singing a goodnight song.

Rinzin, 22 years old, also studies in India. Since childhood, he has been visiting his village only for the *Drub*, once in a year. He feels relieved. For a short time, he does not have to think about his studies. He feels at home. He is surrounded by fellow Bhutanese. He and his friends meet at the small shop, which only opens during festival time. They count their money and buy as many bottles of beer as they can get and hide away in a friend's house where surely none of the adults come by. They have exactly two hours' time before their festival duties as *dodampa* (KH), assistants of the organisers, start. Luckily, there is not much to do. Seeing, if all the girls for the folk dances arrive in time. Looking after the *champas* and fixing their costumes, if some piece comes loose during the performances. Carrying juniper tree sticks during the procession.

Most of the *cham* dancers, *mani amo* and *dodampa*, are students in school or university, staying outside the village during the whole year. And often solely come back to their home place for the festival to perform. The teenage boys and girls are at the height of their bodily strength. The community is satisfied when the youthful dancer displays his bodily advantages and potency through skilful and energetic movement. His pubescent body and mind gives all his boisterous energy into the jumps, and into the powerful beating of the drums. Equal to the teenage boy as *champa*, the young woman displays her bodily features when performing in front of the community. They are not yet at the point to take over

responsibility for others, but are expected to take full responsibility for their own performances during the *Drub*. Many years of teaching the skills have already been invested in them by their seniors. Their bodily strengths and beauty of the late youth is displayed in the most effective way, them being the physical centre piece of the performances of the *Drub* on stage. They are the public display of the community's health, vitality and future. Additionally, there are many works to be accomplished behind-the-scenes for the ones who do not want to present themselves in front of the public.

Young adulthood

Becoming an adult. Being responsible

Pema Wangdi is in his early 20's and has recently started his professional life as a teacher employed by the government. He is the son of the *gomchen* of Korphu. Pema has assisted and learned from his father everything needed to perform all *choga* of the *Drub* since he was a child. He knows how to properly recite the scriptures, he knows which ritual accoutrements are needed, how they are produced and at which stage during the rituals they are called into action. From year to year the senior *gomchen* draws back from more of his duties during the *Drub* and his son takes over with confidence. Pema fulfils his tasks with a great sense of responsibility. From the communities side there is not even the smallest doubt that he accomplishes his works. The *gomchen's* students, school boys, are now assigned to help Pema and follow him everywhere.

Cheche laughs while explaining the ritual with the phalli in which the *mani amo* participate. This year Cheche is not performing as a *mani amo* anymore. She gave birth to a baby. She is busy breastfeeding the little one at regular intervals. While her daughter is handed around the family when not nursed by her, Cheche substitutes her mother in all functions as *maili ama* with increasing frequency. As she has already done in the last couple of years, she takes over all works in the household which

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require bodily strengths. But now, she additionally joins in the discussion when the amount of the daily offerings is discussed publicly, she receives guests of the household by her own. Now, it is her who ties a rope of the cattle to the *lhakhang* window and asks the deities to look after the cows during the festive time in the name of their household. As a young mother Cheche is forced to take over responsibility not only for herself but also for others. While her mother technically still is the official head of household, ever more often representative works are transferred to Cheche.

The young adults, like Pema and Cheche, who have finished their formal education, having started their own families or professional life, are now bound to participate as full responsible members of the community. They have crossed the threshold from being solely responsible for themselves to being held responsible for others as well. Their focus of responsibility is expected to broaden, widen up from themselves to covering other family and community members. They have crossed the border of not only being taught and being students, but as well starting to be teachers themselves and transmitting knowledge to the next generation.

Adulthood

Representing the households. Being the community

Aum Rinchen is one of the *maili ama* of Korphu community. Self-confident, she sits in a row shoulder-to-shoulder with all the other *maili ama*, the offerings to the *lama* ready on their laps. They represent their households, together they represent the total community of Korphu. They are the *jinda*, the sponsors of the extensive and elaborate *Korphu Drub*. With head held high, they receive the final blessings. For their entrusted families, for their community. The last year's crop yield was bad and they are all praying for a better season to come. Just like during the year, now during the festival time, her concerns are with the household responsibility. Will the crops in the soon coming

summer not again all be destroyed by wild boars and leave the household without enough staple food during the winter? Is everyone healthy? Will the medical treatment of her old father be of success? Will her son receive a government scholarship to continue his education in one of the elite colleges of Bhutan? Will they finally be able to get a new roof for their house? Will her daughter, pregnant in the seventh month, have a smooth delivery without any complications and a healthy baby? At the very end of the *Drub* the *maili ama*'s feel reassured. A positive relationship of the community with the deities, with Pema Lingpa and the Bhutanese state has been secured, and all evil has been warded off for another year to come.

The position of the head of household, the *maili ama*, is one of the centrepieces of the *Drub*. Formally, the *maili ama* as representatives as well as main responsible ones for the communities' households, as the smallest formal unit of the community, can be formally understood as the commissioners and at the same time beneficiaries of the whole ritual action. The age range of *maili ama* sitting in front of the community, varies considerably. While some of them – like Cheche – are only in their early 20's, some of them have crossed their 60's birthday. Taking up the status and position as a *maili ama* is highly individual to the family situation as well as the preparedness and ability of the woman to occupy this responsible position.

Responsible years. Representing the community

Aum Sangay Wangmo's family is taking over the responsibility of the *pirpon* (KH; DZ: *spyi 'bod / spyir dpon*: village head, messenger) this year and this *Drub*. The *maili ama*, hand-in-hand with her *magpa* (*rmag pa*: husband, bridegroom) and eldest son are the responsible family of the community taking care of all provisions needed for the *Drub*. The living room has turned into a store room filled with sacks for different foods and the *maili ama* receives community members who arrive all the time delivering their donations. Her son notes down every income in

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a written sheet. Her *magpa* has discussed the height of this year's compulsory offerings with the other households and is now appointing tasks to other helpers supporting his family with the works.

Major Yonten is a civil servant employed by the Royal Bhutan Police in the capital Thimphu. He has not come to Korphu for twelve years in a row, for different reasons. Being stationed and trained all over the country throughout his career, he could not take vacations to come all the way up to Korphu. But now, he is back. He is wearing a blue *kapné* showcasing his rank. The Korphupa are proud. He is one of them and has made his career out of the small village. He is representing the village in the capital. This year, Korphupa have installed a colourful tent in the courtyard for the first time. Major Yonten and his wife are offered seats inside to observe the festival comfortably, served tea and snacks continuously. He is one of the non-resident Korphupa who has largely contributed to the acquisition of the new *tongdröl*.

Mastery. Passing on knowledge

Champon Sonam, in his late 40's, is mustering the boys of the village for the dance rehearsal in the dark courtyard of the *lhakhang*, issuing instructions for the upcoming rehearsal. By his judgement, the *champon* assigns participation in the different dances according to the abilities of the individual boys and their participation during the last years' festivals. With the drum in his hands, he sets the rhythm and calls out the sequence of the steps. Whenever needed he demonstrates complicated body rotations in slow motion associated with spoken instructions, how to move hands and feet, while all his students try to copy his elegant movements. Just before the rehearsal *champon* Sonam had inspected all masks and costumes, making a list of the pieces which had to be repaired or replaced by new ones. Sonam is holding the position of the *champon* of Korphu for more than a decade. Together with Rinzin, who is performing as the *chamjug*, they lead the group of the *champa*, the mask dancers. The *champon* has perfected his choreographies. He knows all the

steps, every single dance choreography. Only he has the honour to wear and perform the most respected and venerated mask of the community, the *Rakhsha Lango* (Ox-headed deity of the intermediate realm between death and rebirth, symbolising justice.).

The adults in the middle of their lives, are at their best of carrying responsibility for the community - during everyday life as much as during the *Drub*. While the youth display the peak of physical strengths, the adults are displaying the summit of mental strengths in carrying out the most specialised and most responsible positions. Be it the leading of the different performing groups as *sedpem*, *champon*, leader of the *chöpa*, *the la-tsap*, or as *maili ama*. They are the main holder of the communities wisdom and knowledge and are continuously busy to make sure it is properly transmitted to the following generations and not lost in-between. They are the ones struggling, carrying the burden to decide whether to hold on to procedures as their elders had taught to them, or adapt to the changes the younger ones bring into the community from outside. It is the responsibility on their shoulders to secure the continued existence of their community's tradition.

Late adulthood

Leaving the stage. Passing on responsibility

Aum Karma, in her 50's, sticks out when the community assembles in a circle for the joint folk dances. She is moving most gracefully, every step with absolute certainty and ease, gazing with a calm expression to the ground in front of her. Her clear voice is easy to be recognised above all the others, and often she is the leading voice of the singing group. Aum Karma held the position of the *sedpem* for many years in a row and has taught generations of young women how to sing and perform the traditional songs. When the community is asked to provide folk singers to the Dzong, Aum Karma is the one to be sent to

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represent the village. She holds the knowledge of many of the ancient lyrics that are otherwise already forgotten. When her successor as *sedpem* became pregnant, a couple of years ago, Aum Karma deputised for her and took up again the role of leading the *mani amo* during the *Drub* for one year. Her lifestyle fits the expectations towards a serious performer of the folk songs with an overall sacral meaning. She doesn't drink alcohol, as alcohol consume is said to affect vocal chords. Aum Karma is one of the most respected *maili ama* of Korphu community and her opinion is valued by all.

Ap Nyontey is sitting together with the *champon* and discussing the programme of this year's *Drub*. He is in his 60's and one of the most dedicated community members when it comes to the festival. In his life he has first served the community as a *champa* and later *champon*, took over any of the works in the group of the *chöpa* (*chos pa*) and held the responsibility as *kön-yer* (*dkon gnyer* / *sku gnyer*: caretaker of temple) for many years. And, if needed, he is still ready to sublimate any of the roles no-one likes to perform. This year he volunteers to take over the most unpopular role of *ganmo* (*rgan mo*: old woman), the horny old lady trying to seduce young men. He is there. Joking and rebuking the youth when needed, supporting the middle-aged whenever a helping hand is needed, finding solutions to all problems occurring during a weeklong highly complex festivity. Drinking with his friends and remembering the old days of performing with all the mishaps, being a real raconteur in supplying the community with stories of the last 50 years of *Drub*.

Behind the scenes. Advising. Counselling

The retired civil servant is sitting together with the household providing the *pirpon*. He has taken over the position of the senior *lai' berpo* to support the *pirpon's* family. He has stepped back from his exposed position in the public eye to the back rows. Next to his assignments in the Civil service in Thimphu he had been

the elected *gup* (*rged po / rga po*) of Korphu *gewog* (*rged 'og*)²⁸ for some years in a row and been responsible for the instalment of the cemented water places throughout the inner community territory, making fluent water available for all community members to spare them the walk to the far away well above the village. His lifelong working experience is now needed. He is organising the festival behind the scenes. Through his good and far relations he could garner the high *lama* to come to Korphu and conduct the rituals at this year's *Drub*. For the acquirement of the new needed masks, he got in contact with the Korphupa staying as civil servants in Thimphu. He searched for a capable mask carver and made the civil servants discharge their duties and pay for the masks. As the main *lai' berpo*, he assists the family of the *pirpon* this year, coordinating all the workers, managing the collected foods allocating them for the various rites. Giving advice.

According to their knowledge and talents, the elders, who have travelled through many or nearly all positions in the *Drub* throughout their lives, and participated several dozen times in the *Drub*, have a broad understanding of the overall complex activities and organisation of the one-week long festival. They have experience. They know how to keep track. While they step back from being performers on stage, in the centre of attention, they work out their knowledge unseen, behind the scenes. They do not represent the community in the limelight physically and mentally like the youth and adults, but are the indispensable backbone of the community. Their lifelong commitment and dedication to the communal activities like the *Drub*, is reflected in the authority and respect they enjoy in the community.

²⁸ A *gewog* is an administrative unit in a Dzongkhag/district comprising of mostly three to five villages headed by a *gup*.

Old age

Leaving responsibility. Enjoying and looking back

In the early morning the grandmother is the first one to get up. She puts on her best silken *kira*, sponsored by her grandson, and hides away two big bottles of *ara* in the front pocket of her *tego* (*stod bgo*: blouse like jacket). She has no responsibilities, anymore. Free. She opens the front door of her home to let in her best friends, a couple of other old ladies she knows since childhood. These days they are reunited for the *Drub*, since all of them stay scattered over the country with their children during the year. They sit together in a circle on the worn out wooden floor, place all the bottles in the middle. Taking out their wooden cups, they start chatting, laughing and drinking. In-between, out of the corner of her eyes, she observes her daughter, the current *maili ama*. In a split second, the grandmother is back to be the authoritative matriarch and ushers a rough command reprimanding her daughter how to prepare the offerings to the *lama*. When the *cham* start, the grandmother and her friends are the first ones appearing in the courtyard, occupying the seats in the front row, while alternately taking sips from their brought along *ara* and twirling their rosaries. When Dawa Dragpa enters the stage, the grandmother formally welcomes him with a white *khadar* (*kha dar / kha btags*: ceremonial, salutation silken scarf) and a flask of *ara*. As she has done for at least sixty years, since she had been a *sedpem* as young woman and the community had ascribed to her a special connection with Dawa Dragpa.

Preparing for Death. Leaving the community

Just after sunrise, the very aged man is the only one in the still deserted courtyard. Barely being able to walk, supported by a walking stick, he is surrounding the *lhakhang* while loudly shouting mantras. His penetrating voice resounds through the still quiet village. The man is preparing for death. He knows this time's festival might be the last one in his life. A last good opportunity for him to collect merit. The masks representing the deities and their movements are more than familiar to him. They

have accompanied him all his life already inhabiting his first childhood memories. They give him a feeling of security. All the sacred action during the *Korphu Drub* is the eye of the hurricane of turmoil of his bygone life. It is pointing back deep into the past, connecting him with his spiritual ancestors. Now, when observing the deities of the Bardo (*bar do*: intermediate state between death and rebirth), it guides him towards his near future.

