

The Symbolic and Functional Significance of Chhoetse Penlop: A Tribute to the Sixteenth Chhoetse Penlop

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As Bhutan celebrates the ascension of His Royal Highness Dasho Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck as the 16th Chhoetse Penlop in three hundred and fifty seven years, the Bhutanese people once again affirm the centrality of monarchy in our lives. This landmark event has a symbolic and functional significance. It is symbolic by way of upholding an important national tradition. Its functional significance lies in the continuity of monarchy that defines the Bhutanese character.

First, the symbolic significance is historical in nature. Chogyal Mingyur Tenpa, who became the first Chhoetse Penlop in 1647, pioneered the unification of eastern Bhutan into the new nation-state. On the other hand, neither the Paro Penlop nor Daga Penlop was ever entrusted with any responsibilities of unification. This distinction is an important historical antecedent. In the leadership of future Chhoetse Penlops, particularly Jigme Namgyal and Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck, we discover their contribution to unification when the political climate of the country deteriorated. Jigme Namgyal, the 10th Chhoetse Penlop defended the country during the Duar War by rallying behind him the whole country. As often, history repeated in an extraordinary way when His Majesty the King led Bhutanese troops in the recent war against militancy.

Although he was first a Chhoetse Penlop, Jigme Namgyal established himself as the unchallenged leader of the country and became one as the 48th Druk Desi. The last six Druk Desi who succeeded him served almost at the will of Chhoetse

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Penlop. Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck, the 13th Chhoetse Penlop distinguished himself in both domestic and foreign affairs, earning respect and confidence of the Bhutanese people like no other leaders. After the Chhoetse Penlop, he became the first Druk Gyalpo. An important historical fact we tend to overlook today is that Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck did not force the establishment of monarchy. It was the Bhutanese people who, exhausted by two centuries of instability and political in-fighting, opted to establish monarchy as an alternative political system. In Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck, they found a person whose spiritual and genealogical lineage as well as statesmanship and diplomacy assured the founding of a strong monarchy. When he was crowned king, it was already the 20th century. As we celebrate His Royal Highness assumption of the office of Chhoetse Penlop, we also pay tribute to his illustrious predecessors.

Second, the functional significance of the event must be understood in relation to the continuity of monarchy. By becoming the Chhoetse Penlop, His Royal Highness upholds the sacred tradition of the crown prince assuming this position. The more important reason for our celebration is the knowledge that monarchy is strong, loved and will continue into the 21st century. For a monarchy to be so popular, established and leading a country into the new millennium surprises many skeptics.

Generally, monarchy is regarded as a medieval and receding political system that is feudal in nature. Its relevance and success in the modern age is often questioned. On the contrary, Bhutanese monarchy presents an entirely opposite phenomenon. Its establishment symbolized the defeat of a feudal medieval structures and institutions. The modernity of Bhutanese monarchy is its distinguishing characteristic. It represents change and progress as opposed to stagnation and regression. For example, introduction of modern education became possible only with the coming of monarchy. In the court of His Majesty Jigme Wangchuck was found a mobile school where students from most humble backgrounds

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studied. Heavy taxation, a legacy of the past, underwent profound reforms during the reign of the first two kings. It was monarchy who abolished serfdom, introduced land reforms and established democratic institutions. Whereas decentralization and people's participation would be considered radical ideas in traditional monarchies, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck spearheaded these political reforms. Monarchy has been the source of modernization and cause of all socio-economic developments. As we affirm monarchy by celebrating the investiture ceremony of His Royal Highness, we endorse progress; we celebrate progress.

The success of monarchy in a small Himalayan society demonstrates the special relationship between Bhutanese people and our benevolent rulers. Our celebration today is a celebration of this relationship. This relationship is of great relevance in a modernizing Bhutan. The realities of our time contrast with those a hundred years ago. Hence, challenges and concerns confronting us also contrast in their nature and dimension.

As a leader, His Royal Highness straddles two ages, the secluded and the globalized, the traditional and the modern. He represents balance and harmony, which has been the basis of our development. Therefore, the continuation of the specialty of relationship of Bhutanese people to the monarchy is insurance for a secure future. In the beginning of the last century, a Chhoetse Penlop ushered Bhutan into a new millennium of progress. This century also begins on an auspicious note with another Chhoetse Penlop ushering Bhutan into yet another hundred years of peace and prosperity.

A Historical Background of the Chhoetse Penlop*

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The institution of the Chhoetse Penlop (later called Trongsa Penlop) is more than 350 years. It was started by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1647 after he appointed Chhogyel Minjur Tenpa as his representative in Trongsa. This royal institution with a unique blend of mythology and history represents Bhutan's past.

The Trongsa Dzong was founded by Yongzin Ngagi Wangchuk (1517-1554), the son of Lam Ngawang Chhoejay. According to the legend, Ngagi Wangchuk was guided in a vision by Palden Lhamo, the guardian deity of the Dragon Kingdom, to go to a place in central Bhutan which resembled a bow and which was abundant in food grains (*mang-dru*). The name Mangdey has its origin in this word.

Accordingly, Pal Ngagi Wangchuk arrived at Trongsa in 1541 where he took residence in the village of Yueli which was located on the northern hill-slopes overlooking the then bare hillock upon which the Trongsa Dzong is presently located.

One night when Pal Ngagi Wangchuk was meditating in Yueli, his attention was drawn by a flicker of light, resembling that of a butter-lamp burning in the open air, at the spot where the present day Goenkhang in the Trongsa Dzong is located. Upon visiting the spot, he was deeply overwhelmed by discovery of Lhamoi Latsho (a sacred lake of Palden Lhamo) and the hoof prints of Palden Lhamo's steed.

In 1543, Pal Ngagi Wangchuk established a small *tshamkhang* (meditation quarter) in the sacred spot brought

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to light by the auspicious signs, and named it “Mon Drubdey”. He soon attracted large disciples who built their own meditation units around the main tshamkhang. The cluster of newly built meditation quarters appeared to the people of Yueli like a new village and hence they called it “Trongsar”, meaning “new village”. The name is popular to this day. According to one oral version, there was a tall (*trong*) house on the spot of the present day Trongsa Dzong. After construction of the new dzong, the people started to call it “Trongsar” – meaning a new tall house.

By that time Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal was fifty-two years (1646), and he had succeeded in bringing the whole of western Bhutan under the theocratic rule he established. He then turned his attention towards eastern Bhutan with the idea of bringing the whole region under one rule. In order to achieve his goal, the Zhabdrung wanted to establish a seat of authority in Trongsa which would, considering its strategic location between east and west, play a crucial role in the unification of the country.

At that time, there were many feudal rulers in eastern Bhutan, mainly in Bumthang, Lhuentse, Trashigang and Zhemgang. The Zhabdrung found Chhogyel Minjur Tenpa, a close confidante and a person of unquestionable loyalty and integrity, as the most suitable candidate for the daunting task of unifying and consolidating the whole of eastern Bhutan. Chhogyel Minjur Tenpa subsequently brought eastern Bhutan (*sharchog khorlo tsibgay*) under the rule of the Zhabdrung.

Seeing the unification as an auspicious symbol, the Zhabdrung instructed Chhogyel Minjur Tenpa to construct a dzong at the seat of Yongzin Ngagi Wangchuk and Mephram Tenpai Nima in the centre of the Mangdue region. As commanded, Chhogyel Minjur Tenpa built the Trongsa Dzong as the seat of authority of *Sharchog Khorlo Tsip Gyed* in 1644 at the sacred site earlier founded by Pal Ngagi Wangchuk

about a hundred years before him, and called it Druk Minjur Chhoekhor Rabten Tse Dzong.

The name is derived from the lhakhang named *Minjur Lhakhang*, which later came to be known as *Poe Lhakhang*. It was built on the top of a cliff which has a base in shape of a White Right-Turning Dharma Conch (*Chhoe Dung Karpo Yeykhil*). The lhakhang looked like a palace of a temporal ruler from outside and a seat of a spiritual master inside. The construction of the lhakhang was completed in 1652. The Dzong was named *Druk Minjur Chhoekhor Rabten Tse Dzong* (the fortress of the changeless culmination of the eternal Wheel of Law in the Dragon Country) after the shape of the location of the Dzong and the name of the builder.

Its literal translation is *Druk* (Dragon Country) *Mijur* (Changeless, or name of the builder), *Chhoekhor* (Wheel of Law of Dharma), *Rabten* (Eternal), *Tse* (Apex), *Dzong* (Fortress). Yet another oral source says that there is a place above the present Ta Dzong where a famous lama gave the Buddhist teachings. The place was then called Chhokhor Tse.

The dedicated effort of Chhogyel Minjur Tenpa and subsequent governors of Trongsa gradually expanded Trongsa Dzong. The Chhoeten Lhakhang, which can be seen to this day, is believed to be the only remnant of the old structure which incorporated to the new Trongsa Dzong. Trongsa Penlop Sherub Lhendup built the Goenkhang in 1667 and was consecrated by Gyalsay Tenzin Rabgey. Trongsa Penlop Pekar built the Lhakhang of Gyelwa Jampa Drolma and Namgyelma in 1770. In 1715 Trongsa Penlop Druk Dhendup built the temple of Chenrezig which was later renovated in 1927 by the Second King. The Serto on Lam Lhakhang and Tshepamed Lhakhang were installed by Trongsa Penlop Druk Phuntsho and consecrated by Penchen Tenzin Chhogyel. In 1853 Trongsa Penlop Jigme Namgyel built the Dechog Lhakhang. The Dzong has now a total of 25 important lhakhangs.

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Though the meditation centre of Yongzin Ngagi Wangchuk was known as *Trongsar* in the dialect of Mangdey community (Mangdey Tsho Zhi), the chief/head lams were known as Chhoetse Chila or Trongsa Chila. *Chilas* were ordained monks. However, with the passage of time, non-monk chiefs were appointed to the post, and the title Chhoetse Penlop came to be used, replacing Chila with Penlop¹. But the use of the titles Trongsa Chila and Trongsa Penlop was more common than Chhoeste Chila or Chhoetse Penlop.

Similarly, the Zhabdrung also established the institutions of the Paro Penlop and Daga Penlop to head different administrative zones. Chhoejay La Noenpa Tenzin Drugdra was appointed as the Paro Penlop, Tenpa Thinley as the Daga Penlop. Since then the tradition of appointing Trongsa Penlop has continued. The Penlops were direct representatives of the Zhabdrung bestowed with authority to make independent decisions on his behalf and govern according to the administrative and judicial code established by him.

In 1853, Penlop Tshoki Dorji resigned paving way to the installation of Jigme Namgyel as the next Trongsa Penlop. Twenty-nine years later his son Ugyen Wangchuck became the Trongsa Penlop in the year 1882. Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck was the Trongsa Penlop when the Bhutanese clergy, the government, and the people unanimously elected him as the first hereditary King and established a new era of Bhutanese history.

His Majesty King Ugyen Wangchuck served as the Trongsa Penlop between 1882 and 1907, and it was in Trongsa that the people of Bhutan offered their love, their reverence, and their allegiance to their Monarch.

His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck was installed as the Trongsa Penlop on May 15, 1972, at the age of 16 years.

¹ Personal Communications, Lupon Padma Tshewang (Lupon Padmala)

The institution of the Trongsa Penlop, therefore, came to signify the true heritage to the Bhutanese Throne and the investiture ceremony of the Trongsa Penlop became the formal declaration of this status of the Crown Prince. The lhengye zhungtsho had announced that the revered position of the Trongsa Penlop would once again be known by the historical term, Chhoetse Penlop as the Crown Prince represents all the 20 dzongkhags of the kingdom.

With the formal awarding of the Gyalse Ngadun which signifies mastery over worldly and spiritual matters, miraculous accomplishment, inexhaustible speed and strength and the trinity of love wisdom and power, and the celebration of the traditional ceremonies in Trongsa, His Royal Highness Dasho Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck is the sixteenth Chhoetse Penlop.

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Demise of Tongphu Gyalpo*

Karma Galay[†]

Introduction

Tongphu was one of many valley kingdoms that existed in eastern Bhutan during ancient times. There are many folktales and oral accounts associated with these valley kingdoms. One such popular account narrated and remembered to this day is about a crazy command of Tongphu Gyalpo to level a mountain blocking the view of his queen's house. This surely is a myth but the events associated with this myth are interesting in that they highlight some historical and anthropological research issues. In the following essay, I will piece together some information documented last summer from some elderly citizens in Thridangbi village in Mongar.

A Command: More precious and heavier than a mountain

The palace of Tongphu Gyalpo existed on the slope of Zarkula mountain, about one and half kilometers above Yongkala in Thridangbi village. The queen was from Masangang in Chali, another village on the other side of Kurichu river. Tongphu Gyalpo loved his queen so dearly that he could not spend a single moment without her presence. Even a glance at her house in Chali meant so much of happiness to him that he must have a look at it everyday. It appears totally crazy but he is believed to have done it daily: he would walk to the top of the mountain every day from his palace located below the slope just to cast a glance. This daily ritual of gazing at the queen's house turned out to be very cumbersome after a while. He commanded his ministers that Zarkula mountain be leveled or destroyed so that he could see the house of the queen straight from his bedroom's window

* I am indebted to Ap Shantala and Ap Tshewang Rinzin, Thridangbi village for the information.

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One would perhaps expect that ministers would have appealed to the king that his command was beyond execution. People do not know if such appeals were made. One can only surmise that the ministers were so obedient or perhaps, they understood the king's intense love, and realized that there was no way of reversing the command. They mobilized hundreds of workers and began the Herculean task of leveling the mountain. Several months had passed and yet no significant progress was made. The sufferings that people had to undergo were getting beyond their tolerance. Even the ministers, who had to do physically less straining jobs of supervising workers were tired and frustrated.

One evening, as the ministers and workers were winding up for the day, an old woman carrying a little baby appeared and sung the following verses repeatedly:

*Aow, Aow.
Phuchen Dhelpha Wata,
Michen Dhelpha Drag.
Aow, Aow*

*Instead of leveling the towering mountain,
Better it is to bring down a towering personality.*

Ministers instantly understood the old woman's message and met secretly to execute the plan. They came out with this plan: to propose a *chogdha* (archery match) with the neighbouring petty kingdom of Drakar and kill their king during the match. Next day, the senior ministers informed the king about the plan; the king happily accepted it, and commanded that one of the ministers should be sent in person to discuss the plan with the king of Drakar.

As commanded, one minister and some other senior members of the palace went to Drakar, and informed about the plan. The date for the match was fixed (it is not clear if the minister also discussed the plot to kill their king with the Drakar

king). The Minister returned to Tongphu and informed the Gyalpo and his colleagues about the date for the archery match.

The Archery Match

After the rituals were conducted and local deities propitiated for their blessings, Tongphu Gyalpo and his entourage proceeded to Drakar. After traveling a few kilometers, the Gyalpo commanded his entourage that he wanted to conduct a divination about their performance in the match. He did this by trying to balance his walking stick on a flat surface of a big boulder. If the stick balanced and stood upright for a while, it was to foretell a victory; if it tilted and fell down, it was to foretell a defeat. But the divination predicted a defeat. Once again, prayers and offerings of food and drinks were made to the deities to prevent misfortune and bring victory.

In Drakar, a splendid arrangement had been made for the match. Women of varying ages performed dances; food and drinks of varying kinds were served in abundance. Two kings played as *Ma* (anchor or a person who shoots last from the team). The match went on for three days. Both teams performed equally well and none could claim victory. Also, nothing had been done to execute the plan of killing the Gyalpo. Ministers and the archers of Tongphu began to get nervous.

Amidst these worries and confusions, an idea struck in the mind of one of the ministers. He suggested that the Tongphu Gyalpo needed to forgo his *Ma* position to bring luck to the team. The king agreed, and a minister assumed the role of *Ma*. Even today, it is believed that a change in the order of shooters could bring luck to the team. The Gyalpo went to other side of the archery range to encourage or direct his teammates after he had shot his arrows.

It was Drakar Gyalpo's turn to shoot. This was an opportune moment for the minister of Tongphu to kill his king. The

minister who substituted the Gyalpo as Ma and other archers of Tongphu provoked Drakar Gyalpo: they commented he was a bad shooter. They told him that his chance of hitting a small target was non-existent; and that he could not hit the target even if it were the size of Tongphu Gyalpo's giant physique. This challenge provoked and irritated Drakar Gyalpo and he wanted to prove that he was not a bad shooter. So, he proposed that instead of aiming at the target, he would aim at their king. They further provoked and challenged his ego. As Drakar Gyalpo took aim, Tongphu Gyalpo, standing a few meters away from the target on the other side, was distracted by one of his chamberlains who offered him an alcohol. In the flicker of that moment, Drakar Gyalpo released his arrow. Tongphu Gyalpo could not escape the swift and forceful arrow of his opponent. He was shot on the chest.

Tongphu Gyalpo fell flat on the ground. This place where he fell flat came to be known as *Tingarbi*. *Ting* in the local dialect of the region means stretch or fall flat. Associated with this word, people called the place *Tingarbi*, which means a place where Gyalpo fell flat. Many places between these two kingdoms were named after a series of events that followed the injury and subsequent death of Tongphu Gyalpo.

Return to Tongphu

The injured Gyalpo and his entourage returned to Tongphu. A few kilometers down from the archery range, the wounded Gyalpo shook his body in great pain and anguish. The spot where the Gyalpo shook in pain and anguish came to be known as *Parbi*, a place where the Gyalpo moved.

The next place is known as *Changchangla*. When the injured Gyalpo and his entourage reached this spot, the Gyalpo's wound bled like a cascade. *Changchang* in the local dialect means cascade or flow in abundance. The place came to be known as *Changchangla* after this event.

Demise of Tongphu Gyalpo

When the entourage reached a ridge, the king's face shrunk and turned pale. This ridge came to be known as *Nyamsergang*. *Nyam* means deterioration, *ser* yellow or pale, and *gang* a ridge.

The injured king's health was dwindling with every passing minute. When they reached a place where there was a pond of water, somewhere near Zhongar Dzong, the Gyalpo realized that he had no chance of surviving. He asked his ministers and other subjects to rest there. He then narrated his *zhelchem* (oral will). A few minutes later, he passed away. The ministers tied the body of the Gyalpo there. This place came to be known as *Dhamchu*, meaning a pond where body of the Gyalpo was tied. (*Dham* means tying and *chu* means water; here it means the pond).

With their torturous Gyalpo dead, ministers proceeded on to Tongphu. They stopped for a while when they reached a place about a kilometer after Zhongar Dzong. Here they discussed about the future of Tongphu. They were happy that their tyrant leader was dead. This place where they discussed plans and felt happy came to be known as *Galikhar*, a place where happiness (*ga*) was experienced.

Triumphant ministers and the subjects who accompanied them proceeded on. Their jubilant mood, however, was not able to suppress the guilt of killing their king. When they reached a place across the stream, they regretted the crime. They felt remorseful and bad. This place came to be known as *Thridangbi*. *Thri* means sorrow or remorse. *Thridangbi*, therefore, means a place where sorrow was experienced. It is evident from this that *Thridangbi* was initially name of a single spot but today the whole village is known by this name.

When they reached a small gorge further up, all ministers began to experience empty feelings. This gorge came to be known as *Tongpa Lungpa*. *Tongpa* means empty and *Lungpa* a gorge. About a kilometer up from this place, the entourage

rested for a while and some of them urinated at that place. This place came to be known as *Zengmagang*. *Zengma* refers to urine in *Bumtap*. Apparently, it appears that some of the ministers were from Bumthang. My interviewees said that they could possibly have been from Ura. They said that there used to be frequent contacts between the people of Thridangbi and Ura. This is further supported by Michael Aris, in “Bhutan: The Early History of Himalayan Kingdom” (p. 130) where frequent contacts between people of Ura and Zhongar area are mentioned to have existed for many years.

Ministers and rest of the people in the group walked uphill for a few kilometers and as they were approaching Tongphu, they came across many deer. This place came to be known as *Khasha Tong*. *Khasha* means deer and *tong* a thousand. Local people believe that it is ominous to come across many deer. A large number of deer, indeed, foretold ominous future for the kingdom of Tongphu.

When the ministers and the archers were approaching the palace, people from different parts of the kingdom had gathered in the vicinity of the palace. The news of death of their Gyalpo had put them in a state of confusion. This place came to be known as *Yomkala*, meaning a hill of confusion (*yom*). This place is now known by its corrupted name, *Yongkala*.

The tip of *Zarkula* that was leveled came to be known as *Wobkola*. *Wob* means depression or depressed, *ko* dig and *la* a mountain. *Wobkola* therefore, means a dented piece of land that has emerged out of digging. *La* here must have been added as it is still close to the apex of the mountain. It is also appropriate here to explain the meaning of the name of the kingdom - *Tongphu*. *Tong* in local dialect [also] refers to wild pear and *phu* to a hill or mountain. People say that there existed a wild pear tree next to the palace and since the palace was located on the slope of a mountain, name of the

kingdom was derived from the combination of these two words.

Tongphu without the Gyalpo

For the next few years, kingdom of Tongphu fell into a state of complete anarchy. When the Gyalpo passed away at Dhamchu, he left the following *zhelchem*: he would be reborn in Lhasa and if people of Tongphu ever needed him in future, they should come and fetch him; people coming to fetch him should carry some pears (*tong*) from the pear tree next to his palace; he would be amongst a group of children; to show pears to the children; and the child that recognizes the pear will be his reincarnate.

State of anarchy increased with every passing day. The need for a king was felt desperately. As instructed in his *zhelchem*, a group of people went to look for him in Lhasa, carrying some pears. Upon arriving Lhasa, they ran into a group of children. They threw about a dozen or so pears amongst those children. One of the children picked up a *tong* and looked at it very curiously. He finally commented that those pears were from the tree next to his palace in Tongphu. This confirmed the reincarnation of Tongphu Gyalpo.

The group of people who went to look for the reincarnate mugged the child; put him in the sack and kidnapped him out of Lhasa before people had any knowledge of the child's disappearance. The child, who was then about three or four years old is supposed to have defied the kidnappers. Upon reaching Zhangmala pass in Bumthang, they relaxed and took the boy out of the sack. They saw a bunch of grass in both his hands; the grass got uprooted as the boy tried to defy the kidnappers by clinging onto them. The spot at Zhangmala, where the boy threw the grass later turned into two patches of grass distinct from the local species. People called it Tibetan grass and the two distinctly unique patches of grassland are there even today.

From Zhangmala, he was brought to Pangkhar village in Ura. When he reached the village, he told the kidnappers that he did not want to return to Tongphu; he said he was afraid that he might meet with similar fate/treatment as the former Tongphu Gyalpo and pleaded that he be allowed to settle in Pangkhar. The kidnappers from Tongphu agreed, the boy settled in Pangkhar and later became very famous. He started the Dung family of Ura and came to be known as Dung Nagpo.

Conclusion

The myth of the command of Tongphu Gyalpo to his subjects to level a mountain is not interesting or unique by itself. Such myths are told and narrated elsewhere too. Besides, the same myth is credited to different hero by different accounts. For instance, in *Gyal-rigs in Aris' Sources for History of Bhutan* (1986), the same myth is credited to Relpa Tobchen, a boy who was born out of a fish and later became the *Gyalpo* of *Zhongar*. Some believe that it was *Zhongar Dzongpoen Namedla*. It is not clear who the real person associated with the myth was. Purpose here is not to refute sources. The historical and anthropological issues that this myth unfurls are interesting. This narration provides explanation to why places are named in a particular manner though they may not be fully correct and authentic. Apart from understanding the meaning of names, such accounts also help us understand and record rich history of our villages. Similar studies could be replicated to understand the names of places in other parts of Bhutan.

Myth, Legend and History Surrounding Dungsam*

Sonam Wangdi⁺

Dungsam

Earlier the entire regions which presently fall under Pemagatshel and Samdrup Jongkhar districts were popularly known as *Dungsam*. The term is still used both officially and locally. Two oral sources explain the meaning of Dungsam. According to one source, out of many high hills surrounding Pemagatshel, there are three conch-shaped hills. So the word Dungsam originated from the three hills. In Shar chop dialect, *dungkar* is a conch or simply *dung*, and *sam* means three; so Dungsam literally means three conches.

The second source has it that there was a *tsho*, a lake, called Dungshtsho Karmathang on a hill above the present day Khar. Tertön Pema Lingpa (1450-1521) was known to have revealed a *ter* (a sacred hidden treasure) from Dungshtsho Karmathang. Later when the lake dried up, humans settled there, and these settlers became ancestors of the Khoche nobility in Dungsam. Thus, they came to be called Dungshtshopa – the people of Dungshtsho. So Dungsampa is the corrupted form of Dungsapa; Dungsapa itself being the corruption of Dungshtshopa. The word Dungsam was recorded and widely used since the time of the First Zhabdrung, Ngawang Namgyal (1594-1651?), and the nearby villages happened to be called Dungsam. In western Bhutan, a Dungsampa is understood to be either from Dungsam Nganglam or Dungsam Pemagatshel.

