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**multiple secularities**

Dagmar Schwerk

# **Drawing Lines in a Mandala**

A Sketch of Boundaries Between  
Religion and Politics in Bhutan

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Leipzig University  
HCAS "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities"  
Nikolaistraße 8–10  
04109 Leipzig  
Germany

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# Drawing Lines in a Maṇḍala

## A Sketch of Boundaries Between Religion and Politics in Bhutan\*

### Summary

In the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, three major Buddhist governments that combined a twofold religious and political structure under a Buddhist ruler were established in the Tibetan cultural area (hereafter: Joint Twofold System of Governance).<sup>1</sup> In 1625/26,<sup>2</sup> Bhutan was united under the rule of a charismatic Tibetan Buddhist master, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel (1594–ca. 1651; hereafter: Zhabdrung); Tibet and Sikkim followed, both in 1642 – although with significant differences in their respective institutionalisation.

The Bhutanese government as a constitutional monarchy with a Buddhist king is the only one among the three still in existence today. Bhutan's transformation into a modern society along the lines of this Joint Twofold System of Governance under the conditions of non-colonialisation but with crucial and intense encounters of its societal elites with Western

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\* This paper results from research as a Senior Research Fellow at the Kolleg-Forschungsgruppe (KFG) “Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities” between November 2017 and May 2018. For further information, please consult <https://www.multiple-secularities.de/team/dagmar-schwerk/>. I would like to thank Christoph Kleine, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, Per K. Sørensen, and Judith Zimmermann for their suggestions and comments on my paper. In addition, I owe my sincere thanks to the members of the Kolleg-Forschungsgruppe and colleagues from Tibetan and Bhutanese Studies, who significantly broadened my academic horizon through the intense and fruitful discussions during my time in Leipzig and beyond. In particular, I would like to express my gratefulness towards my Bhutanese and Tibetan teachers and colleagues, both traditional and Western academics, and my Bhutanese friends – to whom, in general, the credit for my research mainly goes.

- 1 As Tibetan cultural area is considered regions that have significant populations either speaking the Tibetan language and its vernaculars or practising Tibetan Buddhism as religion. This roughly includes what nowadays constitutes Northern Pakistan, the Tibetan Autonomous Region, parts of the Western Chinese provinces of Yunnan, Sichuan, Qinghai and Gansu, Bhutan, Mongolia, parts of the Indian Himalayas, such as Ladakh and Sikkim, and parts of Nepal, such as Mustang and Dolpo; see also Matthew T. Kapstein, *The Tibetans* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 1–2.
- 2 The corresponding Western year is not entirely clear, since the sources refer to the eleventh month of the Tibetan Wood Ox Year, lying between the middle of December and January, cf. John A. Ardussi, “Bhutan Before the British: A Historical Study” (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1977), 212, accessed June 22, 2019, <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/11280>.

and Asian forms of modernity and secularity represents, therefore, a unique case in point.

First, to determine, how emic terms in classical Tibetan relate to the etic terms currently used in international and interdisciplinary discourses about secularity, religion, and modernity in Bhutan in English, it is indispensable to extract emic terms as functional equivalents for the 'religious' and 'political' sphere in pre-modern Bhutan from textual sources that deal with the Joint Twofold System of Governance. I set out to analyse their applicability to sketch out not only institutionalised but as well merely conceptualised boundaries between the 'religious' and 'political' sphere – boundaries that have been permanently negotiated and shifting. To demonstrate the purpose of my reflective endeavours, this paper then exemplarily correlates emic terms and the respective areas of interest with the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan* from 2008 and the Buddhism-induced ideas and policies of Gross National Happiness (GNH).

Second, although this brings to light important emic terms important for research on secularities – understood as distinction and differentiation processes in the spirit of the 'multiple secularities' approach in a non-evaluating sense, further research needs to systematically address the language shifts from classical Tibetan to Dzongkha and English as a literary medium and the plurilingualism in discourses in contemporary Bhutan today.

Third, since the societal order of the Joint Twofold System of Governance today in Bhutan is still profoundly grounded in a non-Western cosmological order – that of Tantric Buddhism – I further argue that any analytical framework that aims to facilitate fruitful research about distinction and differentiation processes – resulting in secularities – has to address not only factual institutional arrangements but include the religious-doctrinal background of Buddhism systematically.<sup>3</sup>

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3 The title of this paper and the captions of section two intentionally but creatively allude to a Maṇḍala as some of its numerous applications connect well with a variety of themes touched upon in this paper. A Maṇḍala can symbolically represent a cosmological and metaphysical scheme, can be interpreted on a philosophical and doctrinal level or as a symbolic representation of the human body in meditative practices and rituals. In addition, it is used in medical practices and found in the architecture of famous sacred sites. Here, most important is its use as a geopolitical concept. Stanley Tambiah has called it poignantly a "geometric, topographical, cosmological, and societal blueprint;" see Stanley J. Tambiah, "The galactic polity in Southeast Asia," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3, no. 3 (2013): 503–04. While a Maṇḍala transgresses duality, it draws at the same time manifold boundaries. Consequently, it possesses distinctions and differentiations defining

In response to that, I suggest in closing to visualise the areas that point to distinction and differentiation processes in pre-modern Bhutan not only between the opposing etic poles of ‘religious’ and ‘other societal spheres’/ ‘secular’ but also to juxtapose them on a ‘Buddhist’ matrix with Christoph Kleine’s “three-layered concept of immanence, relative and absolute transcendence.”<sup>4</sup>

By presenting first findings of the specific and unique case example of pre-modern Bhutan this paper hopefully yields benefit for further interdisciplinary discourses about secularity, religion, and modernity in contemporary Bhutan – paying thereby tribute to the complexity of this field of research. Besides for Bhutan, this analytical framework can be adapted for further research about different pre-modern formations of the Joint Two-fold System of Governance in the Tibetan cultural area as a whole.

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Secularity, Secularism, and Secularisation

This text-critical analysis of the primary source materials partially adapts etic terms, as laid out in the research programme of the HCAS “Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities,”<sup>5</sup> which are of great benefit in the case example of Bhutan.

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functions and rules, when applied in our context, in my view, ‘secularities’. For an extensive introduction, see Stanley J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). The apparent parallels to Buddhist conceptions of rule through Zhabdrung in Bhutan, and more broadly, of governance, morality, and polity in Bhutan that remain until today will become clear in the course of this paper.

- 4 See Christoph Kleine, “Religion and the Secular in Premodern Japan from the Viewpoint of Systems Theory,” *Journal of Religion in Japan* 2, no. 1 (2013).
- 5 See Christoph Kleine and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, “Research Programme of the HCAS ‘Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities’” Leipzig, March 2016. For a detailed account of the development and definition of the concept of ‘multiple secularities’, see Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Marian Burchardt, “Vielfältige Säkularitäten: Vorschlag zu einer vergleichenden Analyse religiös-säkularer Grenzziehungen,” *Denkströme. Journal der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig* 7 (2011): 53–71; Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Marian Burchardt, “Multiple Secularities. Towards a Cultural Sociology of Secular Modernities,” *Comparative Sociology* 11, no. 6 (2012): 875–909; Marian Burchardt, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, and Matthias Middell, eds., *Multiple Secularities: Beyond the West. Religion and Modernity in the Global Age* (Boston: de Gruyter, 2015); and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Marian Burchardt, “Revisiting the Secular: Multiple Secularities and Pathways to Modernity,” *Working Paper Series of the HCAS “Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities”* 2 (Leipzig University, 2017).

Christoph Kleine and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr propose the term ‘secularity’ as an “analytical term” and “heuristic concept” – “a modality of distinction and differentiation” between religious and non-religious – defined as follows:

We use the term secularity in a more general sense for *institutionally as well as symbolically embedded forms and arrangements for distinguishing between religion and other societal areas, practices and interpretations*. We therefore do not understand secularity to be the opposite of religion [...], but rather associate the term with the modality of making distinctions, and are investigating this *modality, as well as its prerequisites and effects*.<sup>6</sup>

I understand the term ‘secularisation’ to refer only to the process of social distinction (conceptual) and differentiation (institutional) between societal spheres – here the religious and mainly the political – at a given point in time in a non-evaluating sense. As José Casanova has pointed out, secularisation does not necessarily entail the privatisation of religion or the decline of religious belonging, belief and participation. I also separate the use of the terms ‘secularity’ and ‘secularism’, the latter being understood as an ideological legitimisation or promotion of the institutional arrangement for separating religion from politics.<sup>7</sup>

In the spirit of the ‘multiple secularities concept’, I share the assumption that complex distinction and differentiation processes took place in many pre-modern non-Western societies and that these can provide new insights into alternative pathways towards modernity and contribute significantly to the field of secularity and modernity studies. In Bhutan, as elsewhere, these processes included negotiations between different actors and institutions. Such negotiations sought to tackle the issue of competing functions in society, and often resulted in overlapping and continually shifting boundaries of religious and other societal spheres.

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6 Kleine and Wohlrab-Sahr, “Research Programme of the HCAS ‘Multiple Secularities,’” 3.

7 I follow in my use of the etic terms ‘secularity’, ‘secularisation’, and ‘secularism’ the distinctions laid out in the Research Programme of the HCAS “Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities,” see Kleine and Wohlrab-Sahr, 1–3.