Like the children, the community does not expect the old members to take part in any function of the festival, but are let free and encouraged to engage in their religious practices to prepare for death. Throughout the festival, the old ones make up the biggest part of the onlookers as they are the only ones not being occupied with other works.

In summary, every phase, or age grade, in the biography of a member of Korphu community has its own status/es, which is/are reflected in positions during the festivals.²⁹ As much as each community member transits through a range of statuses, he/she also transits through (ascribed and achieved) positions during the festival, and therefore throughout the years carries out all different types of works and actions in the *Korphu Drub*. Although the formal festival content may stay the same, as perceived from an outsider's perspective, what the individual does and consequently how he/she connects to the festival, changes constantly and successively. As the different actions associated with the festival positions have to be carried out at different times and in different locations during the festival, (although there are certain festival actions when all community members are required to be in the same place at the same

²⁹ One reason why certain everyday statuses are taken over as festival positions, and others not, is due to who is considered a *festival agent*. The festival agents are the entities in whose name festival action is carried out. There is no space in this article to address the topic properly, but I discuss it in detail in my PhD thesis.

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time), the immediate experience of the festival also varies in different phases of life.

Every age grade in life is characterised by certain duties/obligations and rights, and each phase in life holds strengths, as well as needs and challenges, bodily and mentally. The positions to be practiced in the festival take advantage of the strengths and cater to and address the challenges and context of each phase of life. By these means, carrying out formal festival action, the individual's identity is mirrored and even enhanced through festival performance.

As festival participants successively build upon knowledge and skills needed for the festival positions and extend these over time, festival-position-sequences are not only essential to the sustainable success of a festival but also to the way an individual social actor connects to the festival. All expert positions during the *Korphu Drub*, like the *champon* and *chamjug*, *sedpem*, are without doubt achieved festival positions, requiring commitment and achievement. As one of the characteristics of subsistence agricultural societies usually is that all members have similar knowledge and skills in terms of type, in contrast to (post-)industrial societies in which specialisation and task diversification is in demand, we can see that the *Korphu Drub* actually supports task specialisation.

A festival position, either as a status taken over from everyday life or an exclusive position solely carried out during festival time, tells the other community members something about a person's age grade at a point in time, in combination with the agentive effort an individual makes, and the means by which he/she wants to present him/herself to the community.

The individual identities of festival participants are a fusion of agentive self-determination by the individual or ascription by

the community. They are re-negotiated and constantly aligned in an act of reflexivity on both sides.

We can ask now: is, and how is a festival position, which is solely enacted once in a year, influencing or reflecting everyday life identities? Is a festival identity connected to daily life identity of the community members? According to my research, we can say, definitely, that it is. For instance, a community member in Korphu is identified in relation to his festival identity - when talked about Sonam, who was the *champon* over many years, everybody in the village would only refer to him as “Champon Sonam”. And, Pema Dorji, performing the main *atsara*, would be called “Atsara Pema” by all.

Rites of Passage

Although transition from one phase in life into the next is (usually) fluent in Korphu community, the *Korphu Drub* seems to function as a visible marker by which the community recognises that a social actor has arrived in a certain phase of life in the next age grade. The notion of status changes (and associated change of identity) combined with external recognition of the same in the context of a rite or ritual, leads us to what van Gennep (1960) termed as rite de passage. In many societies of the world, the transition from one age grade to the next, is furthered and celebrated by an initiation or transition rite. Although we cannot find all three stages³⁰ of rites of passages van Gennep describes, we can employ the concept of rites of passages, in its broadest sense, as communal rites or rituals conducted to support or make visible the transition of a social actor from one age grade to the next in conjunction with the changing status and festival position.

³⁰ The three stages according to Gennep are: separation, liminality, and incorporation.

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The individual festival participant, transiting from one age grade to the next, therefore not only changes the way he/she takes part in the festival, but also re-negotiates his/her identity actively and continuously throughout life.

Korphupa observe rites of passage³¹, in the sense of Gennep, related to two occasions in life - birth and death, both regarded as incidents when defilements, *drip*, (*sgrib*) occur which have to be purified. (Gennep has proposed that status changes are considered 'dangerous' phases in life.) These are the rites to be performed when a new community member is about to join the community, which are conception and birth,³² and finally when the community loses a member through death;³³ both clear-cut status changes.³⁴ The positions taken up during the *Korphu Drub* over the span of one lifetime cover all phases of life complementary to these two rites of passage observed. The rites of passage are only carried out for the states of being in which the concerned human being is not able to carry out action

³¹ As said before, I apply the concept of rites of passage here in the widest sense, relating it to a rite which is performed by a community when a social actor transits from one status in life to the next.

³² When a woman recognises that she is pregnant a *mi kha* (*mi kha*: lit.: 'malicious mouth'; warding off malicious gossip from the pregnant woman and her un-born) ritual is conducted. Once the baby is born again a *mi kha* ritual is conducted as well as a *lhabsang* (*lha bsangs*: offerings of incense to the gods for purification) ritual to get rid of *drip* which has occurred due to giving birth.

³³ When a community member dies a whole series of rituals have to be conducted up to one year or even longer after the death, number and size of these contingent on the will and wealth of the family who commissions the rites.

³⁴ In winter 2018 I was a guest, for the first time, at a birthday party for a boy to which the closest family members in the village and the closest neighbours were invited. Celebrating a kid's birthday this way, is a recently introduced practice. I wonder whether the introduction of formal education in which *age grades* are fixed and formalised, as children have to be admitted according to age in terms of years and not social development (in contrast to informal age grades otherwise determining in village life) has to do with it.

proactively by him/herself. The community has to act³⁵ on behalf of the newly born or deceased community member.

In the conclusion of his book Arnold van Gennep summarizes three characteristics of rites of passage, of which the last two can be applied to the *Korphu Drub*. Van Gennep's second characteristic is the *existence of transitional periods* (German: *Umwandlungsphasen*), for example novitiate or betrothal. He writes: 'It is in this concept of transition that provides an orientation for understanding the intricacies and the order of rites of preliminary to marriage.', (for example, A/N). *Korphu* community members grow from one status/festival position into the next one. There will be the *Drub* when a former 'daughter', for the first time, takes over the position of the *maili ama* from her mother. While the becoming of *maili ama* is a foremost private household issue decided internally, once the new *maili ama* takes this position during the *Drub*, the change of status is publicly acknowledged by the community. The time in-between two *Drubs* (1 year) can be understood, as a transitional period.

In the very end of the festival, when all ritual action has been completed and the last *tashi monlam* (*bkra shis smon lam*: aspiration/supplication prayers for good luck) have been accomplished, the community gathers once more in the courtyard. It is time to talk about the *Drub* of the coming year. After the *Drub* is before the *Drub*. Some community members step forward carrying a white *khadar* and a barrel of *ara*. One by one, they announce publicly that they cannot continue their assigned duties during the *Drub* the following year and putting forth reasons. Each community member holding a *position*

³⁵ There are two minor exceptions: promotions are usually celebrated, although not furthered by a rite of passage, and newly introduced to the community, birthdays are celebrated. But otherwise, rites of passage very common in other cultures, like wedding ceremonies, the transition from Youth/childhood to adulthood et cetera, are not observed at all.

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during the *Drub*, once they wish to resign, have to formally request the community to drop out. Successors are to be found and formally asked to step in. The community members stepping in for a new position in the following year, have one year time to prepare for the new task/assignment.

Gennep states one more significant aspect for rites of passage, as he writes: 'Third, it seems important to me that the passage from one social position to another is identified with a *territorial passage*, such as the entrance into a village or a house, the movement from one room to another, or the crossing of streets and squares.' We can observe three types of *territorial passages*, or *shifts in space*, when it comes to festival position transitions during the *Korphu Drub*. The first significant change in space over the course of one life from being 'off-stage' at the beginning of one's life, towards more prominence 'on-stage' during the central phases of life (in terms of chronology), and then slowly again leaving the stage when becoming older.

Again, when considering the festival positions 'on stage', we recognise that whenever a festival participant as a member of one of the performing groups, becomes the leader of the group, he/she changes the position in terms of space. The girl performing as *mani amo* becomes promoted to be the *sedpem* she takes up the centre position of the seven girls dancing in line. The former *champa* being the new leader of the group as *champon*, occupies the first leading position in the row of the *champa*. The young woman taking the position as *maili ama*, enters an exposed position in the sitting order of the festival. I will address the third change in space subsequently.

Interestingly, thinking of rites of passage, it seems like the festival can be understood as a negative image of the collection of rites of passage appearing in the community. The different functions at the festival do not depict the rite of passage as a specific/certain point in time when something is changing in

the biography of a person, but is capturing the passages of time in between. That is, the rite that marks the shift from one stage in life to another, is absent, is left out. What is shown during the festival is the before and the afterwards. This makes sense regarding the assumed function of the festival of being an action that makes statements about the relationships of its community members.

While we cannot approve the *Korphu Drub* as such a rite of passage, as it does not proactively further transition from one status to the next, it nonetheless functions as a substitute for the not observed rites of passage during the lifetime of a *Korphupa* in the community. As a point-in-time, its annual staging is yearly snapshots of the social composition of the community, for and perceived by, the insider, and indecipherable for a one-time outsider visitor to the festival. A look at who fulfils which festival position - in relation to the observed task as well as space placement - is an exact imprint of the whole picture, composition of the communities identities' at one instant. For the insider, the *Drub* is the opportunity to apprehend the total composition of the communities individual identities at a glance just by observing everyone in his or her festival position in space and in relation to each other. It is an update of community composition understood/perceived in its totality, rather than as constituted by its individuals. In a way, during certain moments during the *Drub*, when all community members are present inside the courtyard at once and positioned in space according to their social position, a real visible organigram is unfolding in front of everyone's eyes.

The *Drub* itself acts as an organigram - any insider can, by just seeing/observing the spatial positions in space an individual occupies during the *Drub*, understand the social position and phase of life the individual takes up at that moment.

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Therefore, individual identity and communal identity of festival participants, can be understood as the individual being in relation to the other community members, and constantly aligning his/her position/status throughout time. Coming back to the third territorial passage. The festival is mainly taking part in the *lhakhang* and adjoined courtyard, both surrounded by a wall. When the community members enter the courtyard, a threshold is overstepped, behind which specific rules become effective regarding dress, behaviour and action of the festival participants. In other words, a magic threshold is overstepped when entering the courtyard.

Conclusion

Let me come back to my initial proposition, putting the festival participants as the pivotal centre part back into the festivals, to bridge the gap of formal festival content on one side and the evolvement of communal identity on the other side.

In this article I tried to show how individual social actors develop communal identity through the practice of communal Buddhist *cham* festivals. In order to understand how communal identity evolves, we need to look at the social lives of the festival participants. We need to understand who they are and how they relate to each other as social beings. In the case of the *Korphu Drub*, the festival participants, who are members of a blood/place community, connect to the structural and religious formal content of the festival, by taking up festival positions according to their age grade and gender in combination with individual agency (patterned-knowledge-communities). These festival positions constantly change and are re-negotiated across lifetimes (festival-position-sequences). The varying festival positions throughout a participant's life cater to and mirror every phase of life the participant is going through, in combination with his/her individual aspirations. Needs, weaknesses and fears connected to each phase in life

are addressed and solutions are explored. Strengths, capacities and individual commitment are proudly exposed and highlighted. Ascribed and achieved statuses are melted together in individual festival positions, as are the diametrically opposed forces of individual agency and communal/cultural structure.

Recapitulating communal identity as an ongoing interdependent process of reflexivity between individual agency and social structure, and between the individual social actor and his/her fellow community members, Buddhist *cham* communal festivals, like the *Korphu Drub*, can be said to act as a magnifying glass exposing the sum of community members identities in one moment of time, and throughout time. It is a two-sided business - the community members recognise and confirm identities, and individual identities are recognized³⁶ and confirmed by the community. Communal identity emerges. The individual identifies as constituent part of the community and is identified as part of it. Rather than carrying out individual rites of passage, in which one single social actor transits from one status and accompanying identity to the next, *cham* festival practice, at least in *Korphu*, can be understood as a substitute for rites of passage for the totality of community members. In the absence of rites of passages marking the transitions from one age grade to the next, the annual performance of the *Drub* is an urgent communal endeavour, which has to be enacted repeatedly, and with regularity, to keep track of the ever-changing human composition of the community and its ever changing composite identities. Following this, individual social actors' identities can

³⁶ In this article I have focused on how feelings of communal identity are created at best. Without doubt, when the external expectations towards a social actor do not match his/her personal understanding of his/her status, sentiments of communal identity are at stake.

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only be perceived as component part of the entire community, always in relation to the others.

When I have interviewed festival participants of village communities across the genders and age groups over the course of my field study, I found that an overwhelming majority of the interviewees does not possess the explicit knowledge (and does not express the wish to possess this knowledge) about the esoteric meanings and background stories ascribed to a specific liturgy and *cham* performances. In each community (especially village communities), there is usually only a handful of people who hold this kind of expert knowledge that we later find in publications about festivals. Understanding a festival participant to be foremost, a social being relating and connecting - above all - to the social side of a festival, we understand that most of the participants do not need expert knowledge (though they deliberately carry out such the festival position in which it is required). For me, a mismatch is apparent. While most scholarly publications about *cham* festivals focus on formal content and diversity ascribed meanings, which is in itself a crucial endeavour, most festival participants seem to rely largely on the social dimension of a festival which is equally legitimate. I think, if we aim to understand the relevance of the festivals for the social actors/participants and in an effort to preserve tangible and intangible cultural heritage for them, let us not lose sight of the social actors who bring the festivals and rituals to life. What festival contents need to survive are functioning patterned-knowledge-communities advancing communal identity. As one of my Korphupa friends once exclaimed: 'This is OUR tradition.'

