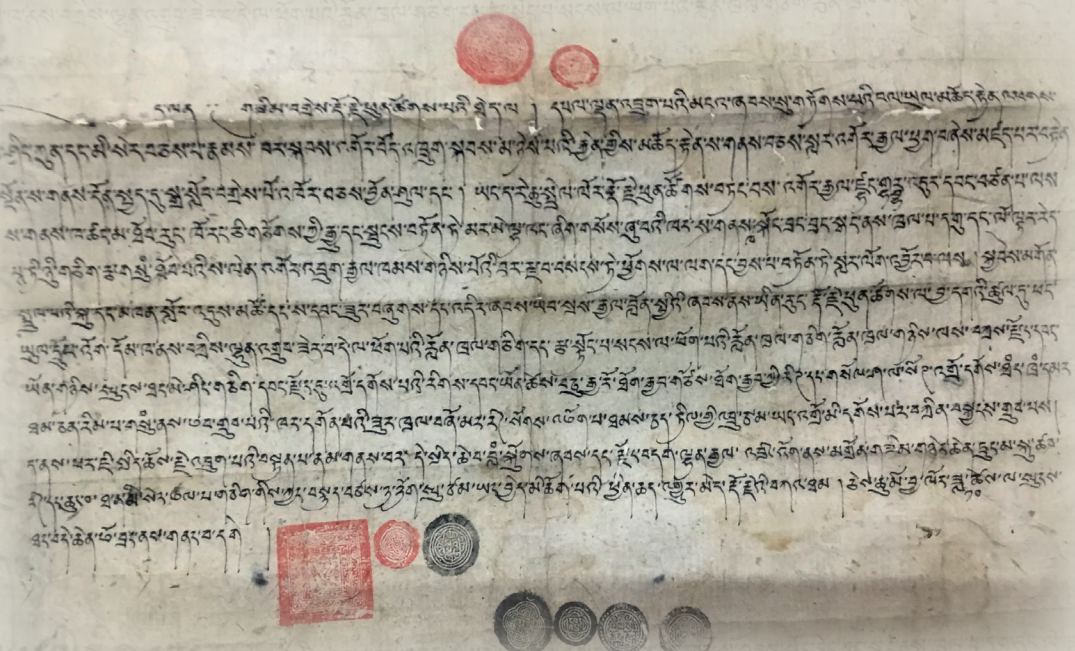


MISSIONS FROM DHARMARAJAS TO GORKHARAJAS *Bhutan-Nepal Relations since the 17th Century*



SONAM KINGA



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SONAM KINGA

RIGSS Fellow Series I



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To the Spirit of Great Transformation
Defining Bhutan
As the Compassionate Activity of the Dharmaraja!

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Foreword

Bhutan has had complex relations with her traditional neighbours in the Himalayas and beyond since the promulgation of the government known as Palden Druk Zhung around 1627. A key determinant in shaping early foreign policy had been her relations with Tibet, which had been conflict-ridden. Between 1617 and 1734, Tibet had launched nearly twelve invasions of Bhutan. Bhutan's national consciousness crystallized in the process of fighting numerous defensive wars. Peace was established after 1734. However, developments in the middle of 20th century led to the closure of northern border in 1959.

Bhutan's relations with Tibet also influenced her relations with Sikkim. The Namgyal dynasty was founded in 1642, the same year in which the government of Gaden Phodrang in Tibet was established under the Fifth Dalai Lama. The nature of Bhutan's relation with Sikkim took shape in the context of Tibetan influence and support to Sikkim. With peace between Bhutan and Tibet, better relations also developed with Sikkim. An underlying factor in the Bhutanese perception and approach had been the understanding that Sikkim is a sacred land blessed by Guru Padmasambhava.

Tibet's influence in Mon Tawang area, which is located towards the east of Bhutan had grown significantly by the latter half of the 17th century. With the eastern boundary defined around 1657, Bhutan looked westward beyond Sikkim to Nepal and Ladakh. Despite huge geographic distances, Bhutan had close relations with Ladakh. Nonetheless, it was with Nepal that a more engaged diplomacy unfolded owing to geographic proximity and shared geo-political challenges with Tibet first, and later, with British India.

In the south, Bhutan had excellent relations with Cooch Behar and established significant military and diplomatic presence. This changed significantly after 1772 when Bhutan fought the British over their support for two different royal factions claiming the right to succession in Cooch Behar. Bhutan had also established significant political and commercial interests in Assam over the centuries. The British assumed the administration of Assam after 1826. The ensuing differences and tensions between Bhutan and British India resulted in the full-blown Duar War of 1864-1865. However, better relations were forged subsequently till the British departed in 1946. With independent India, a new and special relations developed which continues to this day.

Bhutan's relations with Nepal can be better understood in this larger historical context. Dr. Sonam Kinga provides a panoramic overview and analysis of the journey of the relations since the 17th century. He traces the early development of the relations to the dispatch of envoys from the three kingdoms of Patan, Bhadgaon and Kathmandu around 1640 to acknowledge the new State of Palden Druk Zhung. In particular, he focusses on the missions of Bhutanese monk-ambassadors to the courts of the Gorkharajas which began around 1670.

He builds upon existing research and literature on this subject and also revisits many assumptions which inform the historical narrative of the relations. It has no pretension of being comprehensive and instead, has identified areas for further research. The Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic Studies views this as a timely publication. Although Bhutan and Nepal do not share borders, there is a lot in common in terms of geography, culture, and religion. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1983, trade, tourism, official engagements and people to people contact

have become stronger. However, the challenges of the 1990s arising from the presence of thousands of illegal Nepali immigrants in Bhutan have impacted the relations. The challenges were complex and aggravated by regional and global dynamics. Nonetheless, the two countries are today committed to take forward their relations.

As recent as September 2024, Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay of Bhutan and Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli of Nepal met in New York on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly and discussed ways to strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation. A project of great significance that symbolizes the future of relations will be the construction of a Bhutanese monastery in Lumbini for which the government of Nepal had allocated land. As the author shows in this research study, the grant of lands by Gorkharajas and construction of temples by Drukpa Lamas had constituted a key feature of Bhutan-Nepal relations over the centuries.

RIGSS is delighted to publish this monograph as the first of its Fellows Series coinciding with its 11th anniversary. It makes an important contribution to scholarship devoted to Himalayan studies, foreign policies and international relations.

Chewang Rinzin
Deputy Chamberlain to His Majesty The King
Director, RIGSS

Notes on Dzongkha and Tibetan words

Except for names of people and places, I have transliterated Dzongkha and Chökey words using the Wylie orthographic style in the first instance. Thereafter, I use the English equivalent or the commonly used non-transliterated versions for easier reading. In quotations, the spellings and style of the original writers have been retained. The non-transliterated versions have been pluralised as for English words. Dzongkha and Chökey words used as proper nouns have not been italicized while those used as common nouns have been italicized. The Bhutanese do not have a tradition of using surnames or family names. Hence, full names have been used in both the in-text and bibliographic references.

1. Introduction¹

Although the Kingdom of Bhutan and the Republic of Nepal are two Himalayan neighbours surrounded by China and India, they established formal diplomatic relations only in June 1983 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MFA], 2023). The 1990s was a challenging period in their bilateral relations owing to the presence of hundreds of thousands of people of Nepali ethnicity in camps operated by United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in eastern Nepal. The Nepalese government called them “refugees” from Bhutan but the Bhutanese government maintained that they were illegal immigrants from Nepal who had entered Bhutan through its porous southern border over many decades and tried to blend in with the Lhotshampas owing to close social, ethnic and cultural ties. When their disproportionate presence was discovered in nation-wide census conducted in the 1980s, they were asked to leave for their country of origin. Moreover, Bhutan argued that many of those in the camps in eastern Nepal were actually Nepali citizens who took advantage of UNHCR’s almost non-existent screening procedures to determine whether they were refugees or not. Most of them found access to UNHCR-provided resources and services in the camps to be a better alternative than those in their own villages. A report by the Royal Government of Bhutan to the 82nd session of National Assembly of Bhutan noted that:

1 This research study has been undertaken as part of the Visiting Research Scholars program at the Graduate School of Asian and African Areas Studies, Kyoto University, Japan from May-July 2019. I am grateful to Professor Yoshifumi Tamada and Professor Tatsuro Fujikura for their kind invitation. I am also grateful to His Majesty’s Secretariat for granting access to old manuscripts from the late 19th century which enabled continued research in Bhutan. My sincere thanks to Zimpon Wom Chewang Rinzin and officials at the Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic for recognizing the value of this work and supporting its publication.

[T]he camps in Nepal receive one of the highest levels of support compared to similar camps in the world. The residents receive free services and facilities that exceed basic food and shelter. This includes healthcare, education including higher studies, vocational training, and even kerosene and cooking oil. In fact many observers note that life in the camps is much better than those prevailing in rural Nepal, India and Bhutan (MFA, 2004, pp. 1-2).

Bhutan refused to acknowledge them as “refugees” and referred to them as “people in the camps.” In administering these camps, UNHCR was neither helping Bhutan nor Nepal but redeeming its failure in responding to the refugee crisis in the aftermath of Gulf War, a fact admitted by a former UNHCR official (Casella, 2009). The infiltration of the camps by Maoist elements to train leaders and cadres in order to export terrorist movement to Bhutan complicated the issue further as militant outfit born in or associated with the camps began to commit atrocities on the lives and properties of Bhutanese people as well as public infrastructure and institutions. The problem has been largely resolved for now. Most of those in the camps have been resettled in third countries with the United States having taken the majority of them.

The recent establishment of diplomatic relations between Bhutan and Nepal should not suggest the absence of historical as well as contemporary relations. Geographic proximity, shared spiritual tradition, common geo-political realities as well as diverse historical currents have seen the two countries interact at various levels in the past. In fact, Bhutan had sent twenty-two Drukpa Lamas as monk-ambassadors for over one hundred and eighty years to the courts of eight Gorkharajas² starting possibly with Prithvi Pati

2 Unless specifically identified, I use the term “Gorkharajas” in this study to broadly refer to rulers of both the Gorkha kingdom before 1769 as well as those of

Shah (reign: 1668/1676-1716) and ending with Surendra Bikram Shah (1847-1881). The Gorkharajas engaged with Bhutanese rulers known as Dharmarajas through these monk-ambassadors or Drukpa Lamas. Besides, the Gorkharajas who were Hindus, availed Buddhist spiritual services on important occasions or moments in their lives. For the various services these monk-ambassadors offered, the Gorkharajas reciprocated with grants of village settlements and landholdings. The Drukpa Lamas established monastic centres and promoted Buddhism. The relationship developed over the decades but was not always smooth. In fact, it started on a difficult note and also experienced upheavals at some other times. However, there were much longer periods of better relations. Bhutan's religious diplomacy and engagement with Nepal would be reformulated by the early 20th century into less official mode. The stupa of Swayambhu in Kathmandu valley would occupy an important place as we shall discuss later. The primary objective of this study is to build on existing knowledge and information regarding Bhutan-Nepal relations through new research findings using both primary and secondary sources.

Today, Bhutan-Nepal relations express in various formal and informal exchanges ranging from tourism, pilgrimages, trade, sports and certainly the pursuit of common interests within the framework of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). When Nepal was hit by the devastating earthquake of 2015, Bhutan was the only country who sent its Prime Minister to personally convey the condolence message of His Majesty The King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck to the President, Prime

unified Nepal thereafter. The Bhutanese sources refer to Gorkharajas as such both before and after the unification of Nepal.

Minister and people of Nepal. Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay led a 63-member team including medical doctors, rescue operation workers and a financial assistance of USD one million. This had left a very positive image in Nepal's national psyche to see the Prime Minister of a neighbouring country personally visiting them to express sympathy and support. The medical doctor who then led a group of volunteer corps called De-suung served as the Prime Minister of Bhutan from 2018 to 2023.

In this study, I will examine historical moments and events as well as the processes which had seen Bhutan and Nepal interact at different times in various situations. There have been some writings and publications in both Bhutan and Nepal about this shared past but historians and scholars in both countries have presented data, information and analyses that need further elaboration, validation and reconciliation. One of the very few publications in Bhutan came in the mid-1990s, which I use as one of the main sources for this study. Likewise, one paper from the proceedings of an international conference was also published during the period (Jigme Y. Thinley, 1998). Most publications in Nepal also came out during or immediately after the problems of the 1990s. So, there is an inherent bias despite professed objectivity to scholarship. Academic scholarship was not able to free itself from the strong political tones and sub-text of that period. It went on to complement and reinforce Nepal's narrative of the problem. Hence, it is necessary to transcend political bias in working towards a more scholarly enquiry of the past. To do so is the second objective of this study.

For the purpose of this research study, I will examine, re-visit and analyse information and perspective from two main contemporary sources for historical relations between Bhutan and Nepal. The

first one is an eleven-page chapter devoted to the subject in the *History of Bhutan* by Padma Tshedwang (1995, pp. 233-244). The entire book is written in Chökey (*chos-skad*), classical Tibetan. Owing to the importance of the subject, he had dedicated a specific chapter which provides important overview of the relations. Although his work was published during the period of political and diplomatic challenges mentioned above, it was not a conscious response of a Bhutanese scholar to the political exigencies of those days. Rather, it was an outcome of a work conceived much earlier. His primary source is a narrative on Bhutan-Nepal relations written by Lama Sangye Norbu, Bhutan's 19th envoy to Nepal. None of Bhutan's traditional or modern historians devote as much space for this subject as he does although information on the subject appear in the writings of other scholars. However, his narrative has certain drawbacks in mistaking the identities of Gorkharajas in relation to particular historical periods and events, and sometimes of the events themselves. The third objective of this study therefore, is to re-visit them and correct the errors as well as enrich them with new research findings. I use his narrative as the primary framework for this study and acknowledge with gratitude the contributions of his work without which this study would be incomplete.

The second source is Nagendra Sharma's work in English.³ In this two-part book *Nepal's Relations with Sikkim and Bhutan: 1770-1900*, he devotes the second part to Nepal's relations with Bhutan (2002, pp. 113-156). From a reading of his bibliography, it is apparent that there have been earlier publications on this subject in Nepal. However, his work weaves together information and perspective

3 I am deeply thankful to Professor Toshihiro Tsukihara of Fukui University, Japan for directing my attention to this work and sharing a photostat copy of the book during my visit to Fukui from 22-24 June 2019.

of earlier publications to make it more recent. There has not been another recent publication which is specifically devoted to discussing Nepal's historical relations with Bhutan. Despite my usage of his work as one important source for this study, I take serious issue with a lot of his speculations, claims and arguments. While I will discuss and question some factual errors in Padma Tshedwang's work, I will first take up issues with Sharma. This is the fourth objective of my study: pointing out major historical facts in his writing which are either wrong or are exaggerated in order to support his political views. This is very important as his narrative builds on and also influences similar narrative of other Nepali scholars writing on Bhutan. However, there are also useful information in his work, which are referred to enrich the scope of this study.

These two books constitute the primary source for structuring of my narrative and reconciling or correcting some information. Additionally, I use other historical and contemporary materials to deepen our understanding of the relations between the two countries. There is no particular theme in framing this relations. I use the overall sequence of the narrative provided by Padma Tshedwang but I pick up all available materials to fill up the gaps before his narrative begins and ends, and also add new information as well as analysis to build on those he had provided. But first, I will examine Sharma's work to contest some speculations and unfounded claims.

2. Revisiting Historical Facts and Events

My issues with his work are two-fold. First, he criticizes the works of British, Indian diplomat-historians and some other writers who wrote on Bhutan-Nepal relations for the inherent biases of their views and claims not to take sides in the context of "refugees" or

“people in the camps.” But he subsequently expresses open sympathy for their works, and this colours his scholarship as he builds historical arguments to construct the sub-text of the book which intends to legitimize their claims and views. The supposed historical facts which he uses to make his arguments are however, mostly speculations. In fact, most of his sources are Nepali and British writers as well as Indian diplomat-historians whom he criticizes in the beginning for their one-sided views (Sharma, 2002, p. 128 and p. 134).

The core message of Sharma’s work is that Bhutan is generally everything because of Nepal. It is as if Bhutan would not exist without Nepal. From the naming of Bhutan, he claims the historical roles of Nepali artisans in the construction of first Buddhist temples of Kyichu and Jamba in the seventh century, overwhelming influence of Nepal on Bhutanese arts and architecture, role of Gorkha soldiers in Bhutanese wars against the Tibetans and British, Bhutanese-Nepali diplomats negotiating with neighbours like Cooch Behar, Assam, Bengal, Nepal and British India and the imagined Nepalese support in the enthronement of the First King of Bhutan in 1907. He argues that such important historical agency of the Nepalis had not been acknowledged.

This is my second issue with Sharma’s arguments. It is obvious that his reading of Bhutanese history is, without being judgemental, a matter of serious concern since he gets wrong many important facts and figures. This has therefore, impacted his analysis. The instances of factual errors are too many. I will mention a few pertinent ones.

For example, he talks of three main *dzongs* in Thimphu. Tashicho Dzong is certainly the main one. Yet he includes Dechen Choling

and Samtenling as *dzongs* (Sharma, 2002, p. 118). The former is a royal residence where the Fourth King was born. The latter is a simple log cabin where he continues to live. They are not *dzongs* in any sense of the word.

He also refers to estimates of forty-two ethno-linguistic communities in Bhutan. It was officially nineteen earlier including Nepali known as Lhotshamkha. The broad category of Lhotshamkha has been further broken down into other sub-categories to take the total to twenty-four during the 2015 national census. Like many other writers, he assumes that the “southern fringe” of the country as exclusive areas of Nepali settlements. Lhotshampa settlements are indeed predominant in the south.⁴ Nonetheless, there are other important ethnic groups stretching from south-east to the south-west. He overlooks the existence of indigenous population as well as the diverse ethnic mix which has been a consequence of social integration and mobility of the people for socio-economic reasons over the decades.

He writes about a King of Sindhu in western Bhutan during the time of Guru Padmasambhava in the eighth century (Sharma, 2002, p. 121). He recounts how another Indian king called Nabudra

4 Out of 47 constituencies for National Assembly elections, 14 are in Southern Bhutan. About 10 of them have predominant Lhotshampa population. Samtse is the second largest constituency and gets to elect four Members of Parliament (MP) to the National Assembly. In the last four elections, Lhotshampas elected representatives generally proportionate to their population. In 2008 and 2018, the number of Lhotshampa MPs elected to the National Assembly was 19%. It was 17% in 2013 and 15% in 2024. There have been two Lhotshampa ministers in every successive government since the introduction of parliamentary democracy. In the present government, the first woman minister from the south holds the important portfolio of Education Minister. The other Lhotshampa holds yet another important portfolio as Foreign Minister.

invaded and displaced the former. He continues to write that Nabudra was infuriated against the deities and committed impurities against them. King of Sindhu or Sendha Gyelp was an eighth century ruler in the central valley of Bumthang, not in western Bhutan. King Nabudra (or Nawoche) was not the one who committed impurities against the deities. It was Sendha Gyelp who did so after losing the battle against Nawoche.

He states that the two positions of the Dharmaraja and Debraja were created by the incarnations of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (hereafter Zhabdrung Rinpoche, 1594-1651), the founder of Bhutan (Sharma, 2002, p. 122). Zhabdrung Rinpoche was indeed the Dharmaraja then. The two positions he created were that of the spiritual head of Drukpa Kagyu School called *je khenpo* (*rje mkhan-po*) and the civil ruler called *desi* (*sde-srid*)⁵ around 1640. These two positions were not created by his reincarnations but by him. They continued the institutional set-up which he created. Like Zhabdrung Rinpoche, his reincarnations were also known as Dharmarajas. The Bhutanese title was *gyaltshab* (*rgyal-tshab*) or *lam thripa* (*bla-ma khri-pa*). The title was sometimes used to refer to the reincarnations of his son as well as another scion of the family who were positioned above the *desi* and *je khenpo*. They were the head of the Bhutanese state. In a few instances, the title of Dharmaraja was used to refer to a few *desis* as well.⁶

5 It was the British who referred to the *desi* as Debraja based on another Bhutanese title for civil ruler, *depa* (*sde-pa*). There were fifty-nine *desis* before 1907, the year monarchy was established.

6 The first *gyaltshab* was in fact the Fourth Desi Tenzin Rabgye (reign: 1680-1694). The first three *desis* did not serve as *gyaltshab*. Since the secrecy of Zhabdrung Rinpoche's death, which may have occurred around 1651, was being maintained, it was impractical to have a representative when Zhabdrung was still deemed alive and in meditation. Although the secret was not disclosed officially till 1707, the compulsion to appoint a representative by 1680 was so strong that Tenzin Rab-

Sharma strangely credits the Khampas of Tibet for building Punakha Dzong in 1527 and Wangdue Phodrang Dzong in 1578 (2002, p. 131) whereas they were built by Zhabdrung Rinpoche in 1637 and 1638 respectively with the involvement of local Bhutanese people. Again, Sharma gives the impression of a vibrant but informal and indirect trade between Bhutan and Nepal since early times although he notes that the existence of formal trade and agreements have not come to light so far. This may be true but the scale and regularity of such trade were not as extensive because Bhutan's main trade relations were with Tibet in the north and Bengal and Assam in the south. So important were the trade that officials known as *gyadrung* (*rgya-drung*) were appointed by the state to manage frontiers and trade (Pommaret, 2000, p. 31). However, he uses the context of such trade to advocate the idea that the Nepalese coins were legal tender in Bhutan and that "[s]uch coins, said to have been minted by the earlier Nepalese settlers, bore the Sun and Moon symbols on the two sides along with the words "Raja Dharma Deva" in the centre in Devnagari script" (Sharma, 2002, p. 149). He cites an unpublished Nepali source to argue that they minted the coins. Indeed, there were in circulation non-Bhutanese silver coins known as *betam* which were valued. But it generally meant Tibetan coins (*bod-tam*) which were minted in Nepal. The ones from Nepal such as those sent by Ranjit Malla were said to be so de-based that their value was one-half of the original (Stiller, 1995, p. 161). But there were also coins from Cooch Behar called the Narainee in circulation in Bhutan. Although

gye was enthroned as the First Gyaltshab or Lam Thripa in 1667. Later, he was enthroned as the Fourth Desi and continued in this dual position. Nonetheless, a few *desis* were referred as Chogyal (*chos-rgyal*) meaning Dharmarajas, perhaps retrospectively, owing to their exemplary rule and conduct in accordance with Buddhist codes and precepts. Besides Migyur Tenpa, the 13th Desi Sherub Wangchuk was also designated as *chogyal* (*chos-rgyal*).

Bhutan did not have a mint earlier, it used the mint in Cooch Behar to produce its own coins: gold coins - *sertam* (*gser-kram*), silver coins - *ngultram* (*dngul-kram*) and copper coins - *zangtam* (*zangs-kram*). The extent of circulation of coins have been discussed elsewhere (Ray, 2010). The most important point is that the Bhutanese government first minted its own coins in Cooch Behar and later, in places like Paro, Trongsa and Dagana in Bhutan which dates before 1815 (Cage, 1999, pp. 90-91). This may have been a consequence of British closing the mint in Cooch Behar around 1780.

Coming to more recent history, he talks about British support for Ugyen Wangchuck as the First King in place of “Raja S.T. Dorjee” (Sharma, 2002, p. 139). The Raja was only 11 years old in 1907 when the First King was enthroned at the age of 44 years and indeed not a contender to the throne. There was no question of choice for succession. Rather, his father Kazi Ugyen Dorji was a close relative and strong supporter of King Ugyen Wangchuck. Sharma is not sure about the identity of these two persons owing to similarity in their first names. So, he thinks Ugyen Wangchuck is Ugyen Dorji and erroneously refers to the latter as Trongsa Penlop Ugyen Dorji. Ugyen Wangchuck was the Trongsa Penlop before becoming the First King. Sharma makes this error in reference to a speculative visit to supposedly seek the “Nepal government’s blessings and support” to put “Tongshar Penlop Ugyen Dorji” on the throne and that Nepal actually gave a Lal Mohor as advance recognition for “Ugyen’s potential succession” (Sharma, 2002, p. 153). There was never a visit to Nepal in 1906 let alone the grant of Lal Mohor. The only foreign visits that King Ugyen Wangchuck ever undertook was to India in 1906 and 1911 besides his travels to Lhasa in 1896 and 1904.

Sharma makes a conjecture concerning the role of Nepali artisans in building two historic temples in Bhutan. He writes that “when the 33rd King of Tibet, Srong-tsan Gampo [reign: 617-650 AD], took a team of Nepali/Newar artisans from the Kathmandu valley for the construction of 108 monasteries, including the Paro Kyichu Lhakhang and Bumthang Jamphel Lhakhang at the initiation of his queen, Bhrikuti Devi.” This is a laboured argument based on speculation. The construction of the two temples is indeed attributed to Songtsen Gampo. It marks a historic moment in the introduction of Buddhism to Bhutan. Songtsen Gampo too is believed to be one of the early emanations of Zhabdrung Rinpoche. Queen Bhrikuti Devi is also well known by the reference as *beyza* (*rbaal-gza'*) in Bhutanese literature and folk songs but none whatsoever in relation to the temple construction. Neither Songtsen Gampo nor Bhrikuti Devi visited Bhutan let alone deploy Newari artisans for the constructions. Hence, his argument is based on the assumption that since Songtsen Gampo took the artisans to Tibet for the construction of the temples, they too must have been involved in the constructions in Bhutan. I do not reject the role of Nepali artisans in building some important religious artefacts and statues in Bhutan. But they happen much later, in the 17th century.