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The regions was an independent political entity until they were merged with Zhongar following the surrender of the petty rulers of the regions to the Drukpa Kagyud force led by the first Chhoetse Penlop Chhogyal Minjur Tenpa and Lam Namsey who were acting under the command of the Unsurpassable Lord, the First Zhabdrung.

Until 1970, Pemagatshel and Samdrup Jongkhar were known as Dungsam Khoi Dung and Dungsam Kothri respectively. It was His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche who thus christened the two districts. Dungsam comprised of prominent villages like Dungsam Dewathang, Dungsam Nganglam, Dungsam Dechheling, Dungsam Khar and Dungsam Khoi Dung. It was well-known as a trade route to India for the people of eastern Bhutan. From the time of Zhabdrung it was recognized as one of the four gateways to Bhutan: Shar Dungsamkha. The three others are Pasakha in the south, Taktserkha in the north and Dalingkha in the west.

Dungtsho Karmathang was blessed with the sacred visits of Mipham Tenpai Nyima (1567-1619), the father of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. By then the Dungtsho Karmathang had dried up and a settlement had already started. Tenpai Nyima founded the Dungkar Goenpa and fathered the son from a virtuous lady. The son went to Tibet at a young age, only to return to Bhutan to play an important role in country's history. He was Tenzin Drukdra whom most historians believe him to be a Tibetan. A mysterious epidemic struck the settlement at Dungtsho Karmathang, and the people died except for two khoche brothers who escaped to others places. The ruins of Dungtsho Karmathang can be still seen submerged beneath the earth today.

Khoi Dung or Khe Dung?

Before Pemagatshel got its present name, it was known by two names: Dungsam Khoi Dung and Dungsam Khe Dung. The former means the village of Khoi, while the Khe Dung literally means the village of stool. The former name could be

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correct because when the Bangtsho Chhoje was the ruler of Dungsam Khoi Dung during those days, the Khoipa were considered as untouchables, and they were forced to work as slaves. Most of the Khoipa or the untouchables were believed to be captives brought from the Assam Duars. So, Khoi Dung was the village occupied by the Khoipa under the rule of Bangtsho Chhoje, and the Khoi Dung denotes the villages of Khoipa.

After the Third King abolished the serfdom, the Khoipa were freed. It is said that after this reform, Bangtsho rulers even lost touch with their underground fortress of Bangtsho Chhoje at Kheri Goenpa in Lhuntshe. This underground fortress now remains in ruins. Barma of Samdrup Jongkhar who belongs to the lineage of Bangtsho Chhoje has reconstructed a lhakhang at Bar Goenpa opposite Chungkhar facing Zobel and Shumarthung. Geshey Pema Tshering who was the previous incarnation of the 70th Je Khenpo, His Holiness Trulku Jigme Choeda, had established his *dhensa* (residence) at Bar Goenpa. Lam Pema Tshering passed away there and a kudung chhoeten was constructed near the junction of two *zhunglam* where traders from Zhongar and Trashigang travelled to India. Kudung chhoeten was renovated, and consecration ritual was conducted by His Holiness himself. Lam Pem Tshering was supported by his devoted patron, the then Zhongar Dzongpon Kunzang Wangdi who came from Chungkhar Chhoje, a descendent of Lhasay Tsangma. He was also related to Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal through the offspring of Tenzin Drukdra.

Around the 16th century the great Nyingma Master Jigme Kuendrel alias Jangchub Gyeltshen who was the core disciple of the great saint Jigme Lingpa (eighteen century) returned from Tibet and founded Yongla Goenpa as prophesized by the Dakini. This sacred site was blessed by visits of many great Buddhist luminaries like His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche Jigdrel Yeshey Dorji, Terton Pegyel Lingpa, Lam Pema Longdrel, Lama Dorji Gyeltshen alias Lam Phucha, Lama Sonam Zangpo alias Meme Lama, Dungsey Rinpoche Thinley

Norbu, Nyulshu Khenpo, Lhalung Thuksey Rinpoche and many others. Yongla Goenpa is known for its unfailing protection against the southern adversaries. Indeed there is a saying:

འཕར་རྩོད་རིགས་གསུམ་དགོན་པ་དང་།

འཕར་ལྗང་ཡོང་ས་ལ་དགོན་པ་གཉིས།

རྒྱ་དང་བོད་ཀྱི་ལ་གཞོན་ཡིན།

*Rigsum Goenpa in the upper east
And Yongla Goenpa in the lower east
Are the two protections
Against Tibet and India*

In 1970 when His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche conducted a *wang* on a place where Pemagatshel Dzong stands today, the Gup of Shumar Gewog, Ugyen Tshering requested Dudjom Rinpoche to give a suitable name for Khoi Dung. Rinpoche looked around the valley and wrote Pemagatshel on a piece of paper and gave it to Ugyen Tshering. Since then Pemagatshel was declared as the official name of the place and district as well. If one stands near the Dzong and look around, one would see the hills fencing the valley with Redingla Goenpa in the west, Kher Goenpa in the north, Yongla Goenpa in the east and Dungkar Goenpa in the south and instantly one would realize that the hills resemble a fully blooming lotus (*meto pema*). Similarly, Rinpoche christened the then called Dungsam Kothri as Samdrup Jongkhar.

After Pemagatshel became a new dzongkhag, the people felt the need for a dzong. A proposal to build it in Yurung was rejected by the people since it would entail additional tax and labour contribution. The present Dzong was built during the time of home minister late Lyonpo Tamshing Jagar, and Parop Dorji was then the Dzongda.

The district is divided into seven gewogs: Chimong, Chongshing, Dungmed, Khar Shumar, Zobel, and Yurung. Shumar is the biggest, while Nyaskhar, Laniri, Mikuri,

Shemshem and Chimong are the remotest. Yurung is a remote gewog without motor roads. It is shaped like the palms of Lord Buddha. It has an old school built around 1960s where many senior civil servants got their education. Khangma village which is located opposite Yurung is known for a big chhoeten which is believed have been built with assistance of khandom. Maize is the staple crop. The main cash crop orange can be grown in almost all parts of the region. Potato and chilli are also cultivated. Other vegetables and cereals are grown both for consumption and market.

Who was Dungsam Ja Dungpa?

Not even the name of Dungsam Ja Dungpa is known, forget about his life and family. The people who had some knowledge about Ja Dungpa are long dead, and sadly those histories are beyond retrieval. The present account of Dungsam Ja Dungpa has been derived from whatever the people could recount. Some readers may not agree with the present account.

Dungsam Ja Dungpa is from Khangma. He lived with his wife, two sons, sister and a maid called Ja Zam. He had a big house and was known for wealth. It seems that the people addressed him as Ja Dungpa, but not by his actual name. He was appointed by Chhoetse Penlop to collect taxes from Dungsam and Duars; so he was respected as much as he was feared. Taxes collected in form of textiles, tea, salt, fruits and grains were deposited either directly to Chhoetse Penlop or Zhongar Dzongpon. He also functioned as the Governor of the Duars (*Ja* means India and *Dung* is the Governor or Dungpa). The whole stretch of southern plains of Assam and Bengal bordering Bhutan was once under Bhutan until it was annexed by the British India during the Duar War, 1864-5. Dungsam Ja Dungpa must have been a loyal and dedicated servant of Chhoetse Penlop. There are folk songs dedicated to him and they are widely sung even today. There is no oral information on who preceded him as Ja Dungpa; but

certainly no one succeeded him after his brutal death. By then Pel Thongley's supremacy had been well established.

The Death of Ja Dungpa

Dungsam Ja Dungpa's sister was married to Pel Thongley who had a castle on the base of Lha Nang Zor – a rhino horn-shaped hill above the Urichhu on the way to Yurung. During the marriage, Ja Dungpa gave a plot of land in Khangma as a present and asked the newly-wed couple to construct a house. But no house was built there.

Ja Dungpa frequented the Assam Duars for official work and stayed there for many days. During one such visit to Assam Duars, Thongley took advantage of his absence and started an illicit affair with the maid servant. Ja Dungpa's maid was an Indian who was believed to have been brought from Assam Duars. This affair enraged his wife, Ja Dungpa's sister. She failed to stop Thongley from continuing the affair. In the end she suffered from mental disorder. The news enraged Ja Dungpa too. The relationship between Ja Dungpa and Thongley was strained beyond reconciliation. When they met occasionally, there was no former cordiality and warmth. Further, growing supremacy of Pel Thongley added salt to the injury and their hatred for each other grew so intense that eventually they took to fighting where Ja Dungpa met a tragic death.

Another account has it that Thongley arrived at Dungsam with a large force and built a gigantic castle. This instilled a sense of fear and respect amongst the people. Moreover, his sharp intelligence won over the leading figures and the people of Dungsam. This event naturally made Ja Dungpa envious of him. Later, Ja Dungpa came to know that Pel Thongley wanted to marry his sister. The former approached him and the marriage was accordingly arranged. But Ja Drung lied that his maid servant, Ja Zam was his sister and Thongley married Ja Zam. Ja Zam means an Indian girl. Thongley believed and accepted Ja Zam. Ja Dungpa gave him a plot of

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land in Khangma as present. The actual intention of Ja Dungpa to mend their relationship through a nuptial tie is not known. Some say that he wanted to know Thongley's weakness and then overcome his power. The others say Ja Dungpa bribed the Indian girl to poison Thongley after the marriage. Slowly, Thongley came to know his wife's identity before Ja Dungpa could achieve his plan. Thongley took it as an insult to his power, and the fight ensued between the two in which Ja Dungpa was killed.

Carrying a *dob* (a wooden bucket), Ja Dungpa's wife went to the spot where her husband was killed and collected his blood. She mixed it with water and splashed it over the land given to Thongley by her deceased husband. She cursed the land with extreme anger and hatred. She prayed that henceforth this particular land should not yield any harvest and that any family trying to cultivate it should meet the fate of her husband. This story has been transmitted orally from generation to generation and nobody has ever dared to cultivate the land. Today, the people of Khangma call this land as *monang sa*, meaning the forsaken land.

After his death, Ja Dungpa's family was broken. Feeling insecure to live near Thongley, they left their house to an unknown place. The news of Ja Dungpa's death never reached the authority in Trongsa, Zhongar or Wangdichholing which were considered the seat of justice in the eastern region. It was said that his wife decided to report it to Wangdichholing, and left her house and properties. She took whatever she could carry, but left her two sons inside a small hut which she had built of twigs and leaves. The hut was full of her lustrous gems and gold, hopes and aspirations and virtually everything. It is not known whether she mother met with the higher authorities in Wangdichholing or Zhongar. Some accounts have it that she filed a case against Pel Thongley.

How Two Son's Avenged their Father's Death

On the way, somewhere in Kengkhar, she cut a bamboo shoot and planted it upside down in the soil and made a prayer thus: "You [bamboo] grow in the manner I have planted to foretell that my sons can avenge the death of their father." So praying so, she went to Kengkhar and settled there. True to her prayers, the bamboo had grown in the same way she had wished. People say the bamboo still exists, quite distinct from the normal bamboo.

The sons grew up into a man. They became good archers who could hit any target with unerring precision. They could even hit an egg kept on a palm from a reasonable distance. This skill increased the mother's confidence. The mother had no doubt that her sons could really fulfill her wish. So, one day, she blessed her sons and the boys set off from Kengkhar to Lha Nang Zor. They were to make a fire on the top of Khangma Poktor and let the smoke rise to signify that they had killed Thongley.

The Coming of Thongley to Dungsam

At Kengkhar the mother kept on looking for any sign of smoke coming from Khangma Poktor while her sons waited to shoot Thongley. At last one of the sons hit Thongley and killed him. This was what their father had wanted to achieve long time ago, and this was what their mother wanted now. They proved to be the true sons of their parents. The boys immediately ran towards the top of Khangma Poktor, and no sooner did they make fire than they went home. At Kengkhar the mother upon seeing the smoke also ran to receive the sons. They met at a place where the boys said that they had removed Thongley from the earth (*Thongley Ra mun ma rang kang ti wa*). The mother out of sheer excitement jumped three times and shouted *ra mun ma, ra mun ma, ra mun ma*. Today this place is called Kengkhar Munma. Nothing is heard about what happened after that. It is believed that the boys returned to Lha Nang Zor after a few years.

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There is an interesting story about Pel Thongley. One day when a woman was crossing a bridge, a baby slipped out of her hands into a river. She tried to rescue but to no avail. As destiny would have it, a fisherman caught the boy in place of a fish. The baby was no other than Pel Thongley – the great great-great grandson of Lhasey Tsangma.¹ The fisherman did not have any child and he believed the boy was a reward for his prayers. The fisherman's wife was so happy to get the boy. They took a good care the boy as their own. The boy grew up to become a healthy and handsome man. He was so handsome that people were naturally attracted to him. The boy was thus named Pel Thongley རོ་མིག་དབུ་དང་ལྷན་དུ། མཐོང་བ་ཙོམ་གྱིས་ལེགས་

བ། དབུ་མཐོང་ལེགས། Apart from this, no oral information is available about Thongley's childhood. History simply has it that he was the king of Dungsam and that he belonged to the lineage of Lhasey Tsangma.

Pel Thongley was a handsome, brave, wise and talented man. Being from the lineage of kings, he was destined to become a king himself. He was accepted as *garpa* (medieval court attendant) by a Deb. His service impressed the Deb and won his trust and confidence. Thongley was later sent from the base of the golden throne as the *pon* (king) of Dungsam. Thongley pledged his sincerity, loyalty and dedication to the Deb and took his leave with a few servants.

Dungsam was then sparsely populated with a few scattered houses. When Thongley arrived at Dungsam he urgently built

¹ The oral account of genealogy of Pel Thongley begins from Nyathri Tsenpo to Namla Thridhuen, followed by Bargi Tengnyi, Sala Lekdru, Chhula Dheygay, Tshigla Tsen-nga, Tathothori Nyentsen, Namri Songtsen, Songtsen Gyampo, Gungri Gungtsen, Mangsong Mangtsen, Mangjay Lungnam, Thridhey Tsugten, Thrisong Detsen, Muti Tsenpo, Lhasay Tsangma, Thongley Tsen, Thriten Pel and Namkoe Dhey. Pel Thongley's father was Namkoe Dhey, and his descendents were Yoebar, Tshawo Changpo and Bangtsho.

his own castle. He thought of building on the land that might not be of any use in the future.

Building of Lha Nang Zor Castle

Like his ancestor Lhasay Tsangma who prayed for a bridge across Kurichhu, Pel Thongley also made a prayer to the god to prophesize a place for his settlement. After crossing Urichhu, he was climbing towards Yurung when he heard an unfamiliar voice from the sky. He took it as a prophecy and stopped to settle on that hill. He named it Lha Nang Zor - a god-given hill. He began constructing a castle on top of a hill resembling a precious rhinoceros horn. It is not known who were carpenters and masons. From the walls of the ruins, it is evident the castle was not the hands of professional carpenters or masons. This could be one reason why the castle did not last long. The masonry looks as if stones were piled one upon the other.

The castle at Lha Nang Zor served the purpose of any other dzong. It had been comparatively smaller than the dzongs built by Zhabdrung. It did not have any feature of the seventeenth century dzongs. Any way, it was from this hill that the reign of Thongley brought stability, peace and prosperity to the regions. Thongley was wise, just, humane and efficient, so the people believed. Some older generation vaguely recall their grandparents referring to him as Meme Thongley.

The oral account is full of Thongley's hunting adventures in the forest of the present day Shali. So he must have been an avid hunter. One day he forgot to pick up his hunting bow after taking a rest in the forest. The place was later called as *Shali* which literally means 'a hunting bow'.

Likewise, Thongley is associated with the names of other places. Shumar (*shugmar*) is the name of a place where he seriously fell ill. *Shug* means seriously, *marwa* means fell ill. Maan is a place where his physician arrived and treated him.

During his reign from Lha Nang Zor, Thongley had two groups of servants. Nangkorpa were the inner servants who discharged the internal chores, while Chikorpa performed the external duties. Later on, the place where Nangkorpa had settled came to be known as Nangkor. The settlement of Chhikorpa spread as Shumar.

Who Built Shalikhhar Dzong?

The road from the north of Kheri Goenpa winds through the villages of Gonpung and Gamung; then to Mongar and Wangdichholing. Until the early 1960s, it served as the main *zhunglam* between the centre and Samdrup Jongkhar. It was traditionally trodden by officials both in times of peace and civil strife; the local people travelled it for trade. It was through this traditional route that Trongsa Penlop, Jigme Namgyal led the Bhutanese troops to fight the British aggression at Dewathang, then called Dewangiri.

It is not clear who built Shalikhhar Dzong. But some oral accounts attribute it to Thongley. Since Lha Nang Zor's castle was pretty far from the *zhunglam*, Thongley failed to control the travelers, especially during times of political emergency. The existing code of protocol prevented higher authorities to climb up to Lha Nang Zor and meet Thongley. It was also a waste of time. Thus, this difficulty made Thongley to shift the castle to a different location. Another oral evidence points that after killing Ja Dungpa, Tongley built Shalikhhar Dzong to formalize and ease the tax collection, and then deposit them to Zhongar and Wangdichholing efficiently.

While residing at Lha Nang Zor, Pel Thongley cultivated nearby fertile plain where Shumar primary school is presently located, as his kitchen garden. Later when Shalikhhar Dzong was built, its dzongpon continued the practice. The dzongpon must have been Thongley himself because there is no logic for other dzongpon to use this particular land which is far from Shalikhhar. This evidence also points that it was Thongley who built Shalikhhar Dzong.

There is also a semantic evidence to prove that Shalikhhar Dzong was built by Thongley. The term *Khar*, was used wherever the descendents of Lhasey Tsangma settled such as Tsenkhar, Bengkhar Wengkhar, Domkhar, Chungkhar, Kengkhar, Chaskhar, Jamkhar. Had the builder been others, it would have been named Shali Dzong.

Zowo Ngan Tempa - the Great Builder

While the builder of Shalikhhar Dzong cannot be ascertained, Zowo Ngan Tempa was the master mason. He is from Shumar Thung, a small village which is not far from Kheri Goenpa. He was known to be quick and light-bodied. A unique chhoeten built in Shumar Thung bears witness to his architectural skill. This living masterpiece still evokes an echo of Zowo's skill. A similar chhoeten is believed to be still intact, withstanding the cruel test of time somewhere in the forest near Tshelingore. Had Kolokpo, the last Dzongpon safeguarded Shalikhhar Dzong, it might have stood as another living masterpiece, much more glorious than the others. The Dzong was later destroyed and both man and nature began to encroach it. No other details are available about Zowo Ngan Tempa.

Destruction of Shalikhhar Dzong

One reason for shifting his castle to Shali must be purely strategic. Thongley must have wanted a *Dra Dzong* (enemy fortress) to watch over the enemy intrusion. This was why Shalikhhar Dzong was built on the top of a hill overlooking the valleys.

Several attempts were made to conquer the Dzong. There is a story that once the Tibetans came from Tawang to Dungsam through Trashigang. On the way to India they thought of capturing Shalikhhar Dzong and descended from the present day Pangkhar opposite to Shalikhhar Dzong near Chungkhar.

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When they looked up from the ravine, Shalikhhar Dzong looked as if it was hanging in the sky and thus, they exclaimed:

ཤལི་མཁར་བཞི་ཚོང་།
སེ་ཚོང་མ་རེད་གནས་ཚོང་རེད།

*The Dzong of Shalikhhar,
Is not on Land,
But in the Sky*

So, they had to retreat and continue towards India. There is a second story of an attempt to destroy the Dzong with a big round boulder called the Pungdo of Masang. The stone is believed to have been flung from Khangma to destroy the Dzong. Luckily, the boulder landed just a few steps away from the Dzong.

It is not known why the Dzong was under a constant threat. The Indians also made a several attempts to destroy it during the British rule, mostly by Kacharis, Assamese and Bengalis. At that time Lama of Yongla Goenpa played an important mediator role. But a friendship between the Shalikhhar Dzongpon and Lama of Yongla Goenpa abruptly turned sour. It is believed that the Dzongpon once addressed the Lama by his nickname Phucha. This Lama must have been Lama Dorji Gyaltshen, son of Garpa Shesha. The Lama was mostly known by his nickname, but he was never addressed so, at least in his presence. The enemies took advantage of this sour relation and advanced to the Dzong. The Lama who felt insulted and hurt did not speak any good word in favour of the Shalikhhar Dzongpon. Out-numbered by the Indian forces, the Shalikharpa failed to retaliate. Properties were destroyed and religious images desecrated; statues were beheaded and made into *thab lung* (oven-stones); religious texts were made into carpets; countless valuables taken. The Dzongpon's few attendants were killed, while his wife and her maidservant escaped through a window and went to Shar – the present day Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh, India. Kolokpo is believed

to have committed suicide by jumping off from the third storey. The enemies finally razed down the dzong to the ground.

The Dzong was destroyed during the reign of Dzungpon Kolokpo. It is not known what made the enemies to destroy the Dzong. The people of Shalikhari neither have a dispute nor instigate others to deserve such destruction. It is possible that the Indians coveted Dzungpon's enormous wealth. After the Dzong was ransacked, they took away a lot of properties while a mountain of grains was burnt to ashes along with the Dzong. It is believed that Peling of Wooling warned Shalikhari Dzungpon about the Indians attack; but it seems the Yongla Lama did not pass the message to Dzungpon.

There is another story about the downfall of the dzong and this version has the same ending. But it begins differently with the war between Bhutan and the British India in Dewathang.

The Bhutanese troops were led by the then Trongsa Penlop Jigme Namgyal, the father of the First King Ugyen Wangchuck. On the way Ugyen Wangchuck visited Kheri Goenpa and Yongla Goenpa to offer prayers. When he lost his way in the jungle of Yongla Goenpa, a white bird appeared and showed him the way. It disappeared when he was on the right road. During the war, the British positioned their gun at the route used by the Bhutanese in direction of Yongla Goenpa, and kept one gun operator on duty. But at night a short black man would appear and reverse the position of the machine. In the morning, the enemies were surprised to find the operator dead. This happened for several consecutive nights, but the British did not want to retreat. It was only when Jigme Namgyal's arrow hit the head of their general from a reasonable distance that they decided to retreat nervously at once. Some jumped over deep ravines, while others were killed. Some managed to live for some hours with Bhutanese arrows either on the back or legs; some escaped unhurt.

After the British had retreated, Bhutanese forces returned home and carried a *tob* (canon) seized during the war to Wangdichholing. After crossing Shalikhhar Dzong, they took rest under a tree called Buramshing at the base of Kengkhar near Drangmichhu. As they continued their journey, the *tob* incredibly became so heavy that they could not carry it.

Meanwhile, the enemies followed them. It is not known what happened to these Bhutanese, except that the *tob* became miraculously lighter on the shoulders of three or four Indian sepoys. Carrying the *tob* the Indians had crossed the Shalikhhar Dzong and took rest on slope of the opposite hill. Dzungpon Kolokpo knew that the Indians had recovered the canon from the Bhutanese and he, at once, fired his *mendha* (gun power) from his chamber. The fire missed the target and hit a stone on which one of the officers was resting. The scar left by the *mendha* on the stone can be still seen even today. The Indians were angered by the gunshot and they soon surrounded the Shalikhhar Dzong. The forces of Dzungpon were numbered and the Dzong destroyed.

The One Who Cannot Properly Pronounce Words

Little is known about Dzungpon Kolokpo. He was Zhongar Dzungpon before becoming Shalikhhar Dzungpon. When he was in Zhongar, it is believed that he asked his attendants to bring a girl. The attendants went out and brought an ugly lady. When the attendant reported that they could not find a beautiful woman, he replied, "If she is ugly, cover her face with a cloth and bring her in." So they did. Then he made his attendant to witness his sexual intercourse with the lady. He would ask him from time to time how it was progressing. The attendant replied, *lung ngig tsing chamkai joktang nufa prusken nubla la* (your genital is entering as if a potato is squeezed in between two stones). Kolokpo exclaimed at last, *thum thai, thum thai*. Actually, he should have pronounced, *thub thai thub thai* (leave it, leave it). The people believe that he was bad in pronouncing words; even when he was a

Shalikhhar Dzungpon, he was known as Tal Toloe – the one who cannot properly pronounce words.

During one of her rituals performed in 2003 the spirit of Kolokpo spoke through a *pamo* (shaman) from Shumar Gomchu, saying that he has taken rebirth as the Neypo (serpent guardian) in the ruins of Shalikhhar Dzong. In the spirit's recitation, it said, "My body is so huge and long that I can't even slide and move to have sun light even for a while."