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Who is the Tigress in the Lair? A Preliminary Enquiry About Khandro Yeshe Tshogyel's Visit to Taktsang

Sonam Kinga⁺

Introduction

The holy site of Taktsang in Paro, Bhutan, is renowned for its association with Guru Rinpoche, his consort Khandro Yeshe Tshogyel and disciple Langchen Pelgi Sengye. Although a monastery was built at this site in 1692 by Gyalse Tenzin Rabgye, the fourth civil ruler of Bhutan, the site was visited and blessed by Guru Rinpoche as far back as the 8th century. Its sacredness has been reinforced by the visits and spiritual undertakings of great Buddhist luminaries over the centuries.

Pilgrims and tourists visiting Taktsang are generally told two things associated with Yeshe Tshogyel, who was a Tibetan princess and an emanation of Lhamo Yangchenma (Sarasvati). One, when Guru Rinpoche transformed into Dorje Drolo (one of his eight manifestations) and flew to Taktsang riding on the back of a tigress, Yeshe Tshogyel had transformed into that tigress. Two, Yeshe Tshogyel did the Vajrakilaya practice at the cave of Sengephu in Taktshang.

Sources, both oral and literary – including tourist-oriented materials – provide different versions of the narrative of Yeshe Tshogyel, the tigress and Vajrakilaya practice. Trulku Thondup, for example, mentions that Guru Rinpoche practiced Vajrakilaya with Yeshe Tshogyel at Paro Taktshang and that she transformed herself into a tigress and became his mount

⁺ Dr. Sonam Kinga was the chairperson of the National Council of Bhutan, and currently serves in the faculty at the Royal Institute of Strategic Studies (RIGSS), Phuntsholing, Bhutan.

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when he manifested as Dorje Drolo (Thondup, 1996, p. 96). This suggests that Guru Rinpoche and Yeshe Tshogyel were already at Paro Taktshang and it was only during the practice and accomplishment of Vajrakilaya that the transformation took place. But this contrasts with narratives found in tourist books and oral folklore which suggest that Guru Rinpoche had already transformed into Dorje Drolo when he rode on the back of a tigress and flew to Taktshang (Brown, 2007, p. 128). Another source suggests that Guru Rinpoche flew from Senge Dzong in Lhuntse to Taktsang in the form of Dorje Drolo riding on a tigress although it does not mention Yeshe Tshogyel as the tigress (Bhutan Times, 2008, p. 178). In yet another source, it is mentioned that Yeshe Tshogyel transformed herself into a tigress while meditating at Taktshang ‘to protect herself from harmful humans and wild animals’ (National Library, 2005, p. 2). It also mentions that the tigress on which Dorje Drolo is mounted is the form assumed by Yeshe Tshogyel. The common theme that binds different versions of these narratives is usually the association of Yeshe Tshogyel with the tigress. As such, this is also the point of enquiry of this article. Is Yeshe Tshogyel the tigress in the lair or Taktshang?

A few however, speak of it being the manifestation of Monmo Tashi Kheudren also known as Bumden Tshomo instead of Yeshe Tshogyel. She was the daughter of Sendha Gyalp of Bumthang who invited Guru Rinpoche to Bhutan in the 8th century. Guru Rinpoche took Tashi Kheudren as his spiritual consort for the tantric practice at Kurjey in Bumthang to subdue Shelging Karpo, the local deity – who is said to have caused illness to Sendha Gyalp. It was to help treat his incurable ailment that Sendha Gyalp had invited Guru Rinpoche. This event however, took place during Guru’s first visit to Bhutan. He did not visit Taktshang at that time.

Karma Phuntsho (2013) also identifies the tigress as the manifestation of Tashi Kheudren. But this is a different Tashi Kheudren than the one mentioned above. She is the daughter of a local chief called Hangrey ‘probably from Bumthang or Kurtoe’ and not Sendha Gyalp. They are said to have met while Yeshe Tshogyel was meditating at Senge Dzong.

“Yeshe Tshogyel took Tashi Kheudren as her student and introduced her to Padmasambhava in Taktshang.¹ As she possessed all the hallmarks of a spiritual partner, Padmasambhava took Tashi Kheudren as his consort in order to undertake all the esoteric practice of Vajrakilaya. As the culmination of this religious meditative practice, Padmasambhava is said to have manifested in the appearance of Dorji Drolod while Tashi Kheudren, who had already achieved great spiritual heights transformed herself into a tigress” (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, pp. 108-109).

All these raise the question that this article seeks to ask. Who is the tigress in the lair? Yeshe Tshogyel or Tashi Kheudren? If Tashi Kheudren, is she the daughter of Sendha Gyalp or chief Hangrey? The other question that also needs to be answered is if it was really Vajrakilaya that Yeshey Tshogyel practiced at Paro Taktshang? I had the good fortune of spending some time at Sengephu in Taktshang 2014. It was there that I read the translation of Yeshe Tshogyel’s biography, which I had bought in Kathmandu, Nepal fourteen years earlier. I took it as an auspicious coincidence that the book, which had collected dust for so long on my bookshelf, could be read in the very cave where Yeshe Tshogyel spent seven months. Translated by Keith Dowman, the biography was first written by Gyalwa Jangchub along with Namkhai Nyingpo. Gyalwa Jangchub, also known as Atsara Sale, was a consort of Yeshe Tshogyel from Nepal.

¹ As we will see later, this is not the Taktshang located in Paro.

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The biography was hidden as a treasure text in Lhorong, Kham. Taksham Nuden Dorji who was also known as Samten Lingpa and the reincarnation of Gyalwa Jangchub, revealed the biography as terma text in the 18th century. The following is therefore, an answer to the question posed as title to this article based wholly on this biography. I must emphasize the fact that it deals only with Yeshe Tshogyel in Taktshang, and not with the visits and exploits of Guru Rinpoche, a subject which has to be pursued separately later.

Yeshe Tshogyel first comes to Bhutan from Tidro in Tibet. She had gone to Tidro to meditate following the precepts, empowerments and teachings she received from Guru Rinpoche at Samye. His instruction to her was thus; “Practice at Womphu Taktsang, Mon Taktsang and Kham Taktsang and in all those places where there is a naturally manifest image of Guru Rinpoche, particularly in Tidro itself” (Dowman, 1996, p. 63). It is common knowledge to many Bhutanese that the massive cliff of Paro Taktshang has the appearance of Dorje Drolo. The three Taktshangs mentioned here, and events associated with them have been confused in latter narratives, oral or textual, that gave rise to different versions. Many assume that there is just one Taktshang, in Paro, Bhutan, and hence associate events that happened in other Taktshangs with the one at Paro.

Yeshe Tshogyel comes to Sengye Dzong from Tidro with her consort Atsara Sale and a girl called Dewamo.² During the course of her meditation and austere practices, a girl called Khyidren visits her and offers her honey and milk from time to time. Khyidren was the daughter of local king called Hamrey.

² I am yet to ascertain whether her other consort Atsara Pelyang and a Bhutan boy called Sale were there at Senge Dzong or not since they were certainly there at Taktshang later on.

She asks him to give her his daughter who was thirteen years old then and had all the marks of a dakini (Dowman 1996, 73-84). During my research about Khoma village in Lhuntse more than a decade earlier, I was informed that the origin of the name Khoma is based on Guru Rinpoche telling the local ruler that he had a daughter/girl (khomo) whom the Guru would need (for tantric practice) ང་ལ་མགོ་བའི་མོ་ཞིག་འདུག། (Sonam Kinga, 2002). It now turns out that it was Yeshe Tshogyel instead of Guru Rinpoche who said it. Indeed, Guru Rinpoche says the same to Yeshe Tshogyel later but in a different location as we shall see below.

Yeshe Tshogyel names the girl Tashi Chidren³ (“Fortunate Guide to Mankind”) and brings her along with others to Taktshang from Senge Dzong. There were five of them at Taktshang: Yeshe Tshogyel, her consorts Atsara Sale and Atsara Pelyang, a Bhutanese boy called Sale and Tashi Chidren. Today, the small wooden sign board pointing towards Sengephu at the junction leading to it and Taktshang states, “This is a cave, where Khando (dakini) Yeshe Tshogyal practised, Vajrakilaya (Phurpa).” The lines written in Dzongkha on the walls of the cave also state likewise. However, Yeshe Tshogyel states that her practice there was ‘the seed essence of co-incident pleasure and emptiness’ (བདེ་སྣོང་རྩལ་འཇུག་ཐིག་ལའི་དཀའ་ལྷོད།) (Dowman, 1996, pp. 85-86) and not Vajrakilaya. After months of vigorous practice, her body assumes the appearance of sixteen year old maiden and she transforms herself into Vajravarahi. The following lines inscribed below the painting of Yeshe Tshogyel at Sengephu on a rectangular granite-like

³ The name Tashi Chidren is interchangeably used as Tashi Khyidren in the biography.

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stone tablet as a sixteen-year old maiden⁴ capture the essence of her accomplishment.

མ་མོ་སྐྱུ་ཚང་ཟབ་ལམ་བརྟེན་ལྷན་སྦྱོར།
མོ་གསུམ་བདེ་ཆེན་དོ་རྗེ་གསུམ་དུ་གྱུར།
བསུ་དུ་ག་ལང་ཚོས་སྐྱུ་བའི་གཟི་མངའ་ལབས།
དབའ་མོ་ཉེ་བུ་ཀ་ལ་གསོལ་བ་འདེབས།

Undertaking austere practice at Paro Taktshang on the
profound path,

The three doors (of body, speech and mind) became three vajras
of great peace;

Blazing red radiance like a graceful sixteen-year old maiden,

To the Heroine Vajravarahi, I pray!

At Sengephu, Yeshe Tshogyel receives a vision of Amitayus mandala (Tshepame) and a prophecy that foretells her lifespan to be 225 years. From there, she and all her companions go to Womphu Taktshang, and meet Guru Rinpoche. It was there that Guru Rinpoche foretells their reappearance in future: Guru Rinpoche as Pha Dampa Sangye and Yeshe Tshogyel as Machig Labdrön. He also prophesizes that Atsara Sale would appear then as a monk and be a consort to Machig Labdrön. Tashi Khyidren would be her only daughter whereas the Bhutanese boy, Sale, would be her spiritual son. Atsara Pelyang would also appear as a monk and become her mystic consort (Dowman, 1996, pp. 86-87).

⁴ A beautiful life-size image of Khandro Yeshe Tshogyel offered by the Supreme Dharma Patron, Her Majesty the Gyaltsuen has been installed in Sengephu.

It was also there at Womphu Taktshang that Guru Rinpoche asks Yeshe Tshogyel to give him Tashi Chidren, who had all the marks of Awareness Dakini (Vajrakarmaki). She would be employed as his consort for the practice of Dorje Phurba (Vajrakilaya). Yeshe Tshogyel offers Tashi Chidren to her Guru and prays that he reveal to her the tantric mysteries and to her, Yeshe Tshogyel, the secret instructions of Dorje Phurba. Guru Rinpoche sends Yeshe Tshogyel to Uru in Central Tibet to find a fourteen year old boy who would be her tantric partner for the practice. She finds him and returns. Guru Rinpoche names the boy, Lhalung Pelgyi Sengye, who would be reborn later as Lhalung Pelgyi Dorji and assassinate the anti-Dharma king, Langdarma.

It was therefore, at Womphu Taktsang in Tibet and not Paro Taktshang in Bhutan that the practice of Dorje Phurba (Vajrakilaya) was initiated by Guru Rinpoche along with his five 'root' spiritual sons. They were Lhalung Pelgyi Sengye, Namkhai Nyingpo, Ma Rinchen Chok, Dorje Dudjom and Yeshe Tshogyel. Her four other companions were also assigned roles in the initiatory rite of Dorje Phurba.

Dewamo, who was renamed Chonema, the Glorious Priestess, was appointed the Vajra hostess (Dorje Jenmo); Atsara Sale and Atsara Pelyang were appointed Vajra Dancers (Dorje Gingpa) and renamed Karma Dondup and Karma Tarje; the Bhutanese boy Sale was appointed Vajra Attendant (Vajrakarmaka); and then, at the beginning, he made me the "root consort" and Tashi Khyidren the "liberating consort" (Dowman, 1996, p. 90).

The Guru and his two consorts practiced for seven nights, and all signs of accomplishment of the Dorje Phurba appeared. The signs included the manifestation of the gods attending to Dorje Phurba and dancing of ritual daggers "redolent with perfumes". I quote Yeshe Tshogyel at length below in order to answer the primary question that concerns this article.

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The evening that these miraculous signs appeared, the Guru himself was transformed into Dorje Trollo (Adamantine Sagging Belly) with myself as Ekajati (The Crone with One Hair Knot), joined in union with him, and Tashi Khyidren as our mount, the tigress, to subject the gods and demons of microcosmic worlds of the four quarters of Tibet. Riding upon the back of the girl Khyidren transformed into a tigress, the Guru and his mystic partner absorbed in the *samadhi* of Dorje Phurba, holding a nine-pronged *vajra* in his right hand and rolling a phurba of bell-metal in his left hand, the Guru projected countless, fierce, terrifying beings in forms identical to himself. In particular, one of these forms called Blue-black Vajra Wrathful Phurba (Tingnak Dorje Trophur) flew directly to Paro Taktsang, and there he subjugated gods, demons, wrathful Dakinis, and demon savages and the three eight-fold classes of spirits of the barbarian borderlands and beyond – Bhutan, Nepal, India and Lho – and bound them to serve the dharma. Another emanation called Purple Vajra Wrathful Phurba (Muknak Dorji Trophur) flew as far as the second Taktsang, in Kham, and subjugated the gods, demons and demon savages and the three eight-fold classes of spirits in the barbarian lands of Kham, Jang, China and Hor, binding them to serve the dharma, taking away their life-essence (Dowman, 1996, pp. 90-91).