Sharma does not agree with the story of Newari craftsmen’s presence in Bhutan around 1624 which was published in an official Kathmandu weekly, *The Sunday Despatch* (2002, p. 139). He is also doubtful of yet another information that a Nepali was a *desi* of Bhutan in 1780s based on the information that the person’s name was Umze Thapa. Both issues need to be addressed briefly because despite Sharma’s profession of doubt, he nonetheless uses them as materials to build his arguments. These need to be put in proper perspective. I will take up the second first.

His reference to a *desi* called Umze Thapa is actually the 21st Desi Umze Chapchab (reign: 1792-1795). While his name is pronounced as Chapchab, it is written as Chapthrapa (*skyabs-khra-pa*) in classical Tibetan (Sangye Dorji, 2017, pp. 287-289). There are usually some differences in pronunciation between the written and the colloquial. Sonam, for example is written as Seynam (*bsod-rnams*) and Gyamtsho as Gyatsho (*rgya-mtsho*). *Thrapa* has thus been wrongly assumed to be Thapa. Umze refers to a monk-preceptor within the monastic establishment. He had reached this position after enrolling in the Central Monastic Body at an early age and achieving significant scholastic accomplishment. He was from Chapcha in western Bhutan. It was customary as it still is today in some case to address a person by their title or village. For example, Karma Ura is a Karma from Ura, Ugyen Tangbi - an Ugyen from Tangsibji and Kurtoep Sonam, a Sonam from Kurtoe region. Likewise, Umze Chapchab meant an *umze* from the community of Chapcha, which was then under the administrative jurisdiction of Thimphu.

The first statement about the Nepalis presence around 1624 has a different story to it. Zhabdrung Rinpoche did recruit five Newari craftsmen to help build the beautiful silver stupa at Chari monastery. Their names are recorded in Zhabdrung Rinpoche's biography as Mani, Mayang, Zathphala, Amiphala and Mangala (Sangye Dorji, 2008, p. 100). They did not come directly from Nepal but via Ü and Tsang in Tibet. The reliquary stupa was built to keep the sacred ash and bone remains of Zhabdrung Rinpoche's late father Yab Tenpi Nyima. He had died or was possibly assassinated by Tsang Desi Phuntsho Namgyal (1587-1620) in Tibet. His remains were brought to Tango in Bhutan and cremated in seclusion in a cave. After the stupa was built, Zhabdrung Rinpoche granted generous gifts and wages to the craftsmen (Sangye Dorji, 2008, p.

101). So, it is true that the Newari craftsmen were in Bhutan around 1621, earlier than 1624. But Sharma inflates the visit of five craftsmen to undertake the building of a stupa at the level of mass migration. They had returned home after the completion of their works.

There are claims by other Nepali writers about Nepali artisans visiting Bhutan in the 17th century.

Since the 17th century, the Nepalese artisans began to enter Thimphu and Punakha valley of Bhutan and have worked there since then. During the reign of Devraja Tan-Jin-Kh-Gye (1638-1696 AD) some of the Gompas were renovated by Nepalese artisans and decorated them with pieces of art based on Buddhism. The bronze icons in connection with the Mahayana, sculptured by the Nepalese artisans can still be found there in these gompas. Many artists from the Valley of Kathmandu went to Bhutan and resided in the northern part of Thimphu at Bebuna, near De-chen. Some of them also settled in Pachu and Bel-nang of Thimphu Valley recently known as Bal-po, the name of Nepal in Tibetan language. From this fact, we can estimate that the places inhabited by the Nepalese in Bhutan might have been called 'Bal-po' (Dhakal, 2013).

Following Dhakal, Sharma repeats the above information all over his book. We need to acknowledge that the Newari craftsmen had worked in Bhutan and created some amazing masterpieces. That however, does not mean that they had emigrated for good in large numbers as Dhakal claims by drawing parallels between the Tibeto-Bhutanese name for Nepal (Belpo, Bal-po) and settlements in Bhutan with identical names such as Bebeina (Bal-poi-nang). The above extract from Dhakal's short article does not have information about his sources. From the few select bibliographic references, it is hard to identify his exact source. His reference to a

Devraja Tan-Jin-Kh-Gye is most likely the Fourth Desi Tenzin Rabgye who was born in 1638 and passed away in 1697.

In contrast to the above claim of Newari artisans renovating retreat centres or *gonpas* (*dgon-pa*), we see in Tenzin Rabgye's biography many discussions concerning the renovations of *gonpas* and installation of sacred images by Bhutanese artisans. As a token of appreciation for their work in the renovation projects or constructions of new religious monuments, Tenzin Rabgye would administer teachings and grant initiations. Sometimes, the artisans took the initiative to request him for teachings and blessings. There are three instances of references in his biography to foreign artisans who were granted comprehensive introduction to Mahamudra practice, preliminary practices and the practice of Yamantaka (KMT, 2005, p. 169, p. 229 and p. 254). Except for mentioning them as "foreign artisans," there are no details of whether they were Newaris or others. In another instance, he provides similar empowerment and initiation to "artisans" (KMT, 2005, p. 189). There is no reference to them being native or foreigners.

Later, Tenzin Rabgye dispatched two persons to seek the support of the King of Khokhom (Lalitpur – Patan) to send Newari craftsmen to Bhutan for the purpose of making images of the Buddha in Tashicho Dzong and Punakha Dzong. The two envoys were Gelong Pagarp who was Tshamdra Lama and an artisan called Tashi. However, they were ambushed in Tsong country (Limbuva) and robbed of precious gifts meant for the King as well as horses and men. Nonetheless he persevered and sent two more persons, the meditation master of Paro Taktsang and an accomplished practitioner called Ngawang Lhundrup with a letter and gifts of gold and silver. They managed to reach the court of Lalitpur. Not long after, they returned with some Newari artisans

(KMT, 2005, p. 315). The Raja was most likely Srinivasa Malla (reign: 1661-1685). The famed artisans were Pentsa Deva, Dharma Deva, Dharma Singh, Latra Deva and Jiva Singh. The biography mentions that Tenzin Rabgye bestowed them with gifts for casting with gold the pinnacle of the central tower or *utse (dbu-rtse)* of Punakha Dzong during the consecration ceremony which took place in 1682 (KMT, 2005, p. 167). These artisans had also made special request for spiritual guidance and empowerments. They were provided with guidance on the graduated path of Mahamudra meditation (KMT, 2005, p. 169).

They were also active between 1689-1690 when the statues and other relics for the newly constructed Tango monastery were being cast and installed. In fact, the Newari group were particularly entrusted by Tenzin Rabgye to cast the huge image of Lord Buddha whose height is described as equal to those of three human beings (KMT, 2005, p. 272). Some of them, particularly Pentsa Deva, was still active in the early 1700s before Damchoe Pekar (1639-1708), the Fourth Je Khenpo passed away. Damchoe Pekar's biography mentions about how he engaged in conversation with Pentsa Deva to expedite the casting of life-size image of Buddha Shakyamuni at Tashicho Dzong. He had funded the project, and at completion, granted many gifts to the artisans that they are recorded as saying such generous gifts were never received before (Kunga Gyaltshen, 1970, fol. 182-183).

What we observe is that foreign artisans as well as Newari artisans were indeed recruited for religious projects. But there is no mention of their settlement at Bebina. Names like Begana and Bebina are generally associated with Tibetan settlements. Tibet is called Boed (*rbod*) in Tibetan and Bhutanese. Begana (*rbod-sgar-na*) means "at/in the Tibetan settlement." Many Tibetans were permitted to live in these areas since the late 1950s. Tenzin Rabgye's biography

mentions about his visit to their “camp,” *gar* (*sgar*) of the artisans, not villages or settlements (KMT, 2005, p. 189).

Sharma also draws from Dhakal to make similar arguments. He goes further to say that the Nepali artisans had been allotted special settlement areas around principal towns in Bhutan out of gratitude for their services in an alluded construction of the majestic stupas at Chendebji in Trongsa and Choeten Kora in Trashy Yangtse. His source is an unpublished project report by another Nepali writer. These stupas were indeed built in the architectural tradition inspired by Nepali style particularly Boudha. But they were built by Bhutanese. The stupa at Chendebji was constructed by Lama Oensey Tshering Wangchuk from Nyala village in Trongsa. A lyrical ballad composed orally in the 19th century makes references to how he constructed it by using Boudha stupa as his model (Ura, 1995).

The stupa at Choeten Kora was built by a certain Lama Ngawang Loday in memory of his late uncle. He had travelled to Boudha along with his friend Lama Zangpo from Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh. On their return, they reportedly brought a model of the Boudha stupa made of radish. Lama Zangpo constructed a stupa at Pangchanang valley in Tawang, known today as Gorzam Choeten. Lama Ngawang Loday constructed the Duerong Choeten, which came to be known as Choeten Kora.

By the time they arrived home, the radish model had shrunk distorting the shape. As a result, the stupa particularly the one at Trashy Yangtse underwent some changes in design especially in the level of galleries. The construction of Choeten Kora took 12 long years. It was supported by disciples of Lama Ngawang Loday and devotees from Trashy Yangtse, Trashigang and Kurtoe valley, and also by people from the neighbouring tribal communities of Tawang (Lam Kesang Chhophel, 2002, p. 3).

The above records acknowledge the inspiration of Boudha for those two stupas in Trongsa and Tashi Yangtse but squarely identify two Drukpa Lamas and local people as those who were responsible for their construction. The stupa at Choeten Kora was consecrated by the 13th Je Khenpo of Bhutan Je Yonten Thaye (1771-1775). It was consecrated during his second visit to the valley of Trashi Yangtse, most likely towards the latter part of his life. Since the construction took about twelve years, it must have begun sometime in early 1760s.

Nepali scholars also hype about two to three visits of Zhabdrung Rinpoche to Nepal on academic, spiritual and political journeys. The first one is said to have taken place in 1614: “[w]hile visiting gorkha in 1614 AD, he also visited the valley of Kathmandu and offered one hundred thousand votive lamps to the deity at the temple of Swayambhunath. He also befriended King Laxmi Narsingh Malla of Kantipur and took some artisans with him to Bhutan” (Dhakal, 2013). Sharma thinks that this is the second visit. He writes that Zhabdrung Rinpoche “is said to have re-visited Swayambhu in order to go through the Lakh Batti (100,000 oil-fed lamps) ritual, and call on king Lakshimi Narsimha Malla to requisition the services of some local artisans (1614 AD)” (Sharma, 2002, p. 143). Sharma also alludes to Zhabdrung Rinpoche’s “religious internship” at Swayambhu overlooking the fact that all his training and education were done in the ancestral monastic centre of Druk Ralung in Tibet before he left for Bhutan.

Dhakal goes on to state that Zhabdrung Rinpoche visited Nepal in 1640 and renovated Swayambhu stupa. He mentions a second or third visit in the same year. Between Sharma and Dhakal, they are not able to specifically identify the exact years of these three visits. Their narratives suggest two visits either in 1614 or 1640. However,

Sharma's primary source of this information is a Bipin Dev's "unpublished sources." He also relies on the same unpublished sources to argue that Gorkhas have fought shoulder to shoulder with the Bhutanese against the Tibetans. It is very unlikely that Nepali scholars will leave such important sources either unidentified or unpublished owing to their socio-historical and political relevance.

They write that Zhabdrung Rinpoche took some forty to fifty Gorkha families to Bhutan after his visit in 1640: "[a]mong them were Brahmins, Chhetriyas, Vaishya and Sudras. Bisan Thapa Magar was the leader of the migrated Gorkhals to Bhutan" (Dhakal, 2013). Dhakal makes a bold claim that Zhabdrung Rinpoche was influenced by Gorkha's political system and introduced them in Bhutan with some changes. Sharma basically repeats Dhakal's point about Zhabdrung Rinpoche's visit to Nepal and meeting with Raja Ram Shah (1606-1641): "King Namgyal saw the rich cultural heritages of the Kathmandu Valley and the well-organized and established ruling systems of the kingdoms of the Kathmandu Valley, as also that of the kingdom of Gorkha, prior to his return to Bhutan" (Sharma, 2002, p. 136). He makes another claim about Zhabdrung Rinpoche being so impressed by Newari art, architecture and sculpture that "he took back with him quite a few selected artisans and craftsmen with a view to beautify his own palace and capital, if not entire Bhutan" (Sharma, 2002, p. 138).

The crux of the above information from Dakal and Sharma's writings concerning Zhabdrung Rinpoche's supposed visit to Nepal are as follows: he called on Raja Laxmi Narsing Malla (also spelt Lakshimi Narsimha Malla), had religious training at Swayambhu, offered 100,000 butter lamps, renovated the stupa

later, took Gorkha families to Bhutan on his return and introduced Gorkha political system in Bhutan. All these claims are unfounded because Zhabdrung Rinpoche had never visited Nepal. There are about six biographies of him written by different authors. None of them ever mention anything about him leaving Bhutan for Nepal. Such a visit, if indeed undertaken, would not escape the writings of the scribes as they hold enormous historical and political significance. The historical circumstances in 1614 and 1640 in Tibet and Bhutan also made it quite impossible for him to travel. Dhakal suggests that he visited in 1614 and on his return took some artisans with him to Bhutan. Zhabdrung Rinpoche came to Bhutan from Tibet only in 1616! Around 1614, he was still in Tibet and did not travel outside owing to differences with the powerful ruler of Tsang, Desi Phuntsho Namgyal. He left for Bhutan only when the differences became irreconcilable and threats to his life and monastic properties become imminent.

After arrival in Bhutan, Zhabdrung Rinpoche neither travelled outside nor returned to Tibet. Bhutan had just overcome the third and a major invasion launched in 1639 by Tsang Desi Karma Tenkyong Wangpo (1606-1642). Although peace was finally established in 1640 for the time-being, Zhabdrung Rinpoche did not travel elsewhere. He declined the invitation to visit Tibet that year. It was far more important for him to stay in Bhutan than as the recognition of the state he founded with the proclamation of the government of Palden Druk Zhung around 1627 was finally being recognized by regional powers. That government was based on the Buddhist idea of two traditions or *choesid lugnyi* (*chos-srid lugs-gnyis*) advocating interdependence or union of spiritual and temporal authority. Hence the assertion that the Gorkha political system he saw in 1640 influenced his own political system in Bhutan is an unfounded claim. The arguments about him taking

Gorkha families to Bhutan after that visit in 1640 is merely a speculation because Zhabdrung Rinpoche was never in Kathmandu in the first place.

What is mentioned in Zhabdrung Rinpoche's biographies in relation to an important event in 1640 is the kingdoms of Patan, Bhadgaon and Kathmandu sending emissaries to recognize his political authority over Bhutan and of Bhutan as a sovereign political entity. This is an important consideration in understanding Bhutan-Nepal relations. Padma Tshedwang had apparently missed this important event in his narrative. Of course, there were recognition accorded by other polities of the time. For example, there were emissaries from the Kingdom of Derge in Tibet. King Sengye Namgyal of Ladakh had sent his son Tenzin Norbu, who made offerings of monastic lands on the occasion. Likewise, Raja Pran Narayan of Cooch Behar sent congratulatory offerings. Besides, there were envoys from eminent Buddhist luminaries of those days such as Sakya Dagchen Ngawang Kunga Sonam Gyalwang and the 10th Karmapa Choying Dorje (Sangye Dorji, 2008, p. 145). Thus far, the identity of the rulers of the three kingdoms of Kathmandu valley who either sent emissaries or may have come in person has not been established. However, Sharma points out a possible visit by Pratap Malla. He notes that "a Newari language Mss. found at Bhaktapur Museum and titled Pratap Mallako Tirthayatra, 'Pratap Malla's Pilgrimages', is said to have referred to his visit to 'Bhotaanta' (Bhutan) as well" (Sharma, 2002, p. 143). Pratap Malla ascended the throne around 1641 (Shaha, p. 73). It may be possible that it was most likely his father Laksmīnarasimha who either came in person or sent an envoy to Zhabdrung Rinpoche in 1640. The ruler of Patan then was Siddhi Narasimha who ruled from 1618-1661 (Shaha, 1997, pp. 83-84). Likewise, the ruler of Bhadgaon then was Nareśa Malla who had a

short reign from 1637-1643 (Shaha, 1997, p. 92). Ram Shah was then the Raja of Gorkha (1606-1633). He was succeeded by his son Dambara Shah (1635-1642) (Shaha, 1997, p. 73). They had not sent emissaries. Although there was no exchange yet with Gorkha, a major breakthrough would take place a few decades later. The visits of Newari artisans at Tango and Chari monasteries and recognition by the three kingdoms do not occupy major chapter in the Bhutanese narrative of relations with Nepal although they are recorded.

These are not the only factual errors about Bhutanese history in Sharma's book. Not all have been taken up but a few important ones have been pointed out as they relate to some of the issues I discuss. Usage of factually incorrect data and information as the basis of his analysis has resulted in correspondingly misplaced views and biased perspectives. This is abundantly clear when he falls back on his data to articulate politically loaded views beyond the scholarly objectives.

The obvious question is why use his book then as a source for this study in the context of such biases and errors. Besides being the first major attempt by a Nepali scholar to write in greater detail about Bhutan-Nepal relations, it contains some other information which are useful to corroborate and validate certain facts in the works of Bhutanese scholars. There are some important errors which are reproduced from the writings of other Nepali scholars. Unless these are contested and corrected, their repetition by Nepali scholars through citations in different works risks being deemed truthful and objective. Finally, his work has some information and insights which are not known to the Bhutanese thus far, and hence can add value in understanding Bhutan-Nepal relations. My critique of his work is not an attempt at information cherry-picking

for the selective use of materials for the purpose of this study. Where information and facts are wrong, they are pointed out but where they add value to existing knowledge, they are acknowledged and built upon.

3. The First Mission

Padma Tshedwang begins his narrative on the “patron-priest” relationship between the Dharmaraja and Gorkharaja as follows:

[D]uring the reign of Ram Sayab there were constant feuds among his siblings. Besides, he had no children and was therefore, not at peace. One night, the queen had a dream in which it was said that they must seek refuge in Dharmaraja of Bhutan, and request for a lama. This will help subdue their enemies. If the royal couple seek his blessings, the feuds will subside and many descendants who will establish sovereignty over many kingdoms will be born. Following such divine prophecy, the queen reported to the Raja, who was overjoyed and sent an emissary to the court of Dharmaraja to request for a lama. At that time, the Dharmaraja was Migyur Tenpa who was also very pleased and dispatched Lama Damchoe Pekar. When he reached the court of Gorkha King, the enemies were subdued, the feuds among siblings subsided and soon after three children were born. Dambar Sayab succeeded to the throne. During the time of his son Krishna Sayab, the Gonpa of Tsirang-tsa along with monastic estates to the west, landholdings at Rakhina and the monastic laws for the head-shaven ones [monks] were granted ...” (Padma Tshedwang, 1995, p. 234, translation mine).

Sangye Dorji also shares this narrative but only mentions the absence of the heir to the Gorkharaja and not the internal family feud. He writes that it was the Raja rather than his queen who had the dream (2017, p. 78). There are major problems with Padma Tshedwang’s narrative and facts as well as that of Sangye Dorji. We will identify each one of them.

First, Ram Shah (Ram Sayab) had died in 1636 whereas Migyur Tenpa became the Third Desi only thirty-one years later, in 1667. Even his son Dambar Shah and grandson, Krishna Shah had died by 1645 and 1661 respectively. Hence, it is impossible that it was Ram Shah who sent an envoy to Migyur Tenpa's court. Even White makes the same mistake by noting that Migyur Tenpa was a friend of Ram Shah and obtained land grants (1999, p. 261). Ram Shah and Dambar Shah were both contemporaries of Zhabdrung Rinpoche but we know that he had sent no such missions to the Gorkha court. We do know from Damchoe Pekar's biography that Migyur Tenpa had indeed sent him. If either Ram Shah or his son Dambar Shah were the ones who had requested Zhabdrung Rinpoche to depute a Drukpa Lama, it is very likely that they would have sent envoys to congratulate Zhabdrung Rinpoche in 1640 as did the rulers of other three other kingdoms. Since neither of them had sent anyone, it can be assumed that the Drukpa-Gorkha relations had not yet been forged either during Zhabdrung Rinpoche's early years in Tibet or after his arrival in Bhutan. Gorkha too was not as important a political entity then as were the kingdoms of Patan, Bhadgaon and Kathmandu. Hence, Sharma's claim that Zhabdrung Rinpoche went to Gorkha to call on Ram Shah is also untrue for this reason besides the fact that Zhabdrung Rinpoche never visited Nepal. Who was the Gorkharaja then who sent envoys to Bhutan? Was it Rudra Shah (reign: 1661-1673) or his son Prithvi Pati Shah? The periods of their reigns coincide with that of Migyur Tenpa (1667-1680). Who was the queen whose dream triggered the decision to send envoys?

The other question that has to be asked is about the existence of feud among royal siblings in the Gorkha court. Certainly there was none between Ram Shah and his elder brother Chatra Shah, who was the Raja before him. But Chatra Shah reigned only for one

year and died. Ram Shah succeeded immediately. And there was no issue of succession as his son, Dambar Shah was already born.

Third, Damchoe Pekar reached the court of Malla King, not that of the Gorkharaja. Why did he end up in the court of Malla King? According to his biography, he reached the Kingdom of Yambhu (Yam-bu), Kathmandu (Kantipur). Did Kunga Gyaltshen, the biographer of Damchoe Pekar err to write Kathmandu instead of Gorkha? Why did Padma Tshedwang and Sangay Dorji even mention Gorkha when Kunga Gyaltshen mentions Nepal [(Belpo, *Bal-po*), (1970, fol. 61)] as the destination of Damchoe Pekar's mission? He arrived in Kathmandu which is described as the centre (capital) of Belpo. Besides Padma Tshedwang and Sangay Dorji, even Sharma makes the same mistake although he expresses caution over discrepancy in dates. He writes that an old record "goes to reinforce the earlier account of Ram Shah's having sent an envoy to the Dharmaraja in Bhutan requesting the services of a tantric lama. The latter positively responded by deputing a famous Lama, Dam-chos-ped-kar to Gorkha" (Sharma, 2002, p. 140). Again, it must be emphasized at the risk of repetition that if Ram Shah had sent the envoy, it would have been to the court of Zhabdrung Rinpoche. But Zhabdrung Rinpoche did not send Damchoe Pekar. It was Migyur Tenpa who did. Anyway, Damchoe Pekar was born three years after Ram Shah's death.

Fourth, contrary to Padma Tshedwang's narrative, Damchoe Pekar was not received warmly. The ministers prevented him from getting an early audience. Even the community at Lachang Gonpa, which appears to be the first community he came across, did not really welcome his party. Now, why would the people along the way as well as the ministers not welcome a lama if he was indeed invited by Raja Pratap Malla in the first place? The meeting which

did take place between Damchoe Pekar and Pratap Malla later was said to be warm and cordial but it is difficult to understand that the ministers would delay an audience for a special royal guest.

Fifth, Kunga Gyaltshen mentions about Damchoe Pekar's monastic centres in Nepal, possibly in Kathmandu and certainly at Namkhaling. These must have been built on lands granted by Pratap Malla. But Padma Tshedwang writes that it was Krishna Shah who granted the lands. This is not possible as Krishna Shah had died about 10 years before Damchoe Pekar's mission.

When we examine these historical facts in detail, we find errors in the starting point of Padma Tshewang's narrative. The names of the rulers in Bhutan and Nepal at that time do not match with the years of their reigns. Also, the genesis of the relationship identified either with the Gorkharaja or his queen's request for a Drukpa Lama based on their dreams are also found to be questionable. To help us deal with these conflicting facts, let us first look at Damchoe Pekar's mission.

The events I discuss below are all drawn from his biography (Kunga Gyaltshen, 1970, fol. 61-87). As the very first mission, it is important to get a complete sense of how it unfolded. Damchoe Pekar received instructions to go to Nepal from Desi Migyur Tenpa soon after the completion of his three-year retreat at Chari. The biography does not provide any details as to what his instructions were except that he was to go to Belpo. He called on his spiritual master Pekar Jungnye, the First Je Khenpo, to seek his blessings before his departure. He saw his mission as one of spreading the Buddha Dharma in Nepal. The moment of departure from his master is described in very painful terms. Indeed, the master passed away before his return. He also went to visit his parents at

Paro. Again, the separation of parents and their son is described in moving terms. Especially for his father Dorje Gyalpo, the premonition that he may not meet his son ever again somehow dawned on him very strongly. This indeed turned out to be true as the father also passed away when Damchoe Pekar was in Nepal.

