

THE BHUTAN SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

Number 39

President: Sir Simon Bowes Lyon KCVO

Spring 2009

Researching the Buddhist Wall Paintings of Bhutan

An illustrated lecture by Stephen Rickerby and
Lisa Shekede, introduced by Professor David
Park, Courtauld Institute of Art

Friday 17th April, 2009



Despite the extraordinary richness of Bhutan's heritage of wall paintings - in monasteries, temples, dzongs and chortens - they remain poorly understood and inadequately recorded. Now, however, thanks to a major grant from an anonymous US donor, the Courtauld Institute of Art in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture is undertaking the first comprehensive study. Research by Lisa Shekede and Stephen Rickerby, conservators with considerable expertise in the technology and conservation of Asian wall painting, aims to examine and record a significant proportion of the most important paintings, investigate their original techniques, and assess their conservation needs and priorities. In order to appreciate and safely preserve this extraordinary legacy in Bhutan, this information will provide the crucial basis for future decisions regarding their conservation.

Friday 17th April, 2009

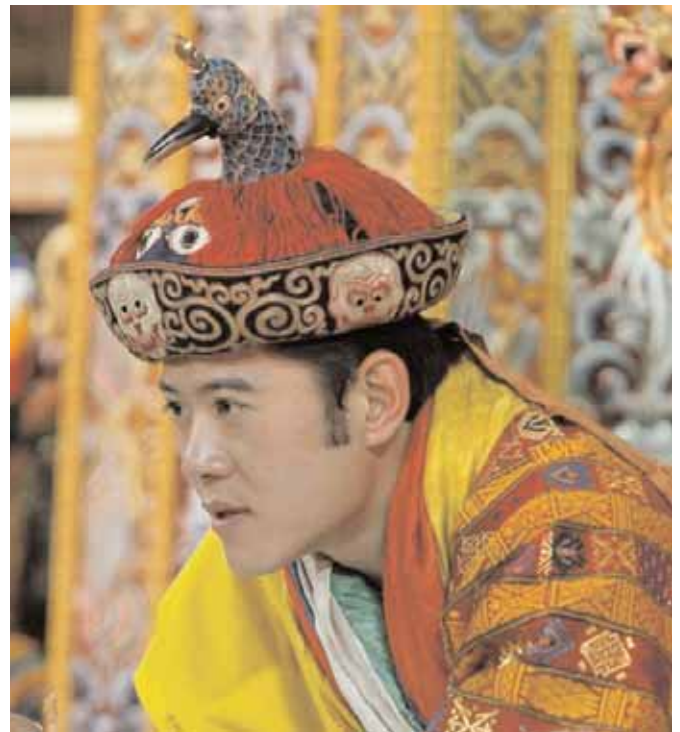
6:30pm for 7:00pm

**The Oriental Club
Stratford Place, London W1C 1ES**

Drinks available before the lecture

The Coronation of His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck the Fifth Druk Gyalpo

See pages 2-7



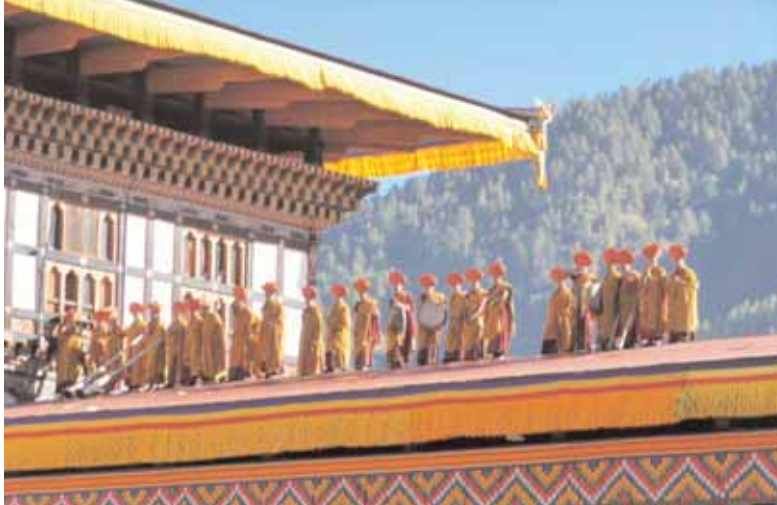
"I will never rule you as a King. I will protect you as a parent, care for you as a brother and serve you as a son. I have no personal goals other than to fulfill your hopes and aspirations. I shall always serve you, day and night, in the spirit of kindness, justice and equality."

The Society's website is at www.bhutansociety.org and carries information about the Society, news and events, an archive of Newsletters and a selection of interesting Bhutan-related links. The Bhutan Society of the UK:

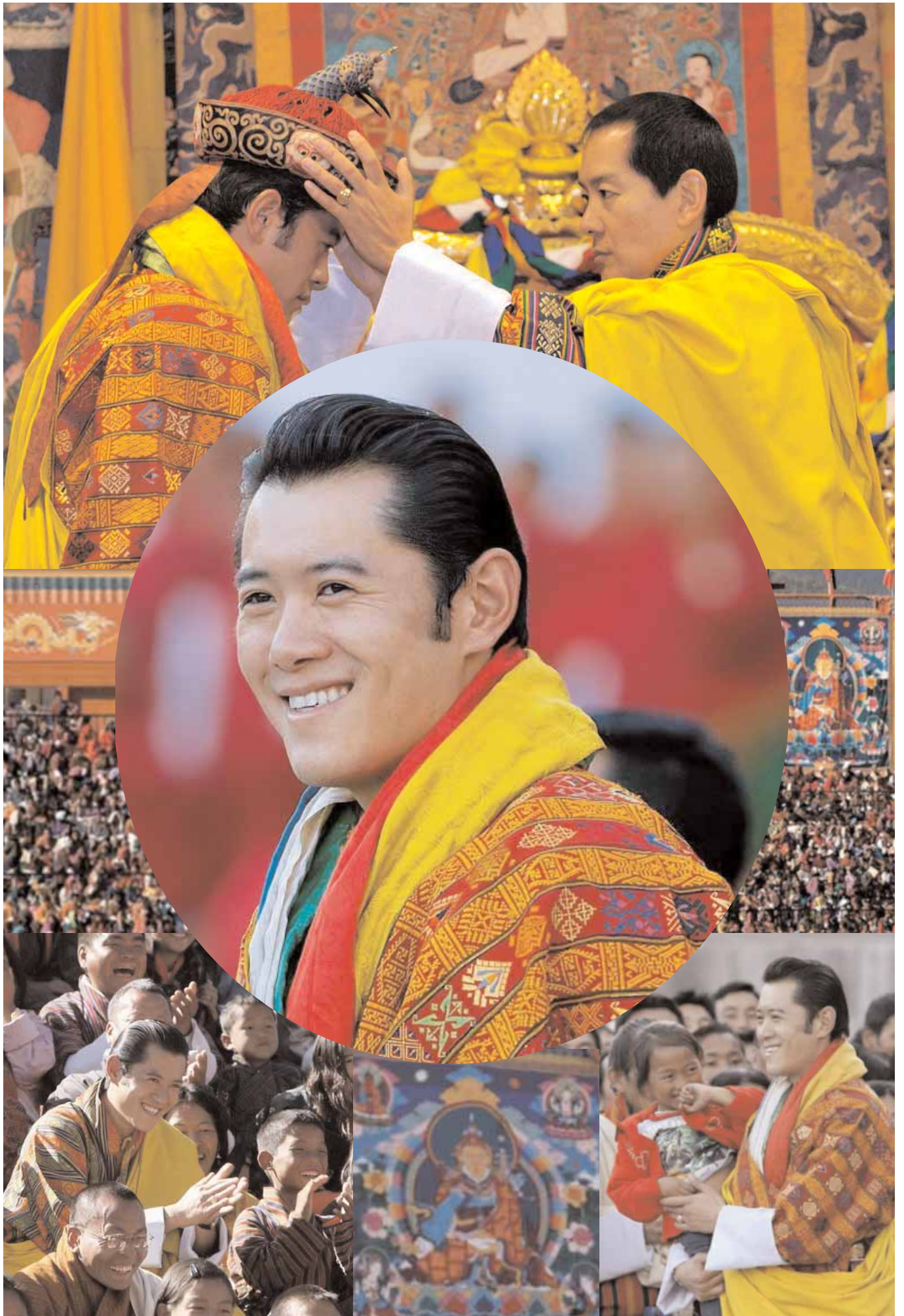
Unit 23, 19-21 Crawford Street, London W1H 1PJ E-mail: info@bhutansociety.org