There is no doubt from Yeshe Tsogyel's statement that the tigress upon whose back Guru Rinpoche mounts as Dorje Drolo was the Bhutanese girl Tashi Chidren. Yeshe Tshogyel was transformed into Ekajati and was joined in union with Dorje Drolo. The transformation of the trio into Dorje Dorlo, Ekajati and the tigress neither takes place at Taktsang nor do they fly in from Sengye Dzong, as the signboard tells visitor at Ramthangkha, the place where motor road ends and the trek to Taktshang begins. Again, at the junction between Sengephu and Taktshang monastery, the following prayer is inscribed on a board besides the sign board pointing up the flight of 125 steep steps to Sengephu. It captures what Dorji Drolo did at Taktsang.

ལྷག་ཚང་སེང་གེ་བསམ་གྲུབ་ཀུན་ཚང་དུ།
གདུག་པའི་སྤྲོ་སྤྲོགས་བདུད་དང་དམ་སྲི་བལྟལ།
གནས་ཆེན་གངས་བྲག་རྒྱམས་ལ་གཏེར་ཆེན་སྤེལ།
མ་འོངས་སྤྲོགས་མའི་སེམས་ཅན་ལྷགས་རྗེ་གཟེགས།
དོ་རྗེ་གོ་ལོང་རྩལ་ལ་གསོལ་བ་འདེབས།

In the sacred rock cavern of Sengye Samdrup⁵ in Taktshang,
Subduing vicious heretics, demons and gnomes,
Hiding sacred treasures in holy sites, mountains and cliffs.
Looking with compassion at sentient beings of degenerate age,
I pray to the skillful Dorje Drolol

In this biography, there is just one more reference to Yeshe Tshogyel's visit to Taktshang. Before Guru Rinpoche leaves for Ngayab Khandroling, the Land of the dakinis, he instructs Yeshe Tshogyel to compile all his teachings to be hidden as *terma* and revealed in future. Along with her, the twenty-five pre-eminent disciples of Guru Rinpoche such as Namkhai Nyingpo, Denma Tsemang, Atsara Pelyang, Vairotsana and others write down the teachings at Chimphu in Tibet and then travel with the Guru himself to hide them. First, they go to the three Taktshangs.

In Paro Taktsang in Bhutan we disposed the treasures separately and left prophetic catalogues. "This is the place of Guru's Mind," prayed the Guru. "Whoever practices here will attain *mahamudra siddhi*. When the Guru dwells in The Highest Paradise (Ogmin) these symbols of his Body, Speech and Mind will spontaneously manifest." Then he made wish granting prayers and made benediction upon an image of Dorje Trollo, a

⁵ Sengye Samdrup is the local deity of Taktsang.

Who is the Tigress in the Lair?

naturally manifest stupa and the spontaneously manifest Six-syllable mantra (Dowman, 1996, p. 124).

From there, they go to Womphu Taktshang, the power place of Guru's body and to Kham Taktshang, the power place of his speech and concealed many treasures. Around 804 AD, according to the translator, when Guru Rinpoche left for Ngayab Khandroling, Yeshe Tshogyel was about 80 years old. For the rest of her life, she travelled to the power places blessed by Guru Rinpoche. Although she received a prophecy at Senggephu in Paro Taktsang that she would live for 225 years, she attains her parinirvana at Zapu Peak in Tibet at the age of 211 years. Thus, she would have been practicing and teaching for nearly 131 years thereafter. But the translator puts her age at 60 years (birth 757 AD and death 817 AD).

Determining the exact age of Yeshe Tshogyel however, is not the point of enquiry of this article. It is about her visits and stay at Taktshang. During her last visit to Bhutan, the biography does not mention any more visits to Taktshang. Rather, she first goes to Senge Dzong. Interestingly, she even records of her visit to 'Phari Dzong in Bhutan.' Then she names four more places here in Bhutan where she spends a year each and conceals many caches of treasures. They are Gyelmo Mudo Jong, Lhamo Ngulkhang Jong, Gyellung Jokpo Lung and Budum Lung.

I propose that if key groups within the Bhutanese community were trained in the publishing protocols of Wikipedia, over time they would extend Wikipedia's use of the audio capabilities which would benefit the international community, as well as other oral cultures and differently abled peoples, including dyslexic and blind.

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A Bibliometric Analysis of the *Journal of Bhutan Studies*, 1999-2017

*Lingchen Dorji**

Abstract

*This paper describes a 19-year bibliometric dimensions and characteristics of the *Journal of Bhutan Studies* (JBS), from the earliest available data in 1999, to 2017. The result of the bibliometric analysis is based on two methodologies, namely descriptive statistics for quantifiable bibliometric characteristics, and impact analysis using both Garfield's formula and Harzing's Publish or Perish (PoP) software citation analysis program. Longitudinal trends were examined regarding the number of articles published, the number of citations received, the immediacy index, and the journal's impact factor. A list of most prolific authors and highly cited articles were also established, including geographic distribution and subject matter of the articles.*

Keywords: bibliometric analysis, citation analysis, JBS, immediacy index, impact factor, h-index

Introduction

Bibliometric analysis - the quantitative study of the communication and utilization of literature - has become a central means to evaluate scholarly publications and their producers (Bayer, 1982). Citation analysis as a tool for journal evaluation was originally developed by Eugene Garfield when his company, the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), introduced the ISI Web of Science citation database and

* Deputy Chief Librarian, Sherubtse College, Royal University of Bhutan.

published the Journal Citation Report (JCR) in 1976 (Smith, 2009). Similar to the ISI Web of Science (now owned by Clarivate Analytics) are Elsevier's Scopus and Google Scholar. Journal citation measures are designed to assess significance and performance of individual journals, their role and position in the international formal communication network, their quality or prestige as perceived by scholars (Glanzel and Moed, 2002).

Currently, the tool most widely used to determine the quality of scientific publications is the journal impact factor (IF) published annually in the JCR. It was developed by Eugene Garfield and Irving H. Sher in the 1960s (Garfield, 2006). The IF is the average number of times articles from the journal published in the past two years have been cited in the JCR year – for example, 2007 – by the total number of articles published in the two previous years – 2005 and 2006 (Bornmann and Daniel, 2009). Its formula is: $\text{Impact factor} = \frac{\text{citations to recent items}}{\text{number of recent items}}$ (Andres, 2010). If the total citations in 2007 to items published in 2005 and 2006 for a journal is 2000 and the total number of items published in 2005 and 2006 is 45, the impact factor for the journal is given by: $2000/45 = 44.444$. In this case, articles published during the previous two years have received an average of around 44 citations each. It should be noted that impact factor of a journal cannot be compared with another journal of different area of research because they vary tremendously between fields. Even the best and most highly recognized journals from other fields such as social sciences or mathematics obtain only small impact factors because of the lower citation propensity in these fields (Archambault and Larivière, 2009). Thus, a great number of literature (Seglen, 1997; Wolfram, 2003; Ogden and Bartley, 2007; Petsko, 2008; Simons, 2008) has criticized the impact factor (IF) for its bias, limitations, and contradictions.

Another bibliometric indicator of citation analysis is the immediacy index. The immediacy index is an indication of the

speed with which items published in journals are cited in other literature (McVeigh, 2004). A high immediacy index indicates that the content of this journal is quickly noticed, highly valued and topical within the field of study (Davarpanah and Aslekia, 2008). The immediacy index is calculated by the following formula: Journal immediacy index = Number of citations given to articles published in a given year/ Number of articles published in that year.

In August 2005, Jorge Hirsch – a physicist at the University of California, USA – introduced an alternative to other bibliometric indicators called the h index. He defined it as follows: “A scientist has index h if h of his or her N_p papers have at least h citations each and the other $(N_p - h)$ papers have $\leq h$ citations each (Hirsch, 2005). An h-index of 8 means that an author has published eight papers that each have at least eight citations. The h-index can now be calculated automatically for Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar or any other databases that includes the references cited in the publication. It is now already regarded as the counterpart to the IF (Gracza and Somoskovi, 2007). Another well-known index for measuring and comparing the output of scientific researchers is the g-index, which was introduced by Leo Egghe in 2006 as an improvement of the Hirsch-index (Woeginger, 2008). Google Scholar has become a very popular alternative data source for citation analysis (Harzing and Wal, 2008; Lopez et.al, 2018). In order to calculate the h-index and other measures of impact from Google Scholar the most common way is to rely on “publish or perish” (PoP), a computer program developed by Anne-Wil Harzing which provides a graphical interface to Google Scholar data for bibliometricians (Baneyx, 2008; Dinkel, 2011). PoP is free and can be downloaded from harzing.com.

This study investigates a bibliometric analysis of 196 articles appearing in the *Journal of Bhutan Studies* (JBS) through 1999-2017. The study uses both descriptive statistics and

Google Scholar to calculate the impact factor, h index and other measures of impact for JBS 1999-2017. JBS is a bi-annual publication of the Centre for Bhutan and Gross National Happiness (GNH) Studies. The Centre publishes scholarly and researched articles on social, cultural, political and economic aspects of Bhutan. The objectives of the study are to investigate two clusters of bibliometric dimensions and characteristics. The first cluster concerns the population of articles published by JBS over the past 19 years. This includes the number and year-wise distribution of articles, length of the articles, authorship patterns and ranking of authors, geographical distribution of articles, and most productive institutions and countries. The second cluster of questions concerns the population of bibliographic citations found in JBS articles over the study period, namely citation distribution, frequency of citation, relationship between page length and total citation, most-cited authors, most-cited articles, and the subject matter of the articles. The profiling of most-prolific authors and most-cited JBS articles in this study does not intend to diminish other JBS authors or their contributions to the journal.

Material and Methods

A total of 196 full-text articles published in the Journal of Bhutan Studies (JBS) from 1999-2017 were accessed and extracted from the website of the Centre for Bhutan Studies (CBS) and GNH Research. Keynote speeches, opening remarks of conference presentations, and a catalogue list were excluded. Using a computerized file, a database consisting of quantifiable characteristics of each of the 196 articles was compiled for analysis. This was named database 1. The quantifiable bibliometric characteristics included authorship pattern, length of articles, year of publication, geographical distribution of authors, most cited articles, and the number of times each article was cited or not cited during 1999-2017. As JBS was not indexed in ISI Web of Science or Elsevier's Scopus, the citation metrics for each individual article was obtained

from Google Scholar for citation analysis. Harzing's Publish or Perish (PoP) software program was used for this purpose. This was named database 2.

A Google Scholar (GS) query was carried out using the keywords "Journal of Bhutan Studies" in Publication/Journal search box of Harzing's Publish and Perish tool and limiting the year of publication from 1999-2017. 51 articles were generated by PoP. Citations for these articles were retrieved from the following sites and search engine indexed by Google Scholar: University of Cambridge, UK [repository.cam.ac.uk]; Centre for Bhutan Studies, Bhutan [bhutanstudies.org.bt]; the University of British Columbia, Canada [ubc.ca]; and CiteSeer [citeseerx.ist.psu.edu], among others. The authors and titles of the articles were cross-checked carefully to avoid any duplication in the data.

Since the GS query output of 51 articles (66.8%) was significantly representative of the sample size for the study, thus Harzing's PoP was used to calculate the following measures of impact: total number of citations; cites/year; cites/paper; cites/author; papers/author; authors/paper; h-index; and g-index. Correlation between page length and total citations were analysed using SPSS 21.

Results

Year wise distribution of articles

Journal of Bhutan Studies published a total of 196 articles between 1999 and 2017 with an average of 5 articles per issue. It published one issue in its first year (1999) and from the year 2000 onwards it became a bi-annual publication with a total of 35 volumes published between 1999 and 2017 (Table 1).

Table 1. Year wise Distribution

Sl. No.	Year	No. of Articles	% of Records
1	1999*	5	2.55
2	2000	15	7.65
3	2001	15	7.65
4	2002	9	4.59
5	2003	12	6.13
6	2004	16	8.16
7	2005	10	5.10
8	2006	13	6.63
9	2007	11	5.62
10	2008	12	6.13
11	2009	10	5.10
12	2010	8	4.08
13	2011	8	4.08
14	2012	9	4.59
15	2013	10	5.10
16	2014	8	4.08
17	2015	9	4.59
18	2016	12	6.13
19	2017*	4	2.04
	Total	196	100

*Note: The year 1999 and 2017 has only 1 issue each at the time of study.

Article length

The page length of the articles varied between 3-10 pages to 51-60 pages long. However, the typical articles in JBS were those between 11-20 pages and between 21- 30 pages long, which constituted 61% of the total articles published in JBS 1999-2017 (Fig. 1).

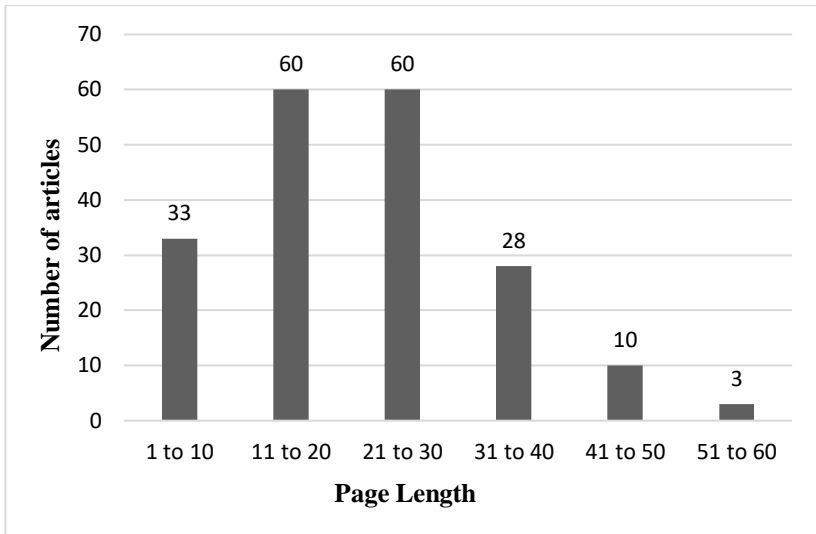


Fig. 1: Page length and number of articles

Articles which attracted the most citations were those articles with 11-20 pages long and 21-30 pages long (Fig.2). Correlation studies were performed to detect the relationship between total citation and article page length. Fig 3 shows the scatter plot of the relationship between total citation and the article page count. The Spearman's correlation test showed a weak negative correlation coefficient between the two variables (Table 2). This correlation was not statistically significant ($P > 0.05$).