He departed accompanied by twenty-seven attendants. His party travelled through Paro, Haa, Dalikha, Damtshang and reached Sikkim. Dalikha and Damtshang in the present-day Darjelling area were already under Bhutanese jurisdiction by then till 1865 when the British annexed them. As they reached the capital, possibly Yuxsom of Tsong country or Limbuvan, they find that there had been no King for some time. And that the capital was under the care of a queen, who accorded them a warm welcome and extended due reverence and hospitality. The reference to the King must be either Phuntshog Namgyal of Sikkim who died in 1670 or Tensung Namgyal, his successor. This is an important clue to determine the year of Damchoe Pekar's mission. Tensung Namgyal was apparently enthroned soon "during the time of Phuntsho Namgyal" (Thutob Namgyal and Yeshe Dolma, 1908, p. 23). From this historical source, we understand that the succession of Tensung Namgyal did not take place after his father's death but rather when he was still alive. So, what does the statement that there was no King for some time mean? In this source, we have a small clue again. It states that Tensung Namgyal "ascended the Gaddi in the Chag-khyi (Iron dog) year, 1670 A.D. during the time of his father Phuntsho Namgyal and while Lha-bTsun Chenpo were alive, and while they had been sojourning together at Tashiding, La-bTsun had spoken to the Raja about the building of the Rabdentse Palace... (Thutob Namgyal and Yeshe Dolma, 1908, p. 23). The clue is about Tensung Namgyal and Lha-bTsun Chenpo sojourning at Tashiding. We do not know how long the sojourn

was but that does seem to explain the King's absence. Tensung Namgyal had three queens. He must have been married by the time of his enthronement as he was 26 years old then, having been born in 1644. His second child, Chador Namgyal, who would succeed him was born in 1686 but he already had an elder daughter from a Bhutanese wife. The youngest wife was from Limbuwan. Her name was Thungwa Mukma, daughter of King Yong Ya Hang of Yangwarok, one of the Limbu kingdoms. It is possible that she must have been the queen who hosted the party as the biographer specifically mentions Tsong or Limbuwan. This anecdote helps us to ascertain the year of Damchoe Pekar's mission, which seems to have taken place around 1670.

The mission travelled through foothills of Indian plains and finally crossed into Nepal. Their first call was at a monastic centre called Lachang Gonpa. The locals were reportedly taken aback to know that there were only twenty-seven of them as opposed to their perception that they saw about three hundred people travelling towards their community. Suspicious, they had asked as to how the size of the party had suddenly shrunk. Damchoe Pekar tried to convince them that there was no one else besides them but the locals were doubtful of the "treacherous Bhutanese" and felt that the others must be hiding somewhere. His attendants entreated that they should leave as the people were neither friendly nor religious. He admonished them not to give in so easily but realized that he needed to befriend the ruler first before winning over the locals. So, the party proceeded to the Kingdom of Yambhu or Kantipur, modern-day Kathmandu.

He sought an audience with the Raja but was first delayed by the jealous ministers. But soon, an audience was arranged. The Raja, though not named in the biography, could not have been anyone

but Pratap Malla (reign: 1641-1674). Since the mission took place around 1670, he was still reigning in Kathmandu. They developed a warm relationship. The meeting was described as one between a “mother and son.” When Damchoe Pekar expressed interest in establishing a monastic centre as the bastion of Buddha Dharma, he agreed.

Soon after, Damchoe Pekar undertook a pilgrimage of the holy sites in Nepal: Swayambhu, Boudha, places associated with the Great Translator Marpa (1012-1097) as well as his student, Milarepa (1052-1135). He also visited Thonthingri, Kyiphu Nyima Dzong and many other sites. Then it is said that he returned to the monastic centre although its name is not specified. Monastic lands were also acquired. The biography does not name or identify the monastic centres and the landholdings. It appears highly likely that the landholdings at Tsirang-tsa along with monastic centres towards the west and a village called Rakhina, which Padma Tshedwang had mentioned at the very start of his narrative as being granted by Krishna Shah may be the ones granted by Pratap Malla. Sharma also wrote that these properties were granted by Krishna Shah (2002, p. 141). However, we have noted how impossible it is for Krishna Shah to have granted the properties as Damchoe Pekar’s mission took place only after his death, not during his reign. Further research including field visits to Nepal can identify and affirm if Tsirang-tsa and Rakhina were under the jurisdiction of Kathmandu during Pratap Malla’s reign and if these were the ones granted to Damchoe Pekar.

As Damchoe Pekar’s activities increased, he felt the need for an able assistant and accordingly wrote to the government in

Punakha. A person called Chodze Rechungpa⁷ was sent. He was soon installed as the lama at the *gonpa* of Namkhaling, which was located three days away from Kathmandu. As the news of the establishment and flourishing of the Lho Drukpa Kagyu in Nepal began to spread, the Lhasa government did not take it positively. They reportedly sent bribes to the Malla court to counter Bhutanese religious diplomacy. The Raja also soon passed away. The other royals were noted as being powerless and the machinations of the ministers resulted in Damchoe Pekar and his followers being harassed and mistreated.

Although Damchoe Pekar tried to continue to stay for a while, hostility intensified and was therefore, eventually forced to escape following the route along the base of mountains that constituted the Nepal-Tibet border. The soldiers reportedly pursued them but were not discovered as they hid in a secure place. As supplies ran out, they had to survive on meagre food. Damchoe Pekar expressed disenchantment at how the Lhasa government and anti-Dharma forces had created obstacles for his aspiration to promote the Buddha Dharma. They managed to slip through Nepal experiencing tremendous ordeal. Soon they reached Cooch Behar but the party was assailed by the guards and subjected to great harm. Nonetheless, an intervention by a Bhutanese merchant called Darchu Gyaltsen, who had connections in the region and had even established contact between its ruler and Zhabdrung Rinpoche decades earlier, brought the plight of the group to the attention of the Raja. He is named in the biography as Padma Narayan and known as such by the Bhutanese. He was actually

7 Choeze Rechungpa later served as the Lama of Do Khachu Gonpa located in Chapcha under Chukha district today. After he passed away, his remains were cremated at the *gonpa* and the ash relics entombed in a memorial stupa that still stands in front of the temple at this *gonpa*.

Pran Narayan (reign: 1626-1665). He enthroned his second son, Mod Narayan in 1765 (Cooch Behar District, n.d). So the ruler then was Mod Narayan, who ruled till 1680. The escape of Damchoe Pekar through Cooch Behar was taking place around 1674. The biography then dwells into how the Raja as well as the guards expressed regrets over their conduct due to mistaken identities and made obeisance.

Damchoe Pekar and the Raja had conversations about the state of affairs in Nepal, particularly of the Buddha Dharma. Thereafter, the party returned to Bhutan and reached Punakha where Damchoe Pekar reported to State officials including Desi Migyur Tenpa and Je Khenpo Sonam Yoezer who had succeeded the late Pekar Jungney as the Je Khenpo. He also travelled to his village, where he found that his father had passed away. His request to the *desi* to relieve him from official duties so that he can now focus on spiritual pursuit in solitary retreat was denied. He continued as member of the monastic community to become the Fourth Je Khenpo around 1698 at the age of 59 years, which was approximately twenty-three years after his return.

We shall now try to answer the questions raised earlier concerning the identity of the Gorkharaja, who sent the envoy to the court of Bhutan's Dharmaraja. There are two possible answers. One, it must be Pratap Malla of Kathmandu as mentioned above. Since the mission took place around 1670 and Pratap Malla was the Raja from 1641 till 1674, it is certain that he was the one whom Damchoe Pekar met. If his biographer was correct that he was sent to Belpo instead of Gorkha as mentioned by Padma Tshedwang and Sangay Dorji, there is no reason that it cannot be Pratap Malla.

However, if the biographer had erred and written Kathmandu instead of Gorkha, there is room to think that the Raja must have been Rudra Shah who ruled Gorkha from 1661 to 1673. Both Rudra Shah and Pratap Malla had died within a year of each other. Damchoe Pekar also mentioned about the death of the Raja and his return thereafter. The biographer, Kunga Gyaltsen was born in 1689, about sixteen years after Damchoe Pekar returned from the mission. He died in 1714 at a young age of 25 years. Damchoe Pekar's biography was written after his death in 1708, which was almost thirty-five years after the mission. We have seen him making references to Cooch Behar as the Kingdom of Padma [Pran] Narayan whereas Mod Narayan was the ruler during his return journey to Bhutan. However, Kunga Gyaltsen does not seem to have made a mistake about Kathmandu as we will see below.

Let us examine if either Rudra Shah of Gorkha or Pratap Malla of Kathmandu had succession issue. Pratap Malla already had four children from his two queens, a Nepalese and a Tibetan. Upon his death, he was succeeded by his son Nripendra Malla (reign: 1674-1680). The fact that Pratap Malla was a successful king, having reigned for thirty-three years, and had two queens as well as successors does not make him the ruler who possibly requested the Dharmaraja to send a Drukpa Lama to bless the royal couple for children. Likewise, Rudra Shah also had a successor. We do not know the exact year in which Prithvi Pati Shah was born. But he also had four other younger brothers from his mother and a half-brother from his father's second queen (Singh, 1997, p. 23). Singh also mentions that he may have had about twelve brothers. There is however, no mention of squabbling among those siblings. This then rules out the question of feud among siblings in the court of Rudra Shah who also did not have issues of succession due to an

absence of heir. So, he too could not have been the Raja who sent the envoy to Migyur Tenpa requesting for a Drukpa Lama.

Since the Bhutanese narrative specifically mentions the troubles in Gorkha court, let us examine if any Gorkharaja may have had been beset with problems either of not having an heir or of feuding siblings. The story of squabbling among siblings is described in relation to the death of Prithvi Pati Shah's eldest son, the crown prince Birbhadra Shah. He did not succeed his father as he died young. At his death, his son Narbhupal Shah was just conceived and not born yet. But the conception was kept a secret and not revealed. It may have been to ensure the safety of the mother and child from perceived threats to their lives from Birbhadra Shah's brothers, who may have nourished ambition to succeed. It is said that the secret was shared with only one of the brothers. Even his father, Prithvi Pati Shah must have been kept in the dark. Birbhadra Shah's wife was Mallikavate, daughter of the Raja of Tanhou. When her husband died, she had left the Gorkha court to live with her parents in Tanhou. This may have also helped in keeping her pregnancy a secret, living further away from the Gorkha court. As a result, Prithvi Pati Shah's other sons are said to have vied for succession and fought one another to claim the throne on the ground of seniority and popularity (Singh, 1997, p. 24).

Pokhrel (2023) also mentions about the largest royal family that Prithvi Pati Shah had among the Gorkharajas and how this became a challenge for him. This is the closest anecdote we have in relation to squabbling among brothers in the Gorkha court. This definitely looks like a consequence of the untimely death of Birbhadra Shah and the secrecy of Narbhupal Shah's conception. So, it appears safe for now to assume that it was Prithvi Pati Shah's other sons who squabbled to be designated successor at the death of Birbhadra

Shah since most of them were possibly unaware of the conception of Narbhupal Shah, who was born only in 1697 at Tanhou, the year his father died. Luckily for him, his grandfather continued to reign for the next nineteen years. Upon his grandfather's death, he succeeded to the throne in 1716, not any of his uncles. This gives some space to think that Prithvi Pati Shah may have been concerned when Birbhadra Shah and his wife did not have a son. Could it then be Mallikavate who had that dream wherein she was urged to seek the blessing of Bhutan's Dharmaraja and that she shared this with her husband and father-in-law? Could it have been her father-in-law who sent an envoy to Bhutan's Dharmaraja? There is another instance of a Gorkharaja whose dream was interpreted by a monk-ambassador foretelling the birth of Prithvi Narayan Shah. However, this takes place much later and cannot be associated with the supposed cause of the first mission.

This is the only historical circumstance we come across concerning the twin trigger of feuding siblings and unborn heir that Padma Tshedwang and Sangay Dorji wrote about. The ruler in question then is Prithvi Pati Shah. But he could not have sent the envoy to Migyur Tenpa since he was enthroned in 1673 while the mission seemed to have taken place around 1670. He was succeeded by the Fourth Desi Tenzin Rabgye, who was actually the first person to be officially enthroned as the representative of Zhabdrung Rinpoche, whose death in 1651, was kept as State secret till 1707. If indeed Prithvi Pati Shah had sent an envoy to Bhutan concerning feuds among his sons and the supposed non-conception of his grandson around 1696, it must then be to the court of Tenzin Rabgye who also passed away in 1697. We need to recall that Birbhadra Shah had also died in 1697, the very year in which Narbhupal Shah was born. The lama who was sent to the Gorkha court in this context was most likely Lama Yangpon, the second monk-ambassador.

This mission from Bhutan then cannot be the one sent by Migyur Tenpa who passed away in 1680 whereas the issue in the Gorkha court discussed above took place in mid-1690s.

From the above discussions, we can make the following observations. Migyur Tenpa had indeed sent Damchoe Pekar to Nepal. But this could not have happened at the request of Rudra Shah, who was the Gorkharaja at that time. Rather, it looks like a completely different mission to the court of Pratap Malla, a unilateral Bhutanese initiative to cultivate the Raja's goodwill in the context of counter-balancing the influence of Lhasa government. By the time of Migyur Tenpa, Bhutan had already fought off about seven invasions from Tibet. More invasions would follow till 1732. Hence, it was in Bhutan's interest to engage with the powerful Malla King. As Damchoe Pekar mentioned, it was the ill doings of the Lhasa government that forced him to flee Nepal. Damchoe Pekar did not get a warm welcome along the way or at the court of Pratap Malla initially. If indeed Pratap Malla had requested the Dharmarajas for a Drukpa Lama, he would have ensured the safety, comfort as well as a fitting reception during Damchoe Pekar's journey and arrival. That, as we have seen, was not the case!

What appears more likely is that the next mission from Bhutan specifically to the Gorkha court may have been dispatched during the reign of Prithvi Pati Shah in Gorkha and Tenzin Rabgye in Bhutan. That also looks more likely towards the last year of Tenzin Rabgye's reign. He retired in 1696, a year before his death. Prithvi Pati Shah had faced issues of squabbling among his sons upon the death of the crown prince Birbhadra Shah. The conception of his grandson, Narbhupal Shah, was kept a secret, even from him. It looks highly possible that Padma Tshedwang and Sangay Dorji

had mixed up the second mission to the court of Prithvi Pati Shah during the last year of Tenzin Rabgye's tenure as Dharmaraja with that of the first mission of Damchoe Pekar to the court of Pratap Malla. Tenzin Rabgye's biography however, does not mention about such a mission being sent. His biographer's focus during the last years of his reign had been on the political turmoil in the Bhutanese government. With this available information reconstituted from various sources, we can assume that it was most likely Prithvi Pati Shah who had sent an envoy to the court of Tenzin Rabgye around 1696, and that the first mission of Damchoe Pekar sent by Migyur Tenpa was a different one. In contrast to the first mission sent to the court of Malla King, the latter missions were dispatched to the courts of Gorkhas. This important shift could possibly be due to minimal Lhasa interference in Gorkha as opposed to Kathmandu. There is scope for re-visiting this assumption with further research on the royal history of Gorkha. Nonetheless, the discussions thus far had shown where the facts and ensuing narratives had gone wrong and what could be the possible trajectory of the historical developments.

5. The Subsequent Missions

Damchoe Pekar's maiden mission undertaken around 1670 when he was about 32 years old was indeed Bhutan's first attempt at religious diplomacy with Nepal. He spent about four years before the unfortunate turn of events forced him to return home. But the mission cannot be deemed a failure. In fact, it laid the foundation for more missions over the next two centuries which not only saw the flourishing of Drukpa Kagyu Buddhism in Nepal but also of the broadening of the scope of relation into a politico-military character which we will discuss later. We know that he was able to establish monastic centres in Kathmandu area, and even at Namkhaling, which was three days away. This would not have

been possible without the patronage of Raja Pratap Malla. What the Raja granted were possibly the landholdings at Tsirang-tsa along with monastic centres towards the west and also a village called Rakhina.

The important question that has to be asked is what happened after Damchoe Pekar's mission. Padma Tshedwang notes that Damchoe Pekar (1st) was followed by Lama Yangpon (2nd) and then Lama Bumthangpa Choeje (3rd). I will hereafter list sequentially the order of tenure of the monk-ambassadors after their names at the first instance of mentioning them. The tenure of the third monk-ambassador Bumthangpa Choeje is said to have spanned the reigns of Rudra Shah (1661-1673) and Prithvi Pati Shah (1673-1716). Let us cross-examine this. Damchoe Pekar had returned around 1674. Rudra Shah had died in 1673. Therefore, even if Migyur Tenpa had sent the next mission immediately after, it would have been during the time of Prithvi Pati Shah. But we know that the next envoy could not have been sent immediately owing to the hostility of Lhasa government towards Bhutan and Bhutanese presence in Nepal. It is far more plausible that Lama Yangpon must have been sent by Tenzin Rabgye during the last year of his reign to the court of Prithvi Pati Shah, around 1696. So Bumthangpa Choeje's tenure would not have coincided with the reign of Rudra Shah but possibly with that of Prithvi Pati Shah, who was succeeded by his grandson, Narbhupal Shah in 1716. His reign went on for 27 years till 1743. From these circumstances, we can surmise that the second mission took place after a gap of almost twenty-two years. From then on, however, the momentum was maintained for more than one and half centuries.

Padma Tshedwang as well as Sharma mention that during Narbhupal Shah's reign, a lama called Drogen Ngawang Drugyal

(4th) effected a truce between the Gorkhas and Tibetans on Narbhupal Shah's request (Sharma, p. 135). Sharma states that the Tibetan-Gorkha differences arose over a small Gorkha territory between Kerung (Kyirong) and Zhingha which was about to be occupied by Tibetans. The Kyirong-Kathmandu or Kuti-Kathmandu connectivity were vital trade routes then and held immense economic significance (Pommaret, 2000, p. 34).

Padma Tshedwang writes how Lama Ngawang Drugyal came across Gorkha soldiers, who were about to be massacred by the Tibetans at the border fort called Bumpa Dzong located between Kyirong and Ngari. It had not been possible to identify the *dzong* yet. In any case, Lama Ngawang Drugyal is said to have conveyed to the Tibetans that the Gorkha-Bhutan alliance can inflict disastrous defeat if the Gorkha soldiers were murdered. They were reportedly freed, and in gratitude, Narbhupal Shah is said to have given him the Nagthali Gonpa, six villages and two landholdings (Padma Tshedwang, 1995, p. 234). But as we shall see below, it was more likely that Nagthali Gonpa and the villages were granted by Prithvi Pati Shah to Lama Yangpon around 1697 since Narbhupal Shah would have just been born around that time.

We can corroborate this by Padma Tshedwang's reproduction in Chökey of the land grant records. In the first of these records, there is a short Sanskrit preamble which is attributed to Narbhupal Shah. But Padma Tshedwang prefaces the preamble by writing that "this is the copy of the copper-plate record of Nagthali Gonpa and monastic lands as well as the people granted by Gorkharaja Narbhupal Shah to Lama Damchoe Pekar in recognition of the relations that developed between Gorkha and Bhutan and for the subsequent flourishing of the teachings of Palden Drukpa" (1995, p. 239). It is important to reiterate two earlier points to highlight

the errors in this preface. One, Narbhupal Shah's grant of lands and the people could not have been to Damchoe Pekar as the former became Raja only years after the latter's death. Two, the fact that Nagthali Gonpa was granted much earlier to a certain Lhopa Lama comes out clearly in another record quoted below. The Lhopa Lama in reference is possibly Lama Yangpon, the second envoy and the grant was therefore, not by Narbhupal Shah but possibly by Prithvi Pati Shah. So, what Narbhupal Shah granted was the additional six villages and their people.

The contents of the copy of copper-plate records are as follows:

In earlier times, the Nagathali gompa was offered to Lhopa⁸ Lama as kusu birta. The patrons must provide services to the best of their abilities. The lama has been assigned as the root guru (principal teacher) for your community. The patrons have also decided thus and [the following] are being given to Lhopa Lama: Thongmoen, Gyaldzong, Chilingma, the village of Pa Dzong and two fields, Goenpagang, Gadeylang. These six villages must serve the lama to the best of their abilities as he wishes. No other lama can play their bells and drums. The lands owned by Lama Tenzin Dorji who is the descendent of Lama Pema Dorji are being granted to the Lhopa Lama as has been laid down in Nagathali records (Padma Tshedwang, 1995, pp. 239-240, translation mine).

Two lamas, Lama Pema Dorji and Lama Tenzin Dorji are being mentioned in this record. But Padma Tshedwang does not mention them anywhere in his list of appointees at the Gorkha courts. It is

8 *Lho* means south in Tibetan and Dzongkha. *Lhopa* means someone from the South, which meant Bhutan. Bhutan was also known as *Lhomon* since it is located south of Tibet and once deemed a dark land (*mon*) where Buddhism had not flourished. Lhopa Lama thus meant lama from Lho (Bhutan). It is interesting that Nepal's reference to Bhutan is in the Tibetan term *Lho* in contrast to Sharma's claim that Bhutan was long referred in a record by Nepal as Bhootanta.

possible that they were not Bhutanese, most likely Nepalis or Tibetans. Otherwise, it does not make sense that lands owned by Bhutanese (the two lamas) are given to Bhutanese (Lhopa Lama).

At this point, we understand that the six villages, its people and the lands mentioned in the above record were granted in addition to earlier grants of Nagthali. What escapes us is an answer to the question of who gave Nagthali to whom although the circumstantial evidences have led us to think that it must be Prithvi Pati Shah who granted it to Lama Yangpon after the birth of his grandson Narbhupal Shah.

Now the photograph of original copper-plate inscription in Nepali of the above record has been identified in 1962. Macdonald romanized the text as follows.

āge hlopā lāmā kana, nakathaliko ghumvā kuś vrtti vakas bhayo,
dhanajiyale seva garnu ksod lāmā kana vaksyako jajmān sabhai
vakas bhayo, thumban goljung ciltimma pājungkā khet dui ghum-
vā gāum gādlang eti gāumle yā lamāle ārhāyako so kām garnu:
miti śambāt, 1798 phālgun vadi 5 oj. 7 subham//ā (Macdonald,
1973, p. 6).

Macdonald states that this copper-plate appears to be from the time of Prithvi Narayan Shah's father which was Narbhupal Shah. Padma Tshedwang also attributes this to Narbhupal Shah. However, this record ends with the six villages requiring to serve the lama. So why does Padma Tshedwang add the following sentences which is not in the original copper-plate record; "No other lama can play their bells and drums. The lands owned by Lama Tenzin Dorji who is the descendent of Lama Pema Dorji are being granted to the Lhopa Lama as has been laid down in Nagathali records." Unless there is a separate copper-plate of similar record, we cannot reconcile the two for now.

The reference to Lhopa Lama in the above record is a generic title for the Bhutanese emissaries in the Gorkha courts. From the reading of the above copper-plate record, we understand that Nagthali Gonpa was offered to a Lhopa Lama earlier. In the meantime, the ownership of lands may have changed hands to those two other lamas, who were apparently not Bhutanese or Lhopa. They were therefore, being restored to a Lhopa Lama while the six villages and two landed estates were being granted additionally. In the first instance, the Lhopa Lama must have been Lama Yangpon. The second reference, I believe is to Lama Ngawang Drugyal, who had saved Gorkha soldiers at Bumpa Dzong from being massacred by the Tibetans.

The next lama is named as Choedrag Konchog (5th). Padma Tshedwang identifies his tenure with that of Bir Bhadra Shah who died in 1697. He mistook Bir Bhadra Shah to be Narbhupal Shah's son whereas it was the other way around. But he has no other information on Choedrag Konchog. Sharma, on the other hand, attributes him with the performance of tantric rituals and prayers which leads to the birth of Narbhupal Shah's son Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1723 (Padma Tshedwang, 1995, p. 142). This lama had been reportedly appointed thrice as monk-ambassador to the Gorkha court.

He was first succeeded by Lama Choying (6th) who was present in Nepal around 1748. This means that Lama Choying was serving in the court of Prithvi Narayan Shah who was enthroned in 1743. Choedrag Konchog (7th) succeeded Lama Choying, and began his second tenure. He was then succeeded by Lama Zangkar Lyonpo (8th) whom he (9th) again succeeded. During his last and third tenure, both Padma Tshedwang and Sharma write about a beautiful dream which Raja Narbhupal Shah had one night and

shared it with Lama Choedrag Konchog. The lama interpreted it to mean that “a son would be born to his queen who would conquer and control the whole country” (Padma Tshedwang, 1995, p. 235). That was apparently a reference to the birth of Prithvi Narayan Shah.