It is believed that a person who gets frightened while passing near the ruins would become inactive and lose the power of pronunciation. A *serkem* (libation) had to be offered to restore the person. This is because Kolokpo himself was not good at pronunciation. In 2001, Morong Rinpoche subdued the Neypo. The Neypo transformed into a young man appeared in Rinpoche's dream with the life-force (*sog*) of a pregnant lady who was admitted to the Pemagatshel hospital and requested the Rinpoche to follow him. The Rinpoche knew the intention and followed Nyepo. After reaching the ruins, he subdued the Nyepo, and asked it not to bring any more suffering to the people. The life-force of the pregnant lady was restored. Since then, nobody has fallen victim. It is said that *Phag Zipa* – the caretaker of Kolokpo's pigs also mispronounced words like his Lord.

The Ruins of Shalikhhar Dzong

The ruin of Shalikhhar Dzong is located to the north of Pemagatshel Dzong. The nearest villages are quite far from the ruins: Gonpung and Serkhangpa lhakhang in the north, Dur Dur in the east, Khari in the south and Senang in the west. It can be reached from Nangkor and Je Brangsa, but the shortest and the easiest route is from Kheri Gonpa along the tractor road. Until 1960s, this route formed a part of the main zhunglam between the central government and Samdrup Jongkhar, passing through Wangdichholing, Zhongar, Shalikhhar and Dewathang.

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The main entrance gate – *gorekha* – faces east in the direction of Dur Dur. To its left is Chungkhar separated by a deep ravine. If viewed from below, Shalikhhar Dzong looks like Trashigang Dzong as seen from Chagzam. To its left is a village called Senang on the slope separated from Khangma and Lha Nang Zor by Urichhu.

It must have been a big dzong built with lots of human labour and difficulties. The courtyard walls are about five meters high, and the stones used were of good quality. The walls of the ruins were intact in late 1960s before the local people removed the stones as *zur lung* (stones used in sides of a house) and transported them for building Shumar Dzong. The Shumar Dungpa was then under Zhongar Dzongpon. Shumar Dzong was also later destroyed and its old timber was used to construct the office of the first Dzongda Parop Dorji before Pemagatshel Dzong was built. The people of the nearby villages continued to carry away the stones for constructing private houses. This further deteriorated the ruins to an unrecognizable shape. Some people believe that these stones are limestone, while others say that they are marble. There are rumours of mining the whole ruins.

At the base of the ruins there is a small valley which looks like a dried lake. One source has it that it was a pond for keeping ducks, while another oral source says that it was Dzongpon's pigsty. The former seem farfetched because there is no sign of an enclosure at the other end, and more over, water was scarce during those days, and more surprisingly even today.

The place has only one drinking water source in Dewpari some kilometers above Dur Dur. A long canal was dug to bring water from a small reservoir. Where it was difficult to dig canal, bamboos were used in absence of modern pipes. Long cylindrical bamboo containers called *gongdong* were also used both for carrying and storing water. People had been using *gongdong* until late 1980s, and they are still being used in some remote villages.

There was a big *mani dungjur* (prayer-wheel) in the corner of courtyard as one enters the courtyard from *gorekha*. The courtyard looks like an undulated plain. There is no trace of a prayer-wheel today. The courtyard floor rises gently as it nears the *utse* (copula). The walls of the three storeys *utse* have been pulled down while removing *zurlung* in the early 1970s. The bases of surrounding walls are covered by dried leaves and bushes. Not many people dare to approach it except for some brave cattle herders.

There is a square plateau-like leveled field as one moves on straight. It must have been another courtyard or the floor of another room. The walls are intact on either side. This is followed by rows of several blocks of ruined houses. While it is difficult to even guess how long it took to construct Shalikhhar Dzong, it took only a few hours for the fire to bring it down. The ruins sleep quietly under bushes unknown to most people.

Per Khe: The Evidence of Iron Work

People believe that there is a deposit of *perkhe* (iron residue) on a slope that stretches down to Senang. There is a local story about a blacksmith's house called *gartsang*. It is not sure whether iron-ore was mined before or after the construction of Shalikhhar Dzong. If there was a mining activity before, iron nails must have been used for construction. However, iron had been used to make weapons and household items. Not a single piece of wood can be found which might otherwise reveal some evidences of use of nails. Nothing can be said about the materials used for roofing either.

Shalikhhar Dzong had played an important role in the country's history. It served as the enemy-fortress to watch any external intrusion into our country from the east. It had been used as the half way terminus by the travellers between Zhongar and Dewathang. From this place also spread one of

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the four highly respected nobilities in Dungsam called Shalikhhar Choeje originated from this place. The other nobilities are Choeje of Dungkhar, Chungkhar and Bangtsho. These four nobilities are considered equivalent to other nobilities of the other parts of the country like Dung nobility.

While Choeje of Chungkhar, Bangtsho and Shalikhhar all belonged to the descendents of Lhasey Tsangma, Dungkhar Choeje is believed to be a mixture of Gya clan and Dung, tracing its root to Tenpai Nyima, the father of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel and Barkey, the son of a Naga King of Makulung Tsho respectively. Today the descendents of Dungkhar Choeje have spread to Dungsam and their nobility is now called Khoche.

Meanwhile, there is no one who claims to be descendents of Shalikhhar Choeje in Pemagatshel. Some elders believe that a few descendants of those who ran away during the downfall of the Shalikhhar Dzong must be surviving in Tawang.

A Myth about the Pungdo of Masang

A several stories of failed attempts to destroy Shalikhhar Dzong are still being narrated. The most interesting one is about Masang who threw a pungdo to destroy the Dzong. A pungdo is a big round boulder, an equivalent of a modern day sport, shot-put.

There were two Gyelpo – Thinley Zangpo and Norbu Zangpo – who were brothers. The former resided somewhere on a steep cliff of Pangkhar, and the latter on a cliff between Guyum and Mande. Their abodes were separated by a crow fly distance of two kilometers. It is said that the two brothers could communicate with each other until the building of Shalikhhar Dzong on a hilltop disrupted their direct communication (conversation), and their welfare also declined.

So one day, Norbu Zangpo invited Masang from Zhongar Chaskhar to help him destroy the Dzong. Masang agreed and

ordered that Norbu Zangpo should cook him one *mon* (80 kg) of rice and a pig for his meal. He further instructed a lady from Yurung to do the cooking. But the lady from Yurung hid one thigh of pig and one *khaw* (roughly 1½ kg) of rice. She thought that Masang cannot eat such a huge quantity, and secretly kept them for herself.

When Masang arrived, he unbelievably gourmandized the whole food, and did not leave anything. He then took an aim and threw a big boulder towards Shalikhhar Dzong. However, the boulder missed the target by a yard, and landed at the foot of the Dzong. The failure was attributed to the lady of Yurung who hid a thigh of the pig and a *khaw* of rice; otherwise the Dzong would have been destroyed.

Another story narrates that the Dzungpon of Shalikhhar Dzong levied heavy taxes on the people living under his jurisdiction. Particularly, the people of Khangma, Yurung and beyond had to carry back-breaking loads while depositing taxes to the government. So they thought of removing their Dzungpon. But they found it difficult either to assassinate or fight against their powerful Dzungpon. Then, someone spoke about a giant called Masang whose fame and strength was well known in the vicinity of Zhongar Chaskhar. All of them agreed and Masang was invited. Masang ordered the hosts to arrange him a feast of one whole pig and a *mon* of rice. The people requested a lady of Yurung to prepare the meal. She agreed. From here the story is similar to the earlier one, except that *pungdo* was thrown from Khangma.

Who was Masang Then?

Long, long ago Brokpa of Merak and Sakteng assassinated a Tibetan Deb called Yabu Zangpo and ran away via Tshona Sewakhar. On the way, they prayed to the gods above for protection. Their prayer was answered. The god-king, Lhayi Jajin Wangpo ordered the god-son, Guseng Langling, to come down in disguise, and so he did.

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Guseng Langling landed at Lho Dungscho Karmathang in Pemagatshel. It is not sure whether the Brokpa asked for any help from Guseng Langling. But it is said that he ruled the under-world of Dungscho Karmathang (Luyul/Muyul) for sometime. There, he was called Mu Tsan Lhanyan Chhenpo. He traveled from Dungscho Karmathang and reached a hilltop from where he clearly saw Wangsengla. Reaching Wangsengla, he saw a beautiful lake called Mukulungtsho where he built his palace and reigned over both the under-world and humans. Guseng Langling could transform into both human and the serpent king, klu.

One day, a young, beautiful Sharchhop girl made her way down to Dungsam Khar as a bride to the Khar Gyalpo. At dusk, she reached at Mukulungtsho and took refuge at the lake shore. As fate would have it, the serpent king Guseng Langling slept with the girl. When she reached Dungsam, she was already pregnant. She later gave birth to an illegitimate male child. So, the child was named Barkey – born from the middle without a father. But she alone knew her son's father.

Barkey grew up and attained his youth. One day, he made his way to India for a trade and reached the lake of Nyey Tsang Long. Since he was the son of a Lha Tsan, the inhabitants of this lake did not allow Barkey to proceed further. The evil serpent (klu) of this lake was his father's enemy. Desperate and annoyed, Barkey returned home and questioned his mother about his father. The mother at last revealed his identity, "You are the son of the Lha Tsan of Mukulung Tsho."

Barkey immediately went to Mukulung Tsho and called for his father. A young man attired in a silk robe came out of the middle of the lake, and replied, "Yes, I am your father. What can I do for you?" Barkey narrated in detail about the evil serpents of Nyey Tsang Long Tsho. His father gave him a locked box, and asked him to open it only when he reached the lake of Nyey Tsang Long. So Barkey returned. On reaching Threphu, Barkey opened the box a little. No sooner did he open it than the serpent of different shapes and sizes

started to come out. He quickly closed the container and hurried down. On reaching the lake he opened the box. Incredibly, thousands of serpents rushed into the lake and the next moment it dried up. In the middle of the dried lake was a copper bowl lying up-side down. The young and curious Barkey went there and opened it. Instantly, a maid servant of the klu who had remained hidden there hit Barkey on the forehead with a copper ladle. Unfortunately Barkey ended his life there. His brain was eaten by a fish and his spirit too entered the fish and thus, he was transformed into a fish.

The fish followed Bronolachhu below Khar which joins Drangmechhu, also called Gongri. Then to Zhongar Meilpachhu and finally it reached the river of Chhankhoi where it got trapped in a fisherman's net. The fisherman was a widower. He did not kill it but took it home alive since it spoke human words. He kept the fish in a wooden tub full of water.

One day, when the fisherman returned home from his work he was surprised to discover that someone had fetched water for him. At another day, a fire was burning in his oven. He wondered who it could be. So, the next day, he pretended to go out and watched secretly.

To his greatest surprise, a young man appeared from the wooden tub and removed his scales. The young man started to burn fire, fetch water and prepare meals. The fisherman thought of adopting him as his son and instantly picked up his scale and threw it into the fire. Thus, this is how Barkey, once again resumed his human form. He was named Repa Tobchhen – a giant with long hair.

This giant, Repa Tobchhen was Masang. He was also called Chhali Masang because his wife was from Chhali. He also lived in Chhali for sometime. His footprints can be still seen on stones in Chhali, Gonpung and Gamung and Dagor. Masang liked to play archery, and there is a long rectangular

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stone slab in Gonpung which is believed to be his target. The other target is at Kengkhar Brongphu, which is about half day's walk from Gonpung. Thus, Mansang's archery range is incredibly long. He is also known to have constructed a bridge using a long single stone-slab somewhere in Bumthang.

Repa Tobchhen alias Chhali Masang built a castle in Yutungla and ruled over Bumthang Ura and Zhongar. As Chieftain he overburdened the people with the work of cutting and leveling a hill between Chhali and Zhongar so that he could see Chhali and enjoy early sunlight. This task enraged the people and they secretly discussed to get rid of him. An archery match was arranged at Kabithang and Masang was invited. Masang knew about the plot, yet he could not decline the invitation. He went to Kabithang only to be hit by an arrow which pierced through his heart. Before he died, he said, "There will come a time when you will remember me; so look for me in Yarlung Drogme Chhey (Tibet). I will be reborn there for your benefit." So Masang died, leaving behind many remarkable episodes and stories that people still love to narrate and listen.

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The Myth and the Mystery of Aja Nye

*Rinzin Wangchuk**

*Value and merit of sacred Aja shall transcend all human
imagination;
A mere visit shall bring peace and happiness
Visualization alone will lead to enlightenment
Aja is comparable to the western heavenly abode...*

Thirteen centuries after Guru Rinpoche made the above prophecy, a sacred *nye* (*gnas*) of Aja in Mongar still holds a mystical attraction for many Bhutanese pilgrims.

This sacred *nye* is attributed to Guru Rinpoche who brought tantric Buddhism to Bhutan. Located in the extreme north of Serzhong Geog at an altitude of more than 3,500 meters, it is a three-day walk from Mongar Dzong. *Aja* means hundred numbers of alphabet "Aa" which appeared on a rock surface. The gorges and mountains in the areas are dotted with *nyes*.

The history of Aja Nye dates back to 850 AD. According to the legend, Guru Rinpoche knew that an exiled demon Tibetan king, Khikharathoed, was trying to settle in Aja. Guru traveled through Tormijangsa by crossing several gorges and mountains to reach Aja. Before that Guru had chased away another demon (*dud*) from Tibet and subdued it at the present Gomphu Kora Nye in Tashiyangtse. At the site, Guru Rinpoche subdued many local *dud* and evil spirits but found it difficult to subjugate Khikharathoed. According to religious interpretation, Khikharathoed escaped the wrath of Guru and moved to Khempajong in Lhuntse where he established his demon kingdom.

It is believed that Guru Rinpoche spent more than three months hiding sacred *nye* to be rediscovered in the future. Among several sacred sites, the most popular one is a small

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cave on the bank of Ajachhu where Guru Rinpoche meditated for three months. After the meditation, he left a white imprint of the letter Aa on the reddish-brown rock in the cave as a proof of his attainment of perfection. Thus, the cave derived its name Aja from the 100 Aa imprinted on the inner wall of the cave. According to Lam Kezang Chopel of Zorig Chusum Institute, Tashiyangtsi, who has conducted an extensive research on Aja Nye, not all letters are visible today, except for those bold imprints.

Spring water near Ajachhu is believed to have curative value. People frequently bathe in the pungent smelling medicinal water (*menchu*) for curative purposes. It is believed to have a curative effect on 18 types of diseases such as tuberculosis, body pain, ulcer, and whooping cough. In the same vicinity there is another stream called Awachhu falling from a cliff. Legend has it that the stream started falling after Guru Rimpoche implanted his walking stick on the rock. The stream forms a pool on a rock basin, where Guru is believed to have taken a bath. The pool can accommodate nine people and person is cleansed by taking a bath. It is warm in winter and cool in summer. A kind of grass locally called *Tsa Awa Doti* grows in the area. The grass planted by Guru is considered sacred with medicinal values.

The place holds a host of other religious sites and symbols. They include the imprints of Guru's feet, body, and seat, prints symbolizing subjugation of the evils, Khando Dowa Zangmo's foot prints, 108 retreat caves of Guru Rinpoche, and foot prints of Lam Karma Jamyang who discovered the hidden sacred sites. They are located in mountains, bamboo groves, meadows, gorges, and dense forest. The entire pilgrimage to Aja would take a week to complete.

The sacred sites in Aja comprise of four clusters: Tsekor, Barkor, Nagkor and Rongkor. It is a tiresome and endless endeavour to reach all sites; and seeing and feeling of these sites strengthen one's beliefs in dwelling places of deities, sacred mountains, meditation caves, holy waters, body and

foot prints of great saints, places of gods, abodes of dead and the meandering Shelrichhu protected by Lumo Tagdongma.

According to a research conducted by Lam Kezang, the door to Aja was initially opened by Terton Ugyen Lingpa around 14th century. He constructed a monastery at Pema Yangdzong, which today is in ruins. Terton Ugyen Lingpa was followed by another great luminary from Tibet called Terton Rigzin Goeki Dhemthrug. The Ninth Karampa Roelpai Dorji followed him. Guru Rinpoche had actually prophesized that the nye would be discovered by the Ninth Karmapa. Old age, however, had deterred him from carrying out the task and he had instead sent his disciple Lam Karma Jamyang, the incarnation of Jetsuen Jampelyang, to reveal the nye. Lam Karma Jamyang re-opened the sacred path for pilgrims according to the instruction of his root guru, Karampa Roelpai Dorji.

Lam Karma Jamyang travelled through Tashiyangtse from Tibet and reached Tagmolung. There he could not establish a base to begin his task of discovering the nye after he had lost his way in the dense forest. That night a tiger approached the helpless lama, made three rounds around him, growled, and disappeared. Taking it as an auspicious sign, the lama followed the tiger's footprints the next day and reached a place called Dechenphodrang. The tiger appeared again that night and growled in four directions, leaping three times. The lama then established his base in Dechenphodrang and discovered all nyes following the tiger's foot prints. Therefore, the popular Aja is also known as Takdong Nye.

In order to rebuild monastery at Pema Yangdzong, the lama collected timber but could not proceed with the construction as no stone was to be found in the area. A local serpent king (Naga) helped the Lam by providing stones and also offered a *nangten* of a self-created *Jangchub Chhoeten*. The hill housing Dechenphodrang resembles a lotus flower, and hence the monastery is called Pema Yangdzong. But the several years later it remained hidden again until a famous Aja Lam from

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Ozorong, Trashigang, resided at Aja and renovated the monastery.

Aja Lam and Sersanglam Gyeltshen Dorji were very influential figures in eastern Bhutan during those days. Their involvement in political affairs of Trashigang forced Sersanglam to leave for Tibet temporarily, while Aja Lam was assassinated at Jangphu. However, Sersanglam returned to Bhutan, perhaps after the place had become stable. The late Aja Lam's nephew Lam Sharchung stayed at Pema Yangdzong after his uncle's death. He was well known in the region as a great sorcerer that he was a figure of great fear for every body. Lam Sharchung and Lupon Gangchhen of Lhuntse once had a sorcery contest by sending flight of a cudgel embedded with the sorcery mantra to hit each other. There was no victor since both possessed equal sorcery power. Later, Lam Sharchung died of food poison and the monastery was left to ruin.

Among the three monasteries located within the Aja area, Dungkar Chholing Lhakhang is considered the most sacred. It is believed that the Buli Trulku of Bumthang, Khachab Namkha Dorji, built the Lhakhang under the instruction of the 15th Karmapa. Aja was quiet, safe and serene place with rich flora and fauna when Buli Trulku arrived there in 1920s. The original environment is intact even today.

Buli Trulku Khachab Namkha Dorji was not related to Aja Lam either through blood or lineage. He was the incarnation of Yudrak Nyingpo born to the noble family of Bumthang Buli Chhoje. From the age of seven to 14, he studied under Lupon Kuenga Gyeltshen at Drangla Goenpa. He then continued his studies under ex-Yanglop Tenzin Dhondup at Shalipang Goenpa in Gaselo, Wangdue. He studied language, grammar, poetry and literature for five years and had to return home when all his brothers had gathered for the funeral of their sister Dorji Dema.

Unfortunately, the family of Buli Chhoje family had a grave tragedy due to a matrimonial conflict with the Wangdichholingpa. They were sent on exile to Dungsam. Few years later, Buli Trulku managed to reach at Aja Nye – his predestined destination. Leaving his old mother, Kuenzang Chhoedon, behind, he made a hut in Aja, opposite to Pema Yangdzong. He then frequently went to Tibet to receive deeper religious teachings from various Buddhist spiritual masters such as the 15th Karmapa Khachab Dorji, Kathog Situ Rinpoche, Drupwang Shacha Shiri Rinpoche and Baeyuel Rinpoche Kuzhu Jigme Thinley, whom he revered as his root teacher. It was his root teacher's prediction that he should construct a monastery in Aja. Thus he constructed the Dungkar Chhoeling Lhakhang in such a lonely place without much hardship.

According to oral sources, Buli Trulku saw a vision of three goddesses who appeared before him and promised to provide the stones. When construction began, blocks of stones like volumes of religious texts appeared. After construction was completed, goddesses disappeared like a rainbow. In the mean time his beloved mother passed away. He cremated her near Dungkar Chhoeling Lhakhang.

Thereafter, Buli Trulku practiced total retreats and meditation in Aja. He also performed many sermons and teachings for the disciples and devotees from far and near. He was then widely known as Aja Lam. Since Aja is very far and cold in winter, he built a house in lower base of Aja called Yarab for his family. He also came to be known as Yarab Lam for his many teachings he had given there during winter months. Resembling a conch-shell, Dungkar Chholing Lhakhang was fully renovated by Buli Trulku's son, Lam Dorji Tenzin, in 1963. Today, Dungkar Chholing Lhakhang and Yarab are maintained by Lam Dorji's daughter and nephew.

In 1950 Lama Thukten Rinpoche, a highly revered Dharma practitioner and a disciple of Drupwang Shacha Shiri, resided for three years at Dungkar Chholing Lhakhang and for

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another three years at Funyingla (the heart of the mountains), another mountain trail walk from Aja Nye. Lama Thukten Rinpoche came from Pangkhar village, Lhuentse. And in 1960s Lama Sonam Zangpo, another disciple of Drupwang Shacha Shiri resided at Aja and Funyingla for five years. Lam Sonam Zangpo from Kurtoe Dungkar constructed the Guru Lhakhang at Funyingla and installed statues with valuable relics in dedication to Guru Rinpoche. He was widely known as a renowned artisan in the country for his great skill in 13 aspects of traditional arts and crafts.

Funyingla is considered as the heart of all the nye in the area and if any pilgrim fails to visit it the pilgrimage is considered incomplete. This place is a day-long walk from Aja and houses various religious sites attributed to Guru Rinpoche. Located at an altitude of 4,500 meters, it is also a meditation centre for Bhutanese lamas. As one climbs higher, the vegetations turn to alpine Rhododendron, Balu Sulu, ferns, bamboos, daphne, maples and other medicinal shrubs infested with leeches and ticks.

The effort of the Mongar Dzongkhag Administration and the local communities is fast making Aja as a popular site for pilgrimage. In 2001 the community of Sheri Mukhung has improved and widened the mule track from the point of a 10-kilometre Yadi-Serzhong feeder road leading to Aja Nye. From there one should start walking uphill to Serzhong village for the first night halt. The next day is an uphill walk to Yarab and the third day will take you to Aja. Two guest houses in Yarab and Aja were constructed by the local people for the benefit of the visitors and the pilgrims. The best season to visit Aja Nye is between April and October. Some people visit between November to January as long as there is no snow. An estimated 700 pilgrims visit the sacred site every year.

It is believed that visits to such sacred places will purify one's mind and rinse the negative actions committed by body. It is also believed that merit resulting from one chant of mantra of Guru Rinpoche or Chenreze in Aja is equivalent to chanting

thousand times in other places. If one erects a triangular stone in Aja, it is also equivalent to constructing a chhoeten in other places. Therefore, it is obligatory to visit the place once in lifetime when one has the means. The ultimate result will lead to the eternal satisfaction of individuals and the perpetual wellbeing of all sentient beings. There are also three routes connecting Aja from Mongar, Lhuentse and Trashiyangtse.

The Legend of Guru Rinpoche and Khikharathoed

With the demon king Khikharathoed still at large, Guru's prime objective had not been accomplished. Therefore, the Guru left Aja and went towards Lhuentse through Funyingla in pursuit of the demon king. Through clairvoyant powers, Guru Rinpoche knew of the threat posed by Khikharathoed who had moved to Khempajong in Kurtoe. Guru went to Khempajong in the guise of a dark-complexioned man and presented himself before Khikharathoed. Calling himself Haranagpo, and claiming to be an enemy of Buddhism and Guru Padmasambhava in particular, he offered to join the dark forces of Khikharathoed against Lhasa. Khikharathoed accepted him as his accomplices after the disguised Guru demonstrated his powers by imprinting 18 footsteps on a large slab of stone. It is believed that the footprints, though not located, exist even now.

Later, Guru Rinpoche proposed the construction of a flying object out of wood. Guru suggested that since the Tibetans were very proud of Samye, a flying object would be more marvelous than Samye. The flying object - in the shape of a Jachung (Garuda) - was built to carry 500 people. As a demonstration, he invited the king, ministers, and the senior courtiers to take a ride. The object took off amidst a big gathering of people. After being airborne, Khikharathoed realized that he had been flown out of his kingdom. Guru Rinpoche then hid Khenpajong as a *baeyul* (a sacred hidden land) after which Khikharathoed tried but never found his

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kingdom. He is believed to have then settled in Tang, Bumthang.

King Khikharathoed's legend says that Marjenmo, one of five consorts of Thrisong Deutsen was furious that the latter had neglected her for three years and started an illicit affair with a goat and a dog. Later she gave birth to an abnormal child with a dog's mouth and a goat's head. People called him Khikharathoed in reference to his physical deformities.