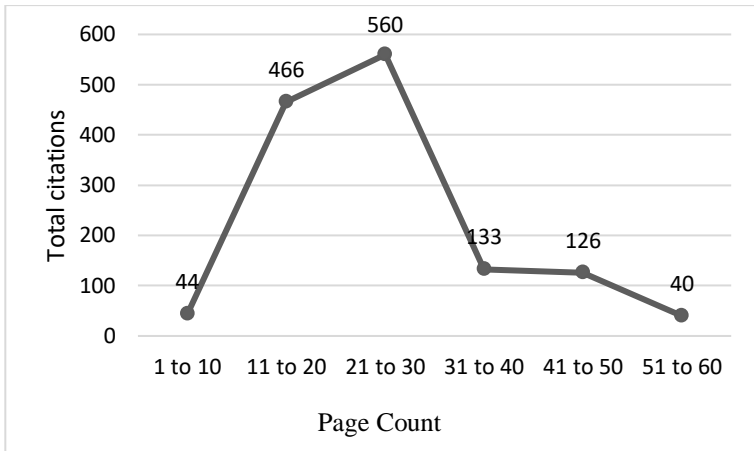


Fig. 2: Total citation count based on the range of article page count

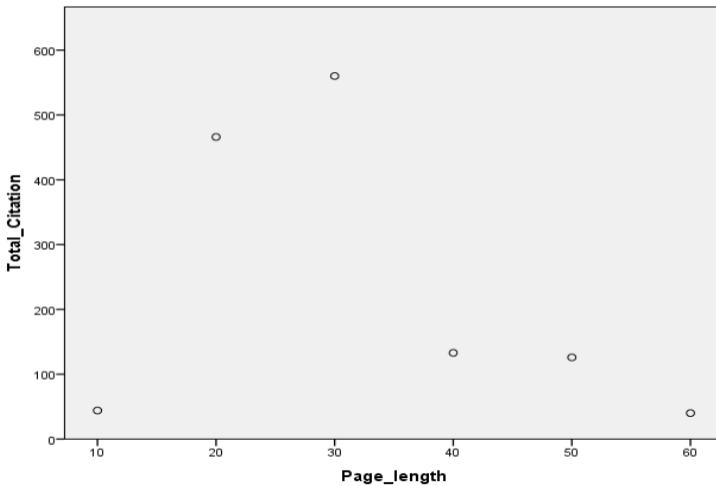


Fig. 3: Scatter plot showing the relationship between page length and total citation

Table 2: Correlation between article page length and total citations

	Mean	Sig. (2-tail) P-Value	Correlation (r)
Total Citation	228.17		
Article Page Count	35	0.468	-0.371

Values represent Mean. Spearman's correlation was used to test all data. $P > 0.05$ was statistically not significant.

Authorship patterns

The collected data showed that out of 196 articles, 164 (83.68%) were contributed by single author; 23 (11.73%) by two authors; 4 (2.04%) by three authors; and 5 (2.55%) by more than three authors (Table 3).

Table 3. Authorship pattern

#	No. of authors	Total no. of articles	% of records
1	Single author	164	83.68
2	Two authors	23	11.73
3	Three authors	4	2.04
4	>three authors	5	2.55
Total 196			100.00

Ranking of authors

Table 4 shows the ranking of authors who had published four or more than four articles in JBS 1999-2017.

Table 4. List of most prolific authors

Author	Publications	Rank	Total Citations	h-index	g-index
John A. Ardussi	7	1	91	6	7
Dorji Penjore	7	1	54	3	7
Ross McDonald	5	2	86	4	5
Karma Galey	5	2	23	2	4
Francoise Pommaret	4	3	35	3	4
P D. Hershock	4	3	25	2	4
Sonam Kinga	4	3	27	1	4
Steven Evans	4	3	26	3	4

Geographical distribution of articles

The highest contribution with 115 articles (58.67%) came from Bhutanese authors followed by authors from USA (9.69%), France (8.67%) and India (6.12%). The remainder were contributed from 12 other countries (Table 5).

Table 5. Geographical distribution

Countries	No. of Articles	Percentage	Rank
Bhutan	115	58.67	1
USA	19	9.69	2
France	17	8.67	3
India	12	6.12	4
UK	7	3.57	5
New Zealand	6	3.06	6
Australia	4	2.04	7
Japan	3	1.53	8
Switzerland	3	1.53	8
Canada	2	1.02	9
Italy	2	1.02	9
South Africa	2	1.02	9
Germany	1	0.51	10
Norway	1	0.51	10
Argentina	1	0.51	10
Netherlands	1	0.51	10
16	196	100	-

Most productive institutions

Table 6 shows the list of the most productive institutions which have contributed at least three articles to JBS between 1999 and 2017.

Table 6. Most productive institutions

Institution	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
Centre for Bhutan and GNH Studies, Bhutan	35	17.86	1
Centre Nationale de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), France	16	8.16	2
Royal University of Bhutan (Colleges)*	11	5.61	3
Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MOAF)**, Bhutan	10	5.10	4
Ministry of Health, Bhutan	9	4.59	5
University of North Bengal, India	5	2.56	6
International Center for Ethnographic Studies, Atlanta, USA	4	2.04	7
Asian Studies of Development Program, Hawaii, USA	4	2.04	7
University of Auckland, New Zealand	4	2.04	7
Central Monastic Body, Bhutan	3	1.53	8
Ministry of Finance, Bhutan	3	1.53	8
Ministry of Education (Schools), Bhutan	3	1.53	8

*Institutions that existed as colleges and other tertiary institutions prior to the establishment of the Royal University of Bhutan in 2003 were also included under this category.

**Includes authors from Department of Forestry, National Soil Service Centre, RNR-Research Centre, Planning and Policy Division, and Nature Conservation Division, MOAF, Bhutan.

Citation distribution

The total citations received by JBS articles from 1999-2017 was 1369 citations. 14% of the articles were not indexed in Google Scholar, 19% of the articles were never cited (see note, Table 7). Among those cited, 34.35% of the articles received more than 10 citations over the period of 19 years of JBS publication.

Table 7. Citation distribution

Number of citations	Number of articles	Percentage
1	11	8.39
2	19	14.50
3	16	12.21
4	14	10.68
5	4	3.06
6	2	1.53
7	5	3.82
8	5	3.82
9	6	4.58
10	4	3.06
11-56	45	34.35
1369	131	100.00

Note: Articles not indexed by Google Scholar = 28; articles with zero citation = 37

Frequency of citations

The frequency of citations by year shows that JBS articles published in the summer of 2001 (volume 3, number 1) received the highest citations, followed by the JBS publication of 2004 (volume 10 and 11) and the publication of the year 2000 (volume 2, number 1 and 2). After a steady decrease in the citation rate from 2004 up to 2007, the publication received a higher rate of citation for the JBS articles published in 2008 (volume 18). From 2008 onwards, the citation distribution curve has continued to decline over the years as shown in Fig. 4.

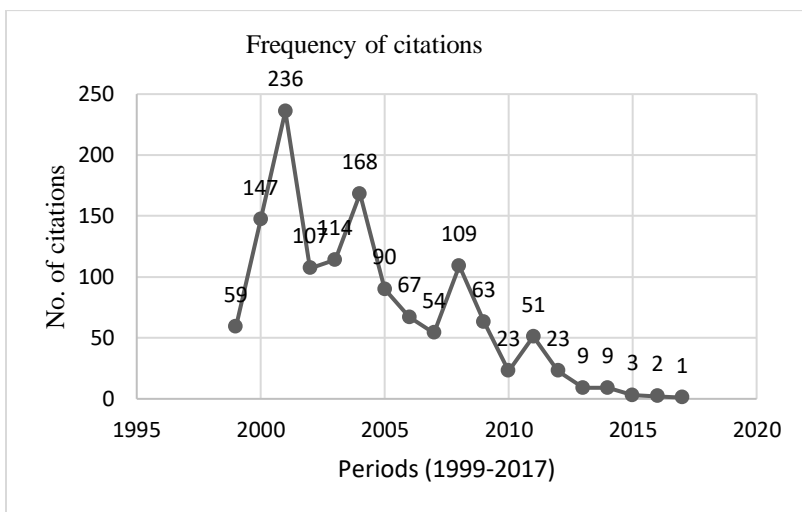


Fig. 4: Frequency of citations by year

Most-cited authors

Table 8. List of most-cited authors in JBS 1999-2017

Author	Rank	Total Citations	h-index	g-index
John A. Ardussi	1	91	6	7
Ross McDonald	2	86	4	5
Dorji Penjore	3	54	3	7
Francoise Pommaret	4	35	3	4
Sonam Kinga	5	27	1	4
Steven Evans	6	26	3	4
P D. Hershock	7	25	2	4
Karma Galey	8	23	2	4

Most cited articles

Several JBS research articles that emerged as highly cited were in the field of education, economy, politics and media in their

decreasing order of citations. Most of these articles were from the issues published in the year 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2007 and 2008 (Table 9).

Table 9. Most-cited articles in JBS, 1999-2017

Cited Title	Author	Year of Publication	Number of Citations
Ensuring Social Sustainability: Can Bhutan's Education System Ensure Intergenerational Transmission of Values	Tashi Wangyal	2001	56
On the Two Ways of Learning in Bhutan	Karma Phuntsho	2000	55
Multidimensional Poverty in Bhutan: Estimates and Policy Implications	Maria Emma Santos and Karma Ura	2008	55
Sustainability of Tourism in Bhutan	Tandi Dorji	2001	54
The Politics of Bhutan: Change in Continuity	Thierry Mathou	2000	52
Integral Development: Taking the Middle Path Towards Gross National Happiness	Sean Boyd Frye Hargens	2002	37
Democracy from Above: Regime Transition in the Kingdom of Bhutan	Aim Sinpeng	2007	32
Formation of the State of Bhutan ('Brug gzhung) in the 17th Century and its Tibetan Antecedents	John A. Ardussi	2004	32
Mass Media: Its Consumption and Impact on Residents of Thimphu and Rural Areas	Phuntsho Raptan	2001	31
Television, Materialism and Culture: An Exploration of Imported Media and its Implications for GNH	Ross McDonald	2004	29

Subject scatter

In order to decide the subject field, the keywords and abstract of the articles were surveyed and categorized according to the LCSH broad subject headings. Table 10 reveals the distribution of articles dealing with various subjects.

Table 10. Subject scatter*

Subject categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
Bhutanese Economy ^a	28	14.29	1
Historical Account of Important Political and Religious Figures	19	9.69	2
Politics and Governance ^b	19	9.69	2
Folktales, Folksongs and Oral Tradition	17	8.67	3
GNH Related Papers ^c	15	7.65	4
Environment Related Papers ^d	15	7.65	4
Historical Account of Ancient Monuments ^e	14	7.14	5
Others subjects ^f	14	7.14	5
Bhutanese Tradition and Culture ^g	13	6.64	6
Health ^h	11	5.61	7
Education	9	4.59	8
Bhutanese Media	8	4.08	9
Bhutanese Language and Linguistics	4	2.04	10
Bhutanese Publication	2	1.02	11
Total	196	100	-

*The data indicates that some subjects dealt with more than one subject

^a Bhutanese economy: *Economic policies; money and finance; ancient migration, historical trade accounts and trade routes in Bhutan; domestic trade, international trade and poverty related issues*

^b Politics and governance: *political history, symbols in Bhutanese politics, democracy*

^c GNH related papers: *GNH policy framework and models; GNH and economic development*

d Environment Related Papers: *Bhutanese landscape; land system and land act; land use and grazing management; soil survey; land degradation; environment pollution; environment conservation*

e Historical Account of Ancient Monuments: *Dzongs, temples, monasteries and stone inscriptions*

f Others subjects: law, public administration, tourism, archeology, social life, food diversity, philosophy

g Bhutanese tradition and culture: *traditional festivals; mask dances; religious tradition; cultural reforms*

h Health: *Public health; historical record of medicinal practice in ancient Bhutan; health and religious practice*

Immediacy Indices and Impact Factors

The immediacy index peaked for 4 years in 2001, 2005, 2008 and 2011 at 15.733, 9, 9.083 and 6.375 respectively, and averaged 6.207 over the entire 19-year period. The journal's impact factor experienced two separate peaks, firstly in 2003 at 14.291 and again in 2010 at 7.818. The overall average impact factor score for JBS was 6.588, as indicated in Table 11.