Padma Tshedwang tells us about how Narbhupal Shah shared with Lama Choedrag Konchog his desire to take over the three kingdoms of Patan, Bhadgaon and Kathmandu and solicited the blessings and support of the Bhutanese Dharmarajas and gave assurances to provide monasteries, monastic lands and householders of those lands. The lama is said to have conducted the necessary rites and ceremonies to clear obstructions for his conquest of the three kingdoms. After the conquest, only six monasteries were given which was deemed far short of the Raja’s original commitment. Lots of historical details are missing and skipped over. It was not Narbhupal Shah but Prithvi Narayan Shah who launched the attacks on the three kingdoms much later. Victory did not happen overnight. It was a long process characterized by defeats and victories. Narbhupal Shah did try to attack Nuwakot which separated Gorkha from the kingdoms in Kathmandu valley but failed. So, we cannot be sure that he would reward the lama even with six monasteries since the battle was lost and not won as Padma Tshedwang implies.

Sharma mentions that a total of twelve *gonpas* were gifted to the Bhutanese by Shah kings after Nepal’s unification and that the two would include the Nasa Gonpa and Cho-dzong Gonpa in Mustang. This must have been gifted by Prithvi Narayan Shah, and the Drukpa Lama in the Gorkha court then must be Lama Thinley Drugyal (10th). We cannot be certain if it was Gorkharajas who gifted the *gonpas* in Mustang because Bhutanese had already

secured a good standing in Mustang by the time of Migyur Tenpa (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, p. 266) and it was not yet a part of Gorkha or Nepal. It looks likely that Prithivi Narayan Shah also sent an envoy to offer congratulatory gifts during the enthronement of 13th Desi Sherab Wangchuk in 1747. Neither the ruler nor the envoy is named except for an envoy from Belpo (Je Yonten Thaye and Je Kunga Jamtsho, 2003, p. 63).

Sharma also mentions about how the last ruler of Bhadgaon, Ranjit Malla (1722-1769) offered monastic lands at Thagu and Bhogudeo along with 50 *roponis* of land in Bhaktapur town after a Drukpa Lama cured him of certain ailments which were attributed to the doings of nagas (2002, p. 145). Padma Tshedwang had provided the following details of land granted by Ranjit Malla on the Thirteenth Day of the Sixth Month of Earth Dragon Year which corresponds to 1748. The lands were granted to Lama Choying as offerings for the curative rituals conducted for the King. It is very important to point out that this particular anecdote shows how the services of Drukpa Lamas were being sought by non-Gorkha kings as well since Lama Choying was actually serving in the Gorkha court.

25 *roponis* at Thragu; the boundary is towards the west of the King's land. Towards the east-west, 726 *thru*⁹, another 126 *thru* in the south-west, 116 *thru* towards the east-west side of Bhuga Dewa's fields, 396 *thru* towards south-north. The boundary in the west is Dochenpo. It is two *zara* in the north and east respectively, 25 *roponis* in the south marked by the presence of open fields, 6 *roponis* for house and vegetable garden, 320 *thru* of land in the east-west, 120 *thru* in the south west and the monastic lands of Thragu (Padma Tshedwang, 1995, p. 241, translation mine).

9 This is a peculiar unit of land measurement, neither Nepali nor Bhutanese.

After the conquest of the three kingdoms of Kathmandu valley, Prithvi Narayan Shah had set his eyes to move further east towards the Kingdom of Vijaypur, which had come under Bhutanese control over the years. The Kingdom had to pay an annual tribute to Bhutan. Prithvi Narayan Shah sent Lama Thinley Drugyal back to Bhutan to convey an important message to the 16th Desi Zhidar, whom he addressed as his friend. The message was to allow him to take over the Kingdom of Vijaypur although the Bhutanese had just installed Buddha Karna Rai as the King. How did this come about?

In 1770, Bhutan invaded Sikkim and Vijaypur. The invasion of Vijaypur was to punish the Limbuwan King Kamadatta Sen for having failed to pay the annual tribute. It is highly possible that the failure to pay tribute that year could have been the consequence of drought and famine that hit Bengal in 1770 when over 10 million people died. The Tarai region of Vijaypur which lies adjacent to Bengal would not have been spared by the famine as they are in the same geographic zone. That factor was perhaps unknown in Bhutan. In the military expedition, Bhutan was joined by the forces of Cooch Behar led by Dewan Deo Ram (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, p. 345). Vijaypur was incidentally a kingdom founded by a king from Cooch Behar called Sangla Ing. Hence, the dynasty was also called the Kotche dynasty. This Kingdom once included the Kingdom of Chaudandi as well, which later became a separate entity. Vijaypur was left with the Tarai districts of Morang, Sunsari and Jhapa as well as control of many eastern hill districts which were controlled by chiefs of 10 Kirata groups called Dasa Kirata. The chiefs accepted the authority of Vijaypur rulers in exchange for appointment of Kirati ministers who were known as Dewan or Roy for six months on rotational basis (Subedi, 2005, pp. 25-26 and Shaha, 1997, p. 68). The last Koch ruler was Vijaya Narayan Roy

who was replaced by Lohang Sen in 1553 (Subedi, 2005, pp. 27-28). Kamadatta Sen was killed in the course of Bhutanese invasion (Padma Tshedwang, 1995, p. 235). Singh suggests that Kamadatta Sen was murdered by Buddha Karna Rai, the prime minister who succeeded as King (1997, p. 138). Kamadatta Sen was a relative of Prithvi Narayan Shah (Stiller, 1995, p. 109 and Karma Phuntsho, 2013, p. 345). Bhutanese had sent representatives during Kamadatta's enthronement. He ascended the throne once in 1756, left the country later owing to quarrels with his minister Srikanta Rai and returned to reclaim the throne in 1763 (Acharya, 2007). Whatever the cause, the Bhutanese interests were apparently at stake that necessitated military action. Even the Panchen Lama, in a recount of conversation by George Bogle in 1775, is reported to have expressed support for Bhutan's rightful claim in Vijaypur. Bhutan had by then been forced to withdraw from Sikkim as it found itself surrounded when penetrating deeper into the latter's territory. A treaty had been signed at Rhenock hills, the place annexed by Bhutan as early as 1706.

Prithvi Narayan Shah had asked Desi Zhidar to desist from providing military support to Vijaypur, which Bhutan may have been obliged "as this country was considered a tributary annex of Bhutan" (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, p. 246). Sikkim too was obliged to protect its annual tribute from Vijaypur. Unlike Bhutan, it went into direct military confrontation with the Gorkhas but lost the war which ended with the signing of a treaty in 1774 (Mullard, 2010, p. 13). Before Gorkha's invasion of Vijaypur, Lama Thinley Drugyal was told to convey to Desi Zhidar that Prithvi Narayan Shah would offer far more than what Bhutan received as tributes from Vijaypur. Vijaypur soon fell to the invading Gorkha troops and Bhutan was offered custodial rights over Swayambhu stupa, the village of Hago, five cultivable fields tied to the temple and the

lands in eastern Nepal [Bhirshing] (Sharma, 2002, p. 145). Prithvi Narayan Shah had been involved earlier in 1751 with the renovation of Swayambhu (Ehrhard, 1989, p.6). As the Nagthali records show, he had made offerings of many other monasteries and monastic lands besides these ones subsequently.

Prithvi Narayan Shah and Desi Zhidar appeared to have struck up friendship and military cooperation. Bhutan invaded Sikkim before sending troops to Vijaypur. This may have been to possibly control access to Tibet sensing the British intent to do so. By 1770, the East India Company was seriously contemplating means to resume trade with Tibet through Nepal. Owing to the great value of trade with Tibet, Prithvi Narayan Shah wanted to control it as well by monopolizing access route both in the east and west. In order to do so, friendship with Desi Zhidar was deemed important (Shaha, 1997, pp. 36-37).

The British interest in Bhutan received a sudden boost in the aftermath of Desi Zhidar's ill-advised attack on Cooch Behar in 1772. The genesis of this lies in the return of Bhutanese ally Dewan Deo Ram to Cooch Behar after the Vijaypur military expedition and his assassination by the Koch King and his supporters. A series of events took place that ultimately resulted in Bhutan's decision to intervene for punitive action. Details of this episode have been written elsewhere (Sonam Kinga, 2004, pp. 2-7 and Karma Phuntsho, 2013, p. 346). Prithvi Narayan Shah had supposedly warned Desi Zhidar against attacking Cooch Behar (Shaha, 1997, p. 37). Bhutan lost the war as the British came in support of Cooch Behar. There are suggestions that Prithvi Narayan Shah may have provided military support to Desi Zhidar in the person of Darpa Dev and his sannyasins (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, p. 350). This is not improbable when we understand the close relationship between

the two rulers and Prithvi Narayan Shah's interest to form a trans-Himalayan federation to prevent the British from gaining access to Tibet. Not only were the Bhutanese expelled from Cooch Behar, its long-standing presence and authority also came to an end with the British replacing it as the principal authority. Desi Zhidar became a fugitive after being unseated from his position owing to a coup d'état at home while he was fighting the war.

The 17th Desi Kunga Rinchen sent an envoy to Panchen Lama to mediate between the Bhutanese and the British (Sangye Dorji, 2017, p. 260). Prithvi Narayan Shah is also said to have dispatched a large mission in 1773. Panchen Lama acknowledged Prithvi Narayan Shah's suggestion but pointed out how the war could have been avoided if Nepal had been more flexible with the trade routes through Kathmandu. The good relationship between the Gorkharaja and Panchen Lama would see the latter's brother Mipham Chödrub Gyamtso (1742-1792), the 10th Zhamarpa escape to exile in Kathmandu. He was accused by the Lhasa government of being an accomplice of the Gorkha troops which invaded Tibet in 1791 (Buddhist Digital Resource Centre, n.d.). He died in Nepal and was cremated at Swayambhu (Diamond Way Buddhism, 2010).

Panchen Lama did write to Warren Hastings to cease hostilities and be lenient with the Bhutanese. This took place after Desi Zhidar's arrival in the court of Panchen Lama by 1773. He had been on good terms with Panchen Lama having even sent gifts earlier (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, p. 352). Panchen Lama promised Warren Hastings his friendship in return for concessions to the Bhutanese. Warren Hastings seized this opportunity, returned to Bhutan those prisoners and lands captured up to the foothills and sent the first British, George Bogle to sign a trade treaty with

Bhutan in 1774. His main objective however, was to get Panchen Lama's support to open up Tibetan market for the British.

Nepal's advice to the Panchen Lama for mediation boomeranged in a strange manner as it was the Tibetan offer for mediation that led to the preliminary contacts between Tibet and the British, resulting directly in Hastings' dispatch of the Bogle mission to Tibet in 1774. The principal object of the Bogle mission was to reopen the Nepal route or open some other trader route to Tibet (Saha, 2001, p. 37).

After a few months of delay in Bhutan, George Bogle did manage to reach the seat of Panchen Lama. A friendly relationship was forged. Panchen Lama even assured George Bogle that he will raise the matter of trade route to the emperor in China. Soon after, he travelled on a very long arduous journey to Peking, where he indeed raised the matter. Emperor Qianlong responded positively although the matter came to an end as Panchen Lama soon died in Beijing (Van Schaik, 2013). Likewise, George Bogle also died soon after his return, and with this, the British hope for working towards a trade route to Tibet ended.

Prithvi Narayan Shah is also recorded as having granted *gonpas* and lands to the Drukpa Lama. This must most probably be after the annexation of Vijaypur to compensate Bhutan for revenues lost. Padma Tshedwang reproduces the copper-plate records which indicate the year as Water Dragon. That would be 1772, two years after Desi Zhidar's invasion of Vijaypur. However, Prithvi Narayan Shah captured Vijaypur on 17 July 1774 (Stiller, 1995, p. 110), which corresponds to Wood Horse Year. So, the landholdings listed in this record including those associated with the stupa of Swayambhu must have been made as part of the deal with Desi

Zhidar in 1770. The following is the record of grant made in the Water Dragon Year.

The monastic lands granted by Raja Prithvi Narayan Shah on the day and month of Water Dragon as issued on copper-plate are as follows: seven *roponis* minus one *zawa* in Upper Lakhupati, seven *roponis* and one *zawa* in Lower Lakhupati, two *roponis* at Koti, four *roponis* in upper Gyendrol, three *roponis* in lower Gyendrol, six *roponis* is Molhepi, six *roponis* in Bhusal, eight and half *roponis* in Bhakhala, five *roponis* is Tsalamu, three *roponis* in upper and lower Bhaku Khola, two *roponis* minus one *zawa* in Bhaku Khola again, one and half *roponis* in Trangla and one *roponi* in Ikhatrol, four *roponis* in Kutatsog, four *roponis* in Shingtabha, three and half *roponis* in Bhangje, four *roponis* in Trangla, four *roponis* in Pangtsog and three *roponis* minus one *roponi* in Ngoshi, one and half *roponis* in Kimtrel, 22 *roponis* at Kodreko at the base of the village of Sango, 20 *roponis* and one *zawa* at Tsati Poto and seven *roponis* at Khopo. In total, 124 *roponis* and three *zawas*¹⁰. The two *dochens* towards the east of Swayambhu, Kimtrel in the south, till the road in the west and all the Bishing of Lungchu Nagtshel Choeten from the north. Besides, the Zakhang of Jagoedphung, Dreshing at the eastern boundary, Lamchen in the south, Drezhing Yen in the west, inclusive of Drezhing irrigation channel in the north, from Hago to Zhingti Ruman, and in-between the rivulet below and Hagojung above (Padma Tshedwang, 1995, pp. 240-241, translation mine).

The list looks pretty long but in actual acreage, 124 *roponis* is just a little over sixteen acres of land. This shows that the lands granted were tiny and fragmented parcels which were spread over different areas. For now, we cannot understand why such fragmented

10 One *roponi* = 508.72 square metres. The total is thus approximately about sixteen acres of land. The unit of measurement called *zawa* is neither Nepalese nor Bhutanese. Hence, its corresponding unit in English could not be determined.

landholdings would have been granted. I have assumed that this was granted in 1772 as part of the deal Prithvi Narayan Shah had made with Desi Zhidar in 1770 before he annexed Vijaypur. The following list of lands attributed by Padma Tshedwang to Prithvi Narayan Shah again appears to be around 1774 after the annexation of Vijaypur.

In addition to the monastic resources of the paddy fields of Birshing and others for the great stupa as recorded in the copper-plate records, seven *roponis* of Bhirudho, three *roponis* at Zahtaghing, three *roponis* at Titsoro, five *roponis* at Takabhi, seven *roponis* at Topa, four *roponis* at Shri Rupotsa, four *roponis* at Chedhol, three *roponis* at Bhochedhol, 10 *roponis* at the three places of Tsho, Dol and Ko, three *roponis* at Bohdoh, one *roponi* and one *zawa* at Zalangka, two *roponis* at Shiropotso, seven *roponis* in Swayambhu, nine *roponis* at the two communities of Tsamu, two *roponis* at Jhukha, one *roponi* and one *zawa* at Kolantra, two *roponis* at Ikha Bhukha, two *roponis* at Yeka Mazhi, 50 *roponis* at Paakha, one *roponi* at Bhugkhyeko, one and half *roponis* at Bhikhu Yiti, two *roponis* at Ekhakhog, one *roponi* at Lakenthrog, seven *roponis* at Razabho, one *roponi* and three *zawas* at Maha Bhudhol, two *roponis* at Kintrolko, one and half *roponis* at Naotri, two and half *roponis* at Ngokhi, eight and half *roponis* at the two communities of Dhampah Rahi, four *roponis* at Tsagamko, two *roponis* at Loholo, one *roponi* at Kowa Pukhu, four *roponis* at Utsukho, two *roponis* at Naulog, four *roponis* at Treko (Padma Tshedwang, 1995, pp. 242-243, translation mine).

This totals a little over 170 *roponis* of land which corresponds to about twenty-one acres. In total, it looks as if Prithvi Narayan Shah had made over to Bhutan only about thirty-seven acres of monastic lands. Whether the produces from this compensated the annual revenue from Vijaypur is difficult to fathom as we are yet to come across records of the tribute paid to Bhutan. The Raja did promise to provide a far better deal than the Vijaypur revenue. The total monastic lands given may not have been deemed adequate as

there are references even during the rule of later *desis* in Bhutan about unresolved issues concerning Vijaypur.

Padma Tshedwang takes us through the next line of lamas in the courts of unified Nepal now. During the short reign of Prithvi Narayan Shah's son Pratap Singh Shah, there were two successive lamas: Tsepa Lhundrup (11th) and Thinley Drugyal (12th). Pratap Singh died in 1777 when Thinley Drugyal was still there at court. This must have been his second assignment as we have seen Thinley Drugyal serving in the court of Prithvi Narayan Shah earlier. At the time of Pratap Singh's death, his son Rana Bahadur Shah was only two years old. In an intriguing plot for succession, the queen mother Rajendra Rajya Laxmi Devi prevailed ultimately over her brother-in-law Bahadur Shah (not to be confused with the young Raja Rana Bahadur Shah) to serve as the regent for the Raja (Stiller, 1995, pp. 127-141). At the behest of the queen mother, Lama Thinley Drugyal is said to have performed rites and ceremonies to remove obstructions for the infant King. She then granted the cultivable lands in Tsherae and Shindura (Padma, Tshedwang, 1995, p. 236).

The next lama is identified as Tenzin Drugyal (13th). During his tenure, the 18th Desi Gongsa Jigme Senge (1776-1789) had decided to send troops into Sikkim, which was under Bhutan's administrative jurisdiction. The Sikkimese had revolted against the Bhutanese and sought Tibetan protection. The Tibetan government dissuaded the Bhutanese from sending troops into Sikkim by assuring that Bhutan would have jurisdiction over Sikkim. By then, the queen mother of Nepal had passed away in 1785 and the young Raja was only 10 years old. Her brother-in-law and the second son of Prithvi Narayan Shah, Bahadur Shah became the regent or *mukhtiyar* (Stiller, 1995, p. 143). He was supposedly

bent on annexing Sikkim. Lama Tenzin Drugyal was asked to convey to the Bhutanese authorities not to support Sikkim and pledged through a written deed that the areas of Thongmon and Kalari would be ceded to Bhutan (Padma Tshedwang, 1995, p. 379).

The Gorkhas attacked Sikkim in 1788. It was in response to Tibet opening a trade route through Chumbi valley to Sikkim in 1784. The 1775 treaty with Tibet had required the trade be conducted only through routes in Nepal. As mentioned earlier, this was a very lucrative trade and Nepal wanted to monopolize it by controlling all the passes. The diversion of the trade impacted Nepal through loss of taxes and tariffs (Mullard, 2010, p. 15). The capital Rabdentse was captured while Chogyal Tenzin Namgyal and his family barely managed to escape. Bhutan did not send military support but provided financial help and food supplies to the Chogyal, who was sheltered near Bhutanese border. White writes that the Bhutanese sent forces to assist Sikkim (1999, p. 261). However, the Bhutanese sources point out that Bhutan had provided 24,000 measures (*drey*, '*dres*) of grains, 1,200 silver coins, tea and other goods as token of help to the ministers and monks after the Chogyal escaped but provided no military support. Mullard however, points out that the Sikkimese counter-attack to retake Rabdentse involved mostly Bhutanese forces led by the Sikkimese general Barfungpa Chogthub (2010, p. 15). Nonetheless, the Sikkimese thought that the Bhutanese were responsible for provoking the conflict as their lands were given to Bhutan by the Gorkhas after the war (Padma Tshedwang, 1995, p. 379). When the Bhutanese supposedly withdrew, the Sikkimese were believed to have been subjected to Gorkha rule although there was resistance put up by the Lepchas (Singh, 1997, pp. 162-163). The story of Bhutan's military support to Nepal is unlikely. Nepal provided

those two places three years later but subsequently took back Thongmon after about twelve years. It compensated Bhutan with Lamagang, Dradragang and Thangzhing (Padma Tshedwang, 1995, p. 379).

The compensation for Thongmon appears to be far more than those three places as captured in the record below.

When the Dharmaraja and Gorkharaja were so close to each other like water and milk, the token of submission of request for Bhutan not to support the Sikkimese king has been Thongmon. In place of it, the boundaries of the villages and fields offered are thus: From the banks of Teesta Ganga towards the north, southwards from Melung Khola river, from the border of the region of Bhelchi eastward towards Aantar Khola. All the communities of Kalari within these boundaries are in place of Thongmon. From the boundary of Thangzhing to Shindhura Khola which were given earlier as Birta to Bhandari Brahman, to the hillock between Andha Thari Khola and Sindhura. Then eastward from the straight trail, southward from Shindhura Khola and Dampha Khola, northwards from the main route that takes a detour from Shindhura. Within these boundaries are the region of Lamagang, Dradragang and Matari. There are fields inside this area which had been seized from 60 Nepali Brahmans. Besides, there are lands seized from 40 Nepalese, 20 fields cultivated by Amtsoni Dhanvar Vallabha, 120 fields cultivated by 14 families of Tsong Tiliikha. The boundary is westward from Paketra Khola, eastward from Reygar Muraritra, and southward from the fields of Amtsoni Dhanvar, northwards from the main route at Kumul River. Within these boundaries are the five huge lands and three villages. All these have been committed to Birta and offered to the Bhutanese Dharmaraja (Padma Tshedwang, 1995, pp. 243-244, translation mine).

In the meantime, there is one last record of land grants to Bhutanese as a substitute sought for infertile possession. It is a record confirming ownership of fields at Khyinchu Dromo. There is no mention of who granted them.

Since the Lhopa Lama had earlier deemed the fields at Khyin Chaka to be of questionable fertility, three fields as well as all the region of Kalari have been offered to Dharmaraja by registering through *birta*. No one has the right to question as they have already been granted. The fields of Khyinchu Dromo Chako possessed by Lokhonutar Krishna Mani Rani measuring 1400 [*roponis?*], 1200 [*roponis*] of fields cultivated by Dhaley Bhebasha, 2000 [*roponis*] of lands cultivated by Angha Buzhing and Sasang Khan Guru have all been granted to Lhopa Lama. The land substitute for Angaphu have been given from Shindali measuring 5600 [*roponis*] (Padma Tshewang, 1995, p. 242, translation mine).

Since Padma Tshedwang does not mention the unit of measurement of landholdings and fields, I have assumed it to be in *roponis* as were the earlier cases.

Soon after the Gorkha invasion of Sikkim, they invaded Tibet in 1788. The Drukpa Lama then was Tshampa Kukye (14th) or the reincarnation of a certain Lama Tshampa. According to Sangye Dorji, he had been appointed in 1786 by Gongsa Jigme Senge (2017, p. 271). Before his appointment he served as the Lama of Shar Rithang in Wangdue Phodrang. During his tenure as the *desi*, Gongsa Jigme Senge is said to have appointed two lamas to the court of Gorkhas. The one who preceded Tshampa Kukye was the elder brother of the 18th Je Khenpo Jamyang Gyaltsen who served till his appointment as the Lama of Do Khachu Goenpa in Chukha. Although Sangye Dorji does not provide their names, it appears that Lama Tenzin Drugyal was the predecessor of Tshampa Kukye.

Tshampa Kukye is said to have intervened to save the lives of leaders of the Tibetan region of Kyirong. Padma Tshedwang writes that this region had surrendered earlier to the Nepalese but some revolted and killed many Gorkha soldiers. So the leaders were fated to be slaughtered. The Lama's intervention to save their lives is said to have earned their commitment to pay taxes to Bhutan. These men are said to have started the tradition of sending annual gifts to Bhutan as tokens of gratitude (Karma Phuntsho, 2013, p. 369). It must be recalled that another lama called Ngawang Drugyal had come across Gorkha soldiers about to be massacred by the Tibetans some decades earlier around the same place.

The Gorkhas invaded Tibet for the second time in 1791. The ruler Rana Bahadur Shah was only 16 years old. The reasons for the invasion, connected to the outcomes of the 1788 invasion, are discussed elsewhere (Stiller, 1995, pp. 160-168). Padma Tshedwang writes how the Bhutanese monk-ambassador was again summoned to the Gorkha court to have him communicate to the Bhutanese authority not to extend any support to the Tibetans. A letter was sent and a response received which exhorted the Gorkhas to desist from invading the country which Bhutan deemed as the land of Buddha Dharma. It warned the Gorkhas that an invasion of Tibet could ultimately lead to Chinese occupation of Nepal. It said that Nepal was then a sovereign country ruled by pre-destined kings. Why to risk an occupation! The advice was ignored and the invasion launched. As the Bhutanese warned, the Chinese counter-attacked and entered Nepal (Padma Tshedwang, 1995, pp. 237-238).

The Chinese attack on Nepal took place around Kyirong in June 1792. Padma Tshedwang writes how the Gorkhas had to leave for "another country" in the face of Chinese attack. This may be an

exaggeration. Although the Chinese initial attack was massive and destructive, the Gorkhas did put up a counter-attack at Gerku, Trishul Bazar and particularly at Dudhiya Thumka. The outcome was a stalemate although the Gorkhas gave in to all Chinese demands including the sending of a tribute mission to Peking every five years (Stiller, 1995, pp. 173-175).