For membership enquiries please see the Society's website, or contact the Membership Secretary, Mrs. Elizabeth Lee

E-mail: lee.elizabeth@btpenworld.com Tel: (01483) 455764



Photos (c) either Michael Rutland or Steve Jones/Windhorse Photography





The Coronation of

Origins of the Coronation Tradition

By Tshering Tashi

In a Buddhist kingdom it is the first born prince who becomes the king. If a king is born then why is there a need to crown him? Then what is the significance of the coronation ceremony of a Buddhist king to its people?

In order to appreciate the significance of the coronation, we need to trace its roots. Oral stories are common in the Himalayas about how the Indian mystic Guru Padma Jungney instituted the tradition of coronation in Tibet in the 8th century. Guru, revered as the living Buddha in Bhutan, was an adopted prince of King Indra Bodhi and so familiar with the traditions of the kings.

Guru is associated with the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet and Bhutan. In c.779 he constructed the first Buddhist monastery in Samye in Tibet. It is believed that he anointed King Trisong Deutsen as the first formal Buddhist king. He conducted this coronation by invoking a blessing called *Ngawang Rinchen Barwai Wangkur* (Blazing Jewel of Sovereignty). This invocation provides the basic rationale behind the institution of Buddhist kings.

In more recent history the origin of the ceremony goes back to when the founder of Bhutan, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, conferred upon Tenzing Dugyel the title of *Deb Raja* in 1656 and upon Pedar Jungye the high office of the *Je Khenpo*. Later, this tradition was followed for the coronation of the first king at Punakha in 1907.

According to Dasho Meghraj Gurung, "The coronation of the king of Bhutan is an ordination of a chosen one by karmic destiny." A retired senior bureaucrat, who participated in the last coronation in 1974, he continues that the coronation provides the platform "where the king dedicates himself completely, body, speech and mind, to fulfil the sacred duties of a Buddhist king."

The kings of Bhutan are the head of both secular and religious order. Their duty is enshrined in Article 2 of the constitution that states: The *Chhoe-sid-nyi* (both religion and secular) of Bhutan shall be unified in the person of the *Druk Gyalpo* (king).

A Buddhist king takes a formal vow to make others' well being his individual responsibility. During his kingship he strives continuously to create ideal conditions for his people's well being and happiness. In addition he will ensure the spiritual advancement of his people. The responsibility of a Buddhist king is so great that no ordinary person wants to be shackled with the extraordinary responsibility of a king. The entanglement is such that popular Buddhist prayer, *Pemai Ka-tha dhuep* says, "*Dik chen Gyalp gi loue lu ki ma chu*." It means, do not let me reborn as a non-Buddhist king.

In 1907 our ancestors elected Ugyen Wangchuck as the first king of Bhutan. After 100 years, his great-great grandson will now ascend the golden throne after handing back the power to the people.

Kuensel Editorial: Our Coronation

Kuensel, 29 October 2008

About 2,500 years ago a Prince walked away from his Palace, his material comforts, his Throne. He did it to help his people, through education and through spirituality. He eventually showed them, and the world, the path to enlightenment.

Less than two years ago, another King walked away from his Throne. He also did it to help his people, having paved the way for his son to take over the responsibility to guide his kingdom into the future.

On November 1 we will watch the empowerment of this King, the fifth Druk Gyalpo. Significantly, the ceremony will be held in the Palace from where Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel fought off invaders, unified the kingdom, and ruled Bhutan as a nation.

The Coronation of the fifth Druk Gyalpo is an extraordinary occasion, coming at a critical period in Bhutan's history. It is an important milestone on the long road in the evolution of the Bhutanese system, from a theocracy to a Monarchy to a unique democracy.

The Zhabdrung was a Monastic King. He was both King and Lama. By the end of his reign, the Zhabdrung had bifurcated the system of governance, with separate leaders for the clergy and secular community. The wisdom of that system is appreciated today, particularly by scholars, who analyse that societies that were completely dominated by the clergy often lacked the capacity to defend their countries.

Scholars have also analysed that Bhutan survived, and thrived, largely because of the political vision of the leaders. Bhutan's evolution continues to be an example of enlightened statecraft. That is reassuring for the Bhutanese people as we end one era of history and begin another.

The Coronation ceremony is significant for the Bhutanese people because, among other reasons, it represents the journey of the past, through the present, into the future. It symbolises the preservation of the Bhutanese identity through change.

While the ceremony itself is rich in symbolism, our Monarchy is not symbolic. As a symbol of unity of the Bhutanese people, the Druk Gyalpo is mandated with the responsibility of the supreme protector, the fountain of honour, fountain of justice, protector of religions, head of state and as the commander in chief of the army.

The Druk Gyalpo takes on the responsibility to make Bhutanese democracy a vibrant one, to uphold the Constitution, and to ensure that Bhutan is safeguarded for future generations.

That is why the sacred empowerment is a significant moment for all of us.

"To grasp and hold a vision, that is the very essence of successful leadership."

the Fifth Druk Gyalpo



His Majesty's Coronation Address

7 November 2008

It is with immense joy that we are gathered together on this most auspicious day. In these last 100 years the dreams and aspirations of our forefathers and the vision of our Kings have been fulfilled beyond all expectations. The wise and selfless leadership of our Kings, the sacrifice and hard work of generations of Bhutanese and the special bond between the People and King have given us this unique and special nation - a jewel of the earth.

Two years ago, at a time of profound change, I came onto the Throne as a young King. You, my people, in the spirit of generations past, worked with me with complete faith and gave me your wholehearted cooperation and goodwill. Thus, in these two short years while we have taken gigantic steps towards strengthening our nation, we have done so in a calm, deliberate manner in complete harmony. It is with great pride that we stand as a new democracy, having successfully completed an unprecedented and historic transition.