Marjenmo wanted her son to become the king, deviating from the law of primogeniture, and had one of the other sons of Thrisong Deutsen killed. She was exiled for this and Khikharathoed, already seen as an enemy of Buddhism, was exiled upon Guru Rinpoche's recommendation. With a huge circle of courtiers and attendants, Khikharathoed established himself in Lhodrag Kith in south Tibet. Bent on destroying Samye monastery and seeking revenge on Guru Rinpoche, he raised an army, but eventually lost the war against Lhasa. Guru Rinpoche was invited to Tibet, on the suggestion of Khenpo Bodhi Satowa, when Samye monastery was being built during the reign of King Thrisong Deutsen. The monastery could not be built until Guru Rinpoche had subdued the disruptive evil spirits.

According to religious interpretation Khempa Jong exists even today as a baeyul imperceptible to the outside world. The site, where Khempa Jong was believed to be hidden, is located in the extreme northern reaches of the Kurichu, nearly three days walk from Lhuentse Dzong. The area is remote, accessible only by a crude and extremely risky path. About 50 wooden ladders sustain the path on the slippery and steep parts and across numerous streams. One false step on these ladders could plunge the traveller into deep gorges. Horses can be used only on the first day.

Khempa Jong, although now inhospitable and dominated by bamboo groves, was inhabited between 1939 and 1961 by Lam Sonam Zangpo. It was a community of about 62

households, all devoted to religious pursuits. Dzongsar Jamyang Khentse was born there on June 18, 1961. Four months after his birth the place, quite close to the Tibetan border, was entirely vacated because of tensions resulting from the Sino-Indian war in 1962. Dzongsar Jamyang Khentse recollects that there was a complete village when his parents and grandparents were living here, and today everything had disappeared like a fairy tale.

The existence of Baeyul Khempa Jong was believed to have been discovered in the 14th century by Terton Pema Lingpa. He discovered a text hidden by Guru Rinpoche and its guidelines took him to Khempa Jong. The text reportedly mentioned that the kingdom was hidden west of Singye Dzong, that it had dense sandalwood forests in the south, and was close to five pointed peaks. It also specifically mentioned “Kurichhu” and that there were nine hot springs to the south and three to its north. The hot springs are believed to be best in the country. The hot springs in the south emit thick fumes of vapour, covering the full length of a cliff from where the springs emanate. Three hot springs form natural stone tubs, set amazingly against the cliff itself, while the others can be used only by constructing tubs.

A cold stream runs close to the hot springs without affecting them. Local devotees believe that when Guru Padmasambhava created these hot springs, evil spirits tried to disrupt him by sending a bigger cold stream from the top of the cliff. He made a separate channel and diverted the stream. The three hot springs north of Khempa Jong are called Yonten Kuenjung. According to the scriptures, they had great curative powers and Guru Rimpoche himself had predicted that Yonten Kuenjung would benefit people more than he could.

A comprehensive history of Khempa Jong is found in the scriptures. Near the Yonten Kuenjung hot spring, there is a huge mountain of monolithic stone in shapes of beams, planks and other construction material of a house. This is

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believed to be Tashinamdzong (castle) of Khikharathoed which was overturned and petrified by Guru Rinpoche.

Changing Soil Fertility Management in Bhutan: Effects on Practices, Nutrient Status and Sustainability*

Chencho Norbu⁺ and Christopher Floyd

Abstract

This paper is the results of a Soil Fertility Management (SFM) survey conducted in 1999 to determine the status and trends in soil fertility management and associated soil conditions in Bhutan in the face socio-economic development of the last four decades. While the traditional SFM systems based on the use of animal manures still dominate, the ability to maintain and sustain these indigenous systems is being undermined by socio-economic factors. Households have been increasingly depending on fertilizer, especially urea, to increase soil fertility and maintain crop yields, and this trend is predicted to continue. Generally, soil nutrient status is poor. The major concerns are a low pH and nitrogen, phosphate status and imbalanced base nutrition. Since sustainable development is a key government development objective, the survey results were examined to determine the sustainability of existing SFM practices and soil use for crop production. In most situations sustainability is being maintained, but the assessment of SFM and crop production questions sustainability in some areas. Lack of sustainability is a concern on both wetland and dryland soils and among households identified as being less able to manage soil fertility. This paper has identified implications for policy, research and extension.

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Introduction

Farming is fundamental to the Bhutanese economy. Some 80% of households depend on agriculture for their livelihood and the share of agriculture to GDP is 37%. Characteristically, farming households are small with a mean farm size of less than a hectare. Wetland (irrigated paddy fields) is preferred and rice is cultivated up to 2,600 masl. Winter cropping of wetland is restricted by low winter temperatures at higher altitudes and lack of irrigation at lower altitudes. Winter cropping is largest at middle altitudes. While only a small proportion is covered here, the double-cropped area is increasing. Maize is the predominant crop on dryland and at higher altitude (above 2,500 masl) wheat and/or buckwheat are the main staples. Although subsistence cropping predominates, mandarin oranges at lower altitudes and apples at higher altitudes are the major cash crops, making an important contribution to GDP. Other important cash crops are potato, cardamom, ginger and chili.

As in any other farming system, soil fertility is fundamental to the productivity and sustainability of farming in Bhutan. Traditionally, soil fertility management (SFM) has been based predominantly on the use of animal manures through either tethering of animals in fields or the use of farmyard-manure (FYM). The traditional labour intensive SFM systems are based on the integrated use of the forest as a source of fodder and leaf litter, livestock for dung, and crops as supply of crop residues. The use of chemical fertilizers has increased substantially parallel to the socio-economic development of the past 40 years. Absolute levels of chemical fertilizer use are low compared to a global level, but households are increasingly relying on these fertilizers.

The objective of this paper is to provide an overview of the status, trends and sustainability of soil fertility management and associated soil conditions in Bhutan against the social and economic transformation. Following a brief description of

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the data sources, three main issues are examined namely, trends in SFM practices, soil fertility status and its sustainability. The paper concludes by identifying the implications for policy, research and extension with respect to soil fertility and its management in Bhutan.

Two principal sources were used for this survey: a national Soil Fertility Management (SFM) survey of 1999/2000 and a Watershed Farmyard Manure (FYM) survey of 1998/1999.

Soil Fertility Management (SFM) Survey

A total of 32 villages were selected as representative of farming systems across Bhutan. It used qualitative data collection methods (example PRA and focus group discussion) at the village level to identify major SFM issues and trends in the villages. Information provided by household interviews in a random sample of 12 households per village formed a quantitative data on household SFM practices, resource and perceived trends in yields and soil fertility. For a standard nutrient descriptors, soil samples from a random selection of (380) fields were analyzed.

Farmyard Manure (FYM) Survey

This survey was conducted amongst 23 households in a mid-altitude watershed over one cropping year 1998/1999. Household interviews were used to characterize each household for socio-economic status, resource base and SFM profile. All fields cultivated by the sample households were monitored for a cropping year to determine rates of nutrient application from tethering, FYM and fertilizer application by direct measurement and nutrient analysis.

ISSUES

Soil Fertility Management (SFM) Practices

The trend in the use of the major SFM practices is summarized in Table 1. The increasing use of fertilizers is the most important change. Although only 41% of households

have used fertilizers, the trend is strongly positive amongst households that have used fertilizers, and of these, 66% of households have increased the fertilizers use.

Table 1: Percent of households reporting change in use of tethering, FYM and fertilizers as an SFM practice

SFM Practice	Change in SFM Practice			SFM not used
	Increased	Same	Decreased	
Tethering	14	37	13	37
FYM Use	27	41	15	17
Fertilizers	27	11	3	59

Source: SFM Survey. 379 household respondents

A complex of interrelated factors influence the changing pattern of SFM practices in Table 1 but three major factors are identified: fertilizer availability and effectiveness, livestock numbers and management system and household labour availability.

Fertilizers Availability and Effectiveness

Fertilizers have only been available in Bhutan since the early 1960s and their use has been an important part of government agricultural development strategy to increase yields and production. Increased use of fertilizers reflects: 1) their increased availability as road access and distribution systems have improved; 2) effective promotion of their use through agricultural extension programmes; and 3) their effectiveness, providing substantial and cost effective yield increases.

Currently fertilizer prices are subsidized through indirect government support to the national marketing and distribution system.

Livestock Numbers and Management Systems

The supply of animal manures for either FYM or tethering use is dependent on the number of livestock kept and their management system. Data indicates that livestock numbers

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are declining. Review of livestock population and composition over the years indicate significant decrease in total livestock numbers and an increase in the number of cross breed livestock at the expense of a decrease in the number of local breed between 1986 and 1996 (MoA, 1999). This trend is complemented by farmers moving from extensive (grazing) through semi-extensive (tethering) to intensive (stall feeding) systems, particularly associated with adoption of crossbreds. Although declining livestock numbers reduce the supply of manure, recovery of dung is greater in the more intensive systems.

Household Labour Availability

Declining availability of household labour is an established trend in Bhutan. In the SFM Survey, 48% of households reported a decline in household labour availability in the last 10-15 years. A contemporary survey in the west-central region confirms this finding, and 50% of 300 respondent households report a decline in household labour availability (Yeshey, 2001). The three reasons reported for labour decline are household members leaving for marriage (30%), government employment (26% of households), and schooling (24%).

Declining labour availability means that the effectiveness of labour use is an overriding factor determining household SFM strategies. Use of FYM is labour intensive and, in the face of declining household labour, households will move to more intensive livestock management systems (ultimately stall feeding) that reduce the labour required (traditionally children) for shepherding. Fertilizer use is an extension of this labour saving strategy; substituting cash for labour in providing plant nutrients.

Soil Fertility Status

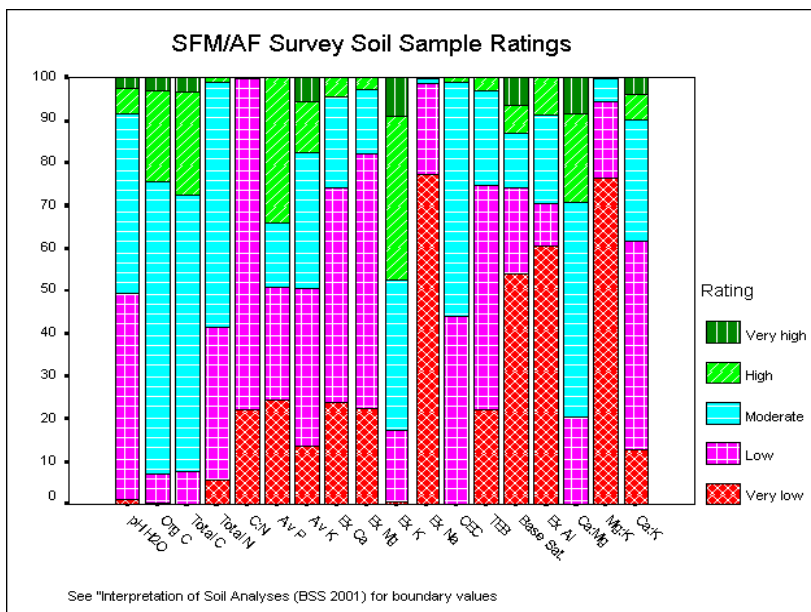
Soil fertility status is assessed in two ways to provide a broader view. The first is based on the results of the analyses of the soil samples from the SFM Survey, and the second is

based on the household perceptions of yield and soil fertility changes in the last 10-15 years.

Soil Analytical Results

Bhutan is characterized by considerable diversity in agricultural soils. Climatic zones range from the subtropics from 150 masl with high annual rainfall (ca 5500 mm) in the south to cold temperate with low rainfall (400 mm) in the north. Geology is dominated in the north by granitic gneiss and in the south by phyllite schist. This diversity means that even simple stratification of the soil analysis results by soil type and agro-ecozone is lengthy and beyond the scope of this paper. Although any summary of soil nutrient status runs the risk of oversimplification, the results of key soil variables for 376 samples taken from the SFM Survey are summarized in Figure 1 to provide an overview of the results and identify the major features.

Figure 1: Soil nutrient status-rating chart for SFM Survey samples



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Figure 1 gives the proportion of the samples that fall into five rating classes for each soil descriptor. The rating class boundaries are derived from international sources and standards and classes are designated very low to very high. Any soil variable in which the proportion of samples classified as low or very low exceeds 40% is considered to indicate a potential soil fertility problem.

The main features of the results given in Figure 1 are:

- Although nearly half of all samples had low or very low pH (i.e. pH <5.5), only 15% of samples had exchangeable aluminium levels classified as high or very high. Except for some lowland subtropical soils, aluminium toxicity is of limited concern.
- Total and organic carbon levels are generally adequate although total N levels were low or very low (<0.2%) in 40% of samples. As result of the low total N levels, C:N ratios are favourable (i.e. low or very low [<19]).
- For available P (Bray) and K, 50% of the samples are rated low or very low (<5ppm P and <40ppm K). Of these, low available P is of greatest concern as soil parent materials are generally K rich and this is reflected in predominantly moderate to high levels of exchangeable K.
- The major area of concern is base nutrition and particularly the imbalance between exchangeable bases. Base saturation and total exchangeable base levels are low or very low (>70% of samples). The low to very low exchangeable Ca and Mg levels (more than 70% of samples) as compared to predominantly moderate to high levels of exchangeable K are reflected by unfavourable Mg:K and Ca:K ratios.

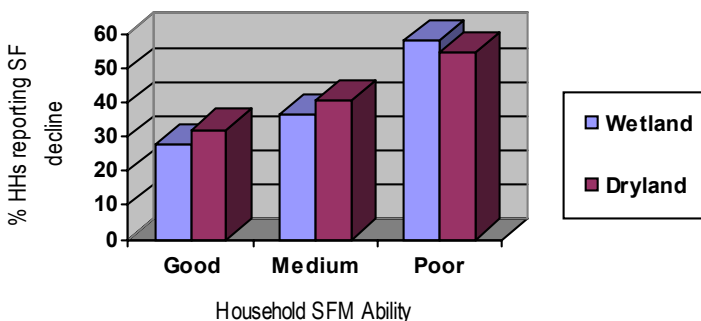
Trends in SFM practices are likely to exacerbate these deficiencies. Decreasing use of FYM reduces the additions of P

and Mg and these nutrients are not usually added by the fertilizers used. In addition, the predominant use of urea is likely to exacerbate problems of low pH.

Household Perceptions

An average of 21% and 22% of households reported increased soil fertility of wetland and dryland respectively in the last 10-15 years. In contrast, for wetland 35%, and for dryland 39% of households reported SF as having declined. Household perception of changes in the soil fertility status of their wetland and dryland in the last 10-15 years is illustrated in Figure 2. This perception differs significantly between households depending on their SFM ability ($p=0.009$). In the case of wetland, 49% of poor SFM ability households reported a decline compared to 27% for good SFM ability households. Comparable figures for dryland are 55% and 31%.

Figure 2: % of households reporting a decline in soil fertility of their wetland and dryland by household SFM ability



The main indicator used by the majority of households to assess soil fertility is crop yield; other factors such as soil conditions (e.g. colour, tilth and texture) and erosion hazard, although considered, are secondary. The association between soil fertility and yield is confirmed by the survey finding that, on average, 39% of households report a decline in the yield of

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their main staple (Table 1). The trend in yield decline is greatest in households with wheat and buckwheat as their main staple; these are predominantly households living at higher altitudes.

Table 1: Percent of households reporting specific change in yield of their main staple crop in the last 10-15 years

Yield change in last 10-15 years	Staple Crop				
	Rice	Wheat	Maize	Buckwheat	All Staples
Increase	21	25	33	36	27
Same	43	13	32	9	35
Decrease	36	63	35	55	39
Household count	183	24	140	22	374

Source: SFM Survey

The association between crop yield and soil fertility is reinforced by the reasons given by respondent households for staple crop yield increases or decrease (Table 3). The main reasons given for yield increase are the use of fertilizers and/or more FYM. Conversely, soil fertility decline dominates the reasons given for yield decrease. In the Bhutanese context an important feature of these results is that ‘soil fertility decline’ was reported as a reason for yield decrease by three times as many households as those reporting yield decrease due to damage by wild animals. Hitherto, crop damage by wild animals has been widely reported and regarded as the most important problem facing farming households.

Table 1 Reasons reported by households for yield increase or decrease in the household’s main staple crop

Reasons reported by more than 5% of households for:	% of households
<i>Yield increase</i>	
Use of chemical fertilizers	32

Use of higher yielding crop varieties	27
Application of chemical fertilizers with FYM	24
Application of FYM	22
Reporting households	99
Yield decrease	
Soil fertility decline	46
Damage by wild animals	16
Use of less FYM and compost	14
Pests and diseases	12
Water shortage	9
Better crop management	8
Reporting households	142

Source: SFM Survey

While accepting that crop yields reflects other influences particularly weather, water availability and crop management, these results illustrate that soil fertility is declining in a significant proportion of agricultural land. They also demonstrate that soil fertility and its maintenance is an important feature affecting farming in Bhutan and that it is stratified. Households identified as being less able to manage soil fertility and those at higher altitudes depending dryland staple crops appear at most risk.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a complex issue and any discussion needs to be clear as to what defines sustainability. Here the definition that “a system is sustainable over a defined period if outputs do not decrease when inputs are not increased” (Monteith, 1990).

The evidence presented above of declining soil fertility and crop yields and increasing use of fertilizers suggests that the lack of sustainability of SFM systems in Bhutan is a major concern. About 40% of households are reporting decline in soil fertility and staple crop yields. Soil fertility decline is reported as a major reason for yield decline and the main

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strategy for maintaining or increasing yield is reported as the use of chemical fertilizers (Table 3).

A complex of socio-economic factors, probably most importantly a decrease in household labour availability and lack of profitability of farming underlie the decline in yield and soil fertility and in particularly undermine the sustainability of the traditional SFM systems based on animal manures. It is not possible to present and discuss these socioeconomic factors in detail in this paper. The evidence shows that a major factor involved in the (un)sustainability of SFM systems is the increased use of chemical fertilizers and for this reason this paper concentrates on this aspect of the problem.

Chemical Fertilizer Use Patterns

Urea is the main fertilizer used in Bhutan. Of the 2,016 metric tonnes of chemical fertilizers used in 1999, 56% was urea. The ratio of N:P:K in fertilizer sold in the three years to 1999 was 5.7: 1.3: 1 and indicates a serious imbalance in nutrient use. Survey results confirm the dominance of urea and show that, with the exception of potato, most households use urea only (Table 4). The use of compound and phosphatic fertilizers in potatoes is related to potato's role as a cash crop. There is a large economic response to single super phosphate (SSP) in potato and its use has been strongly promoted by the extension services. On other crops farmers mostly use urea.

Table 2: Mean farmer estimated rates of fertilizer applied (kg ha⁻¹) for urea, suphala and single superphosphate by crop

Fertilizer applied	Crop (Fertilizer application rate \pm sem where applied with [respondent] number)			
	Rice	Wheat	Maize	Potato
Urea (0:46:0)	95 \pm 9 [80]	104 \pm 1 7 [18]	164 \pm 1 5 [43]	213 \pm 40 [34]

Suphala (15:15:15)	64±17 [9]	133±3 3 [6]		217±44 [22]
Single Superphosphate (0:16:0)	72±43 [4]	115±2 8 [6]		247±37 [24]

Source: SFM Survey

The extent to which households are dependent on fertilizer for yield is shown in Table 5. These substantial yield increases using relatively low rates of fertilizer use (Table 4) illustrate why fertilizer use is attractive to farmers.

Separate estimates suggest that in two of the main rice producing valleys as much as 30% of the current production of rice is due to the application of urea (SSF & PNMP unpublished data).

Table 5: Mean farmer estimated yields with and without fertilizers applied and percentage yield increases resulting from fertilizer use by crop

Crop	Rice	Wheat	Maize	Potato
Yield (kg ha ⁻¹) with fertilizers	5,590 ±280	2,870 ±880	4,408 ±470	12,450 ±2,000
Yield (kg ha ⁻¹) without fertilizers	3,970 ±210	1,790 ±590	2,662 ±300	7,100 ±1,300
Yield change (%) with fertilizers based on farmers' estimated yields	51	70	66	88
Farmers' estimated yield change (%) if unable to recall actual yield change	37	38		38
Overall yield change (%) mean of previous two rows	59	64	76	60
Respondents	71	17	42	25

Source: SFM Survey

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The predominant use of urea has important implications for the sustainability of soil use and this is illustrated below with partial nutrient budgets from a wetland and dryland soils.

Wetland Soils

Partial nutrient budget for nitrogen, phosphorus and calcium from 102 fields growing rice in the FYM survey are illustrated in Figure 3, Figure 4 and Figure 5.

In the figures, fields have been sorted by increasing amount of the nutrient applied from three sources, FYM, tethering and fertilizers¹. The lowest Y-axis gridline in the figures is fixed at the amount of the nutrient removed by the estimated mean yield of a rice crop amongst the surveyed households. The amount of nutrient removed by the estimated mean yield rice crop is about 46 kg N ha⁻¹; 13 kg P ha⁻¹; 69 kg K ha⁻¹; and 18 kg Ca ha⁻¹. The other Y-axis gridlines are multiples of this nutrient removal.

¹ Nutrient recovery assumed as 80% from organic sources and 50% from inorganic fertilizers.

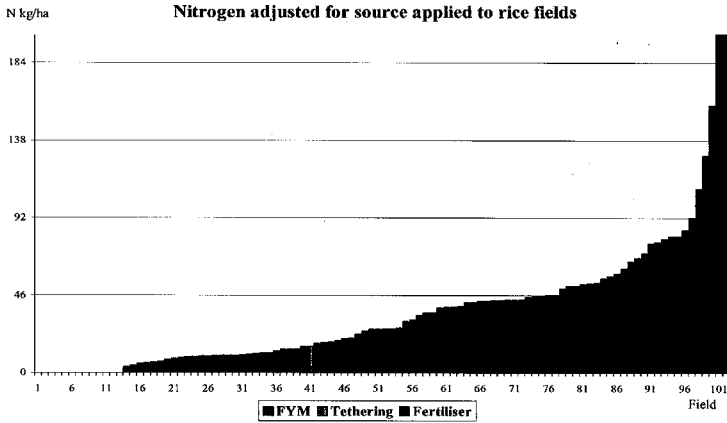


Figure 3 Partial nitrogen budget for rice fields in the Lingmuty Chhu watershed 1998-99

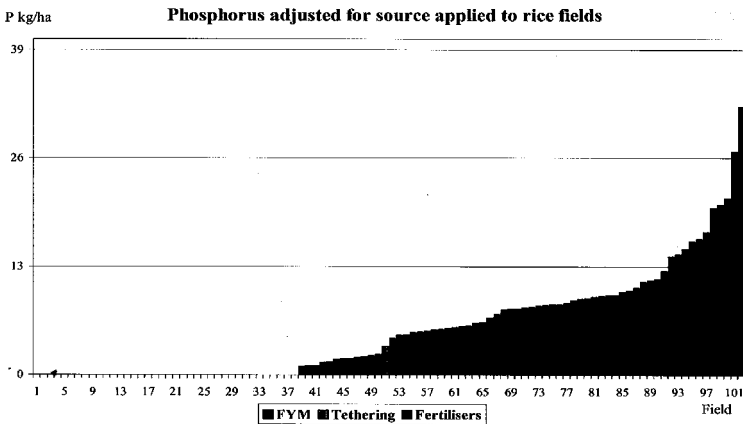


Figure 4 Partial phosphorus budget for rice fields in the Lingmuty Chhu watershed 1998-99

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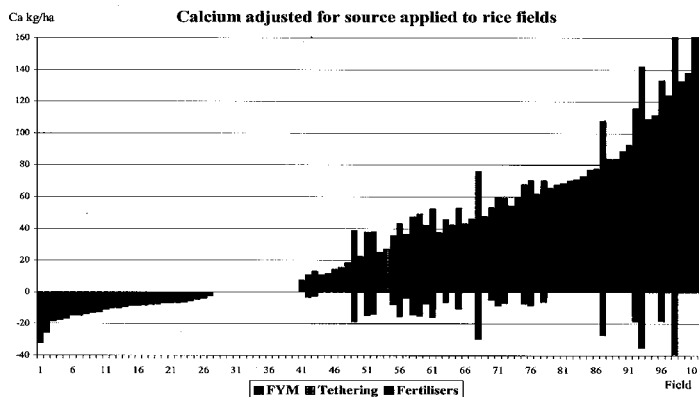


Figure 5 Partial calcium budget for rice fields in the Lingmuty Chhu watershed 1998-99

The main results and issues that emerge from the partial budgets results are;

- More than 50% of fields are receiving less N and P than is removed by a rice crop of estimated mean yield. This proportion is 78% for N and 92% for P.
- The proportion of fields not receiving N, P and Ca from nutrient management is between 20% and 40%; the situation is worst for P and Ca because these nutrients are not being supplied in fertilizers.
- As a result of the Ca needed to neutralize the urea applied as fertilizer, an effective negative application of Ca is occurring in 29% of rice fields. Thus 40% of the fields are effectively receiving no, or a negative application of, Ca.