There is no mention in Nepali sources about the involvement of Bhutanese in the negotiations that took place to end the conflict. Padma Tshedwang however, writes that Bhutan sent Lama Thinley Drugyal (15th) and Lama Sherub Drago Choeje, who was the personal secretary of the Dharmaraja, to mediate in the conflict. This Lama had already left Gorkha earlier but may have been dispatched by the Bhutanese government as a mediator owing to his connection with Rana Bahadur Shah. In doing so, he had succeeded Lama Tshampa Kukye at Gorkha court. There are precedences of Bhutanese involvement as mediators in Ladakh and Tibet especially after 1740s. Hence it is not unlikely that Bhutan may have sent the two lamas to mediate in the Nepal-China conflict.

Lama Thinley Drugyal was succeeded by Lama Saka (16th). Raja Girvan Yuddha Bikram Shah (1799-1816) had asked him to communicate that the Bhutanese must allow Gorkha soldiers access through Bhutanese territory to invade Assam. Druk Namgyal (reign: 1796-1803), the 22nd Desi then denied access recalling how the Gorkhas did not heed the advice against invading Tibet in 1792. This was a major diplomatic fallout as it led to the revocation of *birtas* or cancellation of land grants.

The Bhutanese had subsequently sent Lama Dawa Tashi (17th) to resolve unsettled matters following Desi Zhidar's invasion of

Vijaypur. We do not know what the unsettled matters were. Perhaps it was that Prithvi Narayan Shah's grant of lands fell far short of what was promised to Desi Zhidar. While Padma Tshedwang writes that nothing came of it (1995, p. 238), Sharma writes that Raja Girvan Yuddha Bikram Shah gave assurances in 1801 about the restoration of the lands (2002, p. 147). The ruler who deputed Lama Tashi Dawa was the 26th Desi Chodrag (reign: 1807-1808).

During the reign of Raja Girvan Yuddha Bikram Shah, two more lamas were appointed successively: Lama Ngawang Norbu (18th) and Lama Sangye Norbu (19th). This gives us an idea that the four lamas starting with Lama Saka followed by Lama Tashi Dawa and the latter two lamas all served during this Raja's reign. Lama Sangye Norbu is credited to have renovated Swayambhu which reportedly took five long years. It was this Lama's record which Padma Tshedwang used as the primary source for his chapter on Bhutan-Nepal relations. The renovation of Swayambhu began on the Fourth Day of the Fifth Month of Water Bird Year corresponding to 1813. Sangye Dorji also mentions that Lama Sangye Norbu was sent in 1813 by the 28th Desi Yeshe Gyaltsen (reign: 1809-1811), who was the Speech Reincarnation of Zhabdrung Rinpoche (2017, p. 334). Lama Sangye Norbu completed the renovation works and returned home during the tenure of the 31st Desi Sonam Drugyal (reign: 1812-1817). Further research needs to be done to corroborate this with the fact that the 10th Zhamarpa is also said to have just renovated the stupa during his stay in Kathmandu (Stiller, 1995, pp. 162-163). Perhaps, it may be that Lama Sangye Norbu and Zhamarpa were working for the same project at the same time.

Padma Tshedwang then lists the next lines of lamas. It appears that nothing of significance had happened during their tenures

although the appointments continued to be made. The lamas he lists after Lama Sangye Norbu are Lama Sonam Gyatsho (20th) who served during the reign of Raja Rajendra Bikram Shah (1816-1847). He was followed by Lama Sherub Chogden (21st), Lama Palden Wangpo (22nd), Lama Jinpa Tharchin (23rd), Kyilkhor Lopon Jinpa (24th) and Lama Kargyud Wangchuk (25th).

After his tenure in Nepal, Lama Kargyud Wangchuck was appointed to administer Bhutan's eight exclaves in Mount Kailash region of Tibet. These eight exclaves were offered by Ladhaki King Senge Namgyal to Zhabdrung Rinpoche. The context in which this was offered was the prolonged illness of King Senge Namgyal's daughter. Without finding any cure, it is said that he dispatched a ministerial envoy to Zhabdrung Rinpoche who had become very renowned by then. Zhabdrung Rinpoche sent some sacred pills and medicines along with a scripture. The daughter was reportedly cured, and in gratitude he offered the exclaves as well as households associated with the exclaves mentioned above (Tsang Khenchen, 2022, p. 368). It appears that the offerings were made after Zhabdrung Rinpoche's arrival in Bhutan. In order to administer the exclaves, Bhutan started the tradition of appointing senior official titled Gangri Dorzin (*Gang-ri rdo-'dzin*) whose position was equal in rank to *dzongpons* and *chilas (spyi-bla)*¹¹, members of the Zhabdrung-era cabinet (Tsang Khenchen, 2022, pp. 367-368]. He served both as lama and lord. This highlights the importance accorded to the exclaves. Bray (2012, pp. 13-15) quotes British sources which refer to the official as Dasho (*drag-shos*) and to the fact that the exclave administration was independent of Lhasa

11 The three regional governors of Paro, Trongsa and Dagana were initially called *chila* or chief lama since they were monks appointed from the Central Monastic Body. Later, as lay officials without monastic background were appointed, the title changed to *penlop (dpon-slob)*.

authorities. In the early 1900s, Lhasa asserted itself to raise salt taxes which contested Bhutan's sovereignty over the exclaves. It also began to register residents in the area for the purpose of taxation. The first two kings of Bhutan had made representation of the case through the British. The matter prolonged and remained unresolved. In the first year of the establishment of the National Assembly of Bhutan in 1953, there was a discussion and resolution passed concerning these exclaves. It reads:

Appointment of Teo Gangri Lam or Dzungpon

It was learnt that the territorial of Toe Gangri (Mount Kailas) was initially gifted to Bhutan since the reign of King Jamyang Tenzin and his son Singye Namgay of Ladag with all the ecclesiastical properties. And accordingly, the Gangri Lam was appointed periodically from Bhutan to administer Toe Gangri. Since some years ago the Administrative power for the Administration of Toe Gangri was granted to the Trade Agent (Boidel) of Bhutan in Lhasa (Tibet) by the Royal Government.

As such, Toe Gangri being of Bhutan's colony, the Assembly has suggested that the appointment of Gangri Lam or Dzungpon would have to be reconsidered for proper administration of the Toe Gangri, because of the possible benefits that may accrue from it in future (NAS, 1999, pp. 11-12).

After the Chinese forces took over the exclaves in 1959, there were no further discussions in the National Assembly. The requests made by the Bhutanese government to discuss them were not accommodated by the Chinese. In the discussions over boundary disputes with China which began in 1984, the Bhutanese have not made representations over the exclaves so far, perhaps, pending final resolution of the boundary disputes between the two countries.

Lama Kargyud Wangchuck's public service did not end with his appointment to Mount Kailash region. After his return, he was appointed as the 50th Desi in 1864. However, his tenure was short-lived as he passed away within less than a year of his appointment. The most significant development during his tenure was the unwelcome and ill-fated British mission to Bhutan led by Ashley Eden in 1864. The fallout of this mission's failure led to the outbreak of the Duar War.

The next and the last envoy was Lama Gangtengpa (26th). When he was in Kathmandu, another problem arose between Nepal and Tibet. This resulted in Nepal's third invasion of Tibet in 1856. Raja Surendra Bikram Shah was the King of Nepal then. Kalyon Shatra, the Tibetan regent sought the friendship of the Bhutanese authority in the person of Sonam Dendup who was the chamberlain to the Dharma Raja. The Nepalese suspected Bhutanese support for the Tibetans and took over the administration of Swayambhu and associated landed properties.

5. The Last Missions

In response, Bhutan fielded at least two missions to clarify the misunderstanding of the Gorkharaja and discuss the return of the stupa as well as the landholdings. The first was led by a former Drabi Lopen¹² around 1872/1873. The Bhutanese mediation team had reached Nepal-Tibet border to hold talks with Jagat Shamsher,

12 He is one of the four *lopens* (*slob-dpon bzhi*), who are immediately below the *je khenpo*. The other three are Dorje Lopen, Yangbi Lopen and Tshenyi Lopen. The position of a fifth one, Tsugla Lopen was created in 2005 as part of reforms in the Central Monastic Body. The titles of these three positions have also been changed to correspond to the nature of responsibilities entrusted to each of them. The new titles are Leytshog Lopen, Tshokey Lopen and Yonten Lopen for Yangbi, Drabi and Tshenyi *lopens* respectively.

a brother of the powerful Prime Minister of Nepal Jung Bahadur Rana (Laluk, 2017). Jung Bahadur Rana had forced Raja Rajendra Bikram Shah to abdicate and installed Raja Surendra Bikram Shah on the throne. He was rather a powerless Raja, and the Bhutanese had to deal with the new power in Kathmandu. Sharma writes that the lamas in Nepal had also petitioned the Commander-in-Chief Krishna Bahadur Rana to restore villages of Nagthali, Simbhu, Hakugaun, Kallyari and Kimdol. In response to the petition, “[K]ing Surendra Vikram Shah issued a Lal Mohar in 1862 AD., acceding to the request with retroactive effect, i.e., since 1855 itself” (Sharma, 2002, p. 147). Lal Mohar is an edict bearing a red royal seal.

If what Sharma writes is correct, Jung Bahadur Rana had not only taken over the Swayambhu stupa and its landed property but other lands gifted earlier to the Bhutanese. The Lal Mohar above does not mention anything about Swayambhu. The second mission was fielded around 1872/1873 immediately after the first one. One wonders why the Bhutanese took so long to pursue the matter over Swayambhu. Bhutan was too occupied with internal feuds during those years, and also had to fight the British in the Duar War of 1864, which resulted in British seizure and annexation of the eighteen Duars in Assam and Bengal through the Treaty of Sinchula signed in 1865. Bhutan took another seven years before the mission was fielded to Nepal. This was because the internal political situation was veering off to even worse a course. Peace would not be established till 1885 (Sonam Kinga, 2009, pp. 149-153). It is rather amazing that efforts were made to discuss with Nepal about restoring its landed properties even during those trying times.

I had access to five original hand-written documents from this era maintained in the archives of His Majesty's Secretariat. The first document (Annexure 1) is a letter sent around 1872/1873 in the Water Monkey Year by the 53rd Desi Jigme Namgyel (reign: 1870-1873) to the fort governors of Phari, Gampa, Chilung, Shelkar, Dingri, Dzongkha and Kyirong which fall under Tibetan jurisdiction. It was sent a little before the first mission to Nepal, led by Drabi Lopen, was fielded. This short letter reminded the fort-governors to extend assistance to the Bhutanese mission on their journey to Nepal and their return to Bhutan. Since the journey had to take place through their territorial jurisdiction, it solicited assistance in terms of manpower, transport like horses and boats as well as other resources like fodder and fuelwood. The letter begins by referring to such terms of support agreed to in a treaty signed by the Bhutanese with the Tibetan government. We do not know about this treaty, the nature of agreement as well as the signatories but the fact that the letter refers to it and states with authority the expectation for assistance do give reasons to believe in the existence of such a treaty. It seems very likely that such an understanding must have been arrived as a consequence to the saving of lives of Tibetan leaders of Kyirong region by the Drukpa Lama Tshampa Kukye when they were about to be slaughtered as mentioned above. However, Lhasa delayed the response (see Annexure 2). When it came, it was negative. So, we can only guess that this letter to the fort-governors was sent even before the response from Lhasa came. From contents of Annexure 3, we find that the mission was sent despite the fact that the response from Lhasa had not been received yet. Perhaps, this may account for the mission not achieving its objective since another mission was soon dispatched in the same year. This mission was led by Zimpon Drep Dorji Phuntsho from Phangyul in Wangdue Phodrang. The success appears limited as it resulted in only partial restoration of custodial

rights over some landholdings as highlighted in the edict (Annexure 3).

This edict has two red circular seals on the top: one large and one small. The larger one has the imprint “Druk” in the centre but it is definitely not Nga Chudruma, the famous seal of Zhabdrung Rinpoche.¹³ It must be the seal of the head of state referred to as Lam Kuzhu, another Bhutanese reference to the Dharmaraja. The second smaller red seal has no letters or labels, only a floral pattern. It was used for official correspondences as indicated in the last line of Annexure 4. At the end of this document are seven seals. The first two red seals belonged to the *desi* and the Central Monastic Body respectively. The next dark seal cannot be identified but the subsequent four are those of the *dzongpons* of Punakha, Wangdue Phodrang, Thimphu and that of the Zhung Dronyer. Therefore, this is indeed a very important document signed by the then cabinet and the monastic community. As is made clear in Annexure 4, the issuance of this edict was initiated by Desi Jigme Namgyel in his last year in office.

The edict begins with the sentence, “Concerning the matter of former Zimpon Dorji Phuntsho.” We can infer that he had submitted a petition to the State earlier and that this edict was being issued after review of his petition. It highlights that the stupa of Swayambhu in Nepal, the monastic lands as well as the people who belonged to Bhutan were seized by the Gorkha ruler due to a

13 Nga Chudruma is a sixteen-line victory poem composed by Zhabdrung Rinpoche in 1618 after overcoming the first invasion by Tsang Desi Phuntsho Namgyal. Owing to its style of eight couplets, with each couplet beginning and ending with the letter “I,” it has been named as “The Sixteen I s.” The poem had been carved on square wooden block, and its imprints had been used as the seal of the Monastic State.

misunderstanding following the recent conflict between Gorkha and Tibet. It notes that a mission was sent earlier led by former Drabi Lopen to discuss the matter. Following that mission, Dorji Phuntsho was then sent in the Water Monkey Year to pursue the matter. It points out that not all the lands were returned as the Gorkha ruler Jung Bahadur was very powerful. However, Dorji Phuntsho committed time and resources to do restoration works in one of the inner temples of Swayambhu known as Marmey Lhakhang. Besides, the land at Dradragang with nine tax payers was returned to Bhutan. Again, a landholding which yielded about 403 *pathis* of paddy annually had been acquired. He was also able to clear the misunderstanding between Gorkha and Bhutan and then returned home. As a token of appreciation to Dorji Phuntsho, the State exempted him from various tax obligations and specified unequivocally that this would remain valid in perpetuity and must be honoured by the State, the district officials as well as ordinary people who must not utter even a word against the provisions of this edict.

What we gather from this important edict are the facts that i) Jung Bahadur Rana did suspect Bhutanese involvement on the Tibetan side, ii) his seizure, therefore, of Swayambhu and its landed estates, iii) deployment of two missions from Bhutan to discuss the matter, iv) partial restoration of Bhutanese ownership of the stupa complex and some lands as well, and v) clearing the misunderstanding that Jung Bahadur Rana had about Bhutanese involvement. What we also understand is that the mission to resolve misunderstanding as well as reacquire the stupa and its landed estates took place seventeen years after the end of the Tibet-Nepal war of 1855-1856. The other two related edicts, Annexure 4 and Annexure 5, were issued in 1881 and 1901 respectively by Trongsa Penlop Ugyen Wangchuck. Dorji Phuntsho's kinsmen and descendants were

being forced to pay taxes by the officials of Wangdue Phodrang and also harassed by the village people. One edict makes mention of a lady called Kunzang Drolma while the other one mentions Kuenley Phurb and her only son. Both these edicts recall Dorji Phuntsho's service to the country during that mission to Nepal and the state's commitment thereafter to exempt in perpetuity various taxes and levies. They remind the officials as well the community members very firmly to honour the letter and spirit of the edicts.

The mission of Zimpon Drep Dorji Phuntsho to Nepal did not end with the negotiations over Swayambhu stupa. He was sent back soon along with a certain Niniram Singh. There is no information about who Niniram Singh was but Sharma thinks he was a vakil of Nepal or envoy to Bhutan assigned by Jung Bahadur Rana and that such tradition of appointing vakils from Gorkha courts existed (Sharma, 2002, p. 155). The Bhutanese historical records do not mention anything about such envoys from Nepal. Dorji Phuntsho and Niniram Singh had already left Bhutan with a letter from the Dharmaraja to the Gorkharaja. But the Dharmaraja immediately sent another letter to the two of them in order to reinforce the message to the Gorkharaja conveyed in the letter which they were carrying. This letter is dated the Seventh Day of the Sixth Month of Water Monkey Year (1872/1873). It then appears that the first mission of Dorji Phuntsho was earlier in the same year. He must have been chosen perhaps immediately after for the next mission owing to his contact and familiarity with the Gorkha court.

The Dharmaraja's letter to them (see Annexure 2) basically had two important messages to be conveyed to the Gorkharaja. One, the Bhutanese State grants permission to him to hunt and capture elephants in Bhutanese territory. The Gorkharaja referred here is

not the King but Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana (1817-1877). However, it regrets the inability to extend support in terms of manpower and food supplies which were also requested. The letter instructs the two emissaries to convey that after the British took over the Duars, there are no Bhutanese subjects any longer in the foothills except for a few wandering forest dwellers. This is an important evidence of the absence of settlements in southern foothills even by 1872/1873. The letter states that it would take anywhere from nine to thirteen days to send Bhutanese from the hinterland to the foothills but that it would be difficult as people dread the hot climate of the foothills. We do not know if this request to hunt elephants were part of Jung Bahadru Rana's hobby since he was a famed hunter. It may be possible that this may have been part of raising the herd size for eventual hunting expedition in the Tarai region in 1876 which saw Prince Albert Edward hunt alongside Jung Bahadur Rana. Thereafter, shikar or hunting expedition became part of Nepal's diplomacy (Raj Mulmi, 2017).

Two, the letter highlights how the Tibetans were preventing travel for Bhutanese and Gorkha subjects through their territories located in between the two neighbours. The Tibetans invoked the command of the Chinese emperor in restricting travels, let alone provide support like riding and pack horses. The Dharmaraja disparages the Tibetan's attitude and behaviour.

Far more important than the content of the letter is its tone which is set by the powerful persona of Jung Bahadur Rana and his suspicion of Bhutan which resulted in Nepal's takeover of Swayambhu and its landed estates. Bhutan had just reacquired a temple within the stupa's larger complex and some monastic landholdings. Relations had been repaired to some extent. It did not want any further fallout and was very concerned that the

Gorkharaja must be given no room to misunderstand Bhutan in anyway. His request to hunt elephants in Bhutan and also the request for food supplies and other resources in the same year thus became a diplomatic tightrope for Bhutan. The Bhutanese approval for hunting elephants but denial for food supplies and other material resources citing various reasons were a balanced response. The bottom line was that no further misunderstanding must arise. The risk was large as the Gorkharaja had no knowledge of Bhutan and could assume it to be like Kathmandu. Thus, the two emissaries were dispatched with the letter to the Gorkharaja. But somehow, the Dharmaraja must have felt that the emissaries must be reminded again to report verbally and explain clearly the content of the letter as well as a few other matters which were not included in it. The disparaging remarks for the Tibetans must have been a tactful inclusion to convince the Gorkharaja that Bhutan sees its interest are aligned with the Gorkhas, not the Tibetans. The letter also provides explanation as to why Nga Chudruma seal was not used in official correspondences as the Gorkhas had complained that an earlier correspondence was affixed with the seal of Trongsa Penlop and not with that of Nga Chudruma.

We do not know if the elephant hunting took place or not. Jung Bahadur Rana passed away five years later in 1877. An important question is about the prevalence of elephants in Bhutan. The Asian elephants were predominant in the southern region particularly in present-day Gelephu area which was known as Hatisar (Tandin Wangdi, 2022). The letter to Niniram Singh and Dorji Phuntsho also refers to Hatisar. Hence, the permission for hunting elephants must have been sought in this area.

The fissures in Bhutan-Nepal relations, according to Singh (1997, pp. 176-177), may have occurred much earlier than the suspected

involvement of Bhutan with Tibet during Nepal's invasion of 1855. Singh suggests that Nepal may have harboured ambitions to invade Bhutan as well by then. He discusses a mission from Nepal to Bhutan around 1839 sent via Sikkim. The British in India learnt of the mission which constituted of two native officers and twenty sepoy. The objective, as the British saw it was to organize a league of Himalayan states against the British. This report suggests that the mission may have made into Bhutanese frontiers. On their return, they were stopped at the frontier. They reportedly told the officers about Nepal's interest in providing troops or weapons to support the *desi* who was facing an insurrection in Bhutan. The officers had instructions to convey the *desi's* need for canons. If the Nepalese cannot supply them, artifices to cast and make them in Bhutan were the next option. This was underwritten by the need to cultivate Bhutanese cooperation in forming a league against the British. Nepal had proposed another mission to supply some artillery if Tibet permitted travel through its territory because the route through Sikkim was perceived to be impossible for political reasons. To entice Tibetan support, Nepal had also offered its troops to suppress an insurrection. The real motive however, appears to have been a conquest of Bhutan as well as Sikkim based on the report of the British Resident in Kathmandu. The ruler in 1839 was the 37th Desi Dorji Norbu (reign: 1838-1848). However, Bhutanese historians do not mention anything about the arrival of a Nepali mission at the frontier around that time.

As such, this information needs to be investigated further. It looks likely that the friendly relations between the Bhutanese and Gorkhas may have experienced some frictions over the years beginning with the food and monetary support to Sikkim in the aftermath of Nepal's invasion of Tibet in 1788, Bhutanese advice for Gorkhas not to invade in 1791, Gorkhas perception that

Bhutanese sided with Tibetans, Gorkhas' partial fulfilment of commitments to Bhutan in the aftermath of the invasion of Vijaypur and Bhutanese denial of access through its territory for Gorkhas to invade Assam. This argument cannot be taken at face value for now but they do provide room for further enquiry.

After the tenure of Lama Gangtengpa, Padma Tshedwang ends his narrative of Bhutan-Nepal relations. No other Bhutanese sources mention the next group of lamas in Nepal. For all purposes, he certainly seems to be the last official envoy from Bhutan. Starting with Damchoe Pekar and ending with Lama Gangtenpa, the twenty-two monk-ambassadors from the court of Dharmarajas to Gorkharajas started in 1670 and ended around 1855, which is an engagement for one hundred and eighty-five years!

The next lama we hear of is Drukpa Rinpoche Sherub Dorji from Themnangbi, Mongar. He was a member of Bhutan's Central Monastic Body. But his presence and activities do not appear to be as an official envoy to the court of Nepal but as royal envoy for a spiritual project.

In 1917, King Ugyen Wangchuck (1862-1926) made an offering of £ 40,000 to Shakya Shri (1853-1919), who was raising funds for renovating Swayambhu (Sonam Kinga, 2019, pp. 1-3). This was both a royal patronage for a meritorious dharmic activity as well as a diplomatic move to re-centre the symbolism of this stupa in Bhutan-Nepal relations. The renovation works were taking place approximately a hundred years after those undertaken by Lama Sangye Norbu.

Shakya Shri was a highly learned yogi and a master of both Mahamudra and Dzogchen traditions. He felt the need to renovate

the three stupas of Boudha, Swayambhu and Namu Buddha for the sake of the Dharma. He began raising funds with donations from the Tibetan government, patrons in Lhasa and other regions and the offerings made by his devotees. Shakya Shri did not go to Nepal but instead sent his two sons with a group of people with the funds.

It was then that King Ugyen Wangchuck sent an envoy to grant royal donations. Kathog Situ Chokyi Gyatsho notes that the King “opened wide the door of a sky treasure by sending Geshe Sherub Dorje to Shakya Shri with an offering of forty thousand pounds” (2011, p. 153). His contribution eventually totalled £ 75,000, and appears to have been a major part of the funds mobilized.

The project began with the renovation of Swayambhu on the Thirteenth Day of the Twelfth Month of 1917 and concluded with a consecration ceremony on the Fifteenth Day of the Third Month of 1918. Upon their return to Tibet, Shakya Shri’s sons and others informed him about the dilapidated conditions of other two stupas: Boudha and Namu Buddha. Hence, he made it known to them that renovating these two other stupas was one of his last wishes for the sake of Buddha Dharma and sentient beings.

After his demise in 1919, his sons, disciples and devotees undertook to fulfil his wishes. As before, they began to raise funds from Tibet, and also from Sikkim, Kalimpong, Darjeeling and nearby places. Once again, King Ugyen Wangchuck donated £ 13,700.¹⁴ He

14 Holmes-Tagchungdarpa (2014) also refers to donation made by Ugyen Wangchuck. But she is not sure about the currency. She writes in a footnote (p.131) that “[i]t is difficult to know what type of currency the text mentions, as it only uses the term ‘sgor,’ which is literally currency. However, other sources from this time suggest that Indian and Chinese rupees were widely in circulation throughout

invited the people of Bhutan to contribute to the funds. The Bhutanese disciples of Shakyas Shri also went to their native villages and raised £ 1,174. A family of a deceased government official is said to have made a generous donation of £ 2,000 (Kathog Situ Chokyi Gyatsho, 2011, p. 181). Holmes-Tagchungdarpa (2014) refers to him as a *zimpon*. Although she does not identify him, we can be certain that it was Zimpon Drep Dorji Phuntsho from Phangyul. Renovation works first began for Boudha in 1920 followed by Namu Buddha. In these latter renovation projects, a notable Bhutanese involved was Lama Sonam Zangpo (1888-1982) who was one of Shakyas Shri's main disciples. Holmes-Tagchungdarpa notes that the Newari and Bhutanese were crucial agents involved in the renovation works (2014, p. 114).