## 1.2 Emic and Etic Categories and Concepts

While recognising the importance of giving greater prominence in Western academic discourse to discussion of alternative pathways towards modernity, I am nonetheless aware of the challenges inherent in such endeavours. Two examples of these challenges are: (1) linguistic and methodological barriers to accessing emic terminologies (with, in certain cases, reliance on translations); and (2) orality of emic terminologies not documented in textual sources. Therefore, my research aims to be a first stepping stone for further studies with the hope that other researchers in and outside of Bhutan will proceed in this direction.

I apply the terminology of ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ in this paper, as this offers a sensible and systematic approach for discussing the intricate Tibetan-English and Dzongkha-English translation processes. Pre-modern religious and historiographical works composed by Bhutanese authors were traditionally written in classical Tibetan, called the “language of religion” (Tib. *chos skad*) in Bhutan. However, the official national language of Bhutan nowadays is Dzongkha, the “language of the fortress” (Tib. *rdzong kha*), which derived from dialects called “Ngalongkha” (Tib. *snga long kha*) originally mostly spoken in the Western valleys of Bhutan. After the foundation of the State of Bhutan in 1625/26, Dzongkha became the spoken vernacular of the administration. Only since the 1960s, however, has Dzongkha been promoted nationwide and thus steadily developed as a literary language.<sup>8</sup> Official legal and administrative documents are nowadays issued in most cases in two languages, English and Dzongkha, and

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8 For a concise overview of the various languages and vernaculars used in Bhutan, see Karma Phuntsho, *History of Bhutan* (Noida: Random House, India, 2013), 51–62; see also Michael V. Aris, *Bhutan: The Early History of a Himalayan Kingdom* (Warminster, Wiltshire: Aris & Phillips Ltd, 1979), xvi–xvii. In particular, regarding the role of language politics in language shifts during nation-building and modernisation processes, which, as in the case of Bhutan, often result in a shift from plurilingualism to monolingual or dual language policies; see Mark Turin, “Concluding Thoughts on Language Shifts and Linguistic Diversity in the Himalayas: The Case of Nepal,” in *The Politics of Language Contact in the Himalayas*, ed. Selma K. Sonntag and Mark Turin (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2019, forthcoming), 125–34. For a concise overview of this field of study and the respective contributions in this volume, which include theoretical approaches with respective Himalayan case studies, see Selma K. Sonntag, “Introduction: Language Politics and Language Contact,” in *The Politics of Language Contact*, ed. Sonntag and Turin, 7–17. This publication is an excellent starting point to further address the Bhutanese language shifts (oral and literary) concerning modernisation and secularisation processes.

English is also the language of teaching in education. The pre-modern textual sources employed in my research for tracing emic terms are therefore naturally in classical Tibetan. However, as classical Tibetan and Dzongkha both belong to the Tibeto-Burman language family, classical Tibetan emic terms are often found (or even adopted) in Dzongkha, for example, in the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan* from 2008. It is with this particular linguistic setting of challenging language shifts in mind that I sketch out the crucial emic terms within the conception of the Joint Twofold System of Governance.

For further studies on secularity in contemporary Bhutan, three aspects need to be systematically addressed: (1) the plurilingualism in discourses in Bhutan, carried out not just in Dzongkha and English, but also in other common vernaculars, such as Nepali and Tshangla; (2) the existing gap between written and oral communication media; and (3) the increasing role of social media and the development of civil society. To sufficiently address these aspects, textual studies have to include additional ethnographic field research in Bhutan.

Finally, it is necessary to locate Bhutan's discourses in the wider Tibetan cultural area. Members of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in exile, the Tibetan exile communities, and Tibetan intellectuals within China and Mongolia have debated topics such as newly defining the Joint Twofold System of Governance, 'religious' and 'secular', or the place of religion in the public domain. These discourses on secularity, secularism, and secularisation have to be distinguished from those exclusive to Bhutan, let alone from the linguistic perspective, and do not form part of my analysis.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.3 Technical Annotations

As my paper is aimed at reaching an interdisciplinary readership that may not be familiar with the languages of Tibetan, Sanskrit, Nepali, and Dzongkha, I spell Tibetan and Bhutanese proper names, place names and terms phonetically according to the THL Simplified Phonetic Transcription of Standard Tibetan by David Germano and Nicolas Tournadre. The exception to this is Bhutanese proper names, such as those of the Buddhist

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<sup>9</sup> For a concise overview of these discourses and the related Tibetan emic terms, see Holly Gayley and Nicole Willock, "Introduction. Theorizing the Secular in Tibetan Cultural Worlds," *Himalaya: The Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies* 36, no. 1 (2016): 12–21.

kings of Bhutan, which follow their own convention.<sup>10</sup> By contrast, titles of Tibetan and Bhutanese works and emic Dzongkha, Nepali, Sanskrit and Tibetan terms that are crucial to my analysis are transliterated in cursive script and are usually bracketed. Emic terms form the core of my analysis and therefore serve to facilitate research and discussions in Buddhist and Tibetan studies. The emic terms in brackets are preceded by an abbreviation denoting the language: Dzongkha (Dzo.), Nepali (Nep.), Sanskrit (Skt.), and Tibetan (Tib.). In case of terms in several languages in one bracket, the terms are separated by a colon. The transliteration of Tibetan and Dzongkha characters follows the system of Turrell W. Wylie.<sup>11</sup> Sanskrit characters are transliterated according to the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST). Birth-and-death dates follow the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (hereafter: BDRC) unless noted otherwise.<sup>12</sup>

#### 1.4 Textual Sources

My analysis of emic terms, in particular, focused on the standardised *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729* (Tib. *dPal 'brug pa rin po che mthu chen ngag gi dbang po'i bka' khrims phyogs thams cad las rnam par rgyal ba'i gtam*), that lays out the rules of the Joint Twofold System of Governance. It was written down and arranged by the tenth Chief Abbot Tendzin Chögyel (1701–66/67) and consists of three parts: (1) *Introduction into the principles of theocratic rule*;<sup>13</sup> (2) *The duties of rulers and ministers*; and (3) *The duties of government officials*.<sup>14</sup> Michael Aris has highlighted its significance in

10 See David Germano and Nicolas Tournadre, “THL Simplified Phonetic Transcription of Standard Tibetan,” 2003, accessed June 14, 2019, <http://www.thlib.org/reference/transliteration/#!essay=/thl/phonetics/s/b1>.

11 See Turrell W. Wylie, “A Standard System of Tibetan Transcription,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 22, no. 2 (1959): 261–67.

12 See *Buddhist Digital Resource Center*, accessed June 22, 2019, <https://www.tbrc.org/>.

13 For lack of a suitable emic term, I follow Michael Aris and other scholars in using the terms ‘theocratic’/‘theocracy’ throughout the paper. Nonetheless it should be highlighted that neither ‘hierocracy’ (rule of priests) nor ‘theocracy’ (rule by God) are appropriate descriptors for Bhutan. Note that for the case of Tibet, David Seyfort Ruegg has proposed ‘Bodhisattvacracy’. Since Zhabdrung’s activities and his reputation have a strong emphasis on Tantric Buddhist rule, I am hesitant to adopt it for the case of Bhutan, see David Seyfort Ruegg, “Introductory Remarks on the Spiritual and Temporal Orders,” in *The relationship between religion and state (chos srid zung 'brel) in traditional Tibet: Proceedings of a seminar held in Lumbini, Nepal, March 2000*, ed. Christoph Cüppers (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2004), 11.

14 See Michael V. Aris, *Sources for the History of Bhutan* (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für tibetische und buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 1986), 7–8; 121–86. Unless stated other-

providing unique insights into the principles and practices of governance of the Joint Twofold System of Governance in pre-modern Bhutan.<sup>15</sup> In addition, emic terms and concepts from the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729* remain central to the constitutional framework of Bhutan today, and its political philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH). For example, the academic and popular literature on Gross National Happiness (GNH) frequently refers back to the term “happiness/well-being” (Tib./Dzo. *bde skyid*) found in the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729*.<sup>16</sup>

The *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729* is contextualised by other Tibetan language sources such as Bhutanese historiographical writings. Two historiographical works, in particular, are fundamental to the study of pre-modern Bhutan, but remain only partially translated. The first history of Bhutan (Tib. *lHo'i chos 'byung bstan pa rin po che'i 'phro mthud 'jam mgon smon mtha'i 'phreng ba*; hereafter: *History of Bhutan I*) was written by the tenth Chief Abbot Tendzin Chögyel, and includes the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729*. Michael Aris has observed that, out of a total of one hundred and fifty folios, only six folios concern the time prior to the unification of Bhutan by Zhabdrung in 1625/26. Furthermore, only five of these six address the history of the Drukpa Kagyü school. By contrast, the second history (Tib. *dPal ldan 'brug pa'i gdul zhing lho phyogs nags mo'i ljongs kyi chos 'byung blo gsar ma ba'i rgyan*; hereafter: *History of Bhutan II*), written by the sixty-ninth Chief Abbot Gendün Rinchen (1926–97) in 1972, covers all periods of the Drukpa Kagyü school in Bhutan, as well as the earlier history of the Tibetan lineages. Gendün Rinchen drew from a wide range of sources for his history, however a number of these sources still remain to

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wise, I have followed Michael Aris' text-critical reading of the Tibetan text and translation. Other 'earlier' Bhutanese sources dealing with the monastic or civil law, and conceptions of governance are: (1) Zhabdrung's personal seal, called the “Sixteen I's”, (Tib. *nga bcu drug ma*); (2) his early monastic code (Tib. *rtsa yig chen mo*) dated to 1629; and (3) the 'first' legal code from 1652 on slates of Punakha Dzong, Bhutan, that are almost entirely illegible; see Michael Givel and Laura Figueroa, “Early Happiness Policy as a Government Mission of Bhutan: A Survey of the Bhutanese Unwritten Constitution from 1619 to 1729,” *Journal of Bhutan Studies* 31, no. 2 (2014): 1–21. For a translation of the 'first' legal code, see Michaela Windischgrätz and Rinzin Wangdi, *The Black-Slate Edict of Punakha Dzong* (Thimphu: JSW Law Publishing Series 2019), accessed June 28, 2019, <https://univie.academia.edu/MichaelaWindischgrätz>.