A Bibliometric Analysis of the Journal of Bhutan Studies

Table 11. Immediacy index and Impact factor for JBS 2001-2017 by year

Journal/ publication year	Total citations received in the past two years	Total number of articles published in the past two years	Immediacy Index (II)	Impact Factor (IF)
JBS 1999	-	-	11.8	-
JBS 2000	-	-	9.8	-
JBS 2001	206	20	15.733	10.3
JBS 2002	383	30	11.888	12.766
JBS 2003	343	24	9.5	14.291
JBS 2004	221	21	10.5	10.523
JBS 2005	282	28	9	10.071
JBS 2006	258	26	5.153	9.923
JBS 2007	157	23	4.909	6.826
JBS 2008	121	24	9.083	5.041
JBS 2009	163	23	6.3	7.086
JBS 2010	172	22	2.875	7.818
JBS 2011	86	18	6.375	4.777
JBS 2012	74	16	2.555	4.625
JBS 2013	74	17	0.9	4.325
JBS 2014	32	19	1.125	1.684
JBS 2015	18	18	0.033	1
JBS 2016	12	17	0.166	0.705
JBS 2017	5	21	0.25	0.238
Overall	6.207	6.588		

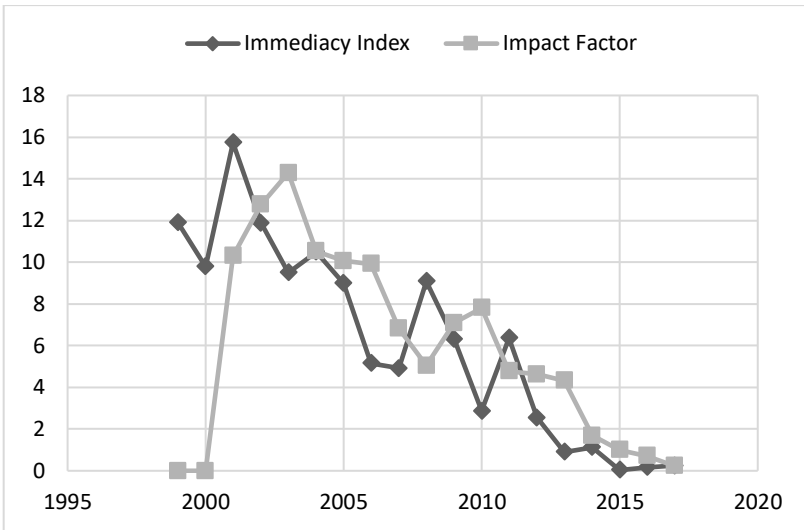


Fig. 5. Impact factors and immediacy indices at JBS 1999-2017

h-index and g-index

A Google Scholar (GS) query carried out for JBS articles in Harzing's Publish or Perish tool and limiting the year of publication from 1999-2017 yielded a total result of 51 articles. The GS query output of 51 articles (66.8%) was significantly representative of the sample size for the study. Harzing's PoP yielded the following measures of impact for JBS 1999-2017. The h-index of 7 was almost equivalent to the impact factor of 6.588.

Table 12. Results of the journal impact analysis for JBS 1999-2017 using Harzing's Publish or Perish (PoP)

<p>"Journal of Bhutan Studies", "Journal of Bhutan studies" from 1999 to 2017 Publish or Perish 6.36.6305.6864</p> <p>Search terms Publication/Journal: "Journal of Bhutan Studies" The phrase: "Journal of Bhutan studies" Years: 1999 to 2017</p> <p>Data retrieval Data source: Google Scholar Query date: 23/10/2018 14:29:50 Cache date: 23/10/2018 14:32:08 Query result: [0] The operation completed successfully.</p> <p>Metrics Reference date: 23/10/2018 14:29:50 Publication years: 1999-2017 Citation years: 19 (1999-2017) Papers: 51 Citations: 148 Citations/year: 8.22 Citations/paper: 2.90 Citations/author: 124.50 Papers/author: 45.75 Authors/paper: 1.29/1.0/1 (mean/median/mode) Age-weighted citation rate: 23.62 (sqrt=4.86), 18.37/author Hirsch h-index: 7 (a=3.02, m=0.39, 79 cites=53.4% coverage) Egghe g-index: 9 (g/h=1.29, 90 cites=60.8% coverage) PoP hI,norm: 6 PoP hI,annual: 0.33</p>
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Discussion

JBS has published a total of 196 articles between 1999 and 2017 at a rate of one volume per year, with each volume having two regular issues. By summer 2018, it had published 35 volumes with an average of 5 articles per issue. The typical page length of articles in JBS were those between 11-20 pages and between 21- 30 pages long, which constituted 61% of the total articles published over the period 1999-2017. These articles attracted the most citations, with 466 citations for

article length between 11-20 pages long, and 560 citations for article length between 21-30 pages long respectively. A Spearman's correlation test performed to detect the relationship between article page length and total citations showed a weak negative correlation coefficient between the two variables. This correlation was not statistically significant. However, it could be inferred that article length between 11-30 pages emerges as the standard article length for social science journals. This result closely parallels the standard article length of 20-25 pages prescribed for academic journals (Kotze, 2007). This is a healthy sign that suggests the scholarliness of the JBS articles.

A total of 163 authors contributed 196 articles to JBS from 1999-2017. Of these, 91 were Bhutanese, 71 were foreign authors, and one was anonymous (translator of a Buddhist text). Gender wise, two-third of the authors were male and one-third was female. Of the total of 163 contributing authors, 105 were first authors.

Authorship pattern showed that most of the articles were contributed by single authors. A quarter of the publications were contributed by two authors. Authorship collaboration between three or more than three authors constituted only 4 percent of the total contributions. Of the 105 first authors published by JBS, over 70 percent of them contributed only one article during the 19-year period under study. Over 6 percent of all first authors contributed four or more articles during this time. These authors were: John A. Ardussi, Dorji Penjore, Ross McDonald, Karma Galey, Francoise Pommaret, P D Hershock, Sonam Kinga, and Steven Evans.

An analysis of the geographic distribution of JBS articles revealed that authors from 16 countries contributed articles to JBS from 1999-2017. The highest contribution came from Bhutanese authors with 115 articles, followed by authors from USA, France and India with 19, 17 and 12 contributions

respectively. The remainders were contributed from 12 other countries. Over 7 percent of the articles were collaboration between national and international authors. The contributing JBS authors belong to various institutions: universities, research centres, colleges and schools, hospitals, and government ministries and departments, among others. By institution productivity, the Centre for Bhutan and GNH Studies contributed the highest number of articles, followed by the Centre Nationale de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), France; Royal University of Bhutan; Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan; and Ministry of Health, Bhutan.

The 196 articles published in JBS during the period under study received a total of 1369 citations. 19 percent of the articles were never cited. Among those cited, over 30 percent of the articles received more than 10 citations over the period of 19 years of JBS publication.

The citation dynamics of JBS articles shows that the articles published in the year 2000, 2001, 2004 and 2008 received the highest citations. The journal appeared to experience separate peaks at the interval of 3-4 years after publication. This fluctuation in citation frequency is consistent with previous research conducted in some other fields (Lee and colleagues, 2005; Ogden and Bartley, 2007). However, for JBS, this citation lag times continued consistently for the first 10 years of the publication only. From 2009 onwards, the citation distribution curve has continued to decline over the years. A comparative bibliometric analysis between the journals published by JBS during its first 10 years and the ones succeeding it (JBS 2009-2017) showed that the average number of articles published per issue during the first ten years was higher (average of 6 articles per issue) than those that were published after 2009 (average of 4 articles per issue). This indicates that more the number of articles published in a journal volume/issue, higher is the rate of citation. Another important factor that affected the citation dynamics of the

articles published after 2009 was that 28 JBS articles published during this time were not indexed by Google Scholar. A deeper investigation carried out to determine this cause confirmed that the Digital Himalaya Project, which had co-hosted the journal with the Centre for Bhutan Studies, had stopped archiving the journal from the year 2010 onwards.

The most-cited author was John Ardussi, followed by Ross McDonald, Dorji Penjore, Françoise Pommaret, Sonam Kinga, Steven Evans, Peter Hershock, and Karma Galey. Five of the eight most cited authors were foreigners from top ranked international institutions, and the rest three were researchers from the Centre for Bhutan Studies.

What was true of the pattern of most-cited author was not necessarily true of the rate of citation for their articles. In other words, the most-cited articles did not necessarily belong to the most-cited authors. It is important to note here that although high quality scholarship might be highly cited, citations are not in and of themselves a measure of quality (Harzing, 2010; Smith, 2010). The authors with the most-cited articles were: Tashi Wangyel, Karma Phuntsho, Maria Emma Santos and Karma Ura, Thierry Mathou, and Tandi Dorji. The most cited articles were those published in the field of education, economics, politics, and media.

Subjects frequently addressed in JBS during the period of time under study were history, economics, politics, GNH, environment, health, education and media. When subjects are ranked by subject categories, the following pattern emerges:

1. History – historical account of important political and religious figures; historical trade accounts and trade routes in Bhutan; ancient monuments; tradition and culture; folktales, folksongs and oral tradition

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2. Economics - economic policies related to GNH; money and finance; domestic trade; international trade; poverty
3. Politics – political history of Bhutan; symbols in Bhutanese politics; Bhutanese democracy
4. GNH - GNH and governance; GNH and democracy; GNH and economic development
5. Environment - Bhutanese landscape; land system and land act; land use and grazing management; soil survey; land degradation; environment pollution; environment conservation
6. Health - Public health; traditional medicines; religious practice and health
7. Education – modern education; monastic education; youth education
8. Media – mass media; television; social media

It can be stated from the pattern of subject matter of articles published in JBS that the treatment of subjects in the journal are purposively aligned towards the four pillars of GNH namely, good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, preservation and promotion of culture, and environmental conservation. When comparing the subject matter of the articles with the nine domains of GNH [i.e. psychological wellbeing, health, time use, education, cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience, living standards] (Ura et.al, 2012), the journal covered eight of the nine domains. Research paper dealing with ‘time use’ was not covered during the period under study.

The immediacy index was highest in 2001 at 15.733. By 2011, it was highest at 6.375 only. Similarly, for the impact factor, the journal experienced two separate peaks, firstly in 2003 at 14.291 and again in 2010 at 7.818. The journal experienced the highest immediacy index and impact factor in its first 5 years at an average of 11.744 and 11.590 respectively. However, both the immediacy index and the impact factor continued to drop after the first 5 years, and by 2017, the overall average immediacy index score for JBS was 6.207 and the overall average impact factor was 6.588. This finding is indicative of the journal reaching its citation age or age of obsolescence, as is the case with most scientific literature (Price and John, 1965; Andres, 2009). Studies have suggested that impact factors can also fall or even disappear altogether, particularly when a journal changes its name and the old and new titles are not unified (Linde, 1998; Smith, 2009). This result was further confirmed by a Google Scholar (GS) query carried out for JBS articles using Harzing's Publish or Perish (PoP), which yielded an h-index score of 7, which was almost equivalent to the impact factor of 6.588. The g-index for JBS 1999-2017 was 9 with 2.90 cites per paper; 124.50 cites per author; 45.75 papers per author; 8.22 cites per year; and 1.29 authors per paper.

Conclusion

This study has been designed to show readers the most significant statistics related to the publication practices and scholarly communication trends of the *Journal of Bhutan Studies* during the last nineteen years. While the journal has diversified its contents over the last decade, its impact, as measured by the disciplines that cite it has slowly begun to dissipate over the years. Nevertheless, the journal continues to be one of the most prominent journals in the field of social sciences and GNH studies in Bhutan. The main conclusion of this analysis is that JBS publications have contributed notably to the overall discussion and impact on the social, cultural,

political and economic aspects of Bhutan. It has also encouraged a growing number of emerging scholars from Bhutan to contribute to the research field as well as collaborate with established international scholars. As the journal moves forward, it will be useful for the editorial board of the journal to consider the following strategies to improve the impact factor and prestige of the journal: publish a larger number of short review articles (Silobrcic, 2015); publish issues with special subjects (aimed at interested groups); expand the electronic distribution of the journal through a wider network of journal citation databases such as the Web of Science and Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI).

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Media Reporting of Suicides in Bhutan: Analysis of Adherence to WHO Guidelines

Tshoki Zangmo & Sonam Zangmo,*

Abstract

Irresponsible media reporting on suicide is associated with copycat suicidal acts. To prevent imitative suicides, guidelines have been developed to inform the media professionals on reporting standards. In 2008, the World Health Organisation recommended a standard media guideline. The present study examines the quality of adherence on suicide reporting by Bhutanese media houses as per the recommended WHO guideline. For the study, the guideline was translated into some assessment criteria comprising of 21 questions, which includes front page reporting, details on method adopted, use of visuals, offering information on help line, and linking suicide to specific problems of life amongst others. Content analysis was carried out on print and Internet based newspapers from January 2013 to December 2018. An adherence score was computed from a selected set of 10 questions. A total of 90 articles were assessed from eight media houses. Excel and Stata 15 were used to carry out descriptive analysis. Findings reveal that majority of articles (99%) breached one or more of the 10 media guidelines. Results suggest that there is a need for greater advocacy, and monitoring of media reporting on suicide stories. Targeted interventions to improve reporting can begin with the development of a national guideline for suicide reporting. Likewise, attempts should be made to develop curriculum, and

* Senior Researcher, Centre for Bhutan & GNH Studies.
tzangmo@bhutanstudies.org.bt

3 Associate Researcher, Centre for Bhutan & GNH Studies.
sonam.zangmo2013@gmail.com

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strategies to boost the positive contribution that media can make to prevent suicide.

Key words: media; reporting; suicide; guidelines

Introduction

Suicide is a complex phenomenon that is affected by a multitude of factors (Ajdacic-Gross, 2015). One such factor is irresponsible media reporting which has a tendency to encourage suicidal behaviours (WHO, 2014; Soreff & Attia, 2017). Such an effect has been theorised based on social theory (Stack, 2003), which suggest that a vulnerable person has a higher chance of imitating suicidal behaviour if the person learns about other(s) who tend to resolve problems through suicide. This imitative or copycat suicide is largely known as the 'Weather effect' (Gould, 1990; Gould, 2006). The impact is said to be most severe when reporting celebrity suicides, when a method is specified, when the story is dramatized often with visuals, and also when causal conditions are over simplified (Pirkis & Blood, 2001; Niederkrotenthaler et al., 2012; Hawton & Williams, 2002; Harshe et Al., 2016). The association appears to be particularly prominent amongst youth, a group that may be more susceptible to social learning (Gould et al., 2003).