Continuation of this management regime will mean that it will be difficult to increase rice yields without the risk of depleting soil nutrient stocks, particularly of P and Ca. P and Ca are of greatest concern; FYM derived from cattle is a poor source of

P and Ca is not being provided in fertilizers and liming is not an established practice in the area.

Dryland Soils

Comparable partial budget information is not available for dryland soils. However, data from the SFM Survey for dryland fields (Table 6) relating household perceptions of SF changes to whether chemical fertilizers are applied to those fields demonstrate a significant ($P < 0.001$) association between perceived SF change and fertilizer use. Where SF is perceived as having remained the same or has decreased, fertilizer is not used on most fields (71% and 89%). Where SF is perceived to have increased, fertilizers are used on most fields (58%).

As the rate of urea applied is higher on maize crops than rice crops (Table 2) it is assumed that the partial nutrient budgets for dryland fields would be comparable to those illustrated here for wetland. FYM survey results show that FYM application rates to rice ($7,800 \pm 700$ kg FYM ha⁻¹) and maize ($8,100 \pm 1,700$ kg FYM ha⁻¹) are similar.

Table 5 : Perceived changes in soil fertility on dryland versus fertilizer use (% of fields)

<i>Fertilizers used on field</i>	<i>Perceived soil fertility change</i>		
	<i>Increased</i>	<i>Same</i>	<i>Decreased</i>
<i>No</i>	42	71	89
<i>Yes</i>	58	29	11
<i>Respondents</i>	55	62	71

Source: SFM Survey

IMPLICATIONS

This paper identifies implications of soil fertility management in Bhutan at a policy, research and extension level.

Policy

1. Improving SFM will depend substantially on improvements to the productivity and profitability of the farming system.

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The more productive and profitable farming is the greater the incentive to invest. In particular, improvements needed are those that are compatible with improved FYM and fertilizer management and use and those that increase returns to labour. Here improvements in infrastructure and markets are important, especially if these are likely to stimulate intensive livestock production.

2. Given the large and negative impacts of imbalanced use it is important that fertilizer prices are not subsidized and so do not undervalue the traditional and more soil friendly methods based on FYM use. At the same time further liberalization of fertilizer distribution systems is needed to provide widespread and improved access to this important SFM input.

Research

3. The most important research implication arising is the issue of sustainable soil fertility management on both wetland and dryland.

Nutrient budgets for rice in the FYM survey indicate that P and Ca are priorities but, given the low exchangeable Mg against rich K soils, poor and imbalanced base nutrition identified in the soil sample results, Mg nutrition also needs consideration.

4. More information is needed for maize production on dryland. Here use of urea is widespread but negative effects may be being offset by the general higher rates of FYM application on maize than on rice.

5. There is a need to examine the importance of poor and imbalanced base nutrition in improving productivity of the main high value crops of apples and mandarin. These crops are major contributors to agricultural domestic product and improved soil fertility and so increased use of fertilizers need to be an important component of strategies aimed at increasing production and productivity.

6. Addressing the other important but general constraints with respect to FYM use requires farmer relevant options to increase the supply of FYM and to reduce its labour requirements. In this respect, on-farm fodder crops are the priority.

Extension

7. The priority for extension is to work with farmers to address imbalanced fertilizer use. Fertilizer use is the single most important change in SFM that has occurred in the last 10-15 years and farmers lack the understanding of simple principles of crop nutrition to be able to make informed decisions on fertilizer use.

8. The other priority for extension is to promote on-farm fodder crops to increase the supply of FYM and to reduce its labour requirements by facilitating more intensive livestock management systems.

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Predator-Prey Dynamics: The Role of Predators in the Control of Problem Species

Tashi Wangchuk⁺

Abstract

A study was conducted to look at the relationship between presence and numbers of wild dog (*Cuon alpinus*) and presence and abundance of wild boar (*Sus scrofa*). This was corroborated with scat analysis to get percentage of the prey consumed by wild dogs and other predators. A preliminary nationwide presence-absence survey of *C. alpinus* population showed that with the exception of Trashigang, Samdrup Jongkhar and Pemagatshel, all the other dzongkhags reported presence of wild dogs. Wild dog density was then compared with relative wild boar density using a simple linear regression analysis.

A negative relationship between increasing wild dog numbers and decreasing wild boar density was detected. The R^2 value for the regression was 0.60 — meaning that about 60% of the relative amount of variance in wild boar density is explained by the number of wild dogs present in an area. The unexplained 40% could be due to other factors such as habitat conditions, food availability, control measures, other large predators, diseases, and so on.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) carried out on the relationship gave a significant value ($F = 12.30 \gg F_s = 0.007$), meaning that the average number of boars in the different study areas are significantly different from each other, or that different pack sizes of wild dogs have significantly different effects. The slope of the regression line was negative 0.1. Thus for every unit increase in wild dogs presence there is a 0.1 unit decrease in relative wild boar density.

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About 37% of wild dog diet consists of domestic animals such as cattle and horses. The other 63% is wildlife. Of this 63%, 65 numbers of scat found contained wild boar remains. This indicates that from the wild herbivores preyed, about 58% of wild prey consumed are wild boar. Overall, including domestic animals, wild boars make about 36% of the wild dog's diet.

In terms of resource partitioning based on sign densities, the three predators (tiger, leopard, and wild dog) avoid conflict with wild boars by using different habitats and through engaging in vastly different hunting behaviour. For instance, leopards have more fixed and stable home ranges, closer to human habitation while tigers have larger home ranges but well away from any human settlement. Wild dogs are more transient and travel frequently over a large distance; their home ranges overlap with that of tigers and leopards. Since their presence is fleeting, they rarely come in conflict with the other predators.

Introduction

As tertiary consumers predators play an important role in regulating prey species such as herbivores and omnivores (Carbone et al, 1999.) Such predator-prey dynamics maintain the health and balance of ecosystems. Any disturbance of this balance due to human or other interventions lead to population explosions or crashes. One significant event in the ecological history of Bhutan has been the poisoning of wild dogs (*Cuon alpinus*) in the early 1980s and the subsequent explosion of wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) population (Wangchuk, 1996). Though the wild boar continues to be the main enemy in Bhutan's agrarian societies, a little is understood about the dynamics of this predator-prey system.

There is an urgency to understand the *C. alpinus*-*S. scrofa* dynamics and find sustainable solutions to the prey population boom all over the country.

Anecdotal information and a small scale survey in Jigme Dorji National Park (Wangchuk, 1996) suggest that there is no crop depredation issues due to wild boars and other herbivores in places where there are wild dogs. A clear understanding of this particular predator-prey dynamics is essential to quantify the impact of *C. alpinus* in regulating *S. scrofa* population.

This study complements an ongoing project financed by the Bhutan Trust Fund for Wildlife Conservation (BTF) which is testing the effectiveness of culling by trapping and shooting wild boars at two pilot sites. The present study looks at the effectiveness of predators such as *C. alpinus* in regulating prey population like *S. scrofa*. A natural regulatory mechanism backed by trapping and culling, where necessary, may provide a sustainable and long-term solution to the *S. scrofa* problem.

Recent news stories report the re-emergence of the wild dog in certain parts of Bhutan and the subsequent loss of livestock to wild dogs. Understanding the impact of predators on prey in the forests of Bhutan has become more critical in light of this evidence before another mass predator eradication programme is done, formally or otherwise.

A little hard data on the predator-prey dynamics of *C. alpinus* and *S. scrofa* exists at the moment. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the impacts of *C. alpinus* in controlling *S. scrofa* population. Should the anecdotal reports prove true, it is critical to ensure that wild dogs are not killed, mainly through poisoning of carcasses. However, if livestock losses are high and there is no reduction in wild boar population, then the wild dog may simply be a menace to both farmers and wildlife.

Studies of the wild dog or Dhole in south India indicate that preferred prey species of *dhole* (more than 70% of kills) are smaller than 50 kg in size (Johnsingh, 1992; Venkataram et al. 1994, Karanth and Sunquist, 1995). Since chital (*Axis axis*) was the most abundant prey species in the study area

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and wild pigs were the least abundant in the less than 50 kg prey class (ratio of 23 chital to 1 wild pig), it is possible that in Bhutan wild boars may substitute the chital as the most abundant preferred prey class. Johnsingh (1992) also found that 69% of leopards that kill in the same area were of prey in the less than 50 kg class. Tigers, however, preferred prey that was greater than 100 kg.

In Bhutan too where these three predators exist in sympatry, it is possible that a similar resource partitioning takes place. However, none of these questions have been answered for the wild dog and other predators in Bhutan.

The present study attempts to address this data gap. A preliminary nationwide survey of *C. alpinus* populations was conducted. Details such as number of wild dogs, location of packs, and reported loss of livestock were collected. Based on this information, a representative field sites in Zhemgang, Gasa, Punakha, Paro, and Thimphu dzongkhags were visited and surveyed. Relative densities of both wild dog and wild boars by habitat types were estimated.

Ten study sites for intensive monitoring were selected in Gasa, Zhemgang, Thimphu, Paro and Punakha based on the preliminary work. In the study areas predator scat was collected from the monitoring sites to analyze the prey content. The study mapped the over-lapping ranges of tigers and leopards, and wild boars. Transects for scat and sign collection were laid in these areas. Habitat and resource use partitioning among these three top carnivores were mapped. Correlation of wild dog presence and numbers with wild boar presence, abundance, and crop damage reported by farmers were also done. This was corroborated with scat analysis which showed percentage of prey consumed by wild dogs and other predators.

Methods

The initial stage of this preliminary nationwide survey was conducted by contacting the offices of parks, wardens, divisional, ranges, dzongkhag forestry and beat officers in the country by phone, fax and email. Sixty-seven such interviews were conducted between September and October 2003. Concurrent visits to 18 villages in Trongsa, Zhemgang, Wangdue, Punakha, Gasa, Thimphu, Paro were made as part of the preliminary survey. The details such as presence of wild dogs, leopards and tigers in the areas, location of the wild dog packs, reported losses of livestock, and reported reductions in wild boar crop depredation were collected using *Data Form 01* (see annex).

The second part was to verify these reports by visiting representative sites in the country. Detailed surveys of the sites and predator presence/absence were conducted, and counts authenticated through use of local informants and transect-laying in the reported areas. The sites were chosen on the basis of the number of wild dogs reported. Some villages reported a high incidence of wild dog occurrence while there was a medium or low wild dog activity in other areas.

Data Forms 02 and *03* (see annex) were used to collect relative mammal sign abundance and scat content. The forms recorded animal sign such as footprint, scat, wallow, rubbings, etc by species. Detail of the habitat types was recorded where each mammal sign was observed. Animal sign information was collected along transects that were randomly selected within a 10 km radius of the study villages. Agricultural areas around villages were excluded from the survey area and the 10 km radius was measured from the edge of agricultural fields. This had the advantage of covering a reasonable amount of forest around the villages. 10 km was an adequate distance to move away from scrub forests to

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undisturbed forests at the top of ridges or valley floors and away from disturbance as well.

However, in some instances tiger sign may have been missed since tigers prefer to stay away from human settlement. It may not come within the 10 km radius of the survey area. Topo sheets (1:50,000) were used to generate the random transects to cover a minimum of 25% of the area (78,500m²). Transect lengths varied between 400 m to 1000 m, although an ideal length of 1000 m was preferred. Some transects were shorter since steep cliff, gorges, or dense bamboo thickets were inaccessible after a certain length. Therefore, the number of transects in each study village varied by conditions but care was taken to ensure a minimum coverage of 25% of the area. Also, randomization allowed coverage of all habitat types in the area to a certain degree. Transect width was maintained at 10 m (5 m on either side) to cover an area of 10,000 m² in each transect. Eight random transect of 1000 m length and 10 m width were aimed in each study area to cover an area of 80,000 m² per study area since the total area surveyed per study area was 314,000 m².

In each plot, the number of sign made by different species was recorded. These sign were then used to generate a relative density per transect for the area by species. Special attention was paid to wild dogs and wild boars. Wild dog density was then compared against wild boar density in the selected areas and a linear regression analysis was done to see the functional relationship between the density of wild dogs and wild boars. Since wild dog numbers were available through actual sightings and observations by villagers, the actual number of wild dogs present in an area was used rather than the relative density estimates based on sign. Also, the relative density estimate of wild dogs fit well with the actual numbers of wild dogs in the area, indicating that transects accurately recorded animal sign.

The following villages listed in Table 1 were visited for detailed field surveys and verification.

Table 1: Survey Sites

<i>Location</i>	<i>Reported Wild Dog Abundance</i>	<i>Dominant Vegetation</i>
Goenshari, Punakha	Low	Warm/Cool Broadleaf
Sha Gangshikha, Wangdue	None	Warm Broadleaf
Tamey Damchu, Punakha	Medium	Warm/Cool Broadleaf
Kuenga Rabten, Trongsa	None	Cool Broadleaf
Remee, Gasa (Revisited in March 2004)	High	Cool Broadleaf
Chamayna, Thimphu	Medium	Mixed Conifer
Helela/Talakha, Thimphu	Medium	Mixed Conifer
Kharibjee, Paro	Low	Mixed Conifer
Dunmang, Zhemgang	Medium	Warm/Cool Broadleaf
Langdurbi, Zhemgang	High	Warm / Cool Broadleaf

Sign from other predators such as leopard and tiger were recorded and mapped by relative density by location to derive habitat use patterns. The habitat and resource partitioning of the three main predators in two selected study areas (Dunmang and Tamey Damchu) were done since these two areas had sign made by all three predators. In each area relative sign density in a transect that fell close to a village, another that fell midway (about 5 km) and a third close to the outer limits of the survey area were selected to study distribution. Habitat use patterns of tiger, wild dog and leopard could be done to a certain extent through the distribution of sign in these selected transects. However, this provides only a general and preliminary distribution pattern and in-depth analysis was avoided. It was simply assumed that where sign were present, the particular species was

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active in that area and where there was no sign, the particular species avoided that habitat.

This also allowed estimation of home range size through sign distribution and density analysis. In south India the home range size for dholes varied between 54.2 and 83.3 km² (Venkataram et al. 1994). In Bhutan based on anecdotal information, in some areas 2 or 3 packs may have overlapping ranges with a rough estimate of 50 km² home range size (Wangchuk, 2003).]

Another important determinant has been the diet analysis of wild dogs, tigers, and leopards. This was done by collecting predator scat along transects and analyzing scat contents for prey species using Data Form 02. Scat found along transects were identified by species. Predator scat were analyzed for prey content on the basis of indigestible animal remains in the scat such as hair, bones, hooves, feathers, and skin. In scat, hair is a good indicator of prey consumed (Schaller, 1967), and it was compared against a reference collection of hairs from the Bhutan Natural History Collection (BNHC).

Results

The preliminary survey of *C. alpinus* populations in all 20 dzongkhags showed that with exception of Trashigang, Samdrup Jongkhar and Pemagathsel, other dzongkhags reported wild dog presence. The last report of wild dog in Trashigang was in Wamrong in 2002. Nine wild dogs were killed by poisoning and their tails handed over to the Nature Conservation Division (NCD). Interestingly, these three dzongkhags lie east of the Drangmichhu which may have acted as a barrier. The river certainly prevented further colonization of the areas by dispersing wild dogs from other dzongkhags where wild dogs are present. Recolonization may take some time as wild dogs have to either find their way across the Drangmichhu or from the neighbouring Indian states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

The other 17 dzongkhags reported presence of wild dogs. The wild dog packs were distributed in patches and did not cover entire dzongkhags. For instance in Wangdue, there is no wild dog in villages along the Dangchhu, unlike higher villages like Phobjikha and Gogona which reported the presence of a pack of 13 wild dogs. Surveys in the Dangchhu area revealed that most cattle were at the summer pastures in the higher altitude areas of Phobjikha and Gogona. The cattle move down to the Dangchhu area in the winter (Ninth Bhutanese month). Farmers reported that they have been having wild boar problems for the last 20 years, beginning 1983. Interestingly, the last wild dogs were extirpated from the area by poisoning that same year. Since then the people have to guard their paddy fields. The usual practice in the past had been to transplant the paddy and return to Phobjikha. But with the presence of wild boars, farmers are compelled to stay behind to guard their crops.

In Trongsa too, some areas reported presence of wild dogs while others did not. For instance, wild dogs were present about 15 years ago in Kuenga Rabten area, but the last pack was killed by using rat poison distributed by agriculture officers. About 10 years ago, wild boars became a major problem in the area. Some agricultural fields above the village and close to the forests had been abandoned since they could not guard crops from wild boars. However, in the Chendebji area, two packs of 4 and 8 wild dogs are present. The packs have killed cattle and yaks in the area in November 2003 when the survey was conducted.

Lhuntse and Trashiyangtse seemed to share the same pack. When wild dogs appeared in Yangtse, there was no report in Lhuntse, and vice versa.

Gasa and Zhemgang reported the highest cases of wild dog depredation of livestock (and therefore, its presence). Even in Gasa some areas in Khatay reported high occurrence, while others such as Lunana and Khamay reported occasional presence only. Likewise in Zhemgang, Bardo reported high

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occurrence while there was no report in villages around Zhemgang Dzong.

Farmers in all survey areas report that there is a direct correlation between presence of wild dogs and wild boars. Where there are many wild dogs, there are a few wild boar numbers and vice versa. This is further corroborated by farmers' reports of reduced crop depredation by wild boar, but increased livestock loss to wild dogs. Farmers have responded by changing their animal herding behaviour. Many said that they now have a full time cattle herder, while horses and mules are stabled and corralled at night. Such changes have reduced loss of livestock to wild dogs. Farmers complain that employing full time cattle herder is an additional burden to their already strained manpower. Also, mule and horse owners complained of the loss of night time foraging opportunity when animals are kept in stables. Loss of mules and horses in Gasa and cattle in Zhemgang are huge losses of income for the people. In Gasa, portage by horses and mules are the main source of income and a loss of these animals meant a big loss to the family. In Zhemgang cattle provide valuable dairy products that are sold or bartered.

In Khatey Gewog of Gasa, a pack of 15 wild dogs have been active since 2002. In 2001 only a male and female dogs were sighted. Within a short span of two years the pack had multiplied to 15 in 2003. The highest density of sign, including group defecation sites or communal latrines, was found in the forest around Reme, about three kilometers from Gasa Dzong; this suggests that the animals have a denning site near Reme village. In Khamey Gewog, a pair has been sighted since last year near Tashithang. Likewise, another pair has been sighted this year in Laya Gewog. It is possible that these will grow over the subsequent years. Farmers in Khatey Gewog, with the highest density of wild dogs, reported that in the spring of 2003 they had a good wheat harvests, which in normal years would have been ravaged by wild boars. Disturbingly, in March 2004, a revisit to Reme village revealed the presence of old wild dog sign

only. The wild dogs had either moved to another location, or perhaps been poisoned since the economic damage in terms of horses and mules loss was too severe. The officials of District Animal Husbandary, Gasa, reported that villagers had made a request for a stringent poison tablets. The villagers denied making any such requests.

In Bardo and Nangkor Gewog of Zhemgang, wild dog densities were highest in Langdurbi village where at least three packs were reported. Two packs (seven and 14 respectively) seemed to remain on the east bank of the Chamkharchhu basin, roving between Khomshar, Langduribi, and Digala, while another pack of 12 dogs traveled back and forth between Dunmang/Kamjang and Langdurbi/Digala. During interviews farmers reported the loss of more than 70 livestock, mostly cattle and a few horses. In one instance, wild dogs came right up to the doorstep and killed a pig.

It was interesting to note that some wild boars were still present in the Langdurbi area (a herd of four was sighted), but farmers reported that they did not lose any crops to wild boars this year.

In Khengkha, wild dogs are called *Tsa Wa Reng* and nick named *A-shang Gelong* because of their red coats. A pair is called *omrang* and usually omrang is reported colonizing an area and producing a litter in the following year. Livestock owners in Kamjang reported the presence of an omrang this year. The people believe they arrived from the Langdurbi.

A pack of 10 wild dogs share the forests above the villages of Chamayan and Kabjisa in Thimphu. In 2003 people did not have to guard their potato. Wild dogs appeared this year only and last year people suffered sever loss of potato to wild boars. It seems that the pack may be a transient between other side of Sinchula which might have migrated from the Kabji-Punakha area.

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The anecdotal information collected from villagers especially about the presence relationship between wild dogs and wild boars is verified through the transect sign survey data. Transect sign survey from 10 study sites in Zhemgang, Gasa, Thimphu, Paro, and Punakha dzongkhags revealed the following relative densities of wild dogs and wild boars (Table 2). Table 2 also shows the actual numbers of wild dogs confirmed from the study sites.

Table 2: Relative densities of wild boars and wild dogs and confirmed number of wild dogs by study site

Location	Relative Density Wild Boar Avg. # sign/m ²	Relative Density Wild Dogs Avg. # sign/m ²	Actual # Wild Dogs
Goenshari	1.40	0.40	4
Gangshikha	2.90	0.00	0
Kuenga Rabten	3.10	0.00	0
Kharibjee	1.00	0.22	2
Dunmang	0.80	0.75	8
Tamey Damchu	0.70	0.65	6
Chamayna	0.70	0.99	10
Talakha	0.90	1.00	10
Remees	0.10	2.10	18
Langdurbi	0.05	2.76	26

Gangshikha in Wangdue had the highest wild boar sign recorded with an average of 2.90 sign/m² of transect area surveyed, while Langdurbi in Zhemgang had the lowest with 0.05 sign/m². Contrarily, Langdurbi had the highest number of wild dog sign and Gangshikha had the lowest.

Since actual wild dog numbers in the study areas could be confirmed through corroborated observations by villagers, the

actual number of wild dogs present in an area could be compared against the relative density of wild dogs in the same area estimated through sign. A Pearson correlation coefficient was generated to test for the fit between observed and estimated wild dog numbers. The correlation coefficient $r_{\text{actual-rel.density}}$ is 0.996542 indicating an almost perfect positive association.

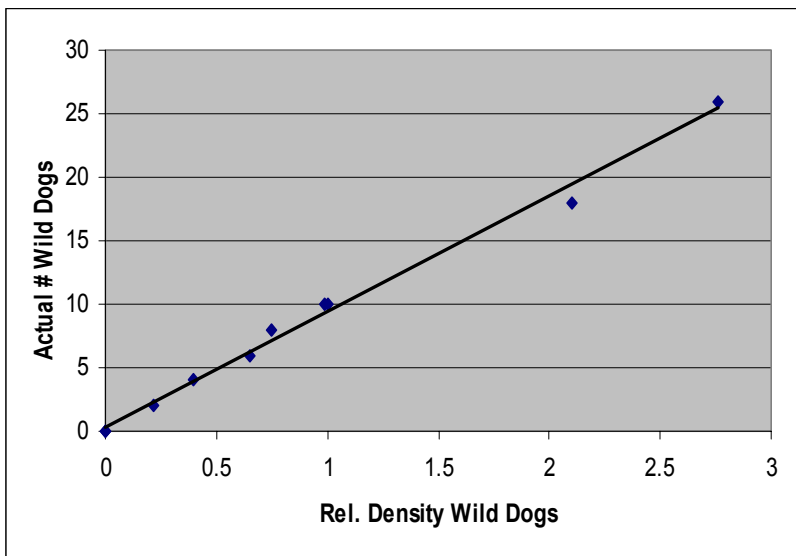


Figure1: Close fit between actual number of wild dogs observed and the relative density of wild dogs estimated from sign ($r_{\text{actual-rel.density}} = 0.996542$)

Figure 1 shows the close fit between actual number of wild dogs observed and the relative density of wild dogs estimated from sign. This close fit between observed and estimated numbers indicates that transects accurately recorded animal sign. Wild dog density was then compared against relative wild boar density using a simple linear regression analysis.