15 Aris, *Bhutan: The Early History*, xxx–xxxii.

16 See Karma Ura et al., “A Short Guide to Gross National Happiness Index,” 6, accessed June 21, 2019, <http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Short-GNH-Index-edited.pdf>.

be identified or located.<sup>17</sup> My research is contextualised by these Bhutanese and other Tibetan religious histories as well as civil and monastic codes.<sup>18</sup>

I have as well considered, but not systematically analysed the fascinating travel account (*Relação*) of two Jesuit missionaries Estevão Cacalla and João Cabral dated to October 24, 1627. Their first-hand witnesses' report describes their experiences during Zhabdrung's political and religious mass-campaigning directly after he announced the foundation of the State of Bhutan under his rule, and it is the first documented encounter of Western missionaries with Bhutanese culture and religion. These Jesuit missionaries spent nearly eight months with the Zhabdrung in Bhutan in 1627 and were even offered an own chapel room in his main Buddhist monastery Cheri to proselytise. They provide remarkable insights in Zhabdrung's self-conception and his rule, his painful relation to his homeland Tibet, and moreover, glimpses into the social reality of governance and administration at that time.<sup>19</sup>

In conclusion, it is indispensable to analyse modern discourses about religion, politics, and secularities in Bhutan against the backdrop of these emic terminologies in pre-modern Tibetan textual sources. My paper provides the first glimpse into these sources and a vision of a complementary analytical framework to conduct further research.

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17 See Aris, *Bhutan: The Early History*, xxviii; 276; see also Ardussi, "Bhutan Before the British," 526. The sixty-ninth Chief Abbot Gendün Rinchen has made an immense contribution not only to the exegetical and doctrinal developments of his school and to the religious institutions of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Bhutan, as a Buddhist master and prolific writer, but also as a historiographer. In my PhD thesis, I provide an analysis of his vast Collected Works which consists of ten volumes with one hundred and twenty-eight works (Dagmar Schwerk, *A Timely Message from the Cave: The Mahāmudrā Doctrine and Intellectual Agenda of dGe-bshes dGe-'dun-rin-chen (1926–1997), the Sixty-Ninth rje-mkhan-po of Bhutan* (Hamburg: Department of Indian and Tibetan Studies, Universität Hamburg, forthcoming 2020).

18 For a general introduction to historiographical writing in Tibet, see Per K. Sørensen, "The Development and Formation of Religious Historiography in Tibet," in *History of Religion: Narrating a Religious Past*, ed. Bernd-Christian Otto, Susanne Rau, and Jörg Rüpke (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 151–64. For an introduction to the genre of monastic codes (Tib. *bca' yig*), see Berthe Jansen, *The Monastery Rules: Buddhist Monastic Organization in Pre-Modern Tibet* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 14–30.

19 For the English translation of the *Relação*, see Aris, *Sources for the History of Bhutan*, 8–9 and 170–86. Michael Aris also noted that the *Relação* is the first record of Zhabdrung being called a *Dharmarāja* [Droma Raja] preceding all other Indian and British sources; see Aris, 173, 184n13. Cf. also Aris, *Bhutan: The Early History*, 217–18. For an overview and analysis about the different versions of Zhabdrung's hagiographies, see also Schwerk, *A Timely Message from the Cave*.

## 2 The Maṇḍala

### 2.1 Conceptualisation: Earlier Developments

Buddhist canonical and commentarial literature provides ample evidence of the historical Buddha Siddhārtha Gautama teaching on topics such as ethical standards for the behaviour of rulers, legitimisation of Buddhist rule, wealth, and social responsibilities. These teachings correspond to a certain extent to our modern fields of law, politics, and economics. The Buddha advised a multitude of people from all strata of society, roughly divisible into lay-people and the ordained. He even gave substantial advice to important rulers. Accordingly, from this context-dependent nature of the Buddha's teachings, we find sometimes seemingly contradicting statements in the corpus of Buddhist scriptures from its inception on. The Buddha neither put forward a systematically arranged religious-doctrinal system nor promoted one *specific political philosophy*.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, throughout his career as a teacher, he even refused to answer specific philosophical and metaphysical questions that he did not consider conducive to reaching Nirvāṇa.<sup>21</sup> After the Buddha's death, and following the spread of Buddhism throughout Asia, the elaboration of philosophical positions and the development of doctrinal systems played an essential role in producing a great variety of Buddhist traditions and schools. In general, the historical development of Buddhism is roughly divided into "three vehicles" (Tib. *theg pa*: Skt. *yāna*): (1) Śrāvakayāna/Nikāya Buddhism; (2) Mahāyāna; and (3) Vajrayāna/Mantrayāna/Tantric Buddhism.<sup>22</sup>

20 Debates about Buddhist societies as either peaceful, which has been a very longstanding notion about Buddhism, or violent *per se*, mostly as a reaction to the political developments in Sri Lanka and Myanmar, seem to overlook the complexity of the respective historical, political, and social context. On the relationship between violence and Buddhism, see, for instance, the contributions in Michael Zimmermann, ed., *Buddhism and Violence* (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2006).

21 The "fourteen unanswered things" (Skt. *caturdaśavyākṛta*) are either listed as ten or fourteen questions in Pali or Sanskrit sources, respectively. They include, for example: whether the world is eternal and spatially finite or not, both, or neither; or does the Buddha exist after death. The reason not to answer them is usually given as a parable told by the Buddha as follows: Having been shot by a poisoned arrow (i. e. impermanence, birth, and so forth), would one ask, for example, who shot the arrow, from what material was the arrow made, or would one better just try to pull the arrow out? See Bhikkhu Thanissaro, "Cula-Malunkyovada Sutta: The Shorter Instructions to Malunkya," in *Tipitaka: The Pali Canon*, 1998, accessed June 19, 2019, <https://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.063.than.html>.

22 As "vehicles" the Buddhist teachings are said to have the capacity to lead sentient beings from the circle of endless rebirth (Skt. *saṃsāra*) to liberation (Skt. *nirvāṇa*), often com-

Besides these doctrinal developments, the societal spheres of religion, politics, and economics have, from an early stage, been intertwined. In India, Buddhist teachers and sages acted as advisors to rulers,<sup>23</sup> religiously legitimised their power and rule (and sometimes even violence and war), and engaged in economic relations to sustain their Buddhist communities and institutions. From there, Indian Buddhist conceptions regarding Buddhist rule and kingship, cosmology, and social order evolved. With this social order naturally manifold codes of conduct and rules alongside a form of reciprocal contractual ethics were developed. These ideas were interpreted, transformed, and institutionalised in varying ways in Buddhist societies across Asia, a diversity mirrored in the distinctions in emic terminologies.

David Seyfort Ruegg has demonstrated that the conceptual dyad “belonging to the world/ordinary life” (Tib. *'jig rten pa*: Skt. *laukika*) and “transcending/excelling/surpassing the world” (Tib. *'jig rten las 'das pa*: Skt. *lokottara*)<sup>24</sup> served as an ‘organizing principle’ in society, in harmony with the cosmological order of early Indian Buddhism.<sup>25</sup> Building on this, Christoph Kleine, in alignment with the framework of Luhmann’s ‘systems theory’, has established this conceptual dyad as a “culturally specific version of the binary code transcendence/immanence”. I will return to this topic later in my conclusions as an additional possible and promising framework

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pared with crossing a river or ocean with a ship and leaving the ship behind at the other shore.