Drukpa Rinpoche Sherub Dorji had established many monastic centres in Nepal such as that of Mu Gompa (Dechen Lhundrup) and Rachen Gompa (Jangchup Choeling Nunnery) at Tsum in Gorkha, Bagam Gompa (Tashi Gyatsho) in Sindhu Palchok, Bigu Gompa (Tashi Chimi Gyatsho nunnery) at Dolakha and the Kyirong Thuje Chhenpo nunnery. He passed away in 1950s at Phukha, Dolakha (Ahrens, 2014). After Drukpa Rinpoche, his reincarnation, known today as Ngawang Khenrab Dorji, was born.

He was succeeded by his nephew who became well-known in Nepal as Lupon Tshochu Rinpoche. He was born in 1918 in Nobgang, Punakha, western Bhutan. An important aspect of his family background is that he was related to the Queen Mothers of Bhutan, who are also from Nobgang. Their maternal grandfather, Lupon Duba, was from Themnangbi in Mongar. He too was a close follower of Drukpa Rinpoche (Rinzin Wangchuk, 2003).

Tibet and the Himalayas, though there was also Tibetan currency.”

After enrolling in the Central Monastic Body at the age of seven years, he moved to Nepal to study under the spiritual guidance of Drukpa Rinpoche Sherub Dorji, who sent him back in 1935 to study at Tharpaling monastery in Bumthang. He returned in 1943 after studying with a great master called Geshe Pema Tshering.

Lopon Tshechu took over the stewardship of monastic establishments of his uncle and became very successful in promoting Buddhism in Nepal. For his contributions, he was honoured by the late King of Nepal Birendra Bir Bikram Shah in 1973 by conferring the Gorkha Dagchim Bahu. He also became the Chairman of Dharmodaya Sabha, a council for the promotion of Buddhist culture and heritage. His appointment broke a long tradition of that position being held by monks of Hinayana tradition. In 1997, he began the construction of his principal monastic centre called Sangye Choling at Gidda Kuthi hill of Kimdol, Swayambhu. King Birendra honoured him and the monastery by attending the inaugural ceremony. That year, twenty-one monks from the Central Monastic Body were taken to Sangye Choling. He passed away in 2003. Meanwhile, his reincarnation had been discovered in Bhutan and enthroned at a ceremony at Sangye Choling. Today, he undergoes both modern and monastic education in Bhutan and Nepal under the tutelage of his former student, Lama Nono.

Table 1: List of Bhutanese Monk-ambassadors

Sl. No	Names of monk-ambassadors	Tenure
1	Lama Damchoe Pekar	1st
2	Lama Yangpon	2nd
3	Lama Bumthangpa Choeje	3rd
4	Lama Drogen Ngawang Drugyal	4th

MISSIONS FROM DHARMARAJAS TO GORKHARAJAS

5	Lama Choedrag Konchog	5th, 7th and 9th
6	Lama Choying	6th
7	Lama Zangkar Lyonpo	8th
8	Lama Thinley Drugyal	10th, 12th and 15th
9	Lama Tsepa Lhundrup	11th
10	Lama Tenzin Drugyal	13th
11	Lama Tshampa Kukye	14th
12	Lama Saka	16th
13	Lama Dawa Tashi	17th
14	Lama Ngawang Norbu	18th
15	Lama Sangye Norbu	19th
16	Lama Sonam Gyatsho	20th
17	Lama Sherub Chogden	21st
18	Lama Pelden Wangpo	22nd
19	Lama Jinpa Tharchin	23rd
20	Kyilkhor Lopen Jinpa	24th
21	Lama Kargyud Wangchuk	25th
22	Lama Gangtengpa	26th

Table 2: List of Gorkharajas during the tenure of Bhutanese Monk-ambassadors

Sl. No	Gorkharajas	Reigns
1	Prithvi Pati Shah	1668/1676-1716
2	Narbhupal Shah	1716-1742
3	Prithvi Narayan Shah	1743-1775
4	Pratap Singh Shah	1775-1777
5	Rana Bahadur Shah	1777-1799
6	Girvan Yuddha Bikram Shah	1799-1816
7	Rajendra Bikram Shah	1816-1847
8	Surendra Bikram Shah	1847-1881

6. Conclusion

Missions from Bhutan's Dharmarajas to the court of Gorkharajas took the form of twenty-two successive lamas. The list and sequence in Table 1 is based on Padma Tshedwang's narrative. We do not know the years they were appointed and the number of years they served.

The appointment of Drukpa Lamas in the courts of Gorkharajas had been a significant aspect of Bhutan's foreign policy since the time of Migyur Tenpa. Initially, it had served to seal an alliance with Nepal in the face of common adversary: Tibet in the north and British India in the south. The successive appointment of these monk-ambassadors was not merely a religious assignment as historians are inclined to think given the prayers and rituals they performed which are credited as paving ways for the birth of Narbhupal Shah, Prithvi Narayan Shah, curing of Ranjit Malla of an illness and removing obstructions for the young prince Rana Bahadur Shah. In fact, the Drukpa Lamas served the function of Bhutan's official plenipotentiary. The title "lama" or "Drukpa Lama" risks reducing the role to a mere Buddhist ritual priest in the courts of Hindu kings. What must be kept in mind is that the Bhutanese government called Palden Druk Zhung (Government of the Glorious Drukpas) was a monastic government. The lamas were appointed by this government from its Central Monastic Body. The initial context of the contact between Bhutan's Dharmarajas and Gorkharajas was supposedly the performance of ritual service. Over the years, the position as well as the roles of the Drukpa Lamas in Gorkha courts expanded into more sophisticated aspect of the State's diplomacy. We have seen how the Drukpa Lamas were summoned to convey to the Bhutanese government politico-military messages from Nepal and how they communicated

the responses. We have also seen their involvement in the mediation of conflicts.

Their ambassadorial function to supervise and manage Bhutan's oversea possessions was not limited to Nepal alone. Similar lamas were appointed to Ladakh where King Senge Namgyal had made significant offerings of monasteries and landed properties long before Gorkha did. There was also an envoy to the small kingdom of Derge when Jamgon Ngawang Gyaltsen (1647-1732) was deputed to the court of King Sangye Tenpa (1638-1710). He was later recalled and deputed to Ladakh. Bhutan also had such possessions in Mt. Kailash area till 1959.

The other important aspect of the relations is the significance of monasteries, monastic lands and communities to farm them. The Gorkharajas had provided lands on many occasions as tax-free endowments. It was a very important gesture that they continued to grant land titles with mohors on copper plates for more than one and half century. It is difficult to assess the value of revenues realized from these lands. The actual acreage of landed properties does not appear to be very significant. Bhutan was even resentful that the expected values of lands were not provided for relinquishing Vijaypur. The values nonetheless were not in the quantity of harvests or monetary terms but in the material representation of a strong relations each country sought to build and sustain. Nepal neither expected nor asked for reciprocal land grants in Bhutan. Nepal must have seen these grants as diplomatic investments for friendship with Bhutan in the broader context of tension and conflict with Tibet and British India. The Bhutanese contribution was the continual deputation of lamas, who were senior, learned and accomplished.

Although the Drukpa Lamas were appointed as envoys to the courts of Gorkharajas, they did not take residence in the palace. As we can infer from some information discussed earlier, the lamas were called by the kings who wished them to convey messages to the Bhutanese government. This raises an interesting question of where they officially resided while in Nepal. We can assume that they started with the Nagthali Gonpa and gradually moved to the temple complex in Swayambhu. They reported to the kings as and when they were called upon. Otherwise, they could have moved around different *gonpas* to manage the properties, collect monastic levies as well as deliver teachings and blessings to those communities associated with monastic properties. This however, remains yet another point for further inquiry.

The Bhutanese government saw in this diplomatic arrangement an opportunity to spread the Drukpa Kagyu teachings in the communities they came to administer. This was in fulfilment of an important objective of the Monastic State. As a result, we see many monasteries and monastic institutions being established over the years. The Gorkharajas were equally cognizant of this aspect of the relationship. We have seen that the mohors issued in connection with land grants specified how the lamas were to be regarded as primary spiritual teachers in the communities. This was an admirable accommodation and support the Hindu kings extended both for diplomacy as well as in recognition of Nepal's Buddhist history and heritage.

We saw this relations mature in the act of bestowing special honour by King Birendra Bikram Shah to Lopon Tshechu and of him breaking the tradition of chairing the Dharmadaya Sabba. The fact that he was related to Bhutan's royal family made it even more significant. Prince Gyanendra visited Bhutan in 1972 to offer

condolences when the Third King of Bhutan passed away. The Fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuk was a guest at King Birendra's coronation in 1975. A year earlier, Prince Dharendra Bir Shamkhar Bikram Shah and Princess Khangzang Preksya Rajya Lakshmi attended the coronation of Fourth King in 1974 (MFA, 2021, p. 2).

After the establishment of monarchy in 1907, we noted that Drukpa Rinpoche Sherub Dorji was deputed as royal envoy to hand over royal contributions for the renovation of Swayambhu initiated by Shakya Shri. The Bhutanese control over Swayambhu before that seemed to have persisted despite the changing dynamics. Sharma writes;

The fact that, even towards the year 1900 or so, the affairs of some 16 monasteries including Swayambhu, Kimdol, Nagthali, Thongmon, Kallari, Hakughyang, Dandagaun, etc., had continued to be managed by Bhutanese Lamas and that the Bhutan king had full rights over revenues accruing from them, is evidence enough of the intimate religio-cultural ties continuing and subsisting between Nepal and Bhutan till a considerably recent period (2002, p. 137).

The grant of additional lands by Gorkharajas does not appear to have taken place after the restoration of partial custodial rights in 1862 by Surendra Bikram Shah. It has yet to be determined if the monasteries built by Drukpa Rinpoche Sherub Dorji were on new lands granted or on sites of earlier grants. Bhutan's loss of all the eighteen Duars in the aftermath of the war with the British in 1865 must have made landed possessions in Nepal even more precious. The monastic lands in Nepal are no longer the property of Bhutanese State. There appears to be gradual loss of custodial rights over these monasteries and monastic lands in the last century. But as an important symbol of that relation, the presence of Bhutan temple in the complex of Swayambhu continues today.

We have noted how Bhutan gained custodial rights over Swayambhu and its landed properties which include the village of Hago, five cultivable fields and the farms of Birshing. This was provided in exchange of the tributes Bhutan received annually from Vijaypur which Prithvi Narayan Shah sought to annex. The records make references to the stupa and its properties but a clear picture of the historical and contemporary landed properties as well as village communities tied to the stupa can only be ascertained with further research, particularly with field visits. What appears likely at the moment is that Prithvi Narayan Shah granted the lands once in 1772 and then in 1774 before and after the annexation of Vijaypur. Perhaps what he had provided was perceived to have fallen short of what the Bhutanese expected as compensation for revenues lost.

Nonetheless, the Bhutanese continued to exercise ownership of the stupa by undertaking its renovations as well. We noted that Lama Sangye Norbu most likely undertook the renovation for five long years during the reign of Raja Girvan Yuddha Bikram Shah. Sharma (2002, p. 155) notes that King Ugyen Wangchuck had written to “Gorkha king” in 1907 about the issue of the management of Swayambhu. The Gorkharaja in reference appears to be Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah (reign: 1881-1911). We do not know if there was a response to this letter.

Kathog Situ Chokyi Gyatsho mentions that Shakya Shri began raising funds and then the renovation works at Swayambhu after obtaining the requisite permission from the Tibetan government and the Gorkha king. They had requested for an “audience with the Gorkhali king and ministers who held jurisdiction over the land, and were cordially granted the necessary permission” (2009, pp. 153-154). This gives ground to assume that the Bhutanese

rights over the stupa may have been reduced to custody of the Marmey Lhakhang since Jung Bahadur Rana returned this temple along with small landholdings at Dradragang by the last quarter of the 19th century. This may have been more a token to mend relations than full restoration of custodial rights.

But a semblance of control was re-exercised as Lupon Tshechu began to administer the monastic establishments of his uncle. However, that was less in his capacity as formal monastic envoy from Bhutan and more as spiritual successor to his uncle. By then he had become the head of Nepal's Dharmadoya Sabha. There is thus a circumstantial transition from national to more institutional and personal custody and administration of the *gonpas* and lands by the time of Lupon Tshechu. The temple (Drukgoen Do-ngag Chholing Gonpa) within the complex of Swayambhu was renovated by the Bhutanese government after being damaged by the 2015 earthquake. This too had been in the hands of a Tamang lama, who had also claimed levies from lands associated with it. The Tamangs of Kimdole assumed the management of the stupa after acquiring control from the Chiniya Lama of Boudha. The Chiniya Lama was reportedly appointed by Bhutanese and Nepalese authorities after the temple caught fire around 1908. The Bhutanese caretaker was blamed for fire although it was possibly due to the offering of 100,000 butter lamps by the Sikkimese king and queen (Barakzai, 2023, pp. 118-120). This suggests that some form of Bhutanese custodial rights at Swayambhu continued till the beginning of the 20th century. There are two narratives how the Bhutanese regained control of the stupa. One, the Tamang Lama handed over the management to Je Tenzin Dendup, the 68th Supreme Abbot of Bhutan. He was in Swayambhu area during the 1970s and 1980s before returning to Bhutan. The Tamang Lama faced challenges to maintain the stupa owing to his advanced age.

The other narrative is the late Royal Grandmother, Azhi Phuntsho Choden of Bhutan and Lopen Tshechu who approached the Tamang Lama and offered to maintain the stupa which was in a sorry state of affairs (Yonten Phuntsho, 2013, p. 271). Today, the lamas in the Bhutanese temple are appointed by the monastery of Sangye Choling.

Reconstruction works began in July 2017 at an approved budget of over Nu. 26 million. Major works were already completed at a total cost of Nu. 23 million. The inauguration slated for November 2020 was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic (MFA, 2021, p. 9) but was conducted in November 2022. The consecration ceremony was presided over by Dorje Lopen of the Central Monastic Body.

This study has sought to understand Bhutan-Nepal relations since the 17th century. It would have benefitted tremendously if a field visit to Nepal were possible. This would have helped answer some of the important questions raised. Visit to Nagthali, some monastic centres associated with Bhutan and indeed an examination of the copper plate records from museums in Nepal would have undoubtedly enriched this study. Since a field visit could not be conducted for various reasons, opportunities exist to undertake further research and even revise some information and analysis. I relied primarily on two sources; one Bhutanese and the other a Nepali. Both constitute the most important work concerning the subject although there are others who have written about it. I have used the framework of Padma Tshedwang's narrative which enabled me to resolve some factual questions, contextualize some of his observations in the broader historical currents of the region then, and add historical details from other sources. I critiqued Nagendra Sharma's work for the strong political subtext of his

views which were grounded in erroneous historical facts as well as speculated and exaggerated information about Bhutan. For the purpose of scholarly objectivity, it has been necessary to point out some of his claims based on speculations merely to ascribe agency to Nepal for many events and developments in Bhutan. This has ranged from the involvement of Nepalis in the construction of Bhutan's first temples in the seventh century to the enthronement of the First King of Bhutan. Wherever valid, the contributions as well as influences of Nepal's Buddhist heritage as in the role of craftsmen in casting reliquary stupas of Zhabdrung Rinpoche's father, image of Buddha at Tango and the architectural style of stupas at Choeten Kora and Chendebji have been acknowledged. The coming of the envoys from the three kingdoms of Kathmandu valley along with envoys from elsewhere to offer congratulatory gifts to Zhabdrung Rinpoche and the new Bhutanese State around 1640 is a historical milestone.

The most important argument is that Bhutan and Nepal had enjoyed close and cordial friendship through a special institutional arrangement of deputing Drukpa Lamas in the courts of Gorkharajas for nearly two centuries. This arrangement served to realize the social, religious, political and military interests of the two countries. The relationship was reciprocal and mutually beneficial. Although monasteries and monastic lands were granted by the Gorkharajas to the Drukpa Lamas on various occasions, it was these lamas who built temples, religious institutions and traditions that helped to sustain and promote Buddhism in Nepal. This also served the interest of Bhutan's Monastic State since propagation of Buddhism as the source of peace and happiness for all sentient beings was one of its primary objectives. Of course, it would be wrong to claim that the propagation of Buddhism in Nepal was solely the works of Drukpa Lamas. There were other

Buddhist schools, leaders and institutions from Tibet as well as within Nepal which kept the Buddha Dharma alive. Nonetheless, the Drukpa Lamas made significant contributions.

An important Bhutanese perspective of the relationship was that of lama and patron, *choeyon jindag* (*chos-yon sbyin-bdag*). The lama priests deputed by the Bhutanese State, saw themselves in the role of providing religious services to the Gorkharajas by performing rituals, tantric rites and other prayer ceremonies. The latter reciprocated by providing tax-free landed properties. Later on, the roles became more sophisticated as the kings required the lamas to communicate with Bhutan's Dharmarajas and *desis* about political and military matters. We have also seen them acting as mediators in Nepal's conflict with Tibet. The sophistication in relations was also driven by geo-politics which became more complex with the arrival of the British as the dominant authority in the south of the two countries. Earlier, their common differences with the Lhasa government and its support to Sikkim ensconced between them had forged closer relations which was best expressed in the kind of alliance between Prithvi Narayan Shah and Desi Zhidar. It must be pointed out that the priest-patron relationship between Drukpa Lamas and Gorkharajas was not the same as those between Tibetan lamas like Sakya Pandita, Chogyal Phagpa and the Dalai Lamas with Mongol Khans and Qing Emperors. An important distinction with the Tibetan case is that the Drukpa Lamas who went to Nepal's courts were not rulers of Bhutan but junior lamas who were accomplished in learning and meditation. They were monk-officials who represented the Bhutanese State. The State itself stood much larger above them.¹⁵

15 See Chapter 2 of my forthcoming book "A Prophetic State and Its Three Foundations" for discussions on the ideology of *chos-srid lugs-gnyis* and the differences in the institutional representation of this ideology in Bhutan and Tibet.

The appointment of about twenty-two Drukpa Lamas and their missions thus constituted the central element of the relations between the two countries. Despite the political fallout of 1990s, there has been reformulation in relationship in the person and agency of Lopon Tshechu who had enjoyed the support and patronage of none other than King Birendra Bikram Shah Dev. He was a Drukpa Lama by virtue of being born in Bhutan from Bhutanese parents, enrolled in the Central Monastic Body, studied in Bhutan's famed Buddhist institute at Tharpaling and trained by well-known Drukpa masters. His relationship to Bhutan's royal family indeed was a great advantage.

The monasteries and monastic lands in Nepal may no longer be under the custodial rights of the Bhutanese government. However, the Bhutanese presence at Swayambhu complex is an important one albeit a small token of that special relationship in the past. The Bhutanese government wishes to build a monastery at Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha. The lease agreement for the land to build the temple is yet to be finalized (MFA, 2021, p. 9).

Thousands of Bhutanese travel to Nepal every year for pilgrimage. In 2017, tourist arrivals from Bhutan numbered 10,923 people. Both Druk Air and Bhutan Airlines operate flights to Kathmandu. The products of Newari artisans and craftsmen particularly the Buddhist statues constitute a major item of import besides other goods. Although the balance of trade was in favour of Nepal between 2010 and 2015, it has since then been with Bhutan till 2019. Bhutan's export that year was worth Nu. 427.8 million whereas imports were about Nu. 217.5 million (MFA, 2021, p. 7). Bhutanese artists and painters work in Kathmandu and contribute to Nepal's tourism industry and Buddhist legacy. New areas of co-operation can develop even at people-to-people level as indicated by the

launch of a YouTube musical video called Gori Gori 2 (Karmo, 2019) involving film stars from Bhutan and Nepal, the very first of its kind. Bhutanese actress Ugyen Choden, who featured in this musical video acted in a Nepali film called “Dui Numbari” released in October 2022. It was directed by a reputed Nepali director, Dipendra Lama (Samten Wangda and Deki, 2022). In another important development in sports, a well-known Bhutanese footballer announced that he would be joining Machhindra Football Club in Nepal, which is a two-time champion of Nepal’s A-Division League (Chencho Gyeltshen Set to Join Machhindra Football Club, 2023). Chencho Gyeltshen did play for the club for a season. The future of Bhutan-Nepal bilateral relations will be very positive and mutually beneficial. There are no reasons why diplomatic efforts should not be stepped up to strengthen relations. The past remains a source of inspiration for future possibilities! The private visit of the former King of Nepal, Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev to Bhutan on October 3, 2024 is therefore, very symbolic.

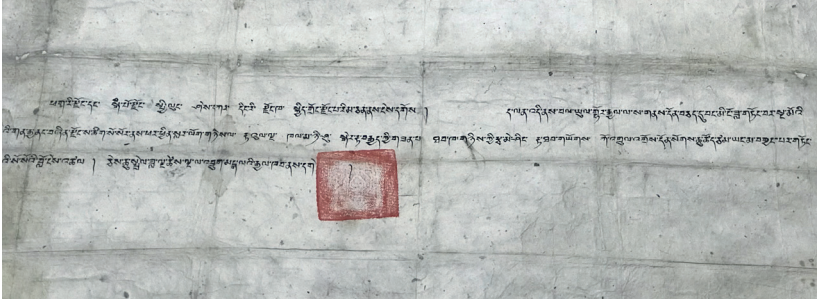
7. Annexures

Annexure 1: Letter to Fort-Governors

For due adherence by the *dzongpas* of Phari, Gampa, Chilung, Shelkar, Dingri, Dzongkha and Kyirong; from here to the Gorkharajas of Nepal, a mission is being sent to resolve land disputes. Hence, as in the agreement with the earlier Tibetan government, each governor within his jurisdiction is requested to provide five riding horses, twenty pack horses, fodder for eight private horses, two cooks, fodder, fuelwood, syce and kitchen helpers as well as leather boats for the purpose of both onward and return journey.

Issued on the Fifth Day of the Fifth Month of Water Monkey Year [1872-1873] from Tashichho Dzong, Kingdom of Bhutan.

Seal of Druk Desi



ཕག་མི་ཚོང་དང་ ལྷོ་མི་ཚོང་ ལྷོ་ལུང་ ཤེས་དཀར་ དིང་མི་ ཚོང་ཁ་ ལྷོ་དྲུང་གོང་ཚོང་པ་མི་མ་ཅན་ནས་དེས་
 དཔོན་ལ། ད་ལན་འདི་ནས་བལ་ཡུལ་ ལྷོ་ར་རྒྱལ་ལ་ས་གནས་དོན་བཅད་དུ་བང་མི་དོ་སྐྱོན་གཏོང་བར་སྲ་
 མོའི་གན་རྒྱ་ནང་བཞེན་ ཚོང་ས་ཚོགས་མོ་སོར་ནས་པར་ཕྱིན་སྐྱར་ལོ་ག་གཉིས་ལ་ རྟ་ལུལ་ལྷ་ ལལ་མ་ཉི་
 ལུ་ ལྷེར་རྟ་བརྒྱད་ཀྱི་གཟན་པ་ ཐབ་ལ་གཉིས་ཀྱི་ཚ་མེ་ཤིང་ རྟ་ཐབ་གཡོགས་ ཀོ་འགྲུལ་འགྲོས་དོན་
 མོགས་ཚུ་ཚོང་ཅམ་ཡང་མ་བགྲང་པར་གཏོང་སོ་སོའི་སློང་ས་འཚེལ། ཅེས་ཚུ་སྒྲེལ་སྐྱ་ལྷ་ཚོས་ལྷ་ལ་
 འབྲུག་མདུ་ག་ལའི་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ནས་དག།

Annexure 2: Letter to Emissaries
 To Niniram Singh and Dorji Phuntsho,

The envoy of Gorkharaja to Tibet has delivered a letter from the Raja to the Dharmaraja. Again, Niniram Singh has also sent a letter which was delivered on the First Day of the Sixth Month. It conveyed that the Raja had told Niniram Singh in person about hunting elephants. You are being sent to convey that we have no reservations against the Raja’s interest and in fact give him permission to hunt. It has been conveyed to us that the hunting will take place in the Ninth Month this year. Besides, the expectations are that we should make arrangements for manpower

and provisions. While the Raja can hunt elephants in our territory as he desires, he may be thinking that our region resembles the Kingdom of Kathmandu. Hence, he has expressed requirements for food supplies and manpower. Our territory extends up from the valleys and foothills. From the foothills downward are under the British. Hence, we neither have landholdings in the Indian Duars which is even the size of a palm nor a single patron. If we still had jurisdiction over the Duars and the people as in the past, we would have done as the Raja desired and that too without the need for him to express thus since the two countries are like two people with one mind, and the Raja would be our guest in the present situation. In that area, there are only a few forest dwellers who have always lived on fruits and roots of trees and do not have a fixed place to stay. They live just like the wild animals. So, we do not have our people living in the area. To send people down to border areas would take anywhere from nine to ten days on foot. In some cases, it will take twelve to thirteen days. Moreover, our people cannot withstand the tropical heat and are not able to adapt to the [climatic] condition. We convey thus since the Raja would not be aware of the situation. Niniram Singh and our envoy who were sent on the Fifth Day of the Fifth Month have also submitted clear information about the good and bad situations when you were questioned. We have communicated thus in response to the Raja's letter. Concerning this matter, the two of you must submit very clearly that the elephants can be hunted but it is not possible to send people and food supplies since the Duars are now under British jurisdiction and there are no inhabitants in our hills and valleys. Our people sent down from here will not be helpful as they are not used to the heat. But there is the risk of giving the impression of two voices coming from one body and the Raja may not find it convenient to listen and understand. Since the Raja's kingdom is well endowed with people and material resources, they can come here and capture [elephants] to be taken. Since

wages have to be paid to anyone, there will be people available on hire even if elephant hunting takes place in area this side from Darjelling. Our people will not be able to transport rice bags on their backs through the hills and valleys particularly due to the heat. So, there will not be porters particularly because the heat is extreme in the Ninth and Tenth Months. They will not be able to serve well. Again when you submit like this, the Raja may feel that the Kingdom here and there are the same and hence, nourish two different thoughts. Although the Raja does not have knowledge [about our region], the two of you who know about the condition of our people must provide very clear and orderly information so that the Raja does not harbour two different thoughts. In the letter to the Raja, it is mentioned that the elephant hunting would be conducive during the Wood Tiger Year. The Swayambhu stupa in Nepal is the pillar of Buddha Dharma in the world. Moreover, it is a sacred support of worship and offering for the kingdoms of Gorkha and Bhutan. If the elephants are caught, there is place for them. If not, there is no need for a place. Since elephants are beasts, there is no need to scorn them. Till now, it was the Raja of Hatisa who hunted elephants and paid land taxes to us. For us, it is better for the Raja to capture and take them away rather than others doing it. If there are elephants in the area, it is well. If not, this should not deter elephant hunting and the Raja can hunt as it pleases him. This particular matter has not been mentioned in the letter to the Raja. The two of you must explain clearly to him. The Gorkharaja has sent one letter to Hari Singh. It arrived after the two of you departed. This letter cannot be read and understood. So, it is being sent back to be delivered to Hari Singh.