Yet we must always remember that as our country, in these changing times, finds immense new challenges and opportunities, whatever work we do, whatever goals we have - and no matter how these may change in this changing world - ultimately without peace, security and happiness we have nothing. That is the essence of the philosophy of Gross National Happiness. Our most important goal is the peace and happiness of our people and the security and sovereignty of the nation.

Our generation of Bhutanese have been gifted a strong, dynamic nation by our forefathers. I am confident that as long as we are willing to work with their commitment and dedication and follow their example we can bring greater peace, happiness and prosperity to our country.

I am confident because I know the worth and character of our people. You are the true jewel of this nation. As citizens of a spiritual land you treasure the qualities of a good human being - honesty, kindness, charity, integrity, unity, respect for our culture and traditions, love for our country and for God. Throughout our history our parents have upheld these values and placed the common good above the self.

My deepest concern is that as the world changes we may lose these fundamental values on which rest our character as a nation and people. It is critical that we are able to recognize Bhutanese character irrespective of how far we look back into the past or into the future. The Bhutan we see is vastly different - unrecognisable even - when compared to the Bhutan in the time of our first King. Yet, the character of our people and the nature of our fundamental values have remained unchanged. Henceforth, as even more dramatic changes transform the world and our nation, as long as we continue to pursue the simple and timeless goal of being good human beings, and as long as we strive to build a nation that stands for everything that is good, we can ensure that our future generations for hundreds of years will live in happiness and peace.

It is not because I am King that I ask these of you. Destiny has put me here. It is with immense gratitude and humility that at this young age, I assume the sacred duty to serve a special people and country. Throughout my reign I will never rule you as a King. I will protect you as a parent, care for you as a brother and serve you as a son. I shall give you everything and keep nothing; I shall live such a life as a good human being that you may find it worthy to serve as an example for your children; I have no personal goals other than to fulfill your hopes and aspirations. I shall always serve you, day and night, in the spirit of kindness, justice and equality. As the king of a Buddhist nation, my duty is not only to ensure your happiness today but to create the fertile ground from which you may gain the fruits of spiritual pursuit and attain good Karma. This is how I shall serve you as King.

I cannot end without addressing our most important citizens - our youth. The future of our nation depends on the worth, capabilities and motivation of today's youth. Therefore, I will not rest until I have given you the inspiration, knowledge and skills so that you will not only fulfill your own aspirations but be of immense worth to the nation. This is my sacred duty. A strong motivated young Bhutan guarantees a strong bright future.

The future is neither unseen nor unknown. It is what we make of it. What work we do with our two hands today will shape the future of our nation. Our children's tomorrow has to be created by us today.

I end with a prayer for Bhutan - that the sun of peace and happiness may forever shine on our people. I also pray that while I am but King of a small Himalayan nation, I may in my time be able to do much to promote the greater wellbeing and happiness of all people in this world - of all sentient beings.



The Bhutan Society

The Coronation Banquet:

Michael Rutland writes...

One of the most memorable evenings of my life was on the second day of the Coronation when the Coronation Banquet was held in the courtyard of Tashicho Dzong.

We arrived as dusk was falling, to be met by the wonderful architecture of the Dzong gently illuminated by hundreds of flickering candles. In the courtyard were twenty round tables, each seating a dozen people. The tables were beautifully laid with white linen, gleaming crystal glassware and full silver place settings, and in the centre candelabras. The King, the Royal Family and The President of India with Sonia Ghandi and family were seated at a long table on a low raised balcony.

As darkness came, the candlelight created a magical and unforgettable atmosphere. The form, architecture and colours of the Dzong courtyard were shown off to perfection. And then, before Dinner was served, there was firstly a performance of the Black Hat Dance - but this was like no performance I had seen before. The dancers were subtly lit by discrete floor-level floodlighting which showed off their impressive costumes - the scythes of brilliantly coloured silks flashing through the air - caught in the light and throwing dramatic shadows on the white Dzong walls.

We were then treated to a moving performance of the Dance of Milarepa, with its hunter, the stag, and the birds and the beasts of the forest - again, beautifully and subtly lit. And then Dinner. This was indeed a Coronation Banquet in a setting and an atmosphere utterly unique to and profoundly characteristic of Bhutan.

CD of the Bhutan Coronation trip

A CD of photographs taken during the Bhutan Society Coronation tour is being prepared by photographer Chris Watt, with proceeds to be donated to the Bhutan Society Trust Fund. Featuring highlights of Bhutan, as well as the Coronation celebrations in Thimphu, the CD will be playable on a standard DVD player or computer.

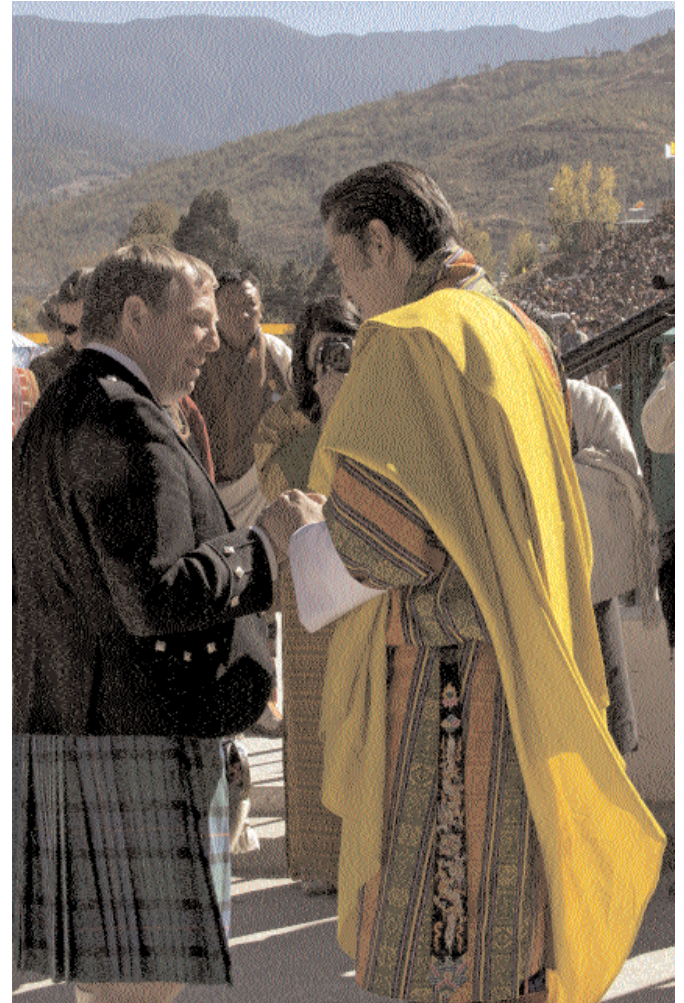
To reserve a copy please contact Andrew Sutton (7 Court Hill, Chipstead, Surrey CR5 3NQ). Cheques for £10 (including p&p) per copy should be made payable to *The Bhutan Society Trust Fund*.

We hope that copies will be available in the second half of March. Please provide your e-mail address (if any) with your order so that we can easily keep you informed of timings.

Matt Heasman writes...

The coronation spectacle lived up to expectations - we watched His Majesty's Coronation address, the military parades and, best of all, the colourful dancers. The deep droning sound of the *dungchen* (a long alpine horn-like trumpet) rolled around the stadium and rang in our ears. His Majesty made his way around the whole complex meeting his people from near and far. It was genuinely touching to see him take the time to talk, sometimes at length, to those of all ages and stature.