Conversely, suicide reportings if done effectively can contribute to suicide prevention, particularly by understanding aspects of reportings that might decrease suicide related risks for vulnerable groups (Niederkrotenthaler et al., 2012). For instance, if a media reporting contains adequate information on helpline then it may also lead to help seeking behaviour (Niederkrotenthaler et al., 2010), a phenomenon known as suicide contagion.

One approach for sensitising journalists is by developing an effective media guideline. There exists several media guidelines (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 2011; Nepon et al., 2009), the most noticeable being the one developed by World Health Organization [WHO] (WHO, 2017).

Although, WHO has widely advocated their guidelines, studies have found even international media to breach guidelines on several occasions. Violations were observed to occur almost on all counts; with respect to method description (Pitman & Stevenson, 2015), sensationalization (Pirkis et al., 2006), disclosure of site of suicide completion (Chandra et al., 2013 et al., 2014), failure to provide information on support services (Ayers et al., 2017), and use of inappropriate imagery (Fu et al., 2010). Similarly, studies have also reported non-compliance regarding inappropriate headlines, and over simplification of reasons for completing suicide (Stack, 2000; Stack, 2003; Stack, 2005).

Suicide reportings in Bhutan is an under-researched area. Besides, lacking a national media guideline, there are no studies assessing the quality of compliance of reportings to any of the existing internationally known guidelines. In light of this shortcomings, the study sought to examine the degree to which suicide reporting in Bhutan adhered to the widely endorsed guideline developed by the WHO.

Objective

The study aims to to investigate the adherence of Bhutanese media to WHO's recommended guideline for responsible suicide reporting.

Method and materials

Study sample included print, online newspaper articles, and other coverage stories on suicide in seven English newspapers in the country. In addition to the seven newspapers, online cover stories by Bhutan Broadcasting Service [BBS] were also assessed. A direct search of the news, articles, stories or coverage was undertaken using key words such as ‘suicide’, ‘suicides’ and ‘suicidal’, published either in print or online between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2018. Basically, all newspaper articles and stories that made reference to case(s) of suicide, attempted suicide, suicide statistics, general report on suicide, or discussed suicide policy or program related to suicide prevention were selected. Data was acquired from the public domain. In total, 90 suicide stories were identified. The selected stories underwent further qualitative (content) analysis.

Table 1: Media coverage on suicide assessed from the following eight news agencies.

#	Name of the media	Year of establishment	Print/Online
1.	Kuensel	1965	Both
2.	Bhutan Broadcasting Service	1986	Online
3.	The Journalist	2009	Both
4.	Bhutan Observer	2006	Online
5.	The Bhutanese	2012	Both
6.	Bhutan Times	2006	Both
7.	Bhutan Today	2008	Both
8.	Business Bhutan	2009	Both

Content analysis was conducted using a predefined checklist⁴³ which comprised of 21 questions. Dichotomous rating scales (yes, no) were used for most of the responses. The checklist was adapted from the guideline ‘*Preventing suicide: a resource for*

⁴³ Refer Appendix for the questionnaire

media professional' developed by WHO (WHO, 2017). Framework for the WHO guideline is explained below.

Table 2: Guideline adopted for assessing suicide reporting⁴⁴

#	Factors	Content	Rationale
1	Help seeking information	Provide suicide prevention information	Reporting should educate the public, in particular the vulnerable persons by providing information on where to seek help such as helpline, hotline numbers, website, intervention centres, support group services, etc.
2	Language	Avoid using inappropriate language/phrases/words	Avoid using terms like 'commit suicide' as suicide is not a crime but a health issue. The phrase hence, is factually incorrect. Likewise, expressions such as 'suicide epidemic', 'successful/unsuccessful suicide', 'failed suicide', 'suicide victim', are not only inappropriate but may perpetuate stigma. Instead, use terms such as 'died/death by suicide', 'took their own life', 'non-fatal suicide attempt' etc.
3	Method/site	Avoiding providing information or images on the exact details of method and location	Do not provide detailed/technical descriptions or images of the methods or suspected methods of the death (or those used in suicide attempts). Do not report details of the location where suicide (or suicide attempt) took place.

⁴⁴ Guideline has been adapted from the WHO report on responsible suicide reporting titled '*Preventing suicide: a resource for media professional*' (WHO, 2017) and The Samaritans Guide (2013) to responsible reporting on suicide.

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			Providing details of mechanisms and procedures use to complete suicide may facilitate imitation of suicidal behaviour by persons at risk.
4	Front page	Do not feature suicide cases in front page	Avoid reporting suicide cases in the front page to reduce prominence of coverage.
5	Normalize	Do not normalize suicide	Avoid presenting suicide act as casual phenomena, something that is unavoidable, or as a tool for accomplishing a certain end. Suicide should not be presented as a reasonable way of problem solving or a coping mechanism as there is a risk of imitative suicide. It can be contagious when it has been modelled as a potential solution to a problem someone can identify with. Acknowledgements should be made on suicide completer's problems, rather than focusing on positive traits.
6	Celebrity suicide	Avoid glamourizing suicide of a celebrity	Avoid letting the glamour of a celebrity obscure issues and problems that may have contributed to the death or attempt. It may promote copycat suicides among vulnerable persons.
7	Over-simplify	Avoid over-simplifying the causes/ perceived triggers of suicide.	Suicide does not occur because of one event or factor. It is a complex phenomenon, which is led on by an interaction of many underlying factors, the main catalyst often being depression, which is treatable. Media personals should not portray the

			final leading event as the only cause of a given suicide.
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Suicide stories were evaluated based on the assessment checklist. Of the 21, the following 10 were used to create an adherence score as per the methodology outlined in the media impact study by Pirkis and team in 2006:

1. Does the word 'suicide' appear in the headline?
2. Does the article use inappropriate language (failed suicide attempt, commit suicide, suicide epidemic, successful suicide, unsuccessful suicide, etc.)?
3. Does the article normalize suicide (suicide is presented as a reasonable way of problem solving/portray suicide in a heroic or romantic fashion)?
4. Does the article feature in the front page?
5. Is there an explicit description of the method used in a completed or attempted suicide?
6. Does the article mention detailed information about the site of a completed or attempted suicide?
7. Does the article feature photograph of the suicide scene/precise location?
8. Is there a reference to the fact that the person who died by suicide was a celebrity?
9. Does the article provide information about where to seek help?
10. Is suicide portrayed as 'merely a social phenomenon' as opposed to being 'related to a mental disorder' or related to a multitude of factors?

As stated earlier, each question elicited a binary response of yes or no. For scoring purposes, a positive response was given

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a score of one and a negative response a score of zero. The scores were added and total adherence score was computed in a percentage form. Those satisfying all the criteria were considered to be compliant. Analysis on the frequency of compliance were also made. Differences in the degree of compliance could not be assessed between state owned and private newspapers due to limited sample size. Descriptive statistics were produced using Excel 14 and STATA 15.

The two authors conducted a pilot study on 15 randomly selected articles independently. An inter rater agreement statistic was observed to be satisfactory with a Kappa of $r=0.8$ ($p<0.05$).

Results

A content analysis using the pre-defined checklist was performed for 90 news articles. Suicide reporting is generally low in the country. Amongst the seven⁴⁵ media houses, reporting was most frequent in Kuensel, the state owned newspaper followed by BBS, another state owned broadcast media house, and The Bhutanese, a privately owned newspaper (Fig. 1). Two other newspapers reported one incidence of suicide story, while the remaining two newspapers did not report on suicide during the study period.

Figure 1: Number of suicide reporting in various newspapers from 2013-2018

⁴⁵ One private newspaper did not have any coverage on suicide during the study period.

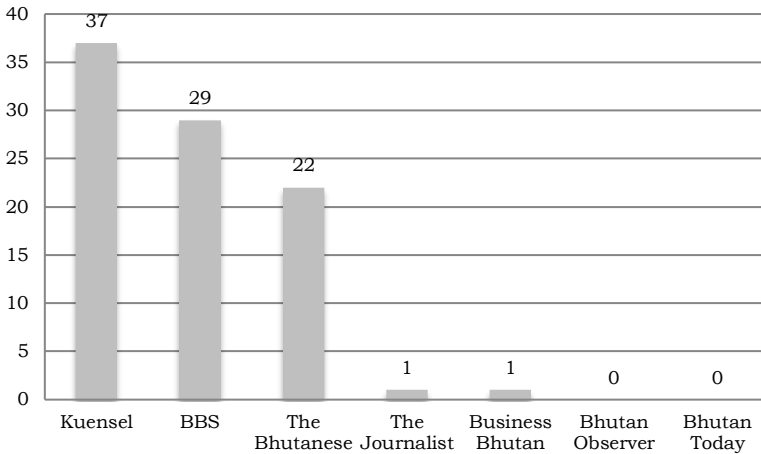


Table 3 presents findings across the 10 assessment criteria. Results show that almost all news articles (99%) breached at least one or more of the media guidelines. Analysis showed that 98.8 percent and 85.5 percent of the articles breached at least two and three guidelines respectively. Nearly 46.7 percent of the articles breached four or more guidelines.

Evaluations were made in terms of whether an article sensationalized the headline by including the term ‘suicide’. A majority of 60 percent had used this terminology in the headlines. Suicide storylines were further studied to assess the usage of inappropriate languages. It was found that more than half of the news articles (53.3%) used inappropriate language. About 12.2 percent disclosed explicit information on method used for completing or attempting suicide. 21 percent disclosed

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location of the suicide. None of the news articles disclosed contents of a suicide note⁴⁶.

Table 3: Quality of adherence analysed

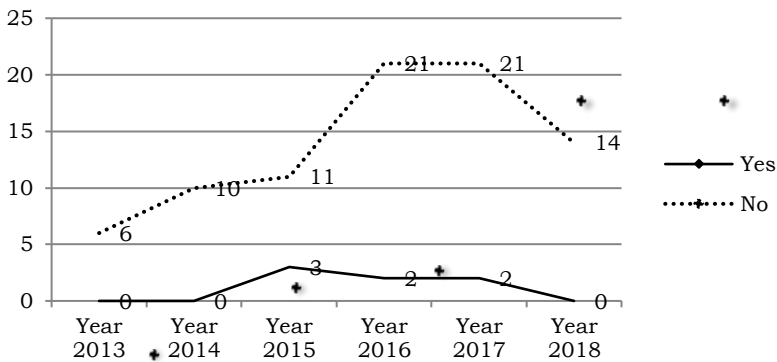
Assessment criteria (n=76)	Yes	No
Does the word 'suicide' appear in the headline?	66.7%	33.3%
Does the article use inappropriate language (failed suicide attempt, commit suicide, suicide epidemic, successful suicide, unsuccessful suicide etc.)?	53.3%	46.7%
Does the article normalize suicide (suicide is presented as a reasonable way of problem solving/portray suicide in a heroic or romantic fashion)?	12.2%	87.8%
Does the article feature in the front page?	1.1%	98.9%
Is there an explicit description of the method used in a completed or attempted suicide?	12.2%	87.8%
Does the article mention detailed information about the site of a completed or attempted suicide?	21.1%	78.9%
Does the article feature photograph of the suicide scene/precise location?		100%
Is there a reference to the fact that the person who died by suicide was a celebrity?	3.3%	96.7%
Does the article provide information about where to seek help?	7.8%	92.2%
Is suicide portrayed as 'merely a social phenomenon' as opposed to being 'related to a mental disorder' or related to a multitude of factors?	5.6%	94.4%

WHO guideline highlights the importance of providing crisis number, helpline, etc., for readers who may be vulnerable to suicide. In majority of the news articles analysed (92.2%), journalists did not provide information on available helpline or counselling services. It must be noted that there is no dedicated suicide prevention hotline available in the country. However, a general health toll free line (112) provided by Health Help Centre [HHC] established since 2009, is said to provide counselling related to suicidal issues (Ministry of Health,

⁴⁶ Articles were also assessed if reporters disclosed any information on suicide note.

2019). Additionally, Department of Youth and Sports under Ministry of Education also has a toll free *Nazhoen* Helpline (214) to counsel and guide youth (Ministry of Education, 2019). While HHC is available for 24 hours, *Nazhoen* Helpline operates during usual office hours. Journalists have consistently failed to provide information on such existing helplines as shown in the figure below. Study also revealed that majority⁴⁷ of the articles did not provide awareness on suicide prevention services.

Figure 2: Does the article provide information about where to seek help?



Positive developments with regard to the compliance were also observed. Analyses reveal that only few (5.6%) news articles simplify suicide by presenting it as mere social phenomena. Majority of news articles avoided prominent placement of stories about suicide, as 98.9 percent of the coverage did not feature in the front page of the newspapers reviewed. News

⁴⁷ Refer Figure 1 in Appendix

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articles analysed seem to strictly abide by the rule of not featuring photographs of the suicide scene.

As explained in WHO guideline, other studies also specify the significance of the use of languages that accurately and sensitively describes suicide to encourage a healthy and respectful way to recount about suicide (Arendt et al., 2018). Analysis across time indicated a slight rise in the usage of inappropriate language. However, the average number of instances per paper was found to decrease towards 2018. Articles were found to use the popular term ‘commit’, which associates suicide as a crime, stigmatising the phenomenon. Likewise, articles were also observed to use terms such as failed suicide attempt, commit suicide and suicide epidemic.

Table 4: Number of times an inappropriate language has been used in the reporting.