Now, concerning travel to Tibet, the Tibetan officials and Amban had issued a letter stating that unless Nepal bans travel through its territory, there is no such travel restriction between the peoples of Bhutan and Gorkha. We have sent a letter seeking permission to

ask for riding and pack horses. So far, there has been no response. When it was received on the Ninth Day of the Fifth Month, it is said that they cannot give permission since this not only deviates from the command of the Chinese Emperor but there has been no such practices earlier. No travel documents have been issued by stating that this cannot be done even if Bhutan, Gorkha and other countries do not have friendly relations with Tibet. The Tibetans do not know yet if the discussion concerning territories have arisen due to the Chinese. The Gorkharaja had sent an envoy along with Niniram Singh but he was stopped at the border at Kyirong and sent back. This is because the Tibetans said that travels through its territory can be permitted only through old routes, not new ones. This is to ensure that there is no breach of the command of Chinese emperor. It was mentioned in the Raja's letter that the Raja was embarrassed at his envoy being sent back. Here also, we were not happy. Actually, there is the age-old practice of unrestricted travel between Gorkha and Bhutan. Besides, there had been no restrictions even for traders travelling to India and Tibet. Let alone the people of our two kingdoms, even those from the region who are deemed our guests should be assisted with riding and pack ponies. This will not only benefit relations among countries but Bhutan and Gorkha have always sought to strengthen relations with other countries, not to harm them. Hence it is unbecoming to prevent the travel of one person. But they invoke the powerful command and law of the Chinese Emperor. So it must be. The fact that such response had been received from Tibet had been conveyed to the Raja. Concerning sending of people to Tibet, there had been support for travel documents dispatched for the Raja's envoy who was sent back from Kyirong. The Raja had let this matter known to Niniram Singh, Hari Singh and Doriya. Although it is the aspiration to have good relations with other countries, the response had been delayed for a long time. When it finally came, it was a negative one. The Tibetans treat the Gorkhas and Bhutanese as ordinary

laymen and inhabitants of one camp. But we have excellent relations as far as Delhi, Lahore, Dzambu, Kangra and the three kingdoms in the east. Yet the Tibetans disregard this as if it means nothing. If we look at the Tibetan's letter as well as the way they talk and present themselves, they expect Bhutan and Gorkha as well as other countries to align with them. If we do not align and engage in a conflict, they give the impression as if they will prevail. Nonetheless, there is no way that any one will groan under unfriendly nations. Even on this matter, it is possible that the Raja may not be well-disposed to pay heed. If he is thus inclined due to the way they [Tibetans] talk and behave, be reminded that the two of you shall explain clearly to the Raja when in audience about this matter as well as the situation here. In the event that the preparations for hunting and capturing elephants as well as supplies and resources are to be made here, convey that it would have been only convenient if we had people under our jurisdiction as in the past. Then, convey that we have no dealing now as we are bound by being lamas and monks. But Kathmandu is large. There are also many large western countries. If we have the possibility to act in consideration of past situation, we would do in the larger interest of bilateral relations not just concerning elephant hunting but with regard to other matters. This point had not been included in the letter to the Raja. So the two of you must explain clearly.

Regarding the seal, the Raja and ministers have expressed to Gandhra their dissatisfaction that the seal used in the communication was that of Trongsa [Penlop] and not that of the Desi. The two of you know that the seal of Nga Chudruma is used in exceptional cases. Since this is an ordinary correspondence, the Nga Chudruma seal has not been affixed. Rather the square seal is being affixed. Regarding this, the two of you must explain clearly. Done on the Seventh Day of Sixth Month of Water Monkey Year [1872-1873].

[The image shows a page of handwritten text in Tibetan script. The text is dense and fills most of the page. At the bottom center, there is a red circular seal with a central emblem and surrounding text in Tibetan. The handwriting is in a traditional style, likely from the 19th or early 20th century.]

ཅི རི་ཀི་རི་མིང་དང་དོ་རྩི་ལྷན་ཚོགས་ལུང་མོང་ལ། དོན་འབྲས་དེ་ནི་ལྷ་ས་སྲིང་མི་རྩོར་རྒྱལ་སྤྱོར་ཚབ་
 ལྷན་སྲིང་བརྒྱུད་རྩོར་རྒྱལ་ནས་འདིར་ཞབས་ཡི་གི་ ༡ བཅས་སྲུལ་འདུག་པ་ད་རེས་རྒྱ་ ༦ ཚོས་ ༡ ལ་
 འབྲོར་དོན་ རི་ཀིང་ལོ་ཀི་རི་མིང་མཛུགས་རྒྱལ་པོ་ནས་སྲིང་ཆེན་བཟུང་དོན་སྲོར་གྱི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་གསུང་འདུག་པ་
 ལས་ རྒྱལ་པོ་མཛུགས་དང་འདིར་མི་སྲིང་མཛུགས་མཛུགས་པའི་དེ་ལུ་འགྲོལ་འདུག་པའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་ལྷན་སྲིང་ལྷན་སྲིང་ལྷན་སྲིང་
 བཟུང་བ་ཡིན་པ་ ༥ རེ་ལོར་རྒྱ་ ༩ རྒྱུར་རྒྱལ་ནས་རྩོར་སྲིང་ཆེན་བཟུང་བ་འོང་འོང་ཡིན་པ་འདི་ནས་མི་
 རེ་དང་ལོ་གི་ཟ་ཆས་དགོས་ལྟེད་སྤྱི་སྤྱི་གས་སྲོར་འདི་ནས་ལྟེད་དགོས་ལྟེད་ཡིན་པའི་ དེ་སྲོར་སྲིང་ཆེན་
 བཟུང་འོང་དེ་འདི་ལའི་ས་ལྷན་ནས་རྒྱལ་པོ་རང་གི་སྤྱི་གས་དང་བསྐྱུར་བཟུང་ཚོགས་པ་ཡིན་ ཟ་ཆས་ལྷོ་
 སྲོབ་སྲོར་ཚོང་པ་གང་ཡང་དགོས་ཀྱི་ཡིན་རུང་ རྒྱལ་པོ་འདི་སྤྱི་གས་ལ་འདིར་ཡང་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལའང་དང་
 འདྲ་བ་ཡོད་པའི་སྤྱི་གས་བཞེས་འོང་ འདི་ལའི་ས་གནས་མི་ལུང་ཡམ་ཆད་ཅམ་མ་གཏོགས་མི་རྩལ་ནས་
 མཛ་ཆད་ས་གནས་སྤྱི་གས་བདག་གང་ཡང་ཕྱི་པས་མཛུགས་ རྒྱ་གཞི་ས་གནས་ལག་མཐོག་ཅོམ་དང་
 སྤྱི་གས་བདག་མི་ཟེལ་ ༡ ཡང་མོད་པའི་ དལ་གཞི་རྒྱ་གཞི་ས་གནས་མི་སེར་རྩོར་སྲིང་བཞེན་ཡོད་ན་རྒྱལ་

ལབ་པན་ཚུན་མི་གཉིས་སེམས་གཅིག་སྐྱབས་སྐྱོད་བཞུགས་པ་མ་ཚད་ གནས་བབ་མགོ་མོ་ཡིན་པའི་
 རྒྱལ་པོས་མ་གཏང་རུང་འདི་ནས་ཕྱག་ཕྱིས་ལྷ་ལོས་བདེན་ཡིན་ འོན་ཀྱང་རི་ལུང་ནང་རྟོར་པ་རེ་གཉིས་
 རྟོན་མི་ཡོད་རུང་སྟེ་ ༢ གྱི་ཁང་རེ་བཅོད་ཡང་ཤིང་གི་རྟོག་མ་དང་རྟོག་བྱ་ རྟོན་ས་རེས་མེད་རྟེན་
 པའི་རི་དགས་བཞེན་མ་གཏོགས་རང་འོག་མི་སེར་མེད་པའི་ཁར་ ཡུལ་མི་རིགས་ནི་རྒྱ་མཚམས་མི་
 ལུང་ནང་ལྟོད་ལྟོད་ཞག་དགུ་བཅུ་དང་རིང་ན་བཅུ་གཉིས་བཅུ་གསུམ་བཅས་འགོ་དགོས་ ལྷག་པར་ཡུལ་
 མིའི་ལུས་ཀྱི་ཚད་ལ་མི་སྐབ་པར་གང་ནས་ཀྱང་བབ་འབྲེལ་དབེན་ཞིང་མ་གྱུར་ཚོ་རྒྱལ་པོ་ཡང་སྐྱབས་
 རྒྱལ་མེད་པའི་མི་མཁའ་ལྷོ་ད་ལྷ་མགོ་ནས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྷོ་དོན་དེ་ཡིན་ བོ་མི་རི་སིང་དང་འདི་ནས་སྐྱུ་ཚོ་
 བཅས་ལྷ་ ༥ ཚོས་ ༥ རས་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ལ་བཏང་བའི་ འདི་ནང་མི་སེར་བདེ་དོག་ཇི་ཡིན་ཞུ་ ༢ པའང་
 འི་དཔུང་གཟེགས་པའི་མགོན་ལོ་ནས་གསལ་བའི་གནས་ཚུལ་བཅས་ རྒྱལ་པོའི་ ཡིག་ལོག་ཡང་དེ་
 ལྟར་ཡུལ་ཡོད་ དེ་སྐོར་ཞུ་ ༢ གྱི་མི་ཤེས་མེད་པ་ གྲང་ཚེན་བཟུང་འོད་ཐང་བཟུང་ཚོག་པ་ཡིན་ འདི་
 རས་མི་བཏང་འོད་དང་བཅས་དགོས་ཀྱི་སྐོར་ མར་རྒྱ་གཞི་ཕྱི་པས་མཚན་རི་ལུང་ནང་མི་
 སེར་རྟོན་མི་མེད་ ཡུལ་མི་ལུས་ཀྱི་ཚད་ལ་མི་སྐབ་པར་སྐབས་ཐོག་འབྲེལ་བ་མེད་པ་ལས་ཚོག་ཁ་མ་
 ཚུད་པ་དང་ འདིར་ཡང་གཞུགས་གཅིག་ལས་སྐྱོད་གཉིས་རྒྱལ་པོ་དང་འདྲ་བ་ཐལ་འགོ་བའི་ རྒྱལ་པོ་
 ཡང་གསན་བཞེས་མི་བདེ་ དེ་བའི་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ལ་རྒྱ་ལོར་མི་དང་བཅས་པ་འཕྱོར་པ་འབྲེལ་བ་ལས་འོང་
 རང་པ་ལས་ཚུར་འོད་ན་བཟུང་ཞུ་ན་སྐབས་ཐོག་མི་འབྲེལ་བ་མི་འོང་པ་ གྲྭ་བཟོན་རོ་ལོ་སུ་རང་ཡིན་རུང་
 ཕྱིན་དགོས་པ་ལས་ཡིན་པའི་རྟོན་གྲང་ནས་ཚུར་འོད་བཟུང་རུང་ལྟོ་སྐབ་ལེན་མི་ནི་འོད་པ་ འདི་ཁའི་ཡུལ་
 མི་གི་རྒྱ་དོས་རྒྱལ་པོ་འབག་སྟེ་ཚད་པ་མི་སྐབ་པར་རི་རོང་ནང་འགོ་མི་མེད་པའི་ ལྷག་དུ་ ལྷ་ ༩ དང་
 བཅུ་པའི་ནང་སེར་དུག་ཚད་པ་ཆེ་བའི་སྐབས་ཡིན་པའི་ཡུལ་མི་གི་ཚོག་ཁ་མི་ཚུད་ ད་རུང་དེ་ལྟར་ལྷ་བ་
 དང་རྒྱལ་པོའི་སྐབས་ལ་འདིར་ཡང་པ་གི་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་དང་འདྲ་བ་ཡོད་ཚོད་སྟོ་སྐབས་གཉིས་སུ་བཞེས་
 འོང་ རྒྱལ་པོ་སྐབས་རྒྱལ་མེད་པའི་མཚེན་རུང་འདི་ནང་མི་སེར་བདེ་དོག་ཇི་ཡིན་ཞུ་ ༢ གྱི་ཤེས་པ་
 འདི་ཁའི་གནས་ཚུལ་རིམ་པ་བཟང་ནས་རྒྱལ་པོ་སྐབས་གཉིས་བཞེས་མ་བཅུག་པར་མགོ་ནས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་
 དུང་མངས་གསལ་ལྷ་དགོས་པའི་རེས་པ་དང་། ད་རེ་རྒྱལ་པོ་ནས་སྐུལ་བའི་ཡི་གེ་བཏང་གྲང་ཚེན་འཛོན་
 བཟུང་བྱེད་ན་ཤིང་སྐབས་ལོ་ནས་ས་མཚན་པའི་དེ་ལས་ཚུར་ས་གནས་སྐོར་གྱི་སྐོག་རྒྱལ་དགེ་ལེན་
 པའི་ བལ་ཡུལ་ཤིང་ཀུན་མཚོད་བརྟེན་ས་གནས་དེ་སྐྱིར་འཛོན་བྱ་སྐྱིང་གི་བཟུན་པའི་སྐོག་ཤིང་དང་
 སྐོས་སུ་རང་ཅག་སྐོར་འབྲུག་ ༢ གྱི་ལྷག་དང་མཚོད་པའི་ཡུལ་གྱི་རྟེན་ཡིན་པའི་ གྲང་ཚེན་འཛོན་བཟུང་
 ཡོད་ན་ས་གནས་ཡོད་པ་དང་མེད་ན་ས་གནས་མེད་ཟེར་བྱེད་པ་དང་ གྲང་ཚེན་ཟེར་བ་དེ་དུང་འགོ་ཡིན་
 པའི་འདི་དང་ཁ་ཐབ་ཉེ་མཚད་དགོས་མེད་པ་ ད་ཚུན་བར་ཡང་ གྲང་ཚེན་བཟུང་འོད་དེ་ ཉ་སྟེར་རྟོག་
 བཟུང་ནས་ས་ཁྲལ་འདིར་ཡུལ་བ་ཡིན་ གཞན་གྱི་བཟུང་བ་ལས་རྒྱལ་པོས་བཟུང་ཞུ་བ་འདིར་ཡང་འདི་

དགའ་ ས་གནས་བརྗེ་ཡོད་ཅུང་ཡིན་པའི་མེད་ཅུང་གྲང་ཆེན་བཟུང་ནོད་དེས་ དེའི་མི་ཐོགས་པ་རྒྱལ་པོའི་
 ཐུགས་དང་བརྩམས་བཟུང་ཚོགས་པ་ཡིན་ དེ་སྐོར་རྒྱལ་པོས་ཡི་གོ་ནང་མ་བཅུགས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ཁྱེད་ ༢ ཉམས་
 དུང་སངས་གསལ་ལུ་འགོ་དང་ རྒྱུར་རྒྱལ་ནས་ཉ་རི་སིང་ལ་ཡི་གོ་ ༡ བཟང་འདུག་པ་ཁྱེད་རྒྱལ་ཐལ་
 བའི་རྗེས་ལ་འབྱུང་བའི་འདྲིར་ནི་ཡི་གོ་ལྷག་མི་ཤེས་པའི་སྐར་ལོག་སྐྱེལ་ཡོད་པ་ཉ་རི་སིང་ལ་སྐོར་
 དགོས་པའི་ཡིད་རེས་དང་། དེ་ལས་བོད་ལུ་ཁ་བགྲུས་པོ་ཡང་བོད་ལ་ཕྱེ་ཤོས་ ༢ དང་ ཨོ་བུན་ ༧ ཤག་
 ཐོག་ལ་ བལ་པོས་ས་གནས་སྐོར་གྲེལ་བ་མ་ཚོགས་བར་དུ་སྐོར་འབྲུག་ ༢ གྱི་མི་སྣ་ཕན་ཚུན་ལོ་བཀག་
 མེད་པ་འགྲུལ་ཚོགས་པ་དང་རྟུའུ་ལལ་མ་བཅས་བསྐྱུལ་ཚོགས་པའི་ལོ་ཡིག་སྐོར་ལས་བཏང་བ་ཡིན་པ་
 ད་ཚུན་ལན་གསལ་མ་གྲུང་ ༥ རེས་ལྷ ༥ ཚོས་ ༦ ལ་སྐོར་ཚོ་ རྒྱ་ནང་གོང་མ་ཆེན་པའི་བཀའི་དཔྱད་
 མཚམས་ནས་རྒྱལ་བའི་སྐར་ནས་བྱིན་སྐོར་མི་འདུག་ཟེར་བཀའ་མ་བཏུབ་པའི་ ལོ་ཡིག་མ་བཀའ་བའི་
 ཟེར་དེའི་དོན་ལས་སྐོར་འབྲུག་ ༢ དང་ རྒྱལ་ཁབ་བཞུན་ཡང་བོད་པ་དང་ཐུགས་བཞེས་མ་མཐུན་ཅུང་
 བྱིན་སྐོར་མེད་ཟེར་ཡིན་པའི་ ས་གནས་སྐོར་བཞེས་ལོང་ལས་རྟེན་གྲུང་བ་ཡིན་མིན་ད་ལྟ་བོད་པའི་མི་
 ཤེས་པའི་ དེ་རང་མ་ཚང་ནི་ནི་རྩི་སིང་དང་མཉེ་དུ་དེ་སྐབས་སྐོར་རྒྱལ་ནས་སྐབས་སྐར་ ༡ བཏང་བ་དེ་
 སྐྱིད་ཤོད་མཚམས་ནས་ལོ་བཀག་བཏང་མ་བཏུབ་པར་སྐར་ལོག་འདུག་པ་དེ་ཡང་བོད་པ་ནས་སྐར་ལོ་
 འོང་སྐོར་རིག་མ་གཏོགས་སྐར་མེད་གསར་སྐོར་ཕྱོགས་མི་བོད་པས་ས་ཁོང་ནས་འགྲུལ་མི་ཚོགས་པའི་
 བོད་མ་ཚེན་པོའི་དཔྱད་མཚམས་ནས་རྒྱལ་མི་ཚོགས་ཟེར་ཡིན་པའི་ ད་རེས་སྐོར་རྒྱལ་ནས་སྐྱེལ་བའི་ཡི་
 གོ་ནང་སྐབས་སྐར་ཕྱིར་ལོག་བཏང་ནོད་དེ་རྒྱལ་པོ་ཡང་ཞལ་སྐྱེམས་འདུག་པ་མ་ཚོད་ འདྲིར་ཡང་མེམས་
 མི་དགའ་བ་ལང་བ་ཡོད་ དལ་གཞི་སྐོར་འབྲུག་མ་ཚོད་ཡོན་ནང་ཕན་ཚུན་སྐར་ནས་ལོ་འགྲུལ་ཁྱེད་སྐོར་
 ཡོད་པ་མ་ཚོད་ ཚོང་མི་ཡིན་ཅུང་རྒྱ་བོད་ས་ཕྱོགས་གར་འགོ་ལོ་བཀག་མེད་པ་ རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ཕན་ཚུན་གྱི་
 མི་མ་ཟངས་ས་ཕྱོགས་བབས་པའི་གནས་མགོན་ཡིན་པའི་རྟུའུ་ལལ་མ་རེ་ཁྱེད་ཅུང་ རྒྱལ་ཁབ་བར་གྱི་
 ཐུན་སྐོར་ཕར་བཞག་ ལྷག་དུ་སྐོར་འབྲུག་ ༢ ཉམས་ རྒྱལ་ཁབ་གར་ཡང་ལོགས་པའི་མཐུན་སྐོར་གང་ཆེ་
 བྱ་བ་མིན་པ་མི་རྒྱུང་འགོ་བ་ལོ་བཀག་དེ་སྐོར་ཁྱེད་མི་འདུག་པ་ཁྱེད་ཚོ་ཁོང་ཡང་རྒྱ་ནག་གོང་མ་ཆེན་
 པོའི་བཀའ་ཁྲིམས་བཅོང་བ་དང་ཡིན་པའི་ཚོད་འོང་ བོད་ལས་ལན་གསལ་དེ་སྐོར་ཡིན་ཟེར་རྒྱལ་པོ་
 ལའང་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལུ་བཏང་ཡོད་། བོད་ལ་མི་བཏང་ནོད་སྐོར་ཡང་དེ་སྐབས་སྐྱིད་ཤོད་ནས་སྐབས་སྐོར་
 ལོག་བཏང་ནོད་དེའི་ལོ་འགྲུལ་རྒྱལ་ནོད་ཁང་འདུག་པ་བོད་ལ་མི་རེ་བཏང་དོགས་པའི་གནས་ཚུལ་རྒྱལ་
 པོ་ནས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་གསུང་བའི་བཏང་དགོས་ཟེར་ནི་ནི་རྩི་སིང་དང་ ཉ་རི་སིང་ རྩི་ལུ་ ༣ ལས་ཡང་བཤད་
 པ་ལས་ རྒྱལ་ཁབ་གར་ཡང་ལོགས་པའི་ཐུན་སྐོར་ཡིན་པའི་སྐོར་བཏང་བ་ཡིན་ཀྱང་ད་ཚུན་ཡུན་རིང་
 བཞག་པའི་རྗེས་བཅོ་ལྷའི་མཐའ་མར་མེད་ལེན་བཀའ་ ཁོང་བོད་དང་ཐུང་ཚོ་སྐོར་འབྲུག་ ༢ པོ་དེས་
 གང་ཡང་མི་བཏུབ་པའི་མི་སྐྱུ་རང་སྐར་ ༡ གིས་འགོ་ས་བཞེན་ཡིན་པའི་ ཁྱེད་ཚོ་སྐོར་འབྲུག་ ༢ པོ་ཁྱེད་