Meeting His Majesty myself, and having the chance to speak to him for a few seconds, was a great honour and a moment I will cherish for the rest of my life.



Matt Heasman, in kilt and full Scottish regalia, meets His Majesty

Coronation Highlights on YouTube

A brief film of Coronation celebration highlights has been posted on the online video sharing site YouTube. It includes some of the traditional games and festivities and also a glimpse of Member Freda Ferne meeting His Majesty! See: <http://tinyurl.com/6t8uk5> Or search on the YouTube site (www.youtube.com) for 'End of the Coronation ceremony of the King of Bhutan'.

Coronation Tour



The Bhutan Society Coronation Tour

By Freda Ferne

A small group of Bhutan Society Members, the sole reason for this visit - to be in Bhutan for the celebrations surrounding the Centenary of the monarchy and the Coronation of the Fifth King, His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.

Just about every building - shop, house, hotel, farm - was proudly displaying the national flag. In Bumthang we met a man who was going to Thimphu for the coronation - the third one for him. In Wangdi I spoke with a woman who had been in Punakha for the coronation ceremonies the previous day. In their little shops people were watching the proceedings on television. It occurred to me that here was television taking their King into homes and shops in just about every corner of the country, helping to unify the diverse population. Here was television as a powerful force for good.

Thimphu was looking magnificent. The new market, landscaped gardens by the river, the National Memorial Chorten with its new prayer wheels and improved surroundings. Every building with the national flag, posters of the five Kings, "Our Kings, our happiness". Posters of the Fifth King, "We love our King". At night the buildings were all lit up with coloured lights cascading down them. Thimphu has never looked like this before. Everyone, from the oldest to the youngest, was dressed in their best. The clothes shops were doing a roaring trade with locals and tourists buying new outfits.

There were to be three days of celebrations, the first at Tashichho Dzong. The approach was packed and we stood no chance of entry (apart from one of our group, Stephen Jones, who had an 'access all areas' press pass and had been up since dawn) but it was exciting just being there. I even met a friend from Phuentsholing! Changlimithang stadium was the venue for the other two days of celebrations. There were flags of many countries alongside the dragon of



Freda Ferne greets His Majesty, while fellow Society Member Albert Heasman looks on. (C): Steve Jones/Windhorse Photography

Bhutan, a light breeze doing a great job. The Royal Pavilion and other buildings were fringed with the pleated yellow borders that rippled beautifully with the slightest wind. There were decorated tents for the honoured guests and the stadium was quickly packed with eager spectators. There was a military flavour to the first morning with parades and inspection of the troops, some in traditional ceremonial dress. Presentations to the King included two elephants with a calf who raised their trunks to salute His Majesty - an outright winner with the crowd! This was followed by religious dances and traditional folk dances from every region of the country. My favourite was from Laya and featured what I can only think of as 'pantomime yaks' only this was not pantomime at all, but an illustration of the importance of the yak in the

culture of Laya. I had seen some of the religious dances before but not on this scale. Up to 80 dancers entering the stadium from the four corners was just so impressive - WOW!

We returned to the stadium the next day for the final of the strong man competition with one finalist from each region. Contestants ran with 70 kg sacks of rice, carried huge logs and lifted impossibly heavy round stones onto oil drums (all this done with bare feet - health and safety eat your heart out!). This was followed by traditional games, one involving young boys riding on the shoulders of men and snatching caps off each other. The winner depended as much on the fitness of his mount as on his own skill. Then pillow fighting on a pole over water - hugely popular with the crowd. It was a delight to see such simple, traditional games taking their place in the historic coronation celebrations and it made me realise how much we have lost even at a village level, never mind nationally.

On both days His Majesty spent as much time as possible moving amongst the crowds, asking for (and receiving) kisses from the youngest and speaking with as many people as possible. When he approached our section of the crowd one of our group, Matthew Heasman (wearing his kilt) offered His Majesty congratulations on behalf of the Bhutan Society. I had the honour of offering His Majesty a ceremonial scarf (which he returned as a blessing). I offered my congratulations and told him what a privilege it was to be in Bhutan at such an historic time. We later had the wonderful honour of taking part in the *Tashi Leybey* (farewell dance). There are some moments/times/days I will remember forever - this is one of them. My cup runneth over.



News & Updates from

The Bhutan Society Trust Fund

The Bhutan Society Trust Fund is a charity established by Trust deed on 15th September 1994 and its income is to be applied to 'the relief of the poor, handicapped and the sick in the Kingdom of Bhutan; the advancement of education and religion in the Kingdom of Bhutan; and other charitable purposes for the benefit of persons being citizens of the Kingdom of Bhutan'.

The original fundraising target of the Trust was to accumulate an Endowment Fund of £50,000, the income from which would be used annually for disbursement for the stated charitable aims. Fundraising events, private donations and investment income helped us reach and substantially pass our target; funds are held in bank deposits and are invested in charitable unit trusts whose market values are somewhat erratic currently.

The most notable fundraising events were held at the Royal Geographical Society: 1997: a lecture given by Joanna Lumley, *'In the Land of the Thunder Dragon'*; 1998: film preview attended by TRH Prince and Princess Michael of Kent, *'Bhutan - the World's Last Shangri-la'*; 1999: an evening chaired by Dr David Bellamy, *'Bellamy and Bhutan'*. These events together raised in excess of £10,000.

At the 10th Anniversary Dinner at the Royal Chelsea Hospital in 2002 a painting of Taktsang Lhaksang, donated by Michael Blooman, was auctioned 'silently' and raised £1,601. £1,000 was realised from the sale of photographs of Bhutan held at the Nehru Centre, London in October 2006.

In total over £20,000 has been disbursed in grants to many and various projects. A flavour of this diversity is given by the following: Braille watches and a Braille dictionary; maintenance of temple roofs in Eastern Bhutan; primary health care via The Bhutan Health Trust Fund; restoration of the polytunnels in the Royal Botanic Garden, Thimphu; teaching and learning aids for the Changangkha Lower Secondary School Special Needs Department; grant to RENEW - a community based support service for the victims of domestic violence; grant to Ugyenscholing Museum - a fortified manor house in the Tang valley converted into a museum to show life in such a building as it was 40 years ago; visit to England by a Bhutanese Scout leader as part of an exchange programme; handbooks, *'Where There is No Doctor'*, to Basic Health Units.

Although the work of the Trust is low key, letters of thanks clearly show that its grants have made differences to many people's lives.

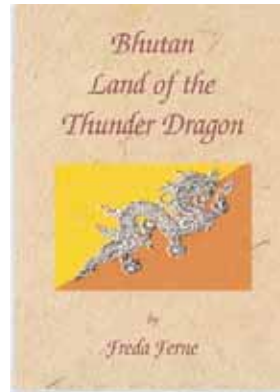
The Trust has benefited greatly from the leadership and counsel of Lord Wilson, as chairman, and of Sir Robert Wade-Gery who were both founding trustees and who stood down in October 2008. Sir Simon Bowes Lyon now chairs the trustees.

If you would like **further information** on the work of the Trust, please contact Linda Li-Davies on 01730 893829.