- 23 For an introduction to the specific genre of advice literature (Tib. *lugs kyi bstan bcos*: Skt. *nitiśāstra*), see José Ignacio Cabezón, *The Just King: The Tibetan Buddhist Classic on Leading an Ethical Life: Jamgön Mipham* (Boulder, Colorado: Snow Lion, 2017), viiii–x.
- 24 The semantic field of this conceptual dyad in Tibetan is broad; just one example: “business of this life” (Tib. *tshe 'di'i bya ba*); see also (in German) Ulrike Roesler, “Die Lehre, der Weg und die namenlose Religion: Mögliche Äquivalente eines Religionsbegriffs in der tibetischen Kultur,” in *Religion in Asien? Studien zur Anwendbarkeit des Religionsbegriffs*, ed. Peter Schalk (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2013), 138–39.
- 25 See David Seyfort Ruegg, *The Symbiosis of Buddhism with Brahmanism/Hinduism in South Asia and of Buddhism with “Local Cults” in Tibet and the Himalayan Region. Vol. 58* (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008), 40; see also David Seyfort Ruegg, *Ordre spirituel et ordre temporel dans la pensée bouddhique de l'Inde et du Tibet: Quatre conférences au collège de France* (Paris: Collège de France, Institut de civilisation indienne; Diffusion De Boccard, 1995); and David Seyfort Ruegg, “A Note on the Relationship between Buddhist and Hindu Divinities in Buddhist Literature and Iconology: The *Laukika/Lokottara* Contrast and the Notion of an Indian ‘Religious Substratum’?,” in *Le parole e i marmi: Studi in onore di Raniero Gnoli nel suo 70. compleanno*, ed. Raffaele Torella (Rome: Istituto italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente, 2001), 735–42.

for analysing distinction and differentiation processes in a Buddhist context, in this case in Bhutan with its Joint Twofold System of Governance.<sup>26</sup>

Turning to the Tibetan cultural area, the conceptual dyad of Tibetan “chö” as “religion” (Tib. *chos*: Skt. *dharma*) and “si” as “politics” (Tib. *srid*: Skt. *bhava*) is abundantly present in Tibetan textual sources, such as legal codes, genealogies and religious histories. It represents an ideal point of departure to trace boundaries (and thereby understand relationships) between different societal spheres. Very generally speaking, the Sanskrit term *dharma* for Tibetan “chö” can in the Indian context denote both religious and non-religious systems of order in the different traditions of Jainism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The Tibetan translation of *dharma*, “chö” denotes an only partially overlapping semantic field to that of *dharma*, though, which therefore requires careful study on its own terms. The term “chö” is used for the Buddhist doctrinal-religious system (though not for Bön) and in certain cases more generally as a worldly order of rules.<sup>27</sup>

Whilst recognising the complexity of historical research on such emic terms over a long period, this research is however not concerned with comparing the semantic field of the Sanskrit terms (Skt. *bhava*, *dharma*) in the Indian context with the Tibetan terms of “si” and “chö”.<sup>28</sup> It is relevant only to note that the semantic field of the Tibetan term “chö” as Buddhist doctrine, practice system, and identification of belonging to specifically this religious group, constitutes an implicit concept of ‘religion’ in Wittgenstein’s sense of family resemblances (*Familienähnlichkeiten*) or an alternative “prototype” as Ulrike Roesler has convincingly argued.<sup>29</sup>

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26 For an analysis of the applicability of Niklas Luhmann’s ‘systems theory’ for Buddhism, see, Kleine “Religion and the Secular in Premodern Japan,” 9–13 and 14–16.

27 See Roesler, “Die Lehre, der Weg und die namenlose Religion,” 134–36. One example of a more ‘worldly’ application is the “Sixteen pure rules of human conduct” (Tib. *mi chos gtsang ma bcu drug*). See also n. 47, p. 20.

28 For several early Tibetan sources going back to the Tibetan Empire including Dunhuang sources, which mention and discuss the conceptual dyad of religion (Tib. *chos*) and politics (Tib. *srid*), see John Ardussi, “Formation of the State of Bhutan (‘Brug gzhung) in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and its Tibetan Antecedents,” *Journal of Bhutan Studies* 11, no. 2 (2004): 26, n. iii.

29 See Roesler, “Die Lehre, der Weg und die namenlose Religion,” 132. For a discussion of semantic equivalents, family resemblances, and polythetic classes, see also Kleine, “Religion and the Secular in Premodern Japan,” 6–7. For “proto-types,” see Christoph Kleine, „Religion als begriffliches Konzept und soziales System im vormodernen Japan: Polythetische Klassen, semantische und funktionale Äquivalente und strukturelle Analogien,“ in *Religion in Asien? Studien zur Anwendbarkeit des Religionsbegriffs*, ed. Peter Schalk et al. (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2013).



The specific form of Buddhist governance that united a twofold religious and political structure under a Buddhist ruler, the Joint Twofold System of Governance, actualised this conceptual dyad of “politics/mundane affairs” (Tib. *srid*) and “religion/transcending the mundane” (Tib. *chos*) in the Tibetan cultural area.<sup>30</sup> It represents an explicit Tibetan emic distinction and differentiation of what we can equate with a ‘religious’ and ‘political’ (and partially economic) sphere in the Tibetan cultural area. Therefore, it stands at the core of my consideration of pre-modern Bhutan after the 17<sup>th</sup> century – a very late stage of this form of Buddhist governance.<sup>31</sup> Tracing emic terms of the Joint Twofold System of Governance as conceptualised in the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729* under consideration of the historical context forms the basis of our understanding of the particular semantic field of generic adjective compounds commonly used in academic literature such as ‘religious-political’.

## 2.2 Manifestation: The Joint Twofold System of Governance

Georgios Halkias has poignantly summarised the ambiguity of the concept of the Joint Twofold System of Governance (and its structural and functional differentiation), which poses enormous challenges to a researcher in this field of study:

While there are clear lines of demarcations between the role of the Buddha and his Sangha [monastic order] and the function of the king, there is often a blurring of these lines in the literary, practical, and cultural manifestations of Buddhism across Asia. Ambiguity is nowhere more evident than in the promotion and application of notions of “dual sovereignty” [Joint Twofold System of Governance] combined in a single person capable of arbitrating secular and spiritual power in this world and the world beyond.<sup>32</sup>

30 I translate the Tibetan terms *chos* and *srid* if used, for example, as adjectives, as “religious” and “political” respectively. Other possible translations of the conceptual dyad in academic discourses depending on their historical context are: “spiritual/temporal”, “secular/spiritual”, “ecclesiastic/secular”, “religious/secular”, and “religious/royal”. To emphasise that, in the case of Bhutan, the Joint Twofold System of Governance not only possesses two branches representing a functional and structural differentiation but also that these branches are united in the overarching figure of a Buddhist master (and nowadays, Buddhist king), I chose to translate throughout the paper: “Joint Twofold System of Governance”.

31 See also Nirmal C. Sinha, “Chhos srid gnyis ldan,” *Bulletin of Tibetology* 5, no. 3 (1968); and the contributions in Cüppers, *The relationship between religion and state*. My research connects in many areas to the excellent scholarship of experts who have worked extensively on the respective regions and periods. However, due to the limited scope of this working paper, that scholarship serves mainly as the contextualising background.

32 See Georgios T. Halkias, “The Enlightened Sovereign: Kingship and Buddhism in In-

The first more concrete form of the Joint Twofold System of Governance was institutionalised in 1264, and lasted until 1368. It was established between the Yuan emperor Khubilai Khan (1215–94) and a Tibetan Buddhist master from the Sakya school, Chögyel Pakpa (1235–80), who was appointed as “imperial/state preceptor”. As such, Tibetan Buddhist masters from the Sakya school exercised suzerainty not only over the religious but also daily political affairs in Tibet. This specific Tibetan and Central Asian arrangement of governance between a lay “ruler-donor” (Tib. *yon bdag*) and his religious “counsellor-donée” (Tib. *mchod gnas*) has been an essential characteristic of Tibetan politics. It needs to be carefully studied in its respective periods and contexts since the relationships between the religious, political, and economic spheres of societies were uniquely determined in each period and context.<sup>33</sup>

While the Joint Twofold System of Governance in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was institutionalised in three instances in Tibet, Sikkim, and Bhutan, it also diverged significantly in its respective formation and organisation.<sup>34</sup> Bhutan was officially founded as a state in 1625/26 by Zhabdrung, who fled there following a dispute with the central-Tibetan Tsangpa ruler over Zhabdrung’s acknowledgement as the rightful incarnation of Pema Karpo (1527–92). Pema Karpo was the fourth hierarch of the Drukpa Kagyü school, a sub-branch of the Kagyü school, which is one of the four Tibetan Buddhist

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do-Tibetan Tradition,” in *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*, ed. Steven Emmanuel (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell Publishers, 2013), 493.

33 See Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 110–16. For a detailed study of the crucial and complex relationship between the lay “ruler-donor” (Tib. *yon bdag*) and his religious “counsellor-donée” (Tib. *mchod gnas*) and the societal spheres of religion and politics in the early Tibetan period up until the Sakya-Mongol rule; see Seyfort Ruegg, *Ordre spirituel et ordre temporal*. See also Per K. Sørensen, *Tibetan Buddhist Historiography: The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies. An Annotated Translation of the XIVth Century Chronicle rGyal-rabs gsal-ba’i me-long* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994). I follow David Seyfort Ruegg, with the English translation of the two emic terms.