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Figure 2: Negative relationship between increasing wild dog numbers and decreasing wild boar density ($R^2 = 0.60$, $b = -0.09857$)

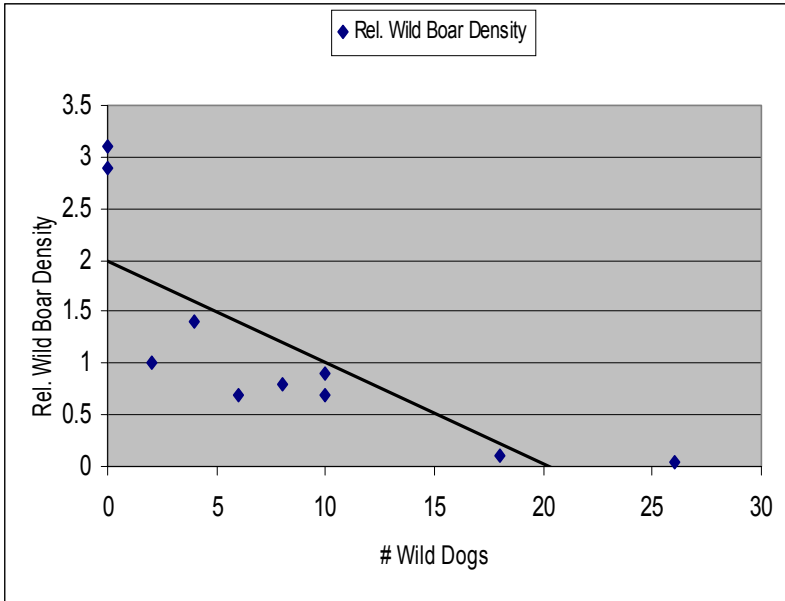


Figure 2 shows the negative relationship between increasing wild dog numbers and decreasing wild boar density. The R^2 value is 0.60 meaning that about 60% of the relative amount of variance in wild boar density is explained by the number of wild dogs present in an area. The unexplained 40% could be due to other factors such as habitat conditions, food availability, control measures, other large predators, diseases, and so on.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) carried out on the relationship gave a significant value ($F = 12.30 \gg F_s = 0.007$), meaning that the average number of boars in the different study areas are significantly different from each other or that different pack sizes of wild dogs have significantly different effects; larger size has a larger effect and vice versa. The slope

of the regression line is -0.09857 or close to -0.1 . Thus for one unit increase in wild dogs there is a 0.1 unit decrease in relative wild boar density. As the ANOVA significance test showed, this is a significant relationship.

In terms of resource partitioning based on sign densities, the three predators (tiger, leopard, and wild dog) avoid conflict by using different habitats and by engaging in vastly different hunting behaviour. For instance, leopards have more fixed and stable home ranges, closer to human habitation, while tigers have larger home ranges but well away from any human settlement. Wild dogs are more transient and frequently travel over large distances; their home ranges overlap with those of tiger and leopard. But they rarely come in conflict with the other predators due to their fleeting presence. In any case, they were known to kill leopards and even tigers if the pack is big.

Table 3 and Figure 3 show the sign density by species in two of the study areas. More detailed and long term studies are necessary to understand this complex relationship.

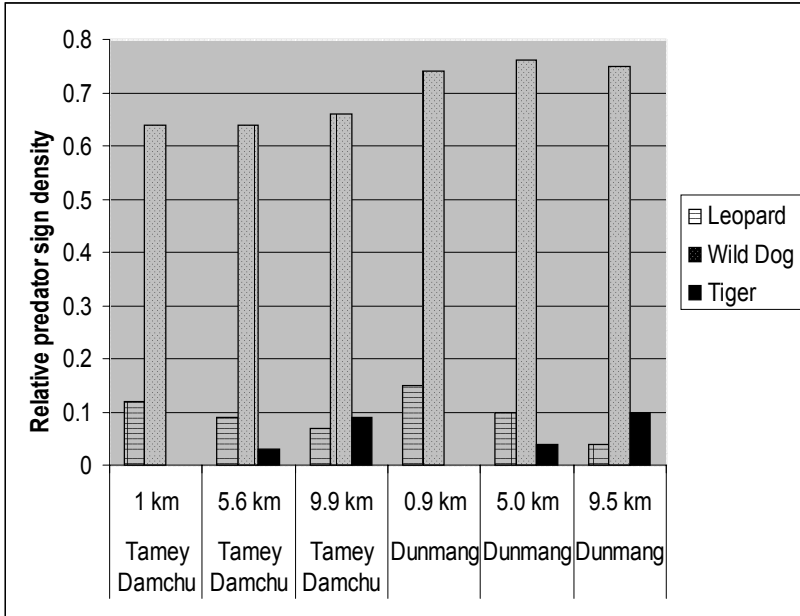
Table 3 Relative sign density by predator species in Tamey Damchu and Dunmang

Location	Distance from village	Predator sign density / m ²
Tamey Damchu	1 km	L= 0.12, W = 0.64,T= 0.00
	5.6 km	L= 0.09, W=0.64, T=0.03
	9.9 km	L= 0.07, W=0.66, T=0.09
Dunmang	0.9 km	L= 0.15, W = 0.74,T= 0.00
	5.0 km	L= 0.1, W=0.76, T=0.04
	9.5 km	L= 0.04, W=0.75, T=0.1

L= Leopard, W = Wild Dog, T = Tiger

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Figure 3 Relative sign density by predator species in Tamey Damchu and Dunmang



Scat Content

Of 178 wild dog scats that were found, 112 contained remains of wild herbivores, one Kaleej pheasant and 65 domestic animals. This shows that about 37% of wild dog diet consists of domestic animals such as cattle and horses. The other wildlife constitutes 63%. Of this 63%, 65 numbers of scat found contained wild boar remains. This indicates that from the wild herbivores preyed, about 58% of wild prey consumed is wild boar. Overall, wild boars, including domestic animals, make up about 36% of the wild dog diet.

Since less than 10 tiger scat was encountered, tiger scat analysis is excluded from the present study. Fifty eight leopard scats were found along transects. Of this, 76%

consisted of wild game, mostly of muntjac. No wild boar remains were found in the leopard scat. The remaining 24% consisted of domestic animals.

DISCUSSION

The study shows that wild dogs are making a slow comeback in Bhutan. They are present in all dzongkhags with the exception of three eastern dzongkhags east of Drangmechhu. There is much speculation within the farming community that the reemergence of the wild dogs is due to a government predator release programme.

The wild dogs are called *zhungi phou* or government wild dogs, released to control the wild boars. However, to my knowledge there is no record of a predator release programme in Bhutan. Some farmers contend that the new wild dogs look different from the old ones. They are said to be smaller in size, more reddish in colour and has a different repertoire of vocalizations from the old ones. Given this observation, it is possible that after the eradication of wild dogs in the 1980s in Bhutan, wild dogs from the Indian plains could have re-colonized the vacant niche.

The sub-species in Bhutan are generally thought to be *Cuon alpinus primevus* (Hodgson, 1833, Ellerman and Morrisson-Scott, 1966) distinguished by their furrer coat, larger body size, and grayish-reddish pelage. Specimens from the Bombay Natural History Society Collection show that there is a clinal variation in appearance with wild dogs from the Indian Duars which have shorter hair. The India subspecies *C. a. dukhunensis* is found south of the Ganges and is probably not the one that re-colonized vacant niches in Bhutan. Rather it is likely that the Duars variety of *C. a. primevus* climbed up into Bhutan.

Whatever the origin, the present study revealed that the reemergence of the wild dogs is having a significant ecological and social impact. The carrying capacity for wild dogs of the

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community is extremely low since they kill valuable livestock. Yet the positive role of the wild dog in controlling wild boars cannot be ignored. As the results indicate, wild dogs have a significant impact in reducing wild boar numbers.

The regression analysis showed a strong negative relationship between increasing wild dog numbers and decreasing wild boar density. The R^2 value of 0.60 is statistically significant and tells that about 60% of the relative amount of variance in wild boar density is explained by the number of wild dogs present in an area. Another way to interpret this result in layman's terms would be that the presence of a pack of wild dogs in an area can result in a 60% reduction in wild boar numbers. The slope of the regression line was close to negative 0.1. Thus for one unit increase in wild dogs there is a 0.1 unit decrease in relative wild boar density. As the ANOVA significance test showed, this is a significant relationship. Wild dogs can effectively control wild boar numbers.

This is further corroborated by the scat test which revealed that wild boars make up about 58 % of wild prey consumed by wild dogs. However, the scat test also showed that overall, about 37% of wild dog diet consists of domestic animals such as cattle and horses. However, these figures are observations from a single point in time and can change due to livestock care and guarding provided by farmers. For instance in Remee, Gasa, scat content of domestic animals was more than 50% in November 2003. By February 2004, the figure had dropped to about 30% largely because livestock owners changed their herding behavior. Many said that they now have a full time herder with cattle, while horses and mules are stabled and corralled at night. Earlier livestock were set free in the forest and rounded up only when needed. Such changes have reduced loss of livestock to wild dogs.

Regarding other predators, the scat test also showed that leopards have a significant impact on domestic animals but that they had little or no impact on wild boars.

Tiger scat results were inconclusive. Future studies could be designed to cover larger areas and better represent tiger habitat than the present study did. Also, as pointed out above, as preying behavior can change over time in response to herding behavior, longer term studies are recommended to monitor these dynamics. Longer term studies are also recommended to better understand the relationship between the three top carnivores of Bhutan. The present study was barely able to scratch the surface regarding this important relationship which may have significant consequences for wild boar numbers. A multi-varied analysis will be possible if better data are available and deeper understanding of predator-prey relationships in Bhutan gained.

Based on the results and discussions above, the following recommendations are made:

1. Avoid mass predator eradication schemes as was done in the 1980s through poisoning since this can have severe consequences such as the wild boar epidemic. However, in certain areas with a big wild dog numbers in a limited local carrying capacity, targeted predator control schemes could be conducted. For instance, if there are three or four packs in any single area (Langdurbi in Zhemgang), a pack could be relocated or removed. This would have to be done by trained professionals, not through random carcasses poisoning since any animal eating the poison are killed.
2. Encourage livestock owners to better guard their livestock in wild dog prone areas as in Gasa areas. However, formal government acknowledgement of the problem faced by livestock owners and repeated public announcements can inform the people that the problem is recognized, and that the solution lies with owners themselves.
3. A livestock compensation scheme for livestock killed by wild dogs, despite their best efforts at guarding, may increase tolerance for wild dogs especially, since farmers already

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understand the relationship between wild dogs and wild boars and do not have to be educated about such realities.

4. In areas with large numbers of wild boars, targeted culling which is ongoing in Thinleygang and Bumdeling areas could be done. As this study showed, wild dogs can at the most result in a 60% reduction in wild boar numbers in any given area. The other 40% can be addressed through trapping and shooting of wild boars if conditions are favourable.

This combination of actions may result in a balanced approach to the human-wildlife conflicts caused by wild dogs and wild boars.

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Annexure

Data Form O1

Questionnaire for Presence /Absence Survey of Wild Dogs

Phone Interview

Forest Division _____
Park/Wildlife Sanctuary _____
Range Office _____
Warden Post _____
Beat Office _____
Guard Post _____
Dzongkhag Forest Office (Dzongkhag/ RNR Center) _____
Dzongkhag Agricultural Office (Dzongkhag / RNR Center) _____

Phone/ WT Interview

Gup Office (Gewog and Dzongkhag): _____

Site Visit Interview

Village / Gewog / Dzongkha: _____
Informant name _____
Date: _____
Enumerator: _____

- 1) Are wild dogs (phou) present in your area?
- 2) If so in which areas (Gewog, Village) are they found?
- 3) How Many packs are there? How many individuals are there in each pack?
- 4) What are the areas covered by the packs (Villages, gewogs).
- 5) Is there livestock loss to predators in your area? What are the main predators?
- 6) How many livestock losses have occurred within the last one year? What type of livestock was lost (cows, calves, bulls, horses etc) and what were the responsible predators? (Enumerator to fill out the form below)

Type of Livestock Lost	Numbers	Village	Predator	Approximate Dates

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7) Are there reports of crop loss in your area? How severe is the problem and where are the reports of heaviest loss? (Enumerator to fill out the form below)

Type of Crop Lost	Loss intensity (High, Medium, Low)	Village	Responsible Wild life (deer, wild boar, <i>shou</i> etc)	Approx. Dates

Data Form.02

Scat Analysis

Transect # _____ Location _____

Habitat Type: _____

Date: _____ Enumerator: _____

Scat Content: Prey Species	Numbers	Percentage	Comments

Data Form.03

Relative Mammal Sign Abundance

Transect No: _____

Transect Length: _____ Location: _____

Date: _____ Weather: Rain/Cloudy/Sun

Enumerator: _____ Local Informant: _____

No.	Mammal Species	Sign (footprint, scat, wallow, rubbing) and number of sign	Comments (habitat type, substrate, other relevant observations)

Notes: _____

International Politics of Bhutan*

*Karma Galay**

Introduction

This paper discusses the extent to which international relations theories, which are mainly based on the behavior and interest of the big powers, explain the international behavior of small states. In order to do so, four different theories that are most commonly used to explain the international behavior of small states are reviewed briefly. Bhutan's international affairs, emphasizing on its relations with India is described and explanations provided using these theories. These theories predict that other small states would behave in a similar manner. To test this, Bhutan's relation with India is compared with the relation between Nepal and India. Nepal's relations with India differ from that of Bhutan's. This difference is empirically supported by their voting behavior in the United Nations. The existing theories fail to explain different relations of two similar states vis-à-vis a big neighbour. Some alternative explanations have been provided. The paper concludes by emphasizing that no existing international relations theories explain the behavior of small states. More studies incorporating cultural, political and social characteristics and involving foreign policy experts of small states are suggested.

A Review of International Relations Theories Related to Small States

There is a wide consensus among scholars and students of international relations that are interested in small states that the small states have been ignored by the prevailing international relations theories. In very limited instances where international politics of small states are mentioned, the

* This paper was written as a research assignment in December 2001 at Stanford University, California,

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states are described as small are so only relative to their neighbours or larger powers with which they are compared. For example, in *Power and Interdependence*, Keohane and Nye discuss the asymmetric relationship between the US on the one hand and Canada and Australia on the other. Australia and Canada are small only when compared to the US. Apart from the issue of differences in sizes of the states, there are several other dimensional differences that characterize global politico-economic system. There is an international hierarchy of growing complexities, discontinuities, and inequalities (Fauriol, 1984. 12-13).

One of the most common theories used to explain international policies of small states is structural scarcity theory. It emphasizes that the lack of economic and military capabilities constrain the behavior of small states. They are dependent on the states that have these capabilities (Vogel. 1983. 58). (in Holl ed.)

The concept of bandwagoning is other most commonly used theory to explain international behavior of small states (Väyrynen, 1997. 46). (in Inbar & Seffer ed) It is stated that that in a situation of threat small states will almost always align with the threatening power.

There are two other theories that have been used to study behavior of small states. First one is the world systems analysis and it emphasizes the economic dynamics of the entire international system. According to this theory, the world is divided into a three-layer hierarchy of core, semi-periphery and periphery. It is believed when the world's economy expands, it contributes productive power of the hegemonic core, which in turn enables substantial penetration into the periphery. It also states that in the long run, there will be rivalry among the core powers, leading to protectionist and bilateral trading arrangements. This enables the peripheral states to exercise economic independence. (Väyrynen, 1983. 90) (in Holl ed). The second one is the dependency school. It distinguishes states into dominant and

dominated. It is believed that the dominant states penetrate with transnational economic forces into the economies and politics of smaller states. (Väyrynen, 1983. 83) (in Holl ed). Given these theories, let us now discuss the international policies of Bhutan and try to see if the above theories explain them.

Bhutan's International Politics

Bhutan emerged out of self-imposed isolation in the early 1960s. Except for a few contacts with Tibet and British India, it did not have contacts with other countries earlier. Since then, Bhutan has cautiously and gradually joined the international community of nations and organizations.

Right from the beginning, Bhutan's international politics has been characterized by its close and intimate relationship with India. It agreed to be advised by India in international affairs. A treaty to this effect was signed in 1949 (Rose 1977, 77), before the country abandoned its isolation, but took on importance only after 1961. Formal diplomatic relations between Bhutan and India at the ambassadorial level were established in 1978. However, cooperation between the two countries started much earlier. Bhutan launched its first five-year plan in 1961. The first two five-year plans were exclusively financed by India. Construction of roads constituted the main component of Indian assistance. Later on it also included construction of schools, hospitals and agricultural centers. Today, Indian assistance to Bhutan is largely in hydropower industry. Apart from economic assistance, India also provides military assistance to Bhutan. It provides basic training to the Bhutanese armed force personnel. On the political front, the two countries enjoy a very stable relationship. Although the political leadership and the governing parties change fairly frequently in India, the two countries have not had any political differences. They share membership in several multilateral and regional organizations. Although Bhutan has neither the capacity nor

the intention to develop nuclear weapons, it has supported India's nuclear policies.

The maintenance of a very close and intimate relationship with India does not mean that Bhutan took India into a total trust. Bhutan has always been aware of the asymmetries between the two. In order to counter this feeling of insecurity, Bhutan has been diversifying its international relations, Bhutan applied for membership in a number of international organizations and gradually became a member of them. It was admitted to the United Nations in 1971. The UN opened a United Nations Development Program office in Thimphu in 1979. Bhutan is now a member of more than 150 international organisations. In addition, diversification of its international relationships also took the form of expansion of bilateral relations with other countries, mostly with small countries that share similar experiences. It has diplomatic relations with Austria, Denmark, Norway, The Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland. In Asia, Bhutan has bilateral relationships with Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Maldives, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Kuwait, Bahrain, Finland, Norway, Australia, and Thailand. These are more formal than intimate, however, and Bhutan does not maintain office in many of them.

As its contacts with the outside world increased, Bhutan gained more experiences in international politics. Internally, various development activities, especially progress in education, had great impacts on Bhutanese policy makers. These changes enabled the policy makers to define a unique security that fitted with its demographic, socio-cultural, and geopolitical realities. Apart from military, political, and economic aspects of security, Bhutan also considers threats to its culture and environment as major security problems. Such concerns have effectively been expressed through its development philosophy, known as Gross National Happiness, which emphasizes the happiness of its citizens as the ultimate objective of any development pursuit that it undertakes. This philosophy is implemented in the day-to-day

activities of the country through the preservation of the culture and the environment, the promotion of equitable economic development and of good governance. Bhutan has increasingly used this philosophy to attract the attention of the outside world.

Explanations to Bhutan's International Behaviour

Bhutan's intimate relationship with India can be explained from several perspectives. Bhutan is located in a very strategic part of the world. It has the world's two most populous and economically growing countries as its neighbours. Given its physical, demographic and economic size and the geo-political realities in which it exists, Bhutan is in a very precarious situation. Thus, it is the lack of economic, military and political capabilities to ensure its security that brought about its collaboration with India. India provides economic and defense assistance to Bhutan. These points suggest the functioning of structural scarcity theory.

Bhutan's efforts to diversify its international relations are rooted in its own national security concerns. Bhutan's fear of confining its international relations to India increased in 1975, when India overran Sikkim, immediately to the west of Bhutan (Chetri 1998, ?). The need to offset Indian domination led Bhutan to establish relations with many countries and organizations around the globe. Despite its dislike for Bhutan's diversifying moves, India has always restrained itself from committing actions that would set the two neighbours into conflict. India is aware that any conflicts with Bhutan will not be a rational move for it. Bhutan serves as a buffer between China and India along part of a very extensive border. Besides, since independence in 1947, India has been left connected to its northeastern states by a narrow strip of land called the Siliguri Corridor, lying between Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and Bhutan. Most of these states have experienced, and continue to experience, active insurgency against the Indian central government. Bhutan and Bangladesh help protect the narrow corridor that connects

these states to the main part of India, and therefore can play an important role in India's strategic plans.

Economically, as a landlocked country, Bhutan relies on India for access to the sea. India is its major trading partner. In 1999, India accounted for 75% of Bhutan's imports and 94.5% of its exports. India is the major donor to Bhutan. But the economic relationship between the two is not a unidirectional one. Although to a lesser degree compared to Bhutan's dependence on it, India also relies on the former for economic matters. Apart from helping Bhutan, its investments in Bhutan serve to boost the economies of the Indian states that border Bhutan. Most of the industries in West Bengal now depend on electricity imported from Bhutan. Many Indians are employed in Bhutan.

It is apparent from these explanations that it's the structural scarcity that determines Bhutan's relation with India and its behavior in other international behavior. However, contrary to structural scarcity theory's emphasis on the prominent nature of the dependency of small states on big ones, we find that the big power is also dependent on the small power. As structural theory fairly explains Bhutan's relation with India, supporters of this theory would predict that it would hold true for any country similar to Bhutan.

Nepal has been chosen for comparison. Like Bhutan, Nepal is a landlocked country depending on India for access to sea and other economic inputs. However, Nepal is much poorer than Bhutan. In 1997, Nepal's per capita income was US 220 whereas Bhutan's was US\$ 594.¹ Nepal's per capita availability of land and forest resources have deteriorated with the increase in population. The situation of unemployment has worsened over the years. Its structural scarcity is much more severe than Bhutan's. By the logic of the theories, it is expected to have even more intimate

¹ Bhutan National Human Development Report, 2000

relationship with India than Bhutan. Yet its relationship with India is a very hostile one.

In the 1950s, Nepal and India had differences over the issue of rights of landlocked states to transit facilities and access to the sea. In 1969, Nepal asked India to withdraw its security check-posts and liaison groups in Nepal. India withdrew very reluctantly. Throughout the 1970s, India supported Nepalese Congress Party² to oppose the monarchy in Nepal. In 1987 India threatened expulsion of Nepalese settlers from neighbouring Indian states. Nepal retaliated by introducing a permit system for Indians working in Nepal and imposing a 55 per cent tariff on Indian goods. In 1988, Nepal signed an agreement with China to purchase weapons. India retaliated by imposing economic sanctions. In 1989, Nepal decoupled its currency from the Indian rupee which previously had circulated freely in Nepal. Indian retaliation prevented Nepal from using port facilities in Calcutta³. In recent times, the two have been having disputes over sharing of water resources.

The prediction of structural scarcity theory fails. It does not explain the behavior of all small states vis-à-vis their neighbours. The case of Nepal also proves that other theories such as small powers aligning with the threatening power don't hold true. Bhutan aligns with India while Nepal doesn't. The world systems approach and dependency school which emphasize the economic issues as the core of international relations, also don't provide a credible explanation as although both Bhutan and Nepal are economically dependent on India, they have different form of relations with India. How can we then explain the different strategies that Bhutan and Nepal adopt towards India?

² Nepal Congress Party first came into being in Varanasi, India in 1940s. It's formation was supported by Indian Congress Party

³ Information used here has been taken from
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/nptoc.html>

Alternative Explanations

Examination of the differences in certain basic characteristics that Nepal and Bhutan had at that point of time in their histories may suggest some explanations to their different relations with India. I start by looking at two issues: general awareness and the domestic institutions. Although both Bhutan and Nepal were considered closed before the 1950s, Nepal had frequent contacts with the outside world. Nepal's Prime Minister Jung Bahadur traveled to England in 1850 and returned convinced of the necessity to have good relations with industrialized countries. Since then, European architecture and fashion were given popular acknowledgement in Nepal. Institutionally, administrative procedures and legal frameworks for interpreting civil and criminal matters, revenue collection, landlord and peasant relations, inter-caste disputes, and marriage and family law, were established. These institutions were largely used to centralize the power of monarchy.

In the same period, Nepal's awareness of the world further increased through its involvement in different military operations with the British army. Nepal offered military assistance to the British during the Sepoy Rebellion in 1857 in India, and its troops fought World War I and World War II. The returning Gurkha troops who were now aware of the outside world started newspapers, which later became the forum of intellectual debate and discussion. Thus, Nepal had a high degree of awareness of the outside world and some form of institutions when it opened up in 1951.

On the other hand, Bhutan remained completely closed and it did not develop any domestic institutions. Until the monarchy was established in 1907, it was governed by a very unstable form of political institution where the civil and military activities were looked after by a temporal ruler and the religious activities by a religious ruler. The institution of monarchy ensured political stability. The reigns of the first two kings were mostly confined to maintaining internal

political stability. Its awareness of the outside world remained low. The two Kings also did not establish any kind of domestic institutions.

The initiatives taken by the Third King in the 1950s suggest that Bhutan was by then more aware of the outside world. Many political changes were taking place in the region. India had gained its independence from Britain in 1947. To the north, China had occupied Tibet in 1951. Soon after these events, the Third King established National Assembly in 1953. In the mean time, events in the north were becoming more threatening. In 1959, China had taken over Tibet forcefully and Dalai Lama fled to India. Bhutan almost immediately launched its first five-year plan in 1961. The five-year system plan was the first formal approach to economic development. These developments emanated largely in response to the international events taking place in the region. Thus, while Nepal already had fairly established forms of domestic institutions when it opened up, Bhutan had to develop them rather in a short span of time. This suggests a close link between domestic institutions and international affairs. A weak domestic institution is a source of threat to the national security of small states.