If you would like to give a **donation**, please contact the Treasurer, Robin Lee, at 13 Albury House, Sells Close, Guildford Surrey GU1 3JY or on 01483 455764.

Bhutan: Land of the Thunder Dragon

An introduction for children and armchair travellers by Bhutan Society Member Freda Ferne.



Finding no books on Bhutan written for children, Freda set out to produce something for her local school. This slim A4 volume is the result, lavishly illustrated with 50 colour photographs and four maps. It covers a range of aspects of Bhutanese life and is based on Freda's own experiences and travels in Bhutan (see her article on the Coronation, p. 7).

Although written for children it is a book that will inform and appeal to all ages. Perhaps the perfect gift when yet another acquaintance asks, "so where exactly is Bhutan?".

Published by Avoncliff Books, 2008

ISBN 978-0-9560296-0-7

Paperback, 35 pp with illustrations; £8.99

Available from: www.bhutan-an-introduction.co.uk

Contact Freda with any queries on 01225 865260 or by e-mail at bhutan@avoncliff.co.uk



Autumn trip to Westonbirt Arboretum

Are any Members interested in meeting up in the Autumn (early Oct - early Nov) for a visit to Westonbirt, the National Arboretum?

Westonbirt, in Gloucestershire, is one of the most spectacular tree gardens in the world, with an historical collection of over 3,000 different trees and shrub species. A very pleasant day can be spent seeking out some of the Bhutanese species represented. The autumn colour won't disappoint! It may be possible to book overnight accommodation for the group, perhaps hiring a room for a talk/lecture.

If you would be interested, or would like further information, please contact Matt Heasman ASAP at:

E-mail: matthew.heasman@virgin.net

Mobile: 07793604609 or Tel: 01698 711089

the Bhutan Society



'The Dragon's Gift' Exhibition

At the Society's meeting on 9th February, and following the subsequent release of our appeal letter, there has been a flood of correspondence from Members and other friends of Bhutan - 86 at the last count. (Apologies to two people whose e-mails were caught in a 'spam filter' and were lost before they could be opened; all others should have received acknowledgment.) These letters gave encouraging messages of support and a combined total of pledges approaching £24,000. Anticipating Gift Aid recoveries and with £5,000 from the Bhutan Society's reserves, we were able to offer £34,000 to Somerset House and the Courtauld Institute of Art in support of the exhibition.

Courtauld executives met the major sponsor, the Robert Ho Family Trust, in London on 25th February to review the options for the exhibition's visit. They were impressed by and grateful for the support offered through the Society, but sadly they concluded that the gap between the available support and the latest budgets for setting up and supervising the galleries was too big to bridge. After exploring many options, and with profound regret, they have abandoned the plans for a visit by *The Dragon's Gift* to London.

The Courtauld has asked the Society to engage in further discussions to explore whether other things can be done to capture a legacy from *The Dragon's Gift* which could be part of future celebrations of Bhutan in London. We will be pleased to be part of those discussions.

So, no exhibition in London this summer, however we will have the chance to see it at the Musee Guimet in Paris in the autumn - 6th October 2009 to 25th January 2010.

Many thanks again for your support.



Bhutan Foundation Greetings Cards

Supporting Vaccination and Child Health Programmes in Bhutan

The International Bhutan Foundation (www.bhutanfoundation.org), a Swiss-based NGO focusing on sustainable development, has asked the Society to publicise its child vaccination project. By purchasing a set of hand painted 'auspicious sign' (*trashi dar gey*) greetings cards Members can sponsor the cost of vaccinating one Bhutanese child for life. All profits from the sale of the cards go directly to the vaccination project - no administrative costs are deducted.

One set contains eight cards, each decorated with a different auspicious sign, and eight envelopes. The eight auspicious signs have specific meanings drawn from the life and teachings of Buddha and are said to bring happiness and harmony. The cards are hand-painted in Bhutan by senior art students on hand-made Bhutanese paper and exclusively designed for the International Bhutan Foundation. The price for one set of these unique and beautiful cards is EUR 49.00 (plus EUR 10.00 postage from Bhutan). To order cards or find out more, please see www.bhutanfoundation.org, fax +41 32 729 97 45 or telephone the Foundation on +41 32 729 97 40.





News from the

Trongsa Ta Dzong Museum Opens

The new Trongsa Ta Dzong Museum was inaugurated by His Majesty the King in December 2008. The collections displayed in the eleven galleries focus on the history of Bhutan's monarchy, which had its cradle in Trongsa, and the history and religious significance of the Trongsa Dzong.

The galleries showcase more than 200 rare and priceless artefacts, ranging from religious sculpture dating back to the 17th century, to the Raven Crown and Sword of the First King, and numerous other royal possessions, including a radio presented to the Third King by an American businessman in the 1950s. There is also a media room where visitors can watch a documentary on the history of the monarchy.



The Raven Crown

The Ta Dzong was built in 1652. It is situated strategically above the Trongsa dzong and served as a watch tower for centuries. It has been restored and converted into a museum at a cost of Nu. 97 million (approx. GBP 1.3 million), funded by the Austrian government.

As His Majesty and the Prime Minister Lyonchhen Jigmi Y. Thinley arrived for the inauguration, thousands of people waited in line burning aromatic herbs and incense, holding flowers and waving the national flag. After the opening ceremony The King joined the crowd for games and an archery match outside Trongsa Dzong, which was specially decorated for the occasion.

The Society hopes to arrange a lecture by Timea Tallian, a conservator who was instrumental in the setting up of the museum, in late spring or early summer. Details to follow.



The Trongsa Ta Dzong Museum

New Protected Area Inaugurated

Prime Minister Lyonchhen Jigmi Y. Thinley inaugurated the second largest protected area in the country, Wangchuck Centenary Park (WCP) in Nasiphel village, Choekhar gewog, Bumthang, on December 12th 2008. Covering about 3,736 km sq of the north-central region of the country, WCP connects Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Park in the west and Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary in the east. A special feature is that the park contains the sources of the following rivers: Punatsangchu, Mangdechu, Kurichu, and Chamkharchu.

The park is expected to uplift local communities through community tourism and home-stays. "The park has a huge potential to promote eco-tourism in water-related recreational sports such as boating, skiing, fishing and canoeing," said an official from the nature conservation division, adding that the famous *Dhur tsachu* (hot spring) located in the park would also attract tourists. Locals agree. Kuenga, 28, from Nasiphel village, the farthest village in the *gewog*, said the park had already given them a road. "Eco-tourism would benefit us even more," she said.

Park management also faces challenges: chief forest officer, Sonam Wangyel Wang, said that they need to consider the livelihood of the approximately 10,000 people directly depended on park resources. "The Park will not restrict people from using forest resources but ensure their use in a sustainable manner," he said.

The zone is host to about 242 species of plants belonging to 51 families, 23 species of mammals and 135 species of birds. Endangered mammals such as tigers, snow leopard, Himalayan black bear, Takin and Tibetan Wolf also inhabit the park.

Bhutan in 1936: excellent archive footage

Members with Internet access may enjoy watching archive footage filmed in Paro by Frederick Williamson in 1936, and probably the oldest film of Bhutan in the public domain. See it at <http://tinyurl.com/as4zmg> or by searching www.youtube.com for 'Paro, Bhutan in 1936'.