34 Cf. Ardussi, “Formation of the State of Bhutan.” Institutionalisation denotes in this context the process of explicitly formalising Buddhist conceptions of governance into rules, standardised processes, and political/religious institutions and actors. This dynamic process involves the establishment, adaptation, and replacement/substitution of rules and processes. In Weber’s sense, these processes can be differentiated by their intention and purpose as “goal-oriented” (*Zweckrationalität*) and “idea-consolidating” (*Wertrationalität*), but not in an exclusivist sense, since both aspects often characterise processes of institutionalisation. See Hans Keman “Institutionalization,” accessed June 14, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/institutionalization>.

schools.<sup>35</sup> Under the unifying charismatic figure of Zhabdrung, two branches of government were institutionalised. A regent, the “Druk Desi” (Tib. *'brug sde srid*) exercised political power while the religious institutions were overseen by the Chief Abbot, the “Druk Je Khenpo” (Tib. *'brug rje mkhan po*). In Tibet, the Ganden Podrang government of the fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1617–82) and a regent, the “Desi” (Tib. *sde srid*), had authority conferred on them by the Mongol Koshut prince Gushri Khan in 1642. Consequently, the dual-authority system of lay ‘ruler-donor’ and religious ‘counsellor-donée’ from the earlier Mongol-Sakya rule was renewed. In the same year, in Sikkim, Buddhist kingship under the reign of the Buddhist king Puntsok Namgyel (1604–70) was institutionalised through an absolute hereditary monarchy lasting until 1975.<sup>36</sup>

I have mentioned here merely three major forms of Buddhist governance in the Tibetan cultural area, thus leaving aside additional institutionalisations of it in the Tibetan cultural area and beyond. It becomes nevertheless evident that under the umbrella of the conception of the Joint Twofold System of Governance, as pointed out by Georgios Halkias, distinctions and differentiations between the religious and other societal spheres – i. e. secularities – varied enormously in social practices and reality.<sup>37</sup>

Then, the emic terms for the Joint Twofold System of Governance, while found to be used in many cases synonymously, transmit nevertheless slightly different connotations. I present here a non-exhaustive list of these terms, as found in various Tibetan textual sources: “religion and politics combined” (Tib. *chos srid gnyis ldan*), “religion and politics united” (Tib. *chos srid zung 'brel*), “religion and politics joint together” (Tib. *chos srid*

35 In general, Tibetan Buddhism is divided into four main schools (however, note that there are alternative, well-established classifications): The first ‘old’ school, the Nyingma school came to Bhutan and Tibet with the earlier dissemination (Tib. *bstan pa snga dar*) of Buddhism from India and the foundation of the Tibetan Empire from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century. The three ‘new’ schools, Kagyü, Sakya and Gelug, were founded after the later dissemination (Tib. *bstan pa phyi dar*) of Buddhism to Bhutan and Tibet from the late 10<sup>th</sup> century on, from where they branched out into many different sub-schools.

36 The historical overview of the foundation of the three governments is based on Phuntsho, *History of Bhutan*, 207–59; and Ardussi, “Formation of the State of Bhutan,” 11–23.

37 Noteworthy is the establishment of religious kingship in other parts of the Himalayan region, such as Mustang and Ladakh; for an analysis of the relationship between religion (Tib. *chos*) and politics (Tib. *srid*) within them, see, for example (in German), Dieter Schuh, “Srid ohne Chos? Reflektionen zum Verhältnis von Buddhismus und säkularer Herrschaft im tibetischen Kulturraum,” in *ZAS Zentralasiatische Studien des Seminars für Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaften Zentralasiens der Universität Bonn* 33 (2004): 153–62.

*gnyis 'brel*), “religion and politics united” (Tib. *chos srid zung 'jug*), and “theocratic rule” (Tib. *chos kyi rgyal srid*). Moreover, the twofold distinction of laws is called “twin laws” (Tib. *khriims gnyis*), “dual system/twin traditions” (Tib. *lugs gnyis*), “great twin laws” (Tib. *khriims chen po gnyis*) as well as “religious law which is tighter than a silken knot” (Tib. *chos khriims dar gyi mdud pa*) associated with the “Law of the Buddha” (Tib. *chos khriims*: Skt. *buddhadharma*) and “secular law which is heavier than a golden yoke” (Tib. *rgyal khriims gser gyi gnya' shing*)<sup>38</sup> that is associated with the “Law of the ruler” (Tib. *rgyal po'i khriims*: Skt. *rājadharma*).<sup>39</sup> However, as we will later see, the twin laws can by no means be simply equated with the the twin religious and political branches of the Joint Twofold System of Governance. Distinctions and differentiation processes in the Tibetan cultural area have proven too complicated to allow such a simple identification.

Other idioms frequently used in Bhutan were to bring “law to the lawless south and handle to the handleless pot,” i. e. bringing law and order to Bhutan (Tib. *lho khriims med la khriims dang rdza lung med la lung*) or the simile of an old lady carrying gold while traveling through the country and remaining entirely unharmed (Tib. *rgan mo gser 'khur*) – the latter likewise attested in Tibetan sources.<sup>40</sup>

38 See *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729*; in Aris, *Sources for the History of Bhutan*, 128 (Tib.), 129 (Engl.). See also Seyfort Ruegg, “Introductory Remarks on the Spiritual and Temporal Orders,” 9: “A further current expression is ‘twin (great) rule’ (*khriims [chen po] gnyis*), namely the supreme rule of the Dharma (*chos khriims*) and the mundane rule of the king (*rgyal [po'i] khriims*). The former rule is traditionally compared with a soft silken knot, and the second rule with the heavy golden Yugaṃdhara (literally ‘Yoke-bearer’, i. e. one of the seven great mountain-chains in Buddhist cosmology that surround in concentric circles the *axis mundi* of Mount Sumeru).”

39 Christoph Kleine established a binary schema of the “mundane ruler’s nomosphere”/“Law of the Ruler” and the (ultimately) supra-mundane nomosphere of the Buddha”/“Law of the Buddha” based on elite discourses in pre-modern Japan. He also addressed the importance of their interdependency from each other to secure the social, moral, political, and cosmic order, which is highly applicable to the Joint Twofold System of Governance in Bhutan. See Christoph Kleine, “The Secular Ground Bass of Pre-modern Japan Reconsidered. Reflections upon the Buddhist Trajectories towards Secularity,” *Working Paper Series of the HCAS “Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities”* 5 (Leipzig University, 2018), 25–30; see also Kleine, “Religion and the Secular in Premodern Japan,” 19–27.

40 See Phuntsho, *History of Bhutan*, 256–57; see also Aris, *Sources for the History of Bhutan*, 128 (Tib.); 129 (Engl.), 168n33. For an analysis of actual social practices of law in Bhutan up until the introduction of the absolute hereditary monarchy in 1907, see Richard Whitecross, “‘Like a Pot without a Handle’: Law, Meaning and Practice in Medieval Bhutan,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie (Droit et Bouddhisme. Principe et pratique dans le Tibet prémoderne/ Law and Buddhism. Principle and Practice in Pre-modern Tibet* 26 (2017): 87–103.

The first part of the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729* addresses the purpose of theocratic rule, the genealogy and therefore legitimisation of Zhabdrung as a Buddhist ruler, and his conquest of Bhutan as a Buddhist Tantric master. Emic terms employed in it are the “dual system” (Tib. *lugs gnyis*),<sup>41</sup> “joint system” (Tib. *lugs zung*),<sup>42</sup> “state laws in accordance with religion” (Tib. *chos bzhin rgyal khrims*),<sup>43</sup> “theocratic rule” (Tib. *chos kyi rgyal srid*),<sup>44</sup> and “stainless theocracy of the dual system [of religious and secular government]” (Tib. *gnyis chos kyi rgyal srid dri ma med pa lugs*).<sup>45</sup> While the authors of the *History of Bhutan I* and *History of Bhutan II* use the term “dual system” (Tib. *lugs gnyis*) the modern-day *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan* elliptically employs the term “the mode of the dyad of religion and politics” (Tib./Dzo. *chos srid gnyis kyi gnas lugs*). The English version of the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan* keeps the Dzongkha term untranslated. While the terminology itself does not provide any insights about the modern-day concrete conception and relationship between the two societal spheres, the constitution deals in further sections with the respective arrangements as laid out later in this paper.<sup>46</sup>

To summarise, this section provided an overview of emic terms within the semantic field of the Joint Twofold System of Governance, which in themselves denote imagined and partially institutionalised boundaries between the spheres of religion and mainly politics. What follows forms a brief synopsis of the institutionalisation of this system in Bhutan in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, highlighting distinction and differentiation processes connected to it.

### 2.3 Embodiment: Zhabdrung and the Foundation of Bhutan

At the time of Zhabdrung’s arrival in 1616, Bhutan was under no central political authority. Many influential principalities with their own chieftains, often from either secular or Tibetan Buddhist religious family lineages, exercised local political and economic autonomy. Boundaries between the

41 *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729*; in Aris, *Sources for the History of Bhutan*, 122, 128, 164 (Tib.); 123, 129, 165 (Engl.); see also sixty-ninth Chief Abbot Gendün Rinchen, *History of Bhutan II*, 239; 258 (Tib.).

42 *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729*; in Aris, *Sources for the History of Bhutan*, 134 (Tib.); 135 (Engl.).