བཏང་བ་ཡང་མ་ཡིན་ཅི་ལོ་ ལ་རྟོར་ འཛེམ་བུ་ ཀང་རག་ ཤར་ཕྱོགས་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ ༡ བཅས་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་
 སོ་སོར་གང་ཡང་ལེགས་པའི་ཐུན་རྒྱུར་གང་ཆེ་བུང་བ་སྟོ་བཏང་བའི་མཐའ་མར་བོད་པ་ནས་ཁུང་གང་
 ཡང་མེད་པ་བྱེད་བཏང་འདུག་པ་ བོད་པས་ཡི་གེ་དང་ལོང་གི་སྐབས་ལུགས་ཟོ་ལུགས་བལྟ་ན་རྒྱུར་འདུག་
 ༢ དང་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་བཞུན་ཡང་ལོང་དང་མཐུན་རུང་བཏུབ་པ་དང་ མ་མཐུན་པ་འཁྲུག་པ་རྒྱབ་རུང་ལོང་ལ་
 ཀལ་བ་མེད་པའི་འགྲོས་བཞིན་དུ་ཡིན་པའི་ དེ་རང་ཡིན་རུང་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ཡང་མཛེམ་མེད་པའི་འོག་ལས་
 ཁུན་བཅུག་ཏེ་འདི་ནས་དེ་ལྟར་མཛེམ་པ་མེད་པ་ དེ་སྐོར་རྒྱལ་པོ་ཡང་ གསལ་བཞེས་མི་བདེ་བ་མི་འོང་
 བའི་ཚོད་འོང་ ལོང་གི་སྐབས་ལུགས་ཟོ་ལུགས་དང་བསྐྱུན་གསལ་བཞེས་བདེ་མིན་བྱུང་ནའང་ ཇི་ལྟར་རུང་
 རྒྱལ་པོའི་ཐུགས་དང་བསྐྱུན་མོད་དང་འདི་ལའི་སྟོན་སྟུག་ལེ་བལྟོས་ཡང་རྒྱལ་པོ་ལ་བཅར་ཚར་བའི་ འདི་
 རས་ཇི་ལྟར་ཟེར་ཡང་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལུ་མི་ཤེས་པའི་མཁེན་རྒྱུ་རྒྱལ་པོ་ཆེ་བཞུགས་པའི་དེ་སྐོར་ཁྱེད་ ༢ རས་
 ལོ་རྒྱུས་དྲང་སངས་གསལ་ལུ་དགོས་པའི་རེས་པ་དང་ སྐང་ཆེན་འཛིན་བཟུང་བྱེད་མོད་དེ་ སྐྱ་སྐྱིགས་དང་
 ཟ་ཆས་དང་ལྟོ་སྟོབ་སྐོར་ཅིས་ཀྱང་འདི་ནས་བྱེད་དགོས་ན་ སྤན་མ་མི་སེར་རང་འོག་འདུས་པའི་བདེ་
 ཞིག་བཟང་འདུག་པ་ བདེ་བཟང་མོད་དེ་འདིར་ནི་སྐོར་ཆོས་པའི་བྱ་བ་ཐུག་ནས་སྐབས་ཐོག་འབྲེལ་བ་མེད་
 ཀྱང་ ཡི་བུ་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ཆེ་ཞིང་བཞུགས་པ་མ་ཟད་ལུ་ཕྱོགས་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་མང་རབ་བཞུགས་པ་ལས་སྤན་
 མ་བདེ་ཞིག་བཟང་ནས་མཛེད་ཁྱེད་ན་ རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ཕན་ཚུན་གྱི་ཆེར་བརྗོད་ཡིན་པའི་སྐང་ཆེན་བཟུང་མོད་
 སྐོར་མ་ཟད་ དེ་བ་མིན་པའང་ཕྱག་ཕྱིས་འགྱུར་བ་འོང་ བེ་སྐོར་རྒྱལ་པའི་ལུ་ཡིག་ནང་མ་བཅུག་ཁྱེད་ ༢
 རས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་གསལ་ལུ་དགོས་དང་། ཕྱག་ཐོས་སྐོར་ཡང་ན་ཅིང་གླུན་མཐུན་ཡང་སྟེ་སྟོན་ཕྱག་ཐོ་མིན་
 པའི་ཀྱང་སར་པའི་བྱི་ལུ་ཡིན་པའི་ཟེར་རྒྱལ་སྟོན་རྟོས་གསལ་བཞེས་བདེ་མིན་བྱུང་འདུག་པ་ ཕྱག་ཏོས་ང་
 ༡༦ མ་དེ་ལག་ཆེ་ཏོག་ཏོག་རིགས་མ་གཏོགས་གང་བྱུང་དུ་མི་གནང་ཁྱེད་ ༢ ཀྱི་ཤེས་པ་ བཏང་ཡིག་
 ཡིན་པ་ལས་ད་རི་དེ་ནང་ཡང་ང་ ༡༦ མ་མ་རྒྱལ་པར་བུ་བཞི་མ་དེ་རྒྱབ་ཏེ་བཀལ་ཡོད། དེ་སོགས་སྐོར་
 ཁྱེད་ ༢ རས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་གསལ་ལུ་དགོས་པའི་རེས་པ་འཚལ། རྟེན་རྩེད་ཀར་བཅས་ཚུ་སྟེལ་རྩེ་ ༦ ཆོས་
 ༥ ལ།

Annexure 3: Edict for Dorji Phuntsho

This time, concerning Zimpon Drep Dorji Phuntsho; the stupa of Swayambhu in Nepal and the people belonged to Palden Drukpa. Meanwhile, due to suspicion during the Gorkha-Tibet conflict, the stupa and its lands were taken possession by the Gorkharaja. Earlier, the former Drabi Lopen was dispatched as an envoy to discuss the land disputes. Then, Dorji Phuntsho was sent in the

Water Monkey Year. Since Gorkharaja Jung Bahadur was very powerful, not all lands were reacquired. But he persevered by committing his time and resources and did restoration works on the Marmey Lhakhang. In addition, he acquired the land at Drangdragang along with nine tax payers. He also got a land which yields annually 403 *pathis* of paddy. He was also able to clear the misunderstanding between Gorkha and Bhutan. Having achieved great success, he returned home. In recognition for his service, the Supreme Protector Trulku, the Je Khenpo, *lopens* and members of the monastic community, the Civil Ruler (on-the-side), the Sovereign - father and son – king and ministers reduce the following levies of three layers from the tax records Thram Marthamchenm: from Tashi Lhundup at Domkha under Phangyul Drungpa, the one wet-tax; from Passang at Tsa-tong, one wet-tax; from the two wet-taxes; these two *wangyon* for Tashichho Dzung, one [load] of fuelwood for Punakha, *wangyon* for Wangdue Phodrang, *thojabs* and meat obligations. Besides, exemptions are being granted so that no side levies for *gonpas* such as milk and butter, equivalent to the size of a mustard seed need to be paid. Hereafter, till the time that teachings of Glorious Drukpas flourish, no high officials like the Supreme Head, *dzongdas* and *lhengyes*, no middle-rank officers like *dronyer*, *zimpon*, *nyerchen*, *drungpa* and *kutshab* as well as the junior officials and even a single ordinary person can deviate from this unchanging vajra seal. Granted on the Tenth Day of the Tenth Month of the Water Bird Year [1873-1874] at Pungthang Dechen Phodrang!

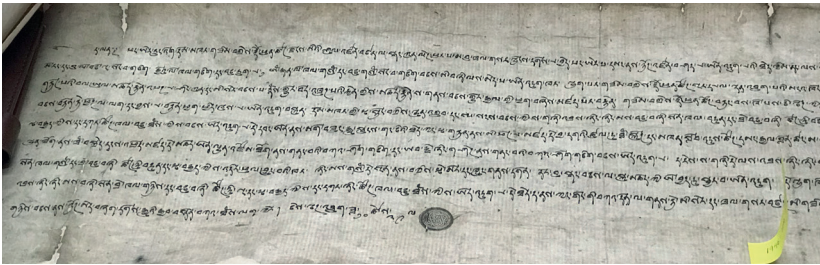
ནས་མགོན་གཟིམ་གཉེར་ཆེན་རྒྱལ་མ་སྐྱ་ཚབ་རིགས་དང་རྒྱལ་བ་ཐ་ན་མི་སེར་ཕལ་པ་གཅིག་གིས་ཀྱང་
བསྐྱེད་བཅས་ཉ་ཉེག་སྐྱ་ཅམ་ཡང་བྱེད་མ་ཚོག་པའི་ཕྱིན་ཆད་འགྱུར་མེད་དོ་རྗེའི་བཀའ་ཐམས། ཅེས་རྒྱ་མོ་
བྱ་ལོར་སློ ༡༠ ཚེས་ལ་སྤྱངས་ཐང་བདེ་ཆེན་ལོ་བྱང་ནས་གནང་བ་དགོ།

Annexure 4: Edict for Kuenley Phurb

This time, concerning the accusation by the community of Phangyul against Kuenley Phurb and her son from Tsenlagang, who are the descendants of Zimpon Drep Dorji Phuntsho from Domkhar under Phangyul Drungpa about the need to designate them as new tax payers; the only able-bodied persons in the family are herself, her 15-year old son, a 36-year old serf and a 73-year old woman. Moreover, when the stupa of Swayambhu in Nepal and the people belonging to Palden Drukpa were taken over by Gorkharaja in the context of Gorkha-Tibet conflict, Zimpon Drep Dorji Phuntsho was sent. He served to the best of his ability. From Tsa-tong of Domkhar, the landholdings of Tashi Lhundrup and at Domkhar, the landholding of Passang¹⁶ consist of four plots of paddy fields requiring 154 *dreys* of seeds, landholdings which yield 6008 *dreys* of grains for the purpose of ritual feast, and landholding which yield 200 *dreys* of wheat; however, all obligations for *wangyon* as well as corvée labour had been exempted by the collective decision of Lam Kuzhu, the Je Khenpo, *lopens* and members of the monastic community, ruler and ministers. The tax obligations have been removed from the register and to this effect, an edict was issued. Moreover, there is also an ordinance issued by my late father. Today, from these landholdings, there are seven plots of paddy fields that require 74 *dreys* of seeds, and land yielding 2,808 *dreys* of grains earmarked for ritual feast have been offered here. Three plots of lands have been earmarked for various rituals and

16 These two persons are mentioned in Appendix 3. We do not know the exact relationship between them and Kuenley Phurb since the *kasho* does not specify.

ceremonies conducted at Tashi Tsemo, Chungney Goenpa and Norbugang. Hence, for their own livelihood, they have only four plots of landholdings requiring 54 *dreys* of seeds, land yielding 2008 *dreys* of grains and land yielding 200 *dreys* of wheats. For this matter, even hereafter, this certificate is issued to reaffirm the provisions of the earlier edict so that the people and the *zimgarp*, who is responsible for settling in new tax payers, must honour them and retain [the family] without any objection. Issued on the Twenty Ninth Day of the Tenth Month of Iron Dragon Year [1880-1881]. Seal of Chhoetse.



། དེ་ལས་ སང་ཡེར་རྩུང་འོག་དོམ་མཁར་གཤིམ་བགོས་ཇོ་རྩེ་ཕུན་ཚོགས་གོང་ས་མའི་ཤུལ་འཛིན་
བཅོམ་ལ་སྐང་ཀུན་ལེགས་ཕུར་པ་མ་སྲ་ལྷལ་གསལ་ལྟོང་ས་དགོས་པ་བྱེད་པར་དེར་ཡེར་དམངས་ནས་
ཉེ་གས་འཛིན་བཤད་པ་ཡིན་འདུག་པའི་ཐེངས་ཀྱིས་ནང་ལས་ མོ་རང་དང་སྲུ་ལོ་བཅོམ་ལྷོ་སོང་བ་གཅིག་
རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལལ་གཅིག་དང་བཅུ་རྒྱག་པ་ ༡ ལམ་རྒྱན་ལོ་ལལ་གསལ་དང་བཅུ་གསལ་སོང་བ་གཅིག་
བཅས་མི་བཞི་ལས་མེད་པ་ཡིན་འདུག་ལར་ ལྷག་པར་གཤིམ་བགོས་ཇོ་རྩེ་ཕུན་ཚོགས་སྲུང་དཔལ་
ལྷན་འབྲུག་པའི་མངའ་ཁོང་སྲུ་གཏོགས་པའི་བལ་ཡུལ་མཚོད་རྟེན་འཕགས་པ་ཤིང་ཀུན་དང་མི་སེར་
བཅས་པ་རྣམས་སྟོར་བོད་འབྲུགས་པའི་རྒྱུན་གྱིས་མཚོད་རྟེན་ས་གནས་བཅས་སྟོར་རྒྱལ་གྱིས་ཕྱག་
བཞེས་མཛད་པར་བརྟེན་ གཤིམ་བགོས་ཇོ་རྩེ་ཕུན་ཚོགས་བཏང་བས་ ཁོ་པས་ཅི་ལྟོགས་ཀྱི་རྒྱ་དང་
སྲུང་ས་བཅས་བཏོན་ཏེ་ཕྱོགས་ལ་ལག་དང་བྱས་པ་བཏོན་ཕྱག་ཕྱིད་ལུས་པ་ཡིན་འདུག་བསུན་ དོམ་
ཁར་རྩ་རྩོད་བགྱིས་ལྷན་འབྲུག་དང་སྲུ་སངས་བཅས་ཀྱི་ས་གཞི་འབྲས་ཞིང་ཞིང་མས་བཅུ་བཞི་སོན་
ལལ་བདུན་དང་བེ་བཅུ་བཞི་ཚོགས་ཉི་ཤུ་བཅོམ་ལྷོ་སོང་ཕྱ་དང་རྩ་བརྒྱད་ཀྱི་ས་དང་དཀར་ཚོགས་ལལ་བཅུ་

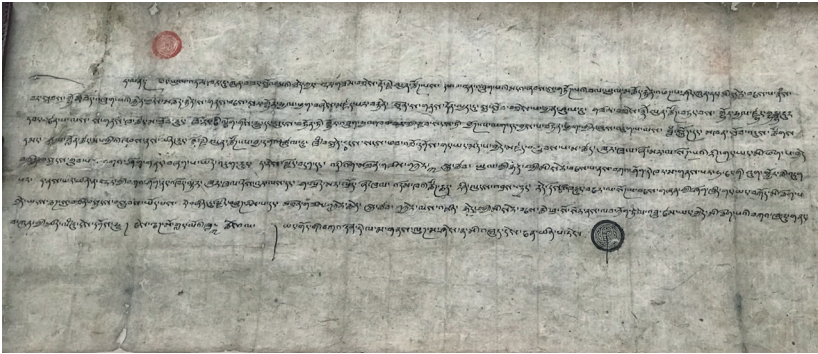
ཐམས་ཀྱི་ས་བཅས་ཡིན་འདུག་པ་དེ་དབང་ཡོན་ནས་མགོ་བརྒྱུད་རྒྱ་སྤངས་གང་ཅིའི་ཐེང་ཀྱང་ཚུ་གཏན་
 རྣམ་མི་ཕོགས་པ་མཛད་དེ་བྱ་དགའི་རྩིས་དུ་གྲམ་སྐྱོགས་གཞོགས་དང་མཁན་སྐོབ་འདུས་ཚོགས་
 དམངས་རྒྱལ་སྐོན་ཚང་མ་ལྷན་ཐོག་ནས་ཁམས་བསྐྱེད་དྲངས་འཕྲོད་མཛད་དེ་མཚོད་ཡོན་ལྷན་འཛོམས་ཐོག་
 རྣམ་གཞན་བའི་བཀའ་ཤོག་གཅིག་དང་ཡབ་རྗེ་ཞིང་གཤེགས་རྣམ་གཞན་བའི་བཀའ་ཤོགས་གཅིག་
 བཅས་ཡོད་འདུག་པ་ ད་རེས་ས་གཞི་དེ་ལས་འབྲས་ཞིང་ཞིང་མས་སོན་ཁལ་གསུམ་དང་བྲི་བཅུ་བཞི་
 ཚོགས་ཉི་ཤུ་བདུ་དང་ཚུ་བརྒྱད་ཀྱི་ས་འདིར་ཕུལ་བྱུང་བའི་ཁར་ ཞིང་མས་གསུམ་དེ་སྔོན་རྣམ་བཀྱིས་
 ཚུ་མོར་དང་བྱུང་གནས་མགོན་ རོར་བུ་སྐྱང་བཅས་ལ་སྐུ་མཚོད་ཀྱི་ཡོ་བྱད་དུ་སྐྱུར་བ་ཡིན་འདུག་ དེ་
 ལྷག་ཁོང་འབྲས་ཞིང་ཞིང་མས་བཞི་སོན་བྲི་ཁལ་གཉིས་དང་བཅུ་བཞི་ཚོགས་ཉི་ཤུ་ལྟ་དང་ཚུ་བརྒྱད་ཀྱི་
 ས་དང་དཀར་ཞིང་ཚོགས་ཁལ་བཅུ་ཐམས་ཀྱི་ས་ཡོད་འདུག་པ་དེ་དེད་ནས་ཀྱང་གོང་གི་བཀའ་དོན་ལ་
 གནས་ཏེ་མི་སེར་དང་ཁལ་གསར་བཙུགས་མི་གཟིམ་སྐར་པ་དང་མི་སེར་གཉིས་བཅས་རྣམ་ཉེགས་
 མེད་བཞག་དགོས་རྒྱུ་འི་རྒྱབ་བསྐྱོན་བཀའ་ཐམ་ལག་ཁྱེད། ཅེས་ལྷགས་འབྲུག་གླེ་ ༡༠ ཚེས ༢༩ ལ།

Annexure 5: Edict for Kunzang Drolma

This time, concerning Kunzang Drolma of Domkhar in Phangyul; earlier, the stupa of Swayambhu in Nepal and the people belonging to Palden Drukpa were taken over by Gorkharaja in the context of Gorkha-Tibet conflict. Earlier, the former Drabi Lopen was dispatched as an envoy to discuss land disputes. Then, Zimpon Drep Dorji Phuntsho was sent. Since Gorkharaja Jung Bahadur was very powerful, not all lands were reacquired. But his steadfast endeavours cleared the misunderstanding between Gorkha and Bhutan. For his great service, the Lama Kuzhu, the Je Khenpo, *lopens* and members of the monastic community, the ruler and ministers jointly ensured that there will be no removal of land titles, and granted exemptions for all tax obligations. Besides, exemptions were granted for all other side levies like milk and butter. Despite the exemption, the *dzongda*, *dronyer*, *zimpon*, *nyerchen*, *kutshab* as well as the *gup*, *chimi* and the people have not honoured the edict but instead inflicted tremendous hardship and harassment. Be it known that hereafter, no side taxes, corvée

labour, meat, milk and butter tax, levies of Domkhar offering rituals, rice obligations for Rinpong, and de-husking of paddy loads and the likes will ever be imposed. Since the exemptions remain in force, no successive dzongdas, dronyer, zimpon, nyerchen, kutshab, assistant to the nyerpa, gup, chimi and people can utter a word as small as the size of a mustard seed. Everyone must honour this edict granted on the Third Day of the Third Month of the Iron Ox Year [1901/1902]. If the above is not honoured, be it known that this is definitely unacceptable!

Seal of Chhoetse!



། དཔལ་ལེན་པའི་ཡུལ་འདོམ་ཁར་དུ་ཀུན་བཟང་སྟོལ་མའི་ཐེང་ཀྱང་སྲུང་གཟིམ་བགོས་དོན་ཕྱན་
ཚོགས་པས་ དཔལ་ལེན་འབྲུག་པའི་མངའ་ཞབས་སུ་གཏོགས་པའི་བལ་ཡུལ་མཚོན་རྟེན་འཕགས་པ་
ཤིང་ཀུན་དང་མི་སེང་བཅས་པ་རྣམས་ བར་སྐབས་སྟོར་བོད་འབྲུག་པའི་རྒྱུན་གྱིས་ མཚོན་རྟེན་ས་
གནས་བཅས་སྲུང་སྟོར་རྒྱལ་ཕྱག་བཞེས་མཛད་པར་བརྟེན་ སྟོན་ས་གནས་དོན་སྟོང་དུ་སྐྱོད་བགོས་
པ་བྱོན་ལུལ་དུ་ གཟིམ་བགོས་དོན་ཕྱན་ཚོགས་བཏང་བས་སྟོར་རྒྱལ་རྫོང་སྐྱོད་དཔང་བཅོན་པ་ལས་
ས་གནས་ཁ་ཚང་མ་ཐོབ་རུང་ ཁོར་འཕྲོད་གིས་རྒྱ་དང་སྲུང་ས་བཏོན་ཏེ་སྟོར་འབྲུག་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་བར་གྱི་
རྩལ་བསངས་ཏེ་ ཕྱོགས་ལ་ལག་དང་བྱས་པ་བཏོན་ཕྱག་ཕྱིར་ཞུ་འདུག་པ་ལས་སྟོར་སྟོན་གས་དང་མཁའ་
སྟོན་འདུས་ཚོགས་དམང་ རྒྱལ་སྟོན་ཚང་མ་སྤྱིའི་ཞབས་ནས་ཡིན་རུང་དོན་ཕྱན་ཚོགས་ལ་བྱ་དགའ་
ཚུལ་དུ་ཁྲམ་བསྐྱོད་དངས་སངས་ཐབ་འགོ་དགོས་གང་ཡང་མེད་པ་བྱེད་མཛད་བསྐྱབས་པ་མ་ཚད་ལྷུར་
ཁལ་ཞོ་མར་ལ་སོགས་པའི་རིགས་གང་ཡང་མི་ཐོག་པ་བྱེད་བཀྱིན་བསྐྱུངས་སྲུབ་པས་བཀའ་ཤོགས་

གནང་བཞག་པ་ཡོད་འདུག་ཅུང་ ད་ལྟོ་རྒྱུ་བདག་དང་ འདི་འོག་མགོན་གཟུང་གཉེར་ཟུ་ཚོ་བས་
 དུལ་གྱི་རྒྱུ་སྤྱི་མི་སེར་བཅས་པ་ནས་བཀའ་ཤོག་དེ་ལར་མ་གནས་པར་ཉ་ཅང་གི་སྤྱི་གཞུང་ཚེ་འདུག་
 པར་ ད་ནས་མར་ཡིན་ན་སྤར་གྱི་བཀའ་ཤོག་ནང་འཁོད་ལྟར་ ཟུར་ཁུལ་དོས་ལུར་ལས་དང་ ཤ་སྤོད་
 མར་སྤོད་ཞོ་ཁུལ་འདོམ་འའི་ཚོགས་ཆད་ རིན་སྤུངས་འབྲས་སྤར་ རེད་དོས་བདུང་བཅར་ལ་སོགས་པ་
 བཅས་གཞག་གྱི་ཤོག་ཁྲིད་གང་ཡང་བཀོད་མི་ཚོགས་པ་བྱེད་ཡངས་ཆགས་སུ་བཀྱིན་བསྐྱུངས་བསྐྱུངས་
 ཡོད་པས་ དེ་བཞིན་དུ་རྒྱུ་བཞག་སེམ་པ་དང་མགོན་གཟུང་གཉེར་ལས་འཛོན་རྒྱུ་སྤྱི་མི་སེར་བཅས་
 ཚེ་སྤོད་སོར་ནས་འབ་ཉོག་ཉིལ་འབྲུ་ཅོམ་ཡང་བྱེད་མི་ཚོགས་པའི་བཀའ་ཁྲིད་དུ་གནང་བ་ཀུན་གྱི་ཡིད་ལོ་
 དུ་རེས་དགོས་རྒྱུ། ཅེས་ལུགས་མོ་སྤང་ལོ་རྒྱུ་ ཟུ་ཚོས་ལ། ཡང་གོང་གི་བཀའ་དོན་དེ་ལ་མ་གནས་
 ལུགས་མ་ཤེས་ན་མི་འབྲུད་དེས་ཅན་ཡིན་པ་དེས།

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Sonam Kinga is a member of the Teaching Faculty at the Royal Institute of Governance and Strategic Studies. He is also concurrently the Inaugural Fellow at the Institute.

Between 2019 and 2022, he served as the Chairperson of Druk Gyalpo's Institute, Chairperson of De-suung Skilling Program, member of the National Service Core Working Group and member of the Task Force for National Resilience Fund during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2019, he was a Visiting Scholar at the Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies in Kyoto University, and in 2002, a Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute of Developing Economies (IDE) in Tokyo. He was also a founding member and researcher at The Centre for Bhutan Studies from 1999 to 2004.

He served as a member of Parliament for 10 years (2008-2018). In his first five-year term (2008-2013), he served as the Deputy Chairperson of the National Council and as the Chairperson in his second term.

His research interests are state-society relations, Bhutan's political history, democracy and oral literature. His works include *Changes in Bhutanese Social Structure* (IDE, 2002), *Polity, Kingship and Democracy* (Ministry of Education: Bhutan, 2009) and *Democratic Transition in Bhutan* (Routledge, 2019).

The Kingdom of Bhutan and the Republic of Nepal established formal diplomatic relations only in 1983. However, bilateral relations between the two Himalayan neighbours had existed for centuries. Bhutan had sent a total of twenty-two monk-ambassadors starting with Choeje Damchoe Pekar (the Fourth Je Khenpo) around 1670 to the courts of eight Gorkha rulers. Bhutan's missions to Nepal continued for the next one hundred and eighty years till the geo-political developments in the later part of 19th century affected the relations. The relations were nonetheless reformulated thereafter although it did not take the shape of the previous centuries. This study provides an overview of the various missions, revisits existing narratives with new research findings and explores the character and content of the relations.

The Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic Studies, a premier leadership institute and a think tank, was established by His Majesty The King in 2013. The first of its kind in the country, RIGSS is an autonomous, not-for-profit institute to promote excellence in leadership, governance, and strategic studies. It conducts executive training programs and carries out research on the accomplishments and future directions for governance.