Bhutan's decision to align with India and not with China could also be related to the events just described. Bhutan viewed China as a revolutionary power. When China took over Tibet formally in 1951 and more directly, and forcefully, in 1959, Bhutan sympathized with Tibet's fate. As a country that shares the same religion and culture as Tibet's, Bhutanese policy makers perceived China in Tibet as posing serious threats to Bhutan's independence and security (Holsti 1982, 42). On the other hand, Nepalese elites had little "empathy for the Buddhist political and cultural system in Tibet and demonstrated only minimal sympathy for the fate suffered by Tibet" (Rose, 1977. 82). Besides, on some occasions in the past China tried to claim suzerainty over Bhutan. It published maps, which showed sizeable portions of Bhutan as part of Tibet and sent pamphlets preaching

Communism into Bhutan from across the border. (Rahul 1971, 103-105). Nepal never saw as much threat from Chinese as Bhutan did.

Bhutan and Nepal differ significantly in terms of the nature of political structure and its stability. Democracy was restored in Nepal in 1990 but Nepal still faces political instability. There have been frequent changes of government. Corruption and inter-party and intra-party conflicts are widely prevalent. Opposition parties label any initiative by the ruling party as selfish and anti-Nepal even though some initiatives would benefit the country as a whole. For example, in 1991, the opposition party opposed Prime Minister G.P. Koirala's initiatives to have close economic and security ties with India. Conflicts and feuds among Nepal's political elites have prevented Nepal from developing a consensus policy towards India. Besides, many view Nepal Congress Party as an extension of the Indian Congress Party. There is an ever-increasing effort to pursue policies quite different from India. In Bhutan, there are no political parties and there had been no fight for power among factions or any groups. It enjoys a very stable political structure and has been pursuing a relationship with India which ensures its economic and military security.

A Comparison of Bhutan's UN roll call votes with Nepal and India

So far, we have indicated difference in the behavior of Bhutan and Nepal vis-à-vis India and have provided some explanations for them. Let us now try to support these claims by looking at one specific instance. For this purpose, data on UN roll call votes from 1975 to 1985, i.e. from the 30th to the 40th sessions of the UN General Assembly, has been analyzed. Bhutan became a member of the UN only in the 27th session, and the first couple of years of its membership was a learning period during which it participated in only a few roll call votes. Therefore, the 30th session has been taken as the starting point of analysis. Data is immediately available only up to the 40th session.

General Assembly votes take three forms: yes, no or abstain. Only those votes in which all three voted were taken for comparison. Votes were classified into the following major categories: disarmament and nuclear weapons, human rights, economic issues, territorial integrity, and international security. All the issues related to nuclear weapons, disarmament, non-use of force, chemical and biological weapons have been included in the disarmament and nuclear weapons category; issues related to apartheid, gender and religious rights in the human rights category; all the issues related economic development and resources under economic issues; colonialism and occupation of territories under territorial integrity; and issues related UN peace keeping forces and international peace conferences and talks under international security. A small number of issues, which did not fall within these categories, have been left out of this analysis. The following table shows the pattern of votes for India, Bhutan and Nepal from the 30th to 40th sessions of the UN General Assembly.

Session	Country	Disarmament & Nuclear Weapons			Human Rights			Economic Issues			Territorial Integrity			International Security		
		Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N
30 th	India	14	1	1	20	0	0	11	0	0	15	2	1	1	0	0
	Bhutan	13	2	1	19	1	0	10	0	0	14	3	0	1	0	0
	Nepal	16	0	0	15	5	0	11	0	0	16	1	0	1	0	0
31 st	India	10	3	1	23	0	0	22	1	0	21	0	1	5	0	0
	Bhutan	9	4	1	24	0	0	23	0	0	17	1	0	5	0	0
	Nepal	14	0	0	21	2	0	23	0	0	19	3	0	5	0	0
32 nd	India	11	3	0	28	0	0	22	1	0	20	0	1	5	0	0
	Bhutan	11	4	0	28	0	0	23	0	0	19	1	0	5	0	0
	Nepal	15	0	0	26	2	0	23	0	0	19	2	0	5	0	0

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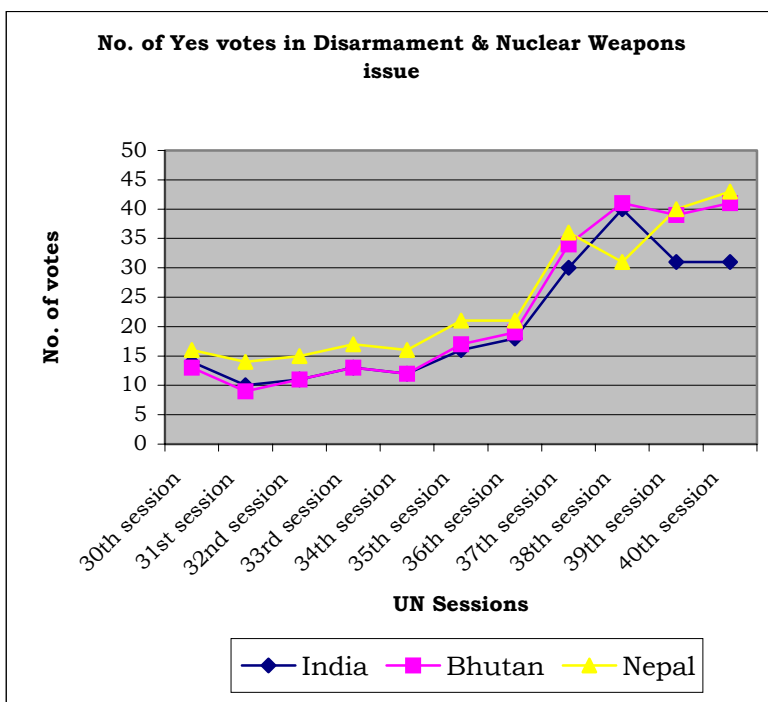
Note- Y: yes; A: abstain; N: no

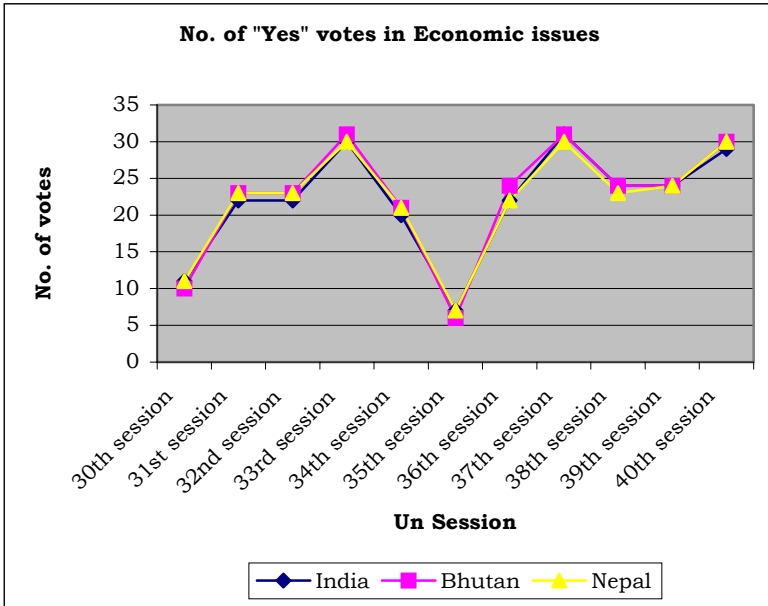
International Politics of Bhutan

Session	Country	Disarmament & Nuclear Weapons			Human Rights			Economic Issues			Territorial Integrity			International Security		
		Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N	Y	A	N
33rd	India	13	4	1	32	1	0	30	1	0	19	1	1	17	0	0
	Bhutan	13	4	1	33	0	0	31	0	0	19	2	0	17	0	0
	Nepal	17	1	0	26	7	0	30	1	0	17	4	0	16	1	0
34 th	India	12	4	1	28	2	0	20	2	0	27	0	1	11	0	0
	Bhutan	12	4	1	28	1	0	21	0	0	27	1	0	11	0	0
	Nepal	16	1	0	24	6	0	21	1	0	24	4	0	11	0	0
35 th	India	16	4	2	39	2	1	7	1	0	12	2	1	4	0	0
	Bhutan	17	4	1	38	2	1	6	0	0	13	1	0	4	0	0
	Nepal	21	1	0	37	5	0	7	1	0	12	3	0	4	0	0
36 th	India	18	7	1	27	1	0	22	2	0	35	2	0	4	0	0
	Bhutan	19	1	1	26	2	0	24	0	0	34	2	0	4	0	0
	Nepal	21	4	0	24	4	0	22	2	0	32	5	0	4	0	0
37 th	India	30	9	2	34	2	1	31	0	0	29	2	1	6	1	0
	Bhutan	34	4	1	33	4	0	31	0	0	29	2	0	6	1	0
	Nepal	36	3	0	34	3	0	30	1	0	29	3	0	7	0	0
38 th	India	29	15	2	27	1	0	24	0	0	28	1	0	13	2	0
	Bhutan	40	3	1	25	3	0	24	0	0	27	1	0	15	0	0
	Nepal	41	5	0	24	4	0	23	0	0	26	2	0	15	0	0
39 th	India	31	12	2	40	1	0	24	1	0	22	1	0	13	1	0
	Bhutan	39	3	1	38	3	0	24	1	0	20	1	0	13	0	0
	Nepal	40	4	0	34	6	0	24	1	0	22	1	0	14	0	0
40 th	India	31	16	0	33	1	1	29	0	0	24	2	0	14	0	0
	Bhutan	41	4	0	35	1	0	30	0	0	23	1	0	14	0	0
	Nepal	43	4	0	34	2	0	30	1	0	22	3	0	15	0	0
Total votes	India	215	78	13	331	11	3	242	9	0	252	13	7	93	4	0
	Bhutan	248	37	9	327	17	1	247	1	0	242	16	0	95	1	0
	Nepal	280	23	0	299	46	0	244	8	0	238	31	0	97	1	0

Source: UN Roll Call Data, SSDS, Stanford University

The above table demonstrates a clear and distinct pattern of votes. The number of differences in “Yes” votes is higher in the nuclear and disarmament issues. There is a small difference in the human rights category too. The three countries vote almost in the same manner on other issues. For example, the difference in the total number of “Yes” votes among the three countries is very small on issues related to economic questions, territorial integrity and international security. This indicates that a big neighbour does not influence a small state’s voting pattern on all the issues. Following charts show the pattern of votes described above.



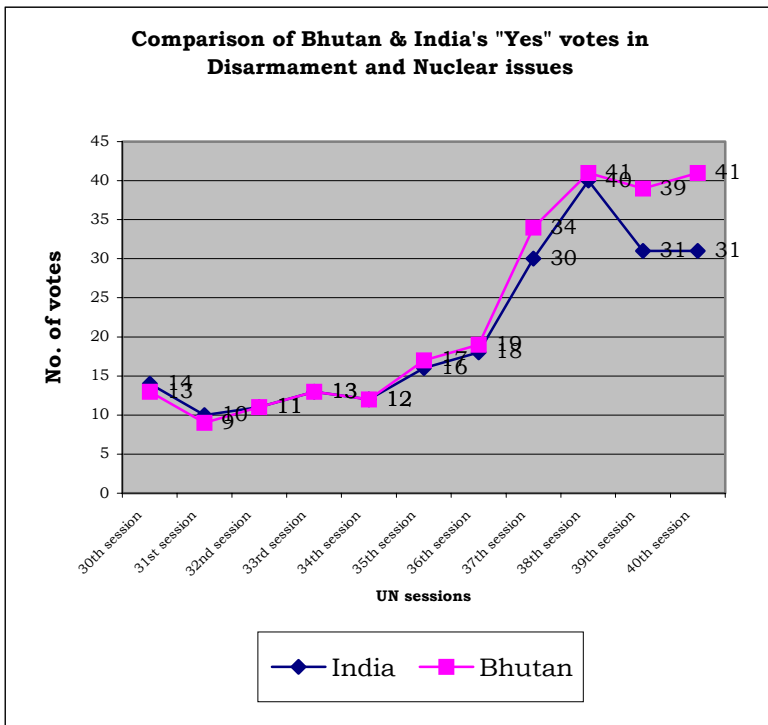


Having seen this general pattern, let's now discuss some more specific issues and try to analyze whether the data supports the general findings that we have seen, i.e. Bhutan and Nepal behave differently vis-à-vis India. We have seen that the voting pattern is almost similar on economic, territorial integrity and international security issues. But closer analysis of votes on disarmament and nuclear weapons issues is suggestive.

Analysis of the data shows that Bhutan's votes on issues related to disarmament and nuclear weapons closely follow India's. In fact, Bhutan's total number of "Yes" votes in the 32nd, 33rd and 34th sessions are identical to India's votes. This suggests the Indian influence in Bhutan's voting pattern. On the other hand, Nepal's votes on these issues differ by a large margin from India's. This confirms that Nepal's international politics does not follow India. This supports our argument

that the two small states with similar economic and physical features, do not behave the same way.

Data also shows a trend that needs further discussion. Beginning with 37th session, Bhutan's voting pattern differs from India's. In the figure below, except for the 38th session, the difference in the number of votes between Bhutan and India on disarmament and nuclear issues widens and the difference becomes greater towards the end of the period under review.



As the data showed some interesting trend, issues on which Bhutan voted differently from India were analyzed further. Analysis shows some counter-intuitive voting behavior by

Bhutan. As a small country, one cannot expect it to have any ambition to develop nuclear weapons but it abstains in many of the issues, which it is expected to support. It even abstains on the issues in which India votes “yes”. In the past most of its abstentions were on the same issues that India abstained from voting. So, how can we account for such a trend by a country, which has so far been supportive of India.

Looking into the diplomatic history of Bhutan, this different voting pattern of Bhutan coincides with the efforts taken to establish its international image. The sessions, which show a different voting pattern, fall in the early 1980s(1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985). During the same period, Bhutan became member of several international organizations and established diplomatic relationships with countries other than India. It joined IMF, World Bank, IDA and FAO in 1981; WHO, UNESCO, and ADB, in 1982; and became a member of SAARC, UNCTAD and ICIMOD in 1985. In 1985, it also established Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva and diplomatic relations with Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and Norway. The different pattern of Bhutan’s voting pattern towards the end of the period under review can be attributed to its diversifying diplomatic relations. This is highly suggestive of the role of the international organizations and the network of diplomatic relations in international politics of a state. However, this conclusion needs to be qualified. Unless more researches are carried out by interviewing Bhutanese foreign policy experts, it cannot be concluded for sure that Bhutan has decided to differ with India. One could only suggest that Bhutan was very tactful and voted different from India only on the issues that India wouldn’t care to bother how Bhutan voted. There are enough facts to support this argument. Bhutan has followed Indian stand on issues that India considers important. Because India refuses to ratify the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Comprehensive Test Ban treaties, Bhutan has also not ratified them. Bhutan supported India’s nuclear test in 1998.

Conclusions

In conclusion we could say that no single existing theory explains the international politics of small states adequately. They fail to account for different behavior of two small states with similar economic and physical limitations. The level of awareness, domestic institutions, culture and the nature of political structure and stability determine their international behavior. This suggests that there can be no universal theory which can explain the behavior of small states with different culture, politics, domestic institutions and perceptions of security. A next stage of study, involving different experts of foreign policies on Bhutan and Nepal, could go a long way in confirming the some suggestive explanations provided to their different behavior towards India.

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Security of Bhutan: Walking Between the Giants*

Dorji Penjore⁺

Introduction

'Vulnerability' best sums up the plight of small states in any discourse on security. Many size factors interplay to entangle most small states in a network of insecurities, and smallness has seldom been beautiful. Small states have often been the 'objects of conquest' in the big powers' scramble for dominion during the colonial and cold war periods. They have been conquered, cornered, exploited and reduced to mere buffer states or pawns in war-games, sometimes changing many hands, since their military – the traditional guarantor of security – was weak.

A normative shift in the concept of security today brought about by uni-polar world and the process of globalization does no good either, despite existing international law and post-Kuwait, -cold war norms. The new security threat is more subtle, dangerous and difficult to contain. While the old military threat still looms large, new forces working across borders are beyond their control, and this complicates the security situation further. How will small states fare under this new world order? There are both opportunities and challenges arising from both the realist and idealist world orders and the process of globalization.

Bhutan is a small Buddhist kingdom with an area of 40,076 square kilometers landlocked between India and China. These two Asian giants have asymmetric geography, demography, economy, military, natural resource endowments and

* This is an abridged version of the paper written for Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS), Honolulu, Hawaii.

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civilizations vis-à-vis Bhutan.¹ But these two regional powers have been competitors, not partners in the regions, thus creating a difficult atmosphere for its small neighbours. Like Nepal, Bhutan is like ‘a yam between two boulders’² and this geo-strategic location makes Bhutan so important in big neighbours’ perception of security.

Bhutan has never been colonized and as a result Bhutanese society has traditionally been sensitive to the issues of security, and preserving its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity has historically been a constant challenge.³ The two great world wars and cold war have spared Bhutan unlike its neighbours. However, it was the focus of big powers politics – Tibetans and Mongols from north, and the British India from the south. Today they are replaced by China and India. Bhutan fought seven wars in the north and three in the south to protect its territorial sovereignty.

Its long history and tradition of political independence, UN membership, political leaderships and successful bilateral and multilateral politics have indeed played a big part in avoiding the fates of its neighbours – integration of Tibet with China (1959) and Sikkim to India (1976). Bhutan closed its old historical ties with Tibet (China) due to various political and historical reasons. The geography, moreover, favoured India, for Himalaya barred an easy access to the north. Today, Bhutan’s relation with China remains frozen like Himalayan ice itself, while Bhutan-India relation burns like heat of Indian tropics. But the global shift in the regional and

¹ Bhutan lost about 3000 square kilometers of its land to the British India during the Duar War, 1864-65, and a few hundred square kilometers to China in process of settling border disputes.

² Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1778, then the Raja of Gorkha, used this metaphor to compare Nepal’s plight between India and China.

³ Tashi Choden and Dorji Penjore (2004). *Economic and Political Between Bhutan and Neighbouring Countries*, Thimphu: The Centre for Bhutan Studies

international relations mostly brought about by forces of globalization is changing this *status quo*.

This paper discusses three broad crosscutting security issues facing Bhutan today – a) Sino-Bhutan border conflict, its security implications, and how resolution of border problem will further complicate its security; b) possible changes in the Indo-Bhutan relation due to other forces such as India's north-east insurgents, improving Sino-Bhutan relation and its implication on India's security concern; and c) the dark side of globalization – the impacts of Bhutan joining World Trade Organization (WTO), and the introduction of satellite TV and information technology which are changing the very fabrics on which Bhutan's national identity is writ large.

Besides other problems, the above three issues are going to have major impacts on the security of Bhutan in the next few decades.

Bringing History into Perspective

An understanding of Bhutan's political history is a prerequisite for getting full pictures of the above issues.

Bhutan has a long history of Buddhist civilization beginning Eighth century AD. However, it was unified as a nation between 1616 and 1652. Historically, Bhutan - the land of peaceful dragon - has never been at peace; Bhutan was a victor⁴ as much as it has been a vanquished.⁵ Throughout its history, its big neighbours and imperialists had posed great security threats - Tibet in the 17th and 18th centuries, followed by the British India in the 19th century.⁶ However, it was never colonized, thus making the issue of security,

⁴ Bhutan invaded the kingdoms of Cooch Behar and Sikkim

⁵ Lost all three wars fought with the British, and ceded one-third of its southern territories.

⁶ Karma Ura, "Perception of Security," in *South Asian Security: Future*, Dipankar Banerjee (eds.) (Colombo: Regional Centre for Strategic Studies)

sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity very sensitive today.

Tibet seriously challenged Bhutan's statehood because it supposedly stood in its way of consolidating the entire Himalayan Buddhist regions into a Gelugpa domain. The process of founding of Bhutan and Tibet as nations, Bhutan under First Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (1594-1651?) and Tibet under V Dalia Lama Ngawang Losang Gyatso (1617-1682), were almost parallel events.⁷ Tibetans and combined Tibetan-Mongol forces unsuccessfully invaded Bhutan seven times in the 17th century.⁸ But the event of 1730 was to haunt the country. During the internal strife of 1729-1735 in western Bhutan, Paro Penlop declared independence and invited the Tibetan forces for assistance. Joint military forces of Paro Penlop and Tibetan defeated the Bhutanese government troops for the first time. The Tibetan ruler Pholanas informed the Chinese emperor that he had brought Bhutan under the emperor's rule, and the Chinese vague suzerainty claim over Bhutan was based on this little piece of misinformation.⁹

Historically, Bhutan had a cordial relation with the British India before it expanded its border to the north. The whole stretch of plains measuring 3000 square miles along the present India's borders called Duars was under Bhutanese sovereignty.¹⁰ Bhutan became a rightful kingmaker in Cooch Behar kingdom, and even stationed a small force. Relation became rocky after the interests of the British and Bhutan

⁷ V Dalai Lama consolidated Gelugpa School by persecuting other schools, Drukpa Kagyu being one.

⁸ In 1618, 1634, 1639, 1644-46, 1649, 1656-57, 1675-79)

⁹ Karma Ura, pp 136. Chinese claim was based on the work of Chinese historian Tieh-tsung where he wrote that China assumed suzerainty over Bhutan beginning 1831.

¹⁰ There were a total of 18 Duars under Bhutanese rule - 7 Assam Duars in Darrang and Kamrup, and 11 Bengal Duars from river Testa to Manas, including districts of Ambari Falakata and Jalpesh.

clashed in Cooch Behar, resulting into the first Anglo-Bhutan War in 1772. This was the beginning of the British interests in Bhutan as a gateway to British trade with Tibet. Many missions were consequently sent to extend and 'explore frontiers of knowledge' and open trade route to Central Asia.

Duar War and the Treaty of Sinchula, 1965

The British annexation of Assam in 1829 brought Bhutan into a direct contact with the British, leading to hostility (1837-64) with the East India Company and later with the British Empire. Over the next century, the British interests in Bhutan changed from trade to security following the Great Game between Russia, China and the British powers over the control of Central Asia. Bhutan too was then a political power to be reckoned with. While mighty Himalaya barred Bhutan's northern expansion, its southern regions provided incentives, thus leading to interference in affairs of Cooch Behar and Sikkim, and the final invasions.

The Duars was a single most important part of Bhutanese territory, fiscally and economically.¹¹ The British annexation of Assam Duars in 1841 resulted to the Duar War of 1864-65. Its direct result was a humiliating Treaty of Sinchula, 1865 which annexed all Bengal Duars and extended borders to foothills, in return for a monetary compensation. The British took over Bhutan's role in Sikkim and Cooch Behar¹² in return for non-interference in its internal matters.¹³ This treaty institutionalized the relation between the two countries

¹¹ Karma Ura, *ibid*

¹² Bhutan exercised its force in Sikkim, Cooch Behar kingdom and principality of Vijapur, and this factor brought Bhutan in direct contact with the British interests.

¹³ The Article 2 "agreed that the whole of the tract known as the Eighteen Doars ... is ceded by the Bhootan Government to the British Government forever," and Article 4 provides that "In consideration of the cession by the Bhootan Government of the territories specified in Article 2 of this Treaty...the British Government agreed to make an annual allowance to the Government of Bhootan of a sum not exceeding fifty-thousand rupees..."

for the first time, and provided basis for future relation. The terms of the treaty curtailed Bhutan's expansion in the south and west – the areas British contested.

Manchu Claim and the Treaty of Punakha, 1910

45 years later the Treaty of Punakha, 1910 was signed in response to geopolitical changes in the north. There was a strong China's presence in Tibet and the British became concerned with the China's forward policy in Tibet and other Himalayan states. China had also claimed all Himalayan states as its suzerains and the British wanted to stop the Chinese expansion by keeping Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal and Sikkim as buffer states.

The new treaty's provisions increased annual compensation for the forced occupation of Bhutanese territory, and guaranteed non-interference in Bhutan's internal affairs in return for the British guidance on its external matters. Bhutan was an independent country, and thus it only became a kind of loose British dependency for practical and political purpose. It was a balanced treaty despite enhancing the British role from arbitrator to an advisor on external matters.¹⁴

However, China suzerainty claim on Bhutan intensified in 1949 when the People's Republic of China (PRC) was born, and an acrimonious relation with the new China began.

Sino-Bhutan Relation

Bhutan is the only China's neighbour with whom it does not have a diplomatic relation despite sharing a common border. Incursion by People Liberation Army (PLA) into undefined border areas has been a threat to its territorial integrity and national security during the last few decades. Bhutan is under increasing pressure to start a diplomatic relation with China, and diplomatic relation was made an indirect

¹⁴ Tashi and Dorji, *ibid*

precondition for a resolving border dispute. What implications will this bilateral relation have on Bhutan-India relation and the two countries' national security? Historically, Bhutan was closer to Tibet than India, but geo-political and historical factors have frozen the relation in 1960. China's claim on Bhutan tilted the balance completely.