43 Aris, 128, 138 (Tib.); 129, 139 (Engl.).

44 Aris, 132, 162 (Tib.); 133, 163 (Engl.).

45 Aris, 128 (Tib.); 129 (Engl.).

46 *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan* (Thimphu: Constitution Drafting Committee, 2008), art. 2, sec. 2, 3 (Dzo.); 2 (Engl.).

secular and religious lineages were in many cases blurred since, for instance, secular lineages produced prominent religious incarnations and religious family lineages exercised significant political and economic power. After his strict three-year meditation retreat from 1623 to 1625/26, Zhabdrung declared the establishment of the State of Bhutan under his authority. This declaration was thereupon communicated throughout Bhutan using his personal seal, the ‘Sixteen Īs.’<sup>47</sup>

Zhabdrung, as a Buddhist master in the cosmological order of Tantric Buddhism, brought the territory of Bhutan under his control in two important senses, which have to be understood as inseparable from each other. As the legitimate head of his specific Tibetan Buddhist school, he was supported by the powers of his school’s protector deity, a raven-faced form of Mahākāla (Tib. *las mgon bya rog gdong can*: Skt. *kākamukha*) as well as local deities in Bhutan. He therefore exercised both ‘worldly’ or ‘immanent’ power as head of his school, and ‘spiritual’ or ‘transcendental’ power through these deities. The conquest and unification of the territory of Bhutan through conventional and ‘magical’ warfare is expressed in terms such as the “subjugation of a spiritual field/field of conversion” (Tib. *gdul zhing/’dul zhing/gdul bya’i zhing*) or the “heavenly field/Buddhfield” (Tib. *zhing khams/dkar rgyud zhing khams*) of this protector deity. His protector deity Mahākāla had revealed itself to Zhabdrung in visionary dreams both earlier in Tibet, and also later in Bhutan.<sup>48</sup> These aforementioned terms are

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47 See Aris, *Bhutan: The Early History*, 212–17. Zhabdrung significantly modified the earlier “Sixteen pure rules of human conduct” (Tib. *mi chos gtsang ma bcu drug*) in his personal seal, called the “Sixteen Īs”; (Tib. *nga bcu drug ma*). The “Sixteen pure rules of human conduct” are ascribed to the Tibetan Buddhist king Songtsen Gampo along with the “Ten virtuous laws of gods” (Tib. *lha chos dge ba bcu*). For both sets of conduct in earlier historical records, see also Sørensen, *Tibetan Buddhist Historiography*, 182–83; Janet Gyatso, *Being Human in a Buddhist World: An Intellectual History of Medicine in Early Modern Tibet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 347–49; and Ulrike Roesler, “16 Human Norms (*mi chos bcu drug*) – Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan,” in *The Illuminating Mirror: Tibetan Studies in Honor of Per K. Sørensen on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Olaf Czaja and Guntram Hazod (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2015). For a translation of the ‘Sixteen Īs’, see Aris, *Bhutan: The Early History*, 213–14. Interestingly, at the coronation of the First King of Bhutan, the respective document of allegiance (Dzo. *genja*) was symbolically sealed with Zhabdrung’s ‘Sixteen Īs’; see Phuntsho, *History of Bhutan*, 520–22; see also Françoise Pomaret, “The Chakravartin-King: Symbolism of the Bhutanese Monarchy,” in *The Bodhisattva King. His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan*, ed. Tshering Tashi and Thierry Mathou (Bangkok: Amarín Printing and Publishing PLC, 2015), 257–58.

48 See Aris, *Bhutan: The Early History*, 209, 212; see also Christoph Cüppers, “Bstan ’dzin chos rgyal’s Bhutan Legal Code of 1729 in comparison with Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya

used throughout the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729*,<sup>49</sup> as well as in the titles of historiographical writings such as of the *History of Bhutan II* (Tib. *dpal ldan 'brug pa'i gdul zhing*) composed by the sixty-ninth Chief Abbot Gendün Rinchen in 1972.<sup>50</sup>

In the following decades, Zhabdrung consolidated his rule through several successful strategies: He founded influential religious-educational institutions and significantly expanded the monastic bodies, as well as introducing standard monastic and civil codes and a Bhutanese dress code and etiquette. In particular, the civil and monastic legal framework not only created the necessary administrative control but also supported the legitimisation of his new centralised Buddhist rule, establishing and promoting a Buddhist Bhutanese identity. Furthermore, a network of fortresses, “Dzongs” (Tib. *rdzong*), was created, covering Bhutan like a spider’s web. This network had the dual purpose of both consolidating Zhabdrung’s internal control over Bhutan, and combatting the external threat of Tibetan and Mongolian invasion. In addition, Zhabdrung executed religious and political campaigns on a vast scale.<sup>51</sup> John Ardussi has highlighted the

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mtsho’s Guidelines for Government Officials,” in *Bhutan: Tradition and Changes. PIATS 2003: Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 2003*, ed. John A. Ardussi and Françoise Pommaret (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 48. On Zhabdrung’s protector deity, see also Phuntsho, *History of Bhutan*, 435. The protector deity is also depicted on the crown of the Bhutanese Kings, the ‘Raven Crown.’ The First King Ugyen Wangchuck’s father, the fifty-first Druk Desi Jigme Namgyel (1825–81), who was also known as the “black regent” (Tib. *sde pa nag po*), had first worn a prototype of the crown as a helmet in battle; see *ibid.*, 435; 471. For the crucial role of the Buddhist protector deity Mahākāla in the Tangut Kingdom of Xixia (1038–1227) and the Mongol Empire, see Karl Debreczeny, “Faith and Empire: An Overview,” accessed June 26, 2019, <http://asianart.com/articles/faith-empire/index.html>.

49 *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729*; in Aris, *Sources for the History of Bhutan*, 122, 128, 136, 162 (Tib.); 123, 129, 137, 163 (Engl).

50 The inseparability of the spiritual field and the territory of the modern Nation State of Bhutan is still imagined today. Against this backdrop, an analysis of the development of the modern concept of ‘nation-state’ addressing emic concepts and related terms in Bhutan would be preferable. Richard Burghart has provided an excellent example for the case of Nepal, analysing the pre-modern emic concepts and terms of “possession” (Nep. *muluk*), “realm” (Nep. *deśa*), and “countries of different people” (Nep. *des/deśa*); see Richard Burghart, “The Formation of the Concept of the Nation-State in Nepal, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 33, no. 1 (1984): 101–25.

51 For an overview of the period of consolidation of Zhabdrung’s rule, see Aris, *Bhutan: The Early History*, 215–32. In particular, for an insight into his religious and political mass-campaigning, see the travel account (*Relação*) of the two Jesuit missionaries Estevão Cacalla and João Cabral; see Aris, *Sources for the History of Bhutan*, 8–9, 170–186; see also Phuntsho, *History of Bhutan*, 224.

entrepreneurial character of Zhabdrung's public addresses to enforce Buddhist ethical behaviour, and law and order. These used pre-modern Bhutanese public media, in the form of simple stone inscriptions (Tib. *rdog nag*) and stone inscriptions carved on prayer walls (Tib. *maṇi dang ring*).<sup>52</sup> A modernised form of this medium is still used in Bhutan, with painted stones or signposts found in remote places, such as river beds, promoting, for example, environmentally responsible behaviour in accordance with the modern-day principles of Gross National Happiness (GNH). Examples include the statements "Pollution kills, keep stream clean" (Engl./Dzo.); or "Cleanliness is next to godliness" (Engl.) found on the way to "Tiger's Nest", Taktsang, which is one of the holiest sites in Bhutan. They combine Buddhist morality with environmental consciousness, supporting thereby 'environmental conservation' as one of the 'Four pillars' of Gross National Happiness (GNH).

To summarise, Zhabdrung gained the epithet of a "great magician" (Tib. *mthu chen*) who was able to ensure the material and spiritual well-being, and security of his subjects and the country, through force if necessary. The legitimacy as a Buddhist ruler stemmed from exactly this demonstration of the ability to ward off external enemies, natural disasters, and famine, and hence secure the material and spiritual well-being of the subjects. This was supposed to be achieved by means such as communal and state rituals, including prayer ceremonies, the recitation of the Buddhist canon, and evocation of Buddhist protector deities, that were undertaken for the protection of both the country and the Buddhist doctrine, and thereby the welfare of the populace. These rites were already a common and longstanding practice in the Buddhist cultural area. However, Per K. Sørensen has noted that within the Tibetan cultural area, these longstanding and more loosely organised communal rites became increasingly formalised and institutionalised as state rituals in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>53</sup>

52 See John A. Ardussi, "Stone Inscriptions: An Early Written Medium in Bhutan and Its Public Uses," *Journal of Bhutan Studies* 14, no. 1 (2006): 1–11.

53 I thank Per Sørensen in particular for drawing my attention to the much earlier connotations and attestation of "happiness", "well-being", and "welfare" in Tibetan textual sources (Tib. *bde skyid*, *bde thabs*). These 'positive' terms were strongly conceptualised by their counterpart, i. e. the absence of war, violence, famine, etc. As listed by Per K. Sørensen, the rites that were supposed to ward off such threats and protect the "Lhasa Maṅḍala" were termed in the Tibetan context, for example, "welfare rites or welfare projects for Tibet and the Tibetan populace," and "rites for the state and religion" (Tib. *bod 'bangs bde thabs rim gro*, *bod khams bde thabs*, *bod 'bangs bde thabs*, *bstan srid spyi rim*); see Per



For example, after the second Tibetan-Mongolian invasion of Bhutan in 1649, Zhabdrung introduced an extensive ritual for the multiple forms of Mahākāla, the Buddhist protector deity of the Drukpa Kagyü school, as the basis of the New Year Festival at Punakha Dzong. Religious state rites are still considered crucial in Bhutan, in particular the longevity prayers for the Buddhist kings of Bhutan, intense prayer ceremonies for the flourishing of the Buddhist doctrine, and ritual offerings to protector deities of the Drukpa Kagyü school that ensure the spiritual and material well-being and protection of the nation.<sup>54</sup>

Two further observations about the foundation of Bhutan in the 17<sup>th</sup> century seem noteworthy. First, the foundation of the State of Bhutan subsequently resulted in a confessional split within the Tibetan Drukpa Kagyü school and a domination of the southern lineage not only of the other sub-branches of the Drukpa Kagyü school but also over other Tibetan Buddhist confessions within Bhutan, such as Nyingma and Drikung Kagyü. At the time of Zhabdrung's arrival in Bhutan, the Drukpa Kagyü school had already been subdivided into three different main branches, the upper, middle and lower Drukpa Kagyü. Following the initial dispute over the rightful incarnation of Pema Karpo in Tibet, the middle branch of the Drukpa Kagyü school further split into the northern lineage (Tib. *byang 'brug*), which continued its incarnation lineage in Tibet, and the southern lineage (Tib. *lho 'brug*) under the spiritual and administrative leadership of the Chief Abbot, the "Druk Je Khenpo" (Tib. *'brug rje mkhan po*). Zhabdrung's appearance in Bhutan thus elicited new rivalry in the existing confessional and socio-economic structures of the other Buddhist schools and consequently led to their subordination.<sup>55</sup>

Second, despite the seemingly clear differentiation into "twin laws" (Tib. *khriims gnyis*) and the "dual system/twin traditions" (Tib. *lugs gnyis*) represented by the two branches of governance under the unifying figure of Zhabdrung, a schematic correlation of 'lay' and 'monastic' with 'religious' and 'political/secular/other societal' spheres, respectively, would

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K. Sørensen, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain. Ecclesiastic and Secular Hegemony in Medieval Tibet. A Study of Tshal Gung-thang* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. 2007), 543–44.