The footage has been made available by the Digital Himalaya Project and their website is also well worth a visit: www.digitalthimalaya.com/collections/index.php

Senator McCain visits Bhutan

Senators John McCain, Joseph Lieberman and Lindsey Graham visited Bhutan during a recent trip to several South Asian countries.

The Congressional delegation, led by McCain, met with The King and senior politicians. The visit was in support of Bhutan's recent elections and new constitutional democracy, said aides. Sources commented that it was no doubt enjoyable for Mr. McCain to visit a country where he was happy with the electoral outcome!

Kingdom of Bhutan



Druk Air to fly via Bagdogra

Starting the first week of April 2009, Druk Air will be using a new route to Bangkok, flying via Bagdogra, a domestic airport in West Bengal, India. Flights from Bhutan Paro Airport to Bangkok will operate through Bagdogra airport on Tuesdays and Saturdays while those from Bangkok to Bhutan will go through the airport on Sundays and Wednesdays.

Tshering Penjore, the General Manager of Druk Air, said that flights will take just 15 minutes to reach Bagdogra and passengers will get immediate connecting flights. Bagdogra is a small regional hub with a lot of potential, he continued. "A lot of people will travel from Bagdogra to Bhutan which will boost local tourism as the rates will be affordable," he said.

Flights from Bhutan to Bagdogra will cost approximately Nu. 2,000 (GBP 27.50). Druk Air is particularly targeting its marketing towards travellers in Darjeeling, Sikkim and Kalimpong.

Bagdogra airport would also be utilised for relief operations in case of any disaster at Paro Airport. Druk Air's assistant planning officer, Sithar Dorji, said that factors such as Bhutan's location in a seismically active zone and Paro Airport's location near a river with risks of flash floods, posed threats to the airport. A memorandum of understanding already exists between Bhutan and India ensuring the use of any airport in India for relief operations in the case of a disaster at Paro Airport, plus Indian assistance with search and rescue operations.

Bhutan appoints Ambassadors

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Thimphu has appointed new Ambassadors to Belgium, Thailand, Kuwait and Bangladesh.

Ambassador Sonam T. Rabgye, the former Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, has been appointed Ambassador of Bhutan to Belgium with concurrent accreditation to Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the European Union and the European Commission.

Ambassador Tshering Dorji, the former Ambassador to Bangladesh, has been appointed Ambassador to Thailand with concurrent accreditation to Australia and Singapore.

The Cabinet Secretary Dasho Sherub Tenzin has been appointed Ambassador to Kuwait with concurrent accreditation to Bahrain.

Former Royal Civil Service Commission Secretary Dasho Bap Kesang has been appointed Ambassador to Bangladesh with concurrent accreditation to Sri Lanka, Pakistan, South Korea and the Maldives.

Bhutan now has diplomatic relations with 22 countries and the European Union, with Resident Missions in New Delhi, Dhaka, Bangkok, Kuwait, New York and Geneva. A Resident Mission will be opened in Brussels shortly.

Coming to Tourism's Rescue:

Government, hoteliers and Druk Air lend a hand in troubled times

Following measures requested by the tourism sector against the present global downturn, the government agreed (January 2009) to defer the tariff revision until a later date and to provide a discount on the royalty payable to the government.

The association of Bhutanese tour operators (ABTO) had requested interim measures from the government and stakeholders. A press release from the tourism council stated that the tariff revision, from USD 200 to USD 250, will be deferred to a later date to be determined by the performance of the industry. Starting July 1st this year, a discount of USD 20 (peak season) and USD 15 (off season) on the government's royalty will be given after the ninth night. The royalty for each tourist is currently USD 65 per day.

The government's response to the tourism sector's proposal, unlike to the steel industry which is still waiting, was quick. However, most people in the tourism industry say that providing the royalty discount after the ninth night made no sense. The average number of nights spent in Bhutan by tourists is only six, claim tour operators, and the discount therefore is not applicable. The proposal from ABTO was for a discount after the sixth night.

In addition to these measures, the Hotel Association of Bhutan (HAB), which sees a yearly increase in rates of about 10 percent, also agreed to refrain from raising room tariffs this year, and Druk Air has approved resumption of their low season discounts and a further reduce of the surcharge, which was lowered by USD 3 in December. This amounts, per tourist, to around a USD 90 discount on airfares during the low season.

Druk Air general manager, Tshering Penjor, said that the airline is also looking into reducing airfares by 25 percent with effect from May. He also stated that Druk Air is working to reduce the fuel surcharge, which is already low at ten percent. The fuel surcharge from other airports is around USD 25. Druk Air also plans to introduce group fares (10 persons or more) with further reductions.

Rising fuel prices have stung most airlines causing increased airfares and fuel surcharges. 40 percent of Druk Air's total operating costs are fuel expenses.

High speed Internet at Paro airport

Bhutan Telecom and the Department of Civil Aviation, MOIC, are now providing **free high speed Druknet Internet access** in the Paro airport departure hall. This has been introduced as part of the country's Centenary and Coronation celebrations.



Paintings from an

Pollyanna Pickering, one of Europe's foremost wildlife artists, travelled through Bhutan for five weeks in 2007 studying and recording the country's unique spectrum of flora and fauna, and also the conservation issues faced by the region. The expedition was sponsored by Canadian foundation 'Artists for Conservation' (AFC) and Pollyanna's expedition journal, comprising 206 pages of outstanding sketches and drawings, plus an account of the Bhutanese people, their lifestyle, and the diversity of Bhutan's flora and fauna, can be viewed in its entirety on the AFC's excellent website - follow link from www.pollyannapickering.co.uk/journal

To see more of Pollyanna's dramatic paintings, and to find out about her books and her charitable foundation, see the website (as above).