Year	# of articles	# of inappropriate language used	Average number of instances per paper
2013	6	13	2.1
2014	10	9	0.9
2015	14	15	1.1
2016	23	19	0.8
2017	23	37	1.5
2018	14	10	1

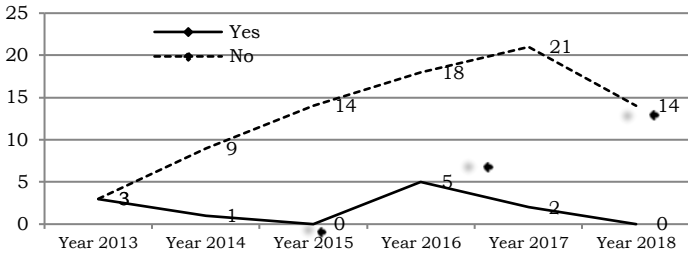
WHO guidelines emphasize that journalists should avoid reporting specific details of the method used. Studies have linked it to further suicides often using the same method or location (Ashton & Donnan, 1981; Hawton et al., 1999; Schmidtke & Hafner, 1988). Featured methods in the current study mostly included hanging, and jumping in the river. Newspaper reported explicit descriptions such as ‘...a girl died after hanging from a scarf (*racchu*) in her room...’, ‘...died by hanging from a ceiling...’, ‘...died hanging from tree with her

belt near a cliff...’, ‘...committed suicide by hanging himself with his own shirt...’, ‘...the deceased had used a nylon rope to hang herself around the neck...’ etc. Likewise, newspapers also narrated ‘...jumping into *dotikhola*...’, ‘...jumping into river...’. Other methods stated were consumption of pesticides and insecticides.

Besides the assessment criteria outlined for computation of an adherence score, additional evaluations were also made. For instance, an evaluation was carried out with regard to whether the bereaved family members were interviewed, and whether specific people were blamed for the deceased. Contrary to the media guidelines available, there were few articles that have blamed specific people for death caused by suicide. For instance, in 2016 two articles blame specific people for death. Example includes a family of the deceased blaming the spouse. Similarly, in the suicide case of a youth, it was reported that the uncle blamed the school; in another report, the grandmother was blamed for the death of four-year-old grandson. Guidelines emphasize that it is vital not to blame specific people or event or reason when people attempt suicide or complete suicide.

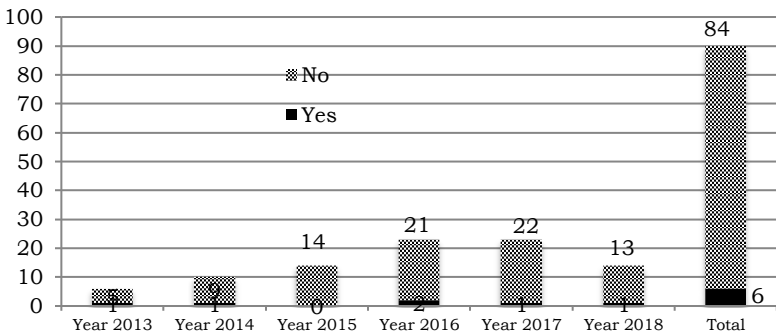
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Figure 3: Is there an explicit description of the method used in a completed or attempted suicide?



In terms of bereaved being interviewed, findings indicate that almost all media professionals follow this rule, as only one out of the 90 articles had described interview with the bereaved⁴⁸. Guideline suggests that the bereaved be treated with sensitivity, and their privacy be respected.

Figure 4: Does the article blame specific people for the death?

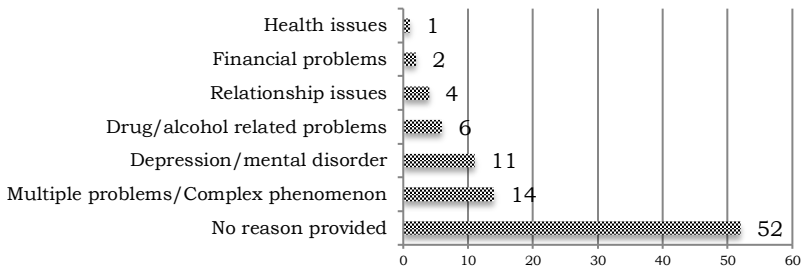


⁴⁸ Refer Table 1 in Appendix

The WHO guideline highlights that news articles should not provide oversimplified explanations for suicide causes such as recent negative life events or acute stressors. In particular, media professionals need to avoid presenting suicide as a result of a single factor or event. Although one event may appear to have triggered the suicide, its unlikely to be explained by this alone. Most people who die by suicide have a history of difficulties, which may not get reported in the aftermath of the suicide.

Analysis in this domain show that majority (86.84%)⁴⁹ did not single out one specific reason for attempted or completed suicide. Articles have highlighted numerous reasons as displayed below. More than half of the news articles have not provided any reasoning behind suicide. WHO guideline encourages citing the role of mental illness (depression) in suicide, and how mental illness is treatable.

Figure 5: Reasons reported in the news articles for attempted/completed suicide from 2013-2018.



⁴⁹ Refer Table 1 in Appendix

Discussion

The study examined changes in media reporting on suicide cases over a period of six years. Evaluation was conducted using standardized assessment checklist. This is the first ever-systematic study of the quality of media reporting of suicide in Bhutan. The findings offer insights on the quality of adherence to WHO guidelines.

The study observed that reporting on suicide was not extensive in the initial years of the study, that is from 2013 to 2014. However, from 2015 onward, coverage on suicide increased substantially. There were 23 news articles each in 2016 and 2017. The nature of reporting was varied in terms of focus and content. While most reported on suicide cases, some informed on policy/programme initiatives while few reported on general suicide statistics and World Suicide Prevention Day. Overall, the study showed that sensationalizing (68.42%) and use of inappropriate language (52.63%) to be relatively high as compared to research in other studies. In United Kingdom (UK) it was studied to be 21 percent (Pitman & Stevensonm 2015). News articles reviewed in the study have never included photographs which compares very favourably with other finding where, it was found to be as high as 57% in China (Fu, Chan, & Yip, 2010). Likewise, journalists in Bhutan seldom report on the site of attempted or completed suicide where as studies report that most suicide stories in India (80%) include detailed descriptions of the location of suicide (Chandra et al., 2013; 2014). Suicide stories in Bhutan were rarely placed in the front page. In India it was 32% (Chandra et al., 2013; 2014) and in United States, it was 6% (Tatum et al., 2010).

These findings suggest that overall adherence is not low. However, challenges remain. Nearly all articles breached at least one guideline. Most articles failed to report information on help or counseling services. Here, as mentioned earlier it is important to note that media professionals may have

overlooked this information based on the absence of an officially dedicated hotline for suicide prevention. Nevertheless, there were other hotlines such as 112 offered by the HHC under the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital, which amongst others provide counselling services for those who ‘...are suffering from mental illness like depression, anxiety & suicidal tendencies’ (Ministry of Health, 2019). Details on such information are vital to facilitate help-seeking amongst readers who are vulnerable (Barney et al., 2009). Other areas of concern include singling out a specific reason for suicide or attempted suicide. Journalists must avoid reporting on what may have contributed to the fatal event such as marital issues, financial debt, job loss, loss of loved ones, etc. (The Samaritans, 2013). Such reportings are said to increase distress among bereaved family and friends (Chappel et al., 2013).

Overall, it was observed the most reports seem to present suicide the same way crimes are reported. As per WHO’s guideline, this needs to be changed. It is also said that reporting suicide as an avoidable loss is beneficial in prevention of future suicidal deaths (The Samaritans, 2013). For example, journalists are encouraged to narrate stories as a public health concern rather than simply a story on statistics. Additionally, including messages of hope such as mentioning success stories of those who have recovered from suicidal crisis, and found resilience may discourage vulnerable groups.

Conclusion

Findings from the current study are clear, Bhutanese media professionals require greater adherence to WHO media guidelines for suicide reporting. Analysis reveal that some news articles have used inappropriate language a number of times, few have normalised suicide by framing it in way that it simplifies suicide while others at times provided explicit descriptions of methods and most seriously, there were several articles that have neither provided information on local

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helpline nor have educated the public about suicide prevention. These findings suggest that there is a widespread lack of awareness in terms of responsible reporting on suicide narratives.

This negligence may be caused by a number of reasons. First and foremost, it may be due to the absence of a national media guideline. Second, suicide stories may have been covered by inexperienced journalists who might have had limited understandings on the implications. A study in the future should be conducted to corroborate this assumption. Third, presently no advocacy or trainings are conducted to inform media personal on responsible reporting guidelines. Fourth, inappropriate media portrayal and reporting of suicidal behaviour is not yet highlighted and given importance. Editors should provide immediate attention to irresponsible reporting, and remain aware of their potentially influential role in correcting it. Fifth, there are limited avenues for suicide experts to work with the media professionals. Finally, no media impact studies have been carried out which can inform knowledge about imperatives that act on journalists deciding whether to report, and how to report on a particular suicide story.

Appropriate reporting in the media can play an important role in preventing suicide and increasing public understanding. The study urgently calls for the formulation of a national guideline for suicide reporting. A steering committee needs to be formed involving mental health promotion experts, suicide prevention agencies and media organisations. Besides reflecting international standards, the guideline needs to adapt to our local context. After formulation, the guidelines would require proactive enforcement through extensive dissemination using various advocacy measures.

Study limitations

Irresponsible media reporting on suicide trigger additional suicides. This is the assumption used for the current study. But how much of this is factual with regard to cases in Bhutan is yet unknown. Future studies hence, need to account for this relationship. Other limitations include with regard to the sample size. Study sample included selected print and Internet based newspapers only. Ideally, it would be more robust to include data from all existing media sources. Furthermore, despite the extensive online search, it is possible that authors may have missed out on articles. Additionally, few of the assessment criteria relied to an extent on the authors' subjective interpretation of the suicide narratives. Accordingly, there might have been overestimates and underestimates.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Sl #	Questions	Response	Res- ponse Code
1	Newspaper identification number	Numeric	
2	Enter the year of reporting	Year	
3	Enter the month of reporting	Month	
4	Enter the date of reporting	Year	
5	Does the word 'suicide' appear in the headline?	Yes	1
		No	2
6	Does the article attempt to educate the public about suicide?	Yes	1
		No	2
7	Number of times an inappropriate language have been used (failed suicide attempt, commit suicide, suicide epidemic, successful suicide, unsuccessful suicide etc.)	Numeric	
8	Does the article normalize suicide (suicide is presented as a reasonable way of problem solving/portray suicide in a heroic or romantic fashion)? (Focusing on life problem as the motive for suicide)	Yes	1
		No	2
9	Does the article feature in the front page? (Avoid prominent placement and undue repetition of stories about suicide (Placement of the story)	Yes	1
		No	2
10	Is there an explicit description of the method used in a completed or attempted suicide?	Yes, explicitly	1
		Yes, vague	2
		No	3
11	Does the article mention detailed information about the site of a completed or attempted suicide?	Yes, detailed information	1
		Yes, no details	2
		No	3
12	Does the article feature photograph of the suicide scene/precise location?	Yes	1
		No	2
13	Is there a reference to the fact that the person who died by suicide was a celebrity?	Yes	1
		No	2
14	Does the article provide information about where to seek help?	Yes, information on both helpline and	1

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		support group services	
		Yes, information on helpline or support group services only	2
		No	3
15	Were the bereaved interviewed?	Yes	1
		No	2
16	Is suicide portrayed as 'merely a social phenomenon' as opposed to being 'related to a mental disorder' or related to a multitude of factors?	Yes	1
		No	2
17	Does the article blame specific people for the death?	Yes	1
		No	2
18	Does the article report on suicide case?	Yes	1
		No	2
19	Does the article report attempted suicide?	Yes	1
		No	2
20	Does the article report general suicide report? (Like overall suicide in particular year, which segments top the suicide dead, etc.)	Yes	1
		No	2
21	Does the article report about suicide prevention plan/methods or suicide prevention day observed?	Yes	1
		No	2
22	Does the article report about workshop or seminars or discussion or agreement signed for suicide prevention?	Yes	1
		No	2
23	Does the article provide awareness/advocacy on suicide prevention plans/measures/strategies?	Yes	1
		No	2
24	Does the article report on the complaint lodged by bereaved family/ or report on court cases or bereaved asking for reinvestigation?	Yes	1
		No	2
25	Does the article highlight one specific reason for suicide/attempted suicide?	Depression/distress/mental disorder	1
		Relationship issues	2
		Health problem	3
		Work problem	4

		Existential crisis (identity crisis, no meaningful life, etc.)	5
		Drug and alcohol related problem	6
		Domestic violence	7
		Financial problems	8
		Academic-related stress	9
		Multiple reasons/complex problem	10
		None	11

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Figure 1: Does the article provide awareness on suicide prevention plans?

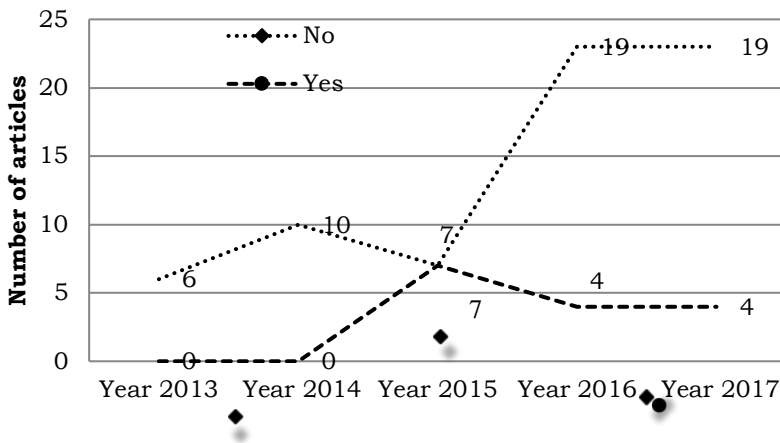


Table 1: Were the bereaved interviewed?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1	1.11
No	89	98.89
Total	90	100

Table 2: Does the article single out one specific reason for suicide/attempted suicide?

Yes	13.16%
No	86.84%