54 See Aris, *Bhutan: The Early History*, 227–28. Françoise Pommaret has analysed several of these state rituals and other characteristics and symbols of Buddhist kingship in modern-day Bhutan; see Pommaret, "The Chakravartin-King," 258, 262–63.

55 See Aris, *Bhutan: The Early History*, 172–81.

ignore the complexity of the social realities in Bhutan. To give two examples: (1) Zhabdrung himself as a Tantric Buddhist master only took full ordination after he had produced a male heir; and (2) from the 17<sup>th</sup> century on, the ‘secular’ branch of government in Bhutan made the ordination as monk a mandatory requirement for the position of the Druk Desi, the ‘secular’ regent, but did not do so for other officials.<sup>56</sup>

Returning, for the sake of completeness, to the brief synopsis of the historical context: Zhabdrung, having been a charismatic Buddhist ruler and Tantric master, left behind a substantial power vacuum with his death, which is thought to have occurred some time around 1651. The question of his succession was highly problematic, and political developments in Bhutan in the following two centuries were characterised by great internal turmoil and external threat. After Zhabdrung’s death, itself only revealed to the public as late as 1704 to 1707, the male heir in the direct family lineage proved incapable of ruling. As a result, the regulation of succession eventually shifted to a model of multiple incarnations of the body, speech and mind of Zhabdrung, and a prince regent.<sup>57</sup> However, this shift failed to solve the ongoing power struggles between the different factions and important family lineages, religious and secular. Indeed, these tensions proved destabilising to the extent of triggering civil war. Furthermore, Bhutan had to deal with a series of external political challenges, such as the Anglo-Bhutanese war of 1772–73, the Duar War (1864–65) and five more Tibetan-Mongolian invasions. Nevertheless, in brief, Bhutan was able to keep its political sovereignty and economic autonomy. The identification as ‘Drukpa’ developed from a religious confessional into a cultural and national identity.<sup>58</sup>

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56 As the different institutional arrangements of the Joint Twofold System of Governance in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Bhutan and Tibet demonstrate, the distinction between lay and monastic in the Tibetan cultural area is complex. While in Tibet the lay officials often had their monastic counterparts and the distinctions were quite clear-cut, as we see, this is not the case in Bhutan; see also Aris, *Bhutan: The Early History*, 262–63. See also Seyfort Ruegg, *Ordre spirituel et ordre temporal*, 20.

57 For a depiction of the enigmatic circumstances of Zhabdrung’s ‘secret retreat’, the succession of the three kinds of incarnations, and the general problem of Zhabdrung’s succession; see Aris, *Bhutan: The Early History*, 231–62.

58 For a detailed overview of the history of Bhutan between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, see Aris, *Bhutan: The Early History*, 243–74; see also Ardussi, “Bhutan Before the British,” 279–418; Phuntsho, *History of Bhutan*, 273–512; and Matteo Miele, “Chinese Shadows on Bhutanese Independence after the Treaty of Punakha, The Tibetan Buddhist Connection and the British Diplomatic Action,” in *Buddhism, Culture and Society in Bhutan*,

## 2.4 Metamorphosis: The Constitutional Framework of Bhutan Today

Following the foundation of Bhutan as a nation state in 1625/26, two significant changes took place in its political system. First, the introduction of the hereditary absolute monarchy in 1907 under the First King of Bhutan, Ugyen Wangchuck (1862–1926; reign: 1907–26) with the result that the position of the regent ceased to exist.<sup>59</sup> The next significant change occurred in 2008 when a constitutional monarchy was introduced under the reign of the Fifth King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck (b. 1980, reign: 2006–present). The Fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck (b. 1955, reign: 1972–2006) abdicated early in favour of his son in 2006.<sup>60</sup>

Study of the current constitutional framework of Bhutan promises insight into the formal relationship between religion and politics in Bhutan in the present day. Nevertheless, the overview I present here vividly demonstrates the challenges inherent in research on emic (and etic) terms in Bhutan, as a result of the language shifts from classical Tibetan to Dzongkha and English as the literary medium and languages of discourse, well exemplified in the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan* from 2008. Consequently, my overview has to be understood as preliminary. Nevertheless, I have documented several relevant Dzongkha terms and phrases in footnotes with the hope to elicit discussion and that scholars knowledgeable in all three languages will pursue further research under consideration of ethnographic fieldwork.

Four areas of the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan* have been chosen as relevant examples evidencing conceptualised and institutionalised boundaries

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ed. Seiji Kumagai (Kathmandu: Vajra Books, 2018), 215–39. The emic designation of the country Bhutan derived from the Tibetan Buddhist confession “Drukpa Kagyü” as “Drukyül,” (Tib. *’brug yul*). Although unfortunately, not possessing any mastery of the Italian language, I nevertheless refer here to Matteo Miele’s research. Here, in particular, he addresses in depth the 20<sup>th</sup>-century development of the absolute monarchy from a Buddhist perspective. Matteo Miele aims to demonstrate the limitations of the application of Western-based etic terminologies and models from political sciences alone as an analytical framework for research into Bhutan; see Matteo Miele, “Isolamento ed interdipendenza, tradizione ed impermanenza. Note sul percorso costituzionale del Bhutan,” in *Annuario di Diritto Comparato e di Studi Legislativi*, vol. 8, ed. Katia Fiorenza et al. (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2017), 381–404.

59 See Phuntsho, *History of Bhutan*, 520–25. Incarnations of the Zhabdrung have remained into the present day but they have no institutional representation in the constitutional monarchy.

60 The Constitution of Bhutan generally stipulates an abdication of the King of Bhutan at the age of sixty-five; see *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*, art. 2, sec. 6, 4 (Engl.).

between the religious and political spheres: (1) the renewal of the Joint Twofold System of Governance, (2) the status of the king, (3) 'Kidu', (4) the regulation of the religious branch of the government and the status of religion.

First, the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*<sup>61</sup> renewed Zhabdrung's Joint Twofold System of Governance as now represented by the King of Bhutan as head of state in art. 2 (*The Institution of Monarchy*), sec. 2:

2. The Chhoe-sid-nyi [dual system of religion and politics] of Bhutan shall be unified in the person of the Druk Gyalpo [King of Bhutan] who, as a Buddhist, shall be the upholder of the Chhoe-sid [religion and politics].<sup>62</sup>

Second, in art. 2, sec. 15, the status of the King of Bhutan is defined:

The Druk Gyalpo shall not be answerable in a court of law for His actions and His person shall be sacrosanct.<sup>63</sup>

The sacrosanctity of the Buddhist kings of Bhutan is theorised and expressed in overlapping models of righteous Buddhist rule, extending deep into Tibetan and Indian history. These include: the embodiment of the former Buddhist kings during the Tibetan Empire (Tib. *chos rgyal*: Skt. *dharma-rāja*), in Bhutan called the "Drukgyel" (Tib. 'brug rgyal),<sup>64</sup> the "Universal Ruler" (Tib. 'khor los sgyur ba'i rgyal po: Skt. *cakravartin*), ruling justly over the entire world; the "Great Elect" (Tib. *man pos bkur ba*: Skt. *mahāsammata*), a King who is legitimised to rule through his merit and virtues; or an incarnation of great Bodhisattvas,<sup>65</sup> such as Avalokiteśvara,

61 The English version of the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan* provides a helpful glossary of the Dzongkha terms; see *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*, 64–66.

62 *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*, art. 2, sec. 2, 2 (Engl.)

63 *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*, art. 2, sec. 15, 15 (Engl.)

64 The three Dharma Kings during the Tibetan Empire were: (1) Songtsen Gampo, (2) Trisong Detsen, and (3) Ralpachen. For a concise analysis of different Buddhist conceptions of rule/kingship and governance in India and Tibet from both a synchronic and diachronic perspective; see Halkias, "The Enlightened Sovereign," 491–507. See also Brandon Dotson's numerous contributions to the early Tibetan Empire; for example, Brandon Dotson, "Theorising the king: implicit and explicit sources for the study of Tibetan sacred kingship," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 21 (2011). Of course, the most prominent and earliest example of Buddhist kingship in South Asia is Aśoka (d. 232 BCE) from the Maurya dynasty in India. He subsequently became the role model for various conceptions of Buddhist kingship in South Asia and the Tibetan cultural area.