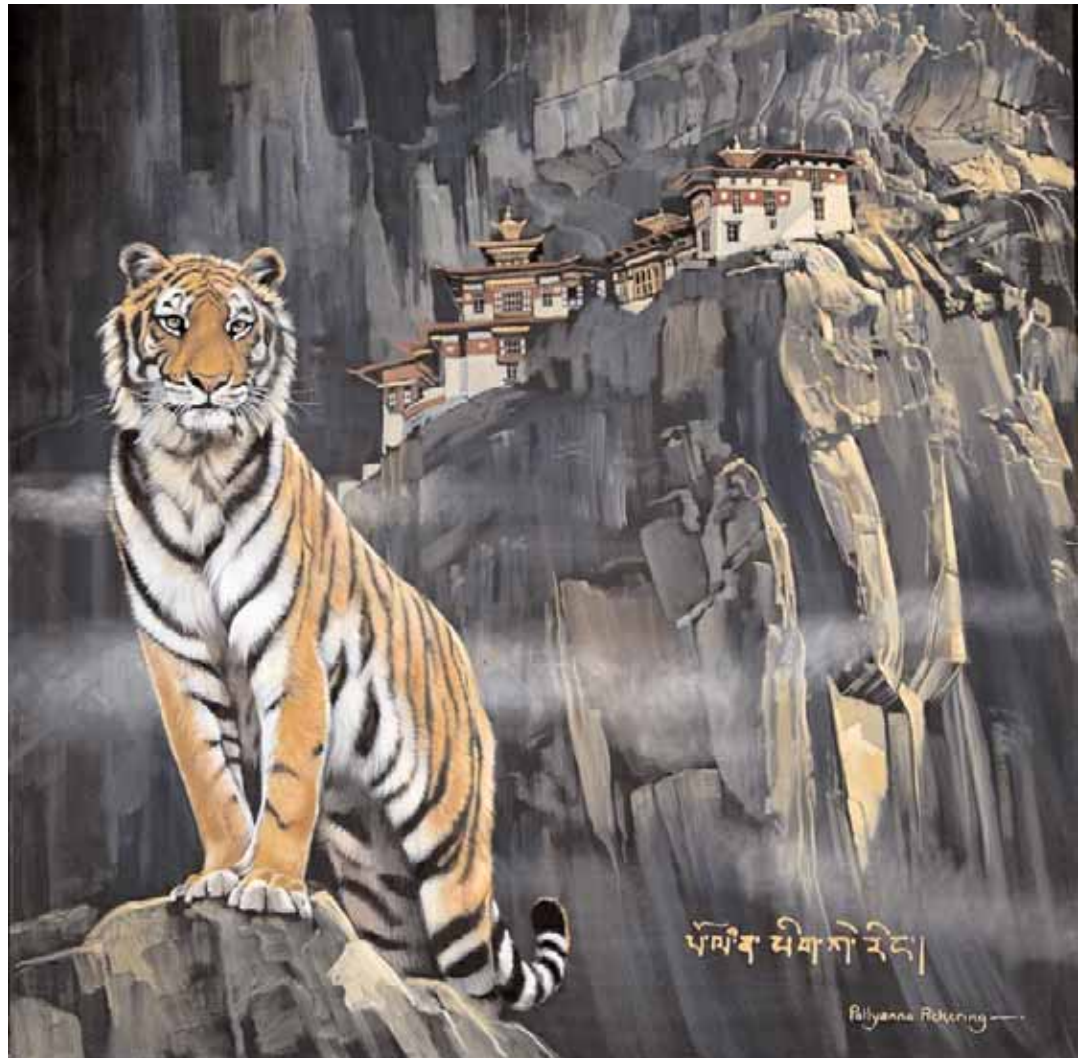


Above: Sketch of Rufous-bellied Woodpecker

Left: 'The Tiger's Nest'

Below: 'Kingdom of the Snow Leopard'

(c) Pollyanna Pickering



expedition to Bhutan



Right: Sketch of yak herders' children (c) Pollyanna Pickering



Right: Sketch of yaks; Far right: Sketch of a golden langur (c) Pollyanna Pickering





'Bhutan People'



Meet Marianne - Thimphu dogs' best friend

She shares her home with 103 dogs, 11 monkeys and five cats. Since coming to Bhutan in 1997, she has nursed more than 30,000 stray animals, suffering the gamut of ailments from heart infection to skin diseases and bone fractures to cancer. Her patients are mostly dogs, but she also takes care of injured birds, monkeys, barking deer, snakes, rats, pigs, horses, cows and sometimes even mosquitoes and flies.

Meet Marianne Guillet - a French woman in her early forties, who lives in Hejo, Thimphu. Known to residents as the "Rochi Ama" (dog mother), she was in November 2008 recognised for her services to society and awarded the Coronation gold medal by Lyonchhen Jigmi Y. Thinley.



Ms. Guillet receives the Coronation gold medal from Lyonchhen Jigmi Y. Thinley for her compassionate work with strays.

had been run over by a car and left to die on the road. It was still breathing so she immediately took it home and operated on her kitchen table. From then on, there was no looking back. "It makes me happy and gives me inner peace, doing what I do.", she says.

Although Marianne had some medical background, she was not a veterinarian. So she pored ('pawed'!) through the Internet and learned things herself. "Compassion without knowledge was painful as we suffer but can't act. So I learned through the Internet and educated myself to act positively."

The journey was not smooth. Officials berated her for doing things (taking care of dogs) illegally. She was not a trained veterinarian, they told her. But there were many residents who admired her work. As time passed, things cooled down. People eventually called her the "mother of dogs". "There was a lot of resistance but I did not mean harm. I just wanted to take care of the animals," she said.

Her typical day starts with bathing stray dogs in the guest bathroom. She washes about 25 a week. The space is also used to store towels, therapeutic shampoos, and other supplies. She operates on dogs on Tuesdays and Fridays for four to five hours. Once the dogs have recuperated, they sleep in her garage in boxes and baskets, which serve as their beds. She usually goes to town to check on dogs on Monday mornings and brings sick ones to her medical centre. Marianne always carries a first-aid box in her car for quick treatment such as de-worming. Every afternoon, she and her staff of four dress wound and administer chemotherapy on the animals.

She does not receive funds from any organisations. The money comes mostly from her husband's salary. Some residents contribute in the form of food and blankets for the dogs. Sometimes she also looks for dog food in the trash bins. No wonder some residents thought she was a foreigner gone crazy!

Marianne likes caring for all animals. Once she had to stitch a snake hurt by an earth mover. As usual, she took the snake to her house and, though frightened, she treated the snake and after keeping it near her radiator till it recovered, she set it free.

Marianne's view on the dog problem in Thimphu is that there are only short-term solutions on offer. Impounding of dogs, she says, is problematic, because it is extremely expensive and, when pounds become full the dogs fight each other. "The money runs out and the quality of the pound is not as good as it should be."

"No one ever could get a solution, and everyone avoids the best way, which is to pet them." Marianne says that what needs to be done is a sustainable campaign all year long. "Dogs have emotions." "My goal, before I leave, is to create something permanent in Bhutan, where stray dogs can find refuge and food and rehabilitation."

By Passang Norbu, Kuensel



Profile: Bhutanese in the UK



Continuing our series of profiles of Bhutanese studying and/or working in the UK, Dorji Wangchuk and Karma Choden talk about their lives and experiences here.

What were you doing before you came to England?

Dorji: I was an engineer with the Government working for the Standards and Quality Control Authority, Ministry of Works & Human Settlement. I formulated standards for the construction sector, provided technical assistance to various government agencies and the private sector, monitored construction projects and was involved in the national standardisation activities in Bhutan.

Karma: I was a journalist with Kuensel, Bhutan's national newspaper. I resigned to be here with my husband while he pursued his studies.

Why did you decide to come and how did you choose the course at the Judge Business School?

Dorji: Reviewing my talents, I was satisfied with my technical performance but I realised that I needed to spruce up my management skills and understand finance and strategy and their contributions to a successful project. I was interested in learning about how appropriate technologies and innovations are identified and managed. An MBA was, therefore, the ideal choice for me. I



Karma Choden and Dorji Wangchuk punting on the Cam

wanted a good school and the Judge Business School stood out for its reputation and collaborative approach and for the international diversity of the classes. It was also an opportunity to study at the University of Cambridge which is renowned worldwide.

Does the Judge have students from many countries?

The 2007 MBA class of 150 came from 47 different countries and many different backgrounds. Each of us was equally talented and brought different experiences, knowledge and perspectives to the class.

Karma Choden, what have you been doing while Dorji has been studying?