What interest did old China have in Bhutan? As most historians point out, it was no more than bringing Bhutan under its area of influence and stopping the British expansion. One big but vague tool China used, as elsewhere, was its concept of 'middle kingdom' suzerainty. But it backfired, especially in Bhutan's case. There is no historical record of two countries having any contact until the Ching dynasty maintained its residents in Lhasa around 1720s.¹⁵ China made concerted efforts to exercise 'historic' rights over Bhutan between 1865 when the Treaty of Sinchula was signed and the signing of the Treaty of Punakha in 1910. The new Republic of China slowly let the claim die down, only to surface later.

China watched Bhutan become an Indian area of influence after signing the Indo-Bhutan Friendship Treaty of 1949. As far as 1930, Chairman Mao "declared that the correct boundaries of China would include Burma, Bhutan, Nepal..."¹⁶ But later editions deleted the claim after PRC began to form a 'Himalayan federation" comprising of Tibet, Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) of India to extend its influence in southern Himalayas. Later PRC used its suzerainty tool much aggressively. In 1954 PRC published *A Brief History of China* where a considerable portion of Bhutan was included as a

¹⁵ Chinese claim was based on the work of Chinese historian Tieh-tsung where he wrote that China assumed suzerainty over Bhutan beginning 1731, after the Tibet's ruler Polhanas misinformed the Tibet's overlord of Ching dynasty that Bhutan was under him.

¹⁶ In the original version of *The Chinese Revolution and the Communist Party* openly

pre-historical realm of China.¹⁷ In 1958, another map claimed a large tract of Bhutanese lands, and later occupied about 300 square miles of Bhutanese territory in the north and north-eastern Bhutan. The Chinese claim surfaced again in 1960 when it openly declared that Bhutanese, Sikkimese and Ladakhis form a united family in Tibet, that they have always been subject to Tibet and to the great motherland of China, and that they must once again be united and taught the communist doctrine.

Bhutan's Southward Policy

For centuries Tibet has been a spiritual heartland of Mahayana Buddhist in Himalayan regions, and the loss of its neighbour had a great security implication for Bhutan. Tensions following Tibet's integration subsided after the Sino-Tibetan Treaty of 1951 promised Tibet's autonomy, and the 1952 Agreement with India allowed New Delhi to maintain a consul-general in Lhasa. The five principles of peaceful co-existence (*panchshila*) of 1954 demonstrated a benign Chinese attitude to its neighbours. Bhutan's mission in Lhasa functioned as before, and the trade continued. But the relation worsened after the brutal crushing of anti-Chinese revolts, first in eastern Tibet (1954-1955) and later in central Tibet (1958). The Tibetan uprising in 1959, the Dalai Lama's flight to India, and reports of Chinese troops along the ill-defined frontier posed a security threat.

After Tibet's integration, China resorted to carrots and sticks policy – carrots in form of economic assistance and assurance of independence, and sticks in the form of continuous claims. In 1959 the PLA occupied eight Bhutanese enclaves in

¹⁷ The other countries included were Soviet Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Nepal, Sikkim, Assam, Burma, Malaya, Thailand, North and South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Sulu Island of Indonesia, Taiwan, Korea and a large part of the Soviet Far east

western Tibet,¹⁸ and that same year, Chinese Premier Chou En-Lai expressed China's desire for a direct bilateral border talk with Bhutan. Bhutan was forced to close its northern border and withdrew its representatives in Lhasa and officers in western Tibet in 1960, thus putting an end to a thousand year old relations with Tibet. With its traditional northern trade route closed, Bhutan turned south.

Beginning of Border Problem

Sino-Bhutan border dispute is not so much a contest over territory as it is of China's desire to punish Bhutan for allying with its regional rival India. Territorial conflict is only a tip of an iceberg.

A 470-kilometer long un-demarcated Bhutan-Tibet border did not trouble the peoples of both countries until the Chinese takeover of Tibet. China has warned that that boundary dispute was a source of conflicts in the world, and it would take just a small incident to conflagrate the situation into a difficult diplomatic or a military confrontation. Tibetan herders, even PLA, stray into what Bhutan considers as its territory, while Bhutanese herders too stray into what China considers as theirs. The herdsmen of both countries have been exercising their rights to traditional pasturelands, thus leading to claims and counterclaims in un-demarcated borders.

The border problem posed a serious security threat after September 1979 incursion into Bhutanese territory. When Bhutan protested, China expressed its desire to solve the problem bilaterally. That same year, the National Assembly deliberated on normalizing relation with China and initiating

¹⁸ The eight enclaves, Khangri, Tarcheng, Checkar, Jangtong, Tussu, Janghi, Dirafoo, Chakop and Kachan were given to Bhutan by a Ladakhi king Singye Namgyal in the 17th century. Bhutan exercised administrative jurisdiction and they were never subject to Tibetan law, nor did they pay any Tibetan taxes.

a direct talk to resolve the problem. The subsequent events led to a direct China-Bhutan border talk. Until then Bhutan's border issues has been incorporated with the Sino-Indian border discussion.

While the preliminary talks began in 1981, the first formal meeting took place in Beijing in 1984. The talks began to be held every year alternatively in Thimphu and Beijing since then. China has always maintained that Indo-Bhutan Treaty of 1949 is an 'unequal' treaty – a symbol of India's hegemony in the region, and Chinese Premier in his message on the 1984 National Day of Bhutan conveyed that China attached great importance to developing friendly and neighbourly relations with Bhutan.

The progress has been slow because of the political and technical nature of the problem. However, a lot of differences were narrowed, and agreement was reached on basic guiding principle on boundary settlement.

Swapping Border Resolution for Diplomatic Relation

It became evident from the very first that China was more interested in developing direct relation with Bhutan than resolving border issues. During the second round in 1985, China talked of expanding contact, saying that it has diplomatic relations with all SAARC states, but not with Bhutan.

In 1996, Bhutan discovered the Chinese logging and road construction activities in the disputed territory, and when the issue was brought up in the 11th round, China proposed for the signing of an interim agreement for maintenance of peace and tranquility along the borders. This agreement was signed on 8 December 1998 in the 12th round. This interim agreement is very significant because it is the first legal document that has been signed by the two countries, and until that time there was no evidence of China recognizing

Bhutan's sovereignty, except that it has claimed Bhutan as a part of China.

Chinese approach in resolving the border as in Nepal was through a 'package deal' rather than a 'sector-by-sector' settlement. During the 11th round held in Beijing, China proposed to exchange 495 square kilometers area¹⁹ with an area of 269 square kilometers in the north-west Bhutan.²⁰ Sinchulumba shares border with Sikkim and is very close to Chumbi valley, and this particular territorial swapping would seriously undermine India's security by shifting the Bhutan-China border to the south. However, both sides agreed to discuss at technical level, and then decide on the Chinese and Bhutanese territories on maps. The 18th round was held in Thimphu in 2004.

Are Two Countries Heading for a Diplomatic Relation?

Besides yearly border consultations, contacts at various levels have increased in recent decades, beginning the 1974 Coronation. The sports, religious and cultural visits have been followed by participation in regional and international meetings on security, hydropower development, tourism and health. Bhutan has always maintained one-China policy by voting for restoring China's United Nations' seat in 1971, and as 55th UN General Assembly's Vice-chairman, Bhutan rejected Taiwan's participation motions in UN and WHO. Bhutan also opposed Taiwan's bid to host 2002 Asian Games. The Chinese ambassador to India has been visiting Bhutan on regular basis since 1994, and Bhutanese ambassador visited China in 2000. These visits have opened up new channels of interaction and contacts for exchanging opinions on different issues, besides boundary talks

Unresolved northern border is a serious concern for Bhutan's national security and territorial sovereignty and it has to be

¹⁹ Pasamlung and Jarkarlung valleys in the northern borders

²⁰ Sinchulumba, Dramana and Shakhtoe

solved soon. But if diplomatic relation is a precondition for resolving border problem, how will it affect Indo-Bhutan relation.

Indo-Bhutan Relation: A Relation Stronger than ever before

Bhutan and India is bound together by a 'special relation'. This special relation has slowly evolved from a donor-recipient to equal partner relationship, the best example being development of Bhutan's water resource for hydropower generation. While India is helping Bhutan harness the water resource through aid, grant, and loan, energy-deficient India could benefit from energy import from Bhutan. In 2001 about 94.1 % of Bhutan's export went to India, while imports from India constitute 77.7%.²¹

The friendship is deeply rooted in religion, culture, history and economic ties, encompassing a wide range of areas and issues of common interests like security, politics, trade and economy. It proved that a small state with a stable government and right leadership could be an equal partner of a giant state with asymmetric economic, political, military, demographic and geographic powers. But will it ever remain the same? Some new developments in regional and international relations, and the process of globalization are testing the validity and relevance of both the treaty and the 'special' relation.

As old order changed, yielding place to the new after the British withdrawal from India, Bhutan felt the need to negotiate a new relation with India. The Treaty of Punakha 1910 did not define Bhutan's status, technically or legally since it was only designed to stop any Chinese threat to British India's northern frontier. The British did not realize the necessity for Bhutan's external relation as long as the country remained isolated and inward-looking.

²¹ Does this figure translate into economic vulnerability? Or putting all eggs into one basket?

The Indo-Bhutan Treaty of 1949

While negotiating a fresh treaty, both countries were clear in their objectives – Bhutan to get the new India’s recognition of its independence like the British and to get back 32 square kilometers Dewangiri (now Dewathang) ceded by the Treaty of Sinchula, 1865; and India to restore Dewathang, so as to remove any fear of India’s alleged imperialistic design, and prevent Bhutan from looking north.

The Article 2 of the treaty reads, “The Government of India undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal administration of Bhutan. On its part the Government of Bhutan agrees to be guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to its external relations.” Does this treaty reduce Bhutan - one of Asia’s oldest and un-colonized nations into a mere Indian protectorate?

There were discrepancies between English and Bhutanese (Dzongkha) texts of the treaty, and the treaty did not specify which version was authoritative. New Delhi insisted Bhutan was obligated to be guided by India’s advice while Bhutan maintained it will merely seek and consider India’s advice. Decades of disagreement led to New Delhi’s acceptance of Thimphu’s version and interpretation in mid-1980s.²² A new interpretation of the article came up in 1974 following the Bhutanese foreign minister’s comment that India’s advice and guidance on foreign policy matters was optional.

Agreement or disagreement over its interpretation is not important here; what is important is the true existing reality, for the treaty has never stood in way of Bhutan conducting its international affairs. The leaders of both countries believed that the continuity and sanctity of the 1949 treaty depends ultimately on the faith and trust which the signatories

²² John W. Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century*, (2001, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London) p.176

reposed in each other. Almost half a century on, the treaty is vibrant and dynamic as both countries co-operate for common interest. Bhutan has always stood by India, for "a strong India means a strong friend of Bhutan." The Indo-Bhutan friendship qualifies as a good example of bilateral relation in the region, not only because of the relations between the two countries and governments, but equally because of the individuals and organizations in both the countries, which have fostered closeness and interdependence on their own.

Asked whether it is time to renew the treaty of 1949 given the excellent Indo-Bhutan relations and the global changes in international relations, Bhutan's foreign minister Jigmi Y Thinley had said the treaty has never been a constraint in conducting Bhutan's foreign relations, establishing diplomatic relations, engaging in various international forums, and in pursuing the paths with respect to its aspiration.²³ In the words of former Indian Foreign Secretary J.N. Dixit, the letters of the treaty do not really prevail in terms of determining the relations between Bhutan and India, but rather it is more of spirit of goodwill and understanding and friendship that prevails in conducting their separate relations with other countries. The relation demonstrates how the tremendous goodwill and friendships between the two countries can transcend legal instruments, and the words printed on paper.

Integration of Tibet, PLA's incursion into delimited border, a vague Chinese claim and other events shattered Bhutan's isolation policy since isolation was detrimental to sovereignty, and Tibet was a good example. The country was forced to re-evaluate its traditional isolation policy, and the need to develop its lines of communications with India became an urgent necessity. It was in this respect that Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited Bhutan on a horseback in

²³ Transcription of talk given to the students of Sherubtse College, Kanglung, on 24 February 1999

September 1958 to convince Bhutan end its isolation policy and accept India's economic assistance. India feared that any direct foreign contact would pull Bhutan into big power politics and might seriously affect its social and economic stability, which could in fact destabilize a strip of land connecting north-east to the rest of India.

Bhutan: the Most Vulnerable Sector in the Indian Security System

From India's perspective, Bhutan is one of the most vulnerable sectors in the Indian security system, as it "stood out as a wide vacuum on a frontier of vital strategic importance." Stability in entire Himalayan neighborhood became important for India's security. Thus, India unilaterally included Bhutan within India's northern security system. India inherited the British doctrine of preventing the areas within India's strategic interest from falling under the foreign powers, and India is always sensitive about keeping an exclusive influence in the southern Himalaya. For India, a weak Bhutan means weak buffer state or "extended frontier" with China, and it is only in this connection that India has played a major role in bringing an end of Bhutan's isolation policy, started socio-economic development and promoted Bhutan's international stature through UN membership and other multilateral organizations. India's assistance is indirectly tied to Bhutan's refusal of China's assistance.

Problem in Southern Borders

No country has threatened Bhutan's territorial integrity militarily since the Duar War of 1864-65. Bhutan's greatest threat came from its northern borders – be it suzerainty claims, cartographic invasion, territorial intrusion, enclaves occupation etc. While its limited security forces were guarding northern borders, all was quiet on its southern front because an excellent Indo-Bhutan friendship was thought to have guaranteed it. There was not a single security post along the southern border.

It turned out to be ironic that the major security threat in recent years came from its unguarded southern border. India may be a good friend and neighbour, but its northeast insurgents are not. These non-state actors from Assam and West Bengal who were fighting for independence from Indian Federation have the potential to undermine the friendship not only between two countries, but also between peoples of both countries living along the borders. The insurgents had been using Bhutanese soil as hideouts and training ground to carry out hit and run activities against vital infrastructure and security forces of India. The presence of these militants, United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and Kamtapur Liberation Army (KLA) have been a great concern to Bhutan for nearly a decade until they were flushed out in December 2003.

India's northeastern corner and the neighbouring countries embody some of the major demographic and environmental time bombs in the subcontinent.²⁴ There are insurgent movements from about 50 groups rooted in history, language and ethnicity, tribal rivalry, migration, local resource control, drugs, centre and state government negligence and foreign powers involvement. Bhutan's proximity to the region makes it very susceptible to any ethnic tensions in the northeast. The presence of militants in Bhutan was known only in 1996. Bhutan understood the potential danger, and beginning 1997 the issue dominated the National Assembly discussions.

Bhutan was caught up in a situation whereby it has a little or no human and materials to finance military operation, and acquiescing to India's unilateral operation would have been a violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bhutan. Moreover, any military action would incite the local Assamese population against the Bhutanese population. Bhutan uses Indian highways to travel from west to east and vice versa,

²⁴ Mandavi Mehta, "India's Turbulent Northeast," *The South Asia Monitor*, Number 35, July 5, 2001

putting Bhutanese travelers at risk, should there be any military action. The militants were adamant on staying on in the country until they get independence from India, thus justifying their long-term presence.

For the first time in its modern history, Bhutan is considering creation of a large militia or reserve force to defend national borders, which was largely prompted by these non-state actors. The idea to train students completing universities or high schools for guarding the borders permanently have been directly prompted by security threat posed by militants. Located between two military giants, Bhutan has never militarized itself, and its standing army numbering a couple of thousands were used to guard the northern frontier. Today, the Royal Bhutan Army (RBA), Royal Body Guard (RBG), and Royal Bhutan Police (RBP) together employ 14,209 personnel,²⁵ and this increase was promoted by the recent crisis with the militants. The security of its southern border is being strengthened through regular patrolling and surveillance of high-risk areas. Now military camps have been established and troops deployed along the entire border areas between Sibsoo and Daifam (farthest eastern and western border towns).²⁶

Globalization

It would be absurd to try to stop the wind of globalization sweeping the world, but if navigated skillfully, steering a steady course and avoid reef, can reach you to haven safe and sound.²⁷ There is no denying the fact that technological progress of recent years has transformed our lives, especially in field of communications and access to knowledge. The drastic changes witnessed in the last few years have widened

²⁵ “Strengthening national security” at www.kuenselonline.com, July 25, 2004

²⁶ “Need to strengthen Indo-Bhutan border security” at www.kuenselonline.com, July 25, 2004

²⁷ Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*; Barbara Bray (Trans.) (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2000)

the gap across many generations in many aspects of life. Bhutan is aware that globalization is irreversible and inevitable, that in the end the benefits will outweigh the cost, and that it is a necessity, not a choice.²⁸ Amin Maalouf argues that the present mass media revolution – ‘the multiplication of the means of expression and the diversification of opinion’ – is also leading to intellectual impoverishment since outpouring of ideas on global scale leads to conformism which is the ‘lowest form of intellectual denominator’ – that is reading same book, listening to same music, watching same films, and swallowing same sound, images and beliefs. TV give access to an infinite variety of opinions, the powerful media mogul only amplify the prevailing opinions, rejecting others point of view, and a flood of words and images discourages criticism.

Cultural Identity to Fight Cultural Homogenization

As remote, cocooned and isolated Bhutan may be until recent years, the process of globalization is transforming structures of society, economy and polity. While there are many advantages of globalization, its negative impacts are not few. Wedged between two billion Chinese and Indians, Bhutan (population 700,000) has long pursued the preservation and promotion of its unique culture as its national identity. The country has neither military nor economic might, and its age-old culture and tradition have been promoted to fight off the global cultural homogenization. Much time and resources have been committed to prevent its culture from going to museum. Globalization is changing the both mental and physical contours of Bhutan where 85% of the population are farmers. How can Bhutan overcome dark side of globalization? Until early 1960s Bhutan was a mediaeval country in strict western sense of the term, but the recent

²⁸ Tashi Wangyel, “Rhetoric and Reality: An Assessment of the Impact of WTO on Bhutan” in *Spider an the Piglet* – proceedings of the First International Seminar on Bhutan Studies, Thimphu: The Centre for Bhutan Studies, 2004

changes are dramatically transforming its economics, politics, and society as never before.

Beginning of an Aerial Invasion

Bhutan became the last nation in the world to introduce television in 1999, and a few years later a crime waves of murder, homicide, shop-lifting, burglary, theft, fraud, drunk driving followed, together with students indiscipline, substance abuse, disrespect for values, mental problem. Marihuana growing wild along the road was once used as feeds for pigs, and now children are beginning to smoke it. These social ills are mostly attributed to TV.

The onslaught of satellite TV and information technology is eroding the badge of national identity and sovereignty, which Bhutan has prided and prided upon. Cable TV may have opened people's eyes to outside world, but it is blurring its inner eyes to see oneself. It is fast homogenizing the tradition to modernity, and adaptation is impossible given the speed, rapidity, volume and glamour of the TV culture. At no time in history is the country going through a rapid social and cultural transformation. At the end of the day, we will have a weakened social solidarity, diluted culture, weak family values, a sterile spiritual plane, and not god-fearing, but god-fighting men and women.

The logic for opening up to TV and Internet was an assumption that Bhutanese are educated enough to sieve the good from the worst, a belief that a culture as rich and vibrant as Bhutanese could prevail over trash TV culture, and the people are capable of selecting good from rubbish; but a few year experiences is proving the opposite. TV is striking at the heart of what Bhutan has been trying to promote and preserve as its national identity. "(T)his is a country that has reached modernity at such breakneck speed that the god of wisdom Jambayang is finding it virtually impossible to compete with the new icons," and TV is "persuading a nation

of novice Buddhist consumers to become preoccupied with themselves, rather than searching for their self.”²⁹

WTO: Economic Entanglement or Enlightenment?

Bhutan’s commitment to open itself to the globalization can be better understood from its application to World Trade Organization (WTO) membership. It is a signatory regional free trade regimes such as SAARC Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA), and Bay of Bengal Trade and Economic Cooperation (BB-TEC). Bhutan is not tempted to accept or reject globalization but chose to take a path at its own strength and speed. But membership follows liberalization, economic reforms, re-legislation, new institutions and harmonization of national laws, regulations and procedures to conform to the WTO agreements. Can Bhutan fulfill and afford these changes? Is Bhutan prepared to compete and benefit from enhanced market access? The dilemma here is Bhutan’s ability to reconcile incongruity between perceived benefits and its limited capacity to reap benefits in the ‘level playing field’.³⁰ Bhutan faces lots of disadvantage from its poor natural resources, lack of labour, capital and technology, problems related to size, structural and geographic location.³¹

Conclusion

Sino-Bhutan relation has been growing since the beginning of the first annual border talk in 1984. From 1959 to the present day, China’s consistent goals has been to draw Bhutan away from its special relations with India, and it used various tools to this end - refusal to discuss about Bhutan

²⁹ Adrian Levy & Cathy Scott-Clark “Fast forward into trouble”, *The Guardian*, Saturday, June 14, 2003

³⁰ Tashi Wangyal, *ibid*

³¹ Land transportation in a landlocked countries whose products need to cross borders is costly. The median landlocked country pays up to 50 percent more in transportation costs than the median coastal nation (see Ricardo Hausmann, “Prisoner of Geography – landlocked countries economies” *Foreign Policy*, January 2001)

during Sino-Indian border talks, providing incentives to Bhutan for having a direct relation with Beijing and linking Sino-Bhutan relation as a condition for softening Sino-Indian rapprochement. China has still refuse to accept what it calls as 'unequal' Indo-Bhutan relation. While Chinese allegation that the 1949 treaty was an 'unequal treaty' symbolizing India's expansionism and hegemony appeals to Bhutanese nationalism, China has negotiated in early 1980s to recognize Bhutan as an Indian protectorate in return for India's ban on Tibetan refugees' anti-China activities from Indian soil.³² Among other factors, history still haunts Bhutan – series of claims China made on Bhutan – despite the interim agreement signed between the two countries recognizing each other's independence. Is the interim agreement a ploy – a Chinese Trojan Horse - to deceive Bhutan into believing China's good, neighbourly and benign intentions and to woe Bhutan, only to be a monster later?

China has been pressing for establishing a diplomatic relation before signing final border agreement. If that is the rigid Chinese criterion, then it will not be solved at all until there is thaw in Sino-Bhutan relation. India has played a big role in Bhutan's development. India's assistance was tied to Bhutan's support on India's security need – meaning no third power presence in Bhutanese soil. India has showed a tremendous good will by enhancing Bhutan's independence by supporting Bhutan's United Nations membership, and acceptance of Thimphu's interpretation of Article 2 of the 1949 Treaty.

Unlike Nepal and Sikkim (before merger), Bhutan has never played its China card against India. Bhutan saw what India could do to Nepal during 1988-89 embargo and integration of Sikkim to India in 1974, if it is provoked or if its neighbours are insensitive to its security concerns. Bhutan has always felt comfortable with the existing bilateral relation, and chose to be a pragmatic. India holds the same geographic trump

³² John W. Garver, *ibid*

card it has with Nepal, and any disruption of communication through Indian territory will cripple the Bhutan's economy. During the 1988 embargo on Nepal, Bhutan saw China's inability to become India's substitute. Bhutan's economy is strongly depended upon India. Hydro-power project built through Indian grant is the main revenue earner, and the coming mega-hydro projects dependent on Indian energy market is going to the backbone of Bhutan's economy. There is a great risk in any change in relation with India.

Any improvement in Sino-India relation has been accompanied by diminished Chinese interests in Bhutan³³ and until such times when Sino-India relation has improved, there is no possibility for any resolution of border problem, nor diplomatic relation with China. So Sino-Bhutan border dispute will continue to be a serious security threat to Bhutan.

The northeast insurgents have been flushed out now, but it is not a permanent solution as long as the problems continue in India. There is no adequate infrastructure and manpower to guard 266 kilometer Bhutan-Assam border. The 2003 military actions against the militants have incensed the local population, and the Bhutanese travelers will continue to be a target of future retaliations. Bhutan has to be on guard as long as the insurgency problem is not solved in India, and the present situation depicts gloom pictures. India's determination to crush any insurgency for independence, and the insurgents' will to fight for independence are the two ends of spectrum.

Socio-economic development plans are fast transforming Bhutan into a modern state. Various development indicators are above the regional average. But development has come at a cost – cost of environment despite 73% forest coverage, erosion of culture and tradition, dilution of people's faith,

³³ J, Mohan Malik, "South Asia in China's Foreign ", *Pacifica Review*, Volume 13, Number 1, February 2001

weakened communal and social solidarity and widening gap between the rich and poor. The opening of this Arcadian country to the forces of globalization, which comes in various sizes and forms, is increasing the country's vulnerabilities in aspects of economy, society, environment, culture, religion and polity. All these changes have lots of bearing on the country's security since the security paradigm has changed from its traditional (military) concept to include non-traditional aspects. But this is not to suggest that Bhutan has to close its eyes to globalization. As Amin Maalouf argues, globalization, if navigated carefully, will reach the country to a safe shore of prosperity and security.

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