As busy as an MBA student! I have had a tremendously eventful year. I signed up with the Temporary Employment Service (TES), which helps students and family members to find jobs within the University. I began work with Prof. Colin Renfrew (Lord Renfrew of Kaimsthorn FBA), in the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, on his Keros Project as a Project Secretary. But it wasn't all work and no play for me! I worked in the

mornings and my afternoons were occupied meeting up with other MBA partners and their children. We often met for lunches, teas and picnics by the River Cam, and there were regularly birthdays to celebrate. Wednesday nights were reserved for the latest films! My other favourite activity was taking leisurely walks in the town and gazing at the wonderful buildings. Cambridge had so much to offer and the year just floated by.

How has England matched with or differed from your expectations?

We definitely knew that life in England would be very different. So we prepared ourselves and came with open minds, ready to explore and embrace the new culture and lifestyle. Therefore, everything has been enjoyable.

Have you been able to see any other parts of the UK?

We haven't been fortunate on that front. We had elaborate plans to visit many exciting places - Stonehenge, Stratford-Upon-Avon and Loch Ness - but Dorji was too caught up with his school work. However, we did squeeze in a few day-trips to London and to some small adorable villages and towns in and around Cambridge.

Have you been able to find everything you need in the food shops?

Karma: I am an out-an-out foodie so I was thrilled to be able to try out different cuisines which I wasn't able to do so in Bhutan (for want of ingredients) and I am happy that Dorji has taken some liking to other dishes apart from *ema-datshi* (our chilli and cheese stew). Talking about chillies, it was a bit difficult at first to find the right quantities - chillies come in tiny packages here! But I soon discovered a Chinese supermarket which fulfilled all our needs.

What are your plans for the future?

It has been an incredibly busy and an exciting year for both of us and now we are taking a brief break.

Dorji: I think it is time for me to take up a new challenge - however the markets and the economy are not helping at the moment. An opportunity where I can use both my technical knowledge and the skills I obtained on my MBA would be ideal.

Karma: No immediate plans but I do have plenty of ideas to explore. But it all again depends on Dorji.

*Dorji Wangchuk and Karma Choden are now living in Edinburgh
Interview by Andrew Sutton*



Bhutan Connections



Women of Buddha: Nuns in Bhutan

by Marie Thesbjerg

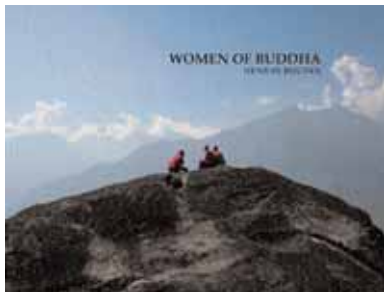
Published by Ajour (Denmark), 2008

ISBN 978-87-92241-08-5

Hardback, 128 pp with many illustrations; £25.00 approx.

Available from: www.forlagetajour.dk

Marie Thesbjerg went to Bhutan on a mission to meet and learn about the lives of Bhutan's nuns. To fund this she worked for Danida, the Danish Aid agency, and in her spare time she visited nunneries throughout the country. Living among them, she gained insights not only into the nuns' devotional lives, but also the reasons why they had become nuns, their thoughts and feelings about their lives, and what they had left behind.



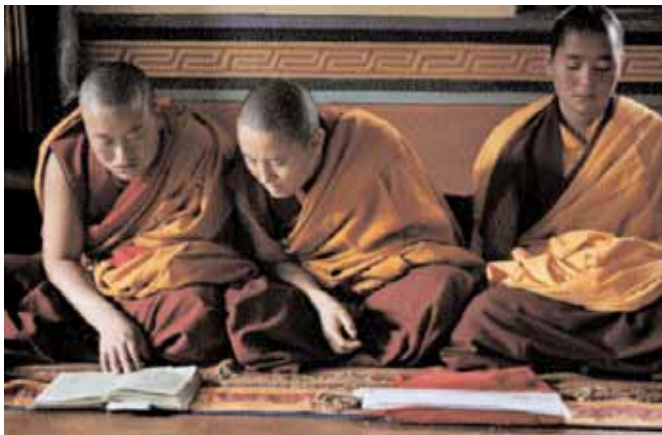
This beautiful book of photos accompanied by short essays is the result of her project. It is a personal and touching account of some of the Bhutanese women who devote their entire lives to

Buddhism. It is clear that Thesbjerg formed a close relationship with many of these women and she recounts their stories in a touching and memorable way, with tales and anecdotes sometimes funny, sometimes sad, and always moving. Her photos are a dream - atmospheric and beautiful images of the nuns at their Buddhist practice, studying, working, and also in moments of rest and play. We also learn some of Thesbjerg's feelings about Bhutan, together with factual information about the country.

This is an account that is the first of its kind, and will take you to places in Bhutan never captured on camera before, where no tourist can venture. A unique book and a must for any book shelf or coffee table.

Profits from the sale of the book will be donated to the Pemacholing Nunnery in Bumthang, in support of the education of nuns in Bhutan. See also the author's website: www.womenofbuddha.com

Jessica Beaghen



Meeting the "Other"

Living in the Present, Gender and Sustainability in Bhutan

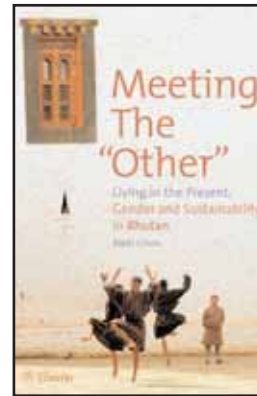
by Reiki Crins

Published by Eburon (Netherlands), 2008

ISBN 978-90-5972-261-3

Paperback, 200 pp with illustrations; Euros 35.00

Available from: www.eburon.nl



Reiki Crins is a Dutch cultural anthropologist who first visited Bhutan in 1990. She has written a thoughtful book which strives to understand the Bhutanese way of life without the prejudice which may come with a Western mindset - thus the use of the term 'the "Other"'. She has many interesting comments on pressures and trends of the last two decades.

In 1990 Crins went to Bhutan and to a village beyond Punakha as part of a study for the Royal Government of Bhutan into how farmers grew crops, in order to develop improvements in techniques and thus crop yields. She and an irrigation engineer were based in Neptenka and experienced the local way of life. What a delight for a young anthropologist to witness, professionally, a culture relatively unaffected by global capitalism; she says that the village still had many of the characteristics of a 'feudal society' as described by Marx. She returned to Bhutan in 2004, and since, to conduct further research and has seen the enormous changes in the country - growth of towns, TV / Internet / mobile phones, more salaried jobs, more capitalism.

Crins says she wrote the book to answer questions about everyday Bhutanese life, acknowledging Bhutan as one of the last undisturbed Mahayana Buddhist countries with a strong pre-Buddhist heritage. She focuses on religion, gender and sustainability in her studies. Much of Crins' research was by interview; she also researched related and relevant topics. She summarises the interviews and discusses how these and her other researches impact on her principal themes. The result is a commentary with valuable insights and many engaging illustrations. For example, she observes how, historically, men and women have had equal status in Bhutanese life; she notes that many households used to be led by a senior female and that the current trend is for the principal wage-earner - often a male - to take that leadership role.

She is impressed by the Buddhist (and pre Buddhist) approach to all creatures and the way that it naturally supports a sustainable environmental culture.

Andrew Sutton