65 An essential shift in buddhological ideas occurred in Mahāyāna Buddhism resulting in the Bodhisattva ideal. While in early Buddhism the prevailing ideal was of an *Arhart*, one who wishes to end the circle of Saṃsāra for themselves, Mahāyāna Buddhism developed the conception of a being, who not only wishes for an end to their own suffering, but also to that of all other sentient beings. Therefore, in their altruism, a Bodhisattva lets themselves be consciously reborn in this world, Saṃsāra, to enable all sentient being to cross over the ocean of Saṃsāra to the shore of Nirvāṇa. There is a threefold typology of Bodhisattvas:

Mañjuśrī or Vajrapāṇi. Additionally, the Fourth King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck renewed the traditional relationship with him as lay ‘ruler-donor’ with the famous Buddhist master Dilgo Khyentse Tashi Peljor (1910–91) as his religious ‘counsellor-donée’.<sup>66</sup> Particularly noteworthy is part of the coronation ceremony of the Buddhist kings of Bhutan, formalised in the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan* in art. 2 (*The Institution of Monarchy*), sec. 4:<sup>67</sup> In this ceremony, the Buddhist kings receive a five-coloured scarf in front of the reliquary of Zhabdrung’s remains (Tib. *sku gdung*) at the Punakha Dzong. Through visualisation of Zhabdrung’s presence throughout the process, this act takes the role of a symbolic blessing and legitimisation for the new king’s rule.<sup>68</sup>

Third, connected to the specific status of the Kings of Bhutan, “Kidu” (Tib./Dzo. *skyid sdug*) has been established as a royal prerogative intended to tackle social injustice and inequality, for example, in case of natural disasters. It is based on the principle of a compassionate Bodhisattva king and demands high moral responsibility in the rule of the king. Before the establishment of the monarchy in Bhutan, ‘Kidu’ was a more informal principle with at least a twofold meaning. It referred to mutual aid and support in the local context of village or monastery life, a concept also present in Sikkim and Nepal, or to a form of dispensation or gift granted by rulers. It seems that, in the case of Bhutan prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a form of Kidu was informally and seemingly irregularly granted by regents. Generally, Kidu was flexibly applied in very different contexts in the Tibetan cultural area and its pre-modern extent and function in societies in the Himalayan region need to be further studied.<sup>69</sup>

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(1) “king-like” (Tib. *rgyal po lta bu*), one who first achieves enlightenment for themselves before leading everybody else towards it; (2) “boatman-like” (Tib. *mnyan pa lta bu*), one who seeks to reach the other shore of Nirvāṇa together with everybody else; and (3) “herdsman-like” (Tib. *rdzi bo lta bu*), one who shepherds everybody safely over a dangerous abyss before saving themselves; see Dorji Wangchuk, *The Resolve to Become a Buddha: A Study of the Bodhicitta Concept in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism* (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2007), 267–71. For an extensive study of the concepts of *bodhisattva* and *bodhicitta* in early Buddhism in India and Tibet, also see Wangchuk.

66 See Pommaret, “The Chakravartin-King,” 254. Royal patronage of Buddhist masters has been widespread in Bhutan, see, for example, between Ashi Phuntscho Choden/Gayum Angay (1911–2003), the wife of the Second King of Bhutan, and the sixty-ninth Chief Abbot Gendün Rinchen.

67 See *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*, art. 2, sec. 4, 3 (Engl.).

68 See Pommaret, “The Chakravartin-King,” 256–57.

69 See Brian C. Shaw, “Bhutan: Notes Concerning the Political Role of Kidu,” *Journal of*

‘Kidu’ is today institutionalised in art. 2, sec. 16:

The Druk Gyalpo, in exercise of His Royal Prerogatives, may:

- (a) Award titles, decorations, dar for Lhengyem [ministerial positions] and Nyi-Kyelma [i. e. conferring a red scarf] in accordance with tradition and custom;<sup>70</sup>
- (b) Grant citizenship, land kidu and other kidus;
- (c) Grant amnesty, pardon and reduction of sentences;
- (d) Command Bills and other measures to be introduced in Parliament;
- (e) Exercise powers relating to matters which are not provided for under this Constitution or other laws.<sup>71</sup>

Fourth, and finally, the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan* regulates the religious institutions and the procedures of appointment and duties of the Chief Abbot, who still holds the highest religious post in Bhutan, in art. 3 (*Spiritual Heritage*), sec. 4–7:

4. The Druk Gyalpo [King of Bhutan] shall, on the recommendation of the Five Lopons [Buddhist Masters], appoint a learned and respected monk ordained in accordance with the Druk-lu [i. e. ordained in the Drukpa Kagyü school], with the nine qualities of a spiritual master<sup>72</sup> and accomplished in ked-dzog [the two stages of Vajrayāna meditation], as the Je Khenpo [Chief Abbot].
5. His Holiness the Je Khenpo [Chief Abbot] shall, on the recommendation of the Dratshang Lhentshog [The Commission of the Monastic Affairs], appoint monks with the nine qualities of a spiritual master and accomplished in ked-dzog [the two stages of Vajrayāna meditation] as the Five Lopons [Buddhist Masters].

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*Bhutan Studies* 33, no. 2 (2015). Brian Shaw has also pointed out the necessity for further studies of Kidu in relation to, in particular, land policies in pre-modern Bhutan. He uses the term “Kidu democracy” or “democracy with Bhutan characteristics” for the specific Bhutanese form of democracy; see Shaw, 1–2.

70 “Nyi-Kyelma” (Dzo.) is a red scarf and refers to the official dress code. According to the official dress code in Bhutan, different coloured scarves must be worn by men at official occasions or at the visit of a Dzong. The colours clearly denote the wearer’s rank in the social hierarchy: (1) saffron for the Buddhist Kings of Bhutan and the Chief Abbots; (2) orange for ministers or members of the government (Tib. *blon po*); (3) red for male members of the Royal Family of Bhutan and other high officials (Tib. *drag shos*); (4) green for judges; (5) blue for members of the National Council and National Assembly; (6) white with a central red stripe for district governors (Tib. *rdzong khag*); (7) white with red stripes at the outside for the headmen Gup (Tib. *rgad po*) of a group of villages; (Tib. *rged ’og*); and (8) white for ordinary citizens.

71 *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*, art. 2, sec. 16, 6 (Engl.).

72 The nine attributes are to be learned, well-disciplined and kind (Tib. *mkhas btsun bzang gsum*), to be skilled in explication, debate and composition (Tib. *’chad rtsod rtsom gsum*) and possessing the qualities of study, contemplation and meditative practices (Tib. *thos bsam sgom*).

6. The members of the Dratshang Lhentshog shall comprise:
  - (a) The Je Khenpo as Chairman;
  - (b) The Five Lopons of the Zhung Dratshang [Central Monastic Body];  
and
  - (c) The Secretary of the Dratshang Lhentshog who is a civil servant.
7. The Zhung Dratshang and Rabdeys [i. e. monastic bodies in districts other than Punakha and Thimphu] shall continue to receive adequate funds and other facilities from the State.<sup>73</sup>

The Chief Abbot is responsible for performing and presiding over all Buddhist state rituals of the country. His religious duties include regular travels throughout the country, and he is the spiritual leader of the Drukpa Kagyü school in Bhutan. His position is highly respected in Bhutan and has high symbolic value, but he does not exercise any official political power.<sup>74</sup>

Furthermore, on the status of religion in Bhutan, as expressed in art. 3, sec. 1–3 of the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*:

1. Buddhism is the spiritual heritage<sup>75</sup> of Bhutan, which promotes the principles and values of peace, non-violence, compassion and tolerance.
2. The Druk Gyalpo is the protector of all religions in Bhutan.
3. It shall be the responsibility of religious institutions and personalities to promote the spiritual heritage of the country while also ensuring that religion remains separate<sup>76</sup> from politics in Bhutan. Religious institutions and personalities shall remain above politics.<sup>77</sup>

73 *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*, art. 3, sec. 4–7, 10 (Engl.). Note that the post of the secretary functionally belongs to the religious branch of the government, but is exercised by a layperson.

74 While the Drukpa Kagyü school is nowadays regulated and funded by the State of Bhutan as the religious branch of the Joint Twofold System of Governance, the Nyingma school (and other marginal Tibetan Buddhist schools) are mostly privately financed and administered.

75 *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*, art. 3, sec.1, 13 (Dzo.). The corresponding Dzongkha term for “spiritual heritage” is *rygal khab di'i srol rgyun gyi chos*.

76 *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*, art. 3, sec. 3, 13 (Dzo.): The Dzongkha phrase for “religion remains separate from politics, or more literally, “religion and politics as different/distinguishable” is *'brug lu chos di srid don dang tha dad gnas*. The term *'brug lu chos* refers to the Drukpa Kagyü school.

77 *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*, art. 2, sec 1–3, 13 (Dzo.). The Dzongkha phrase for “going beyond/above religion” is *srid don las 'das pa*. See also *Election Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan* (Thimphu: Election Commission of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2008), art. 184 (*Ineligibility of a Religious Personality to Participate in the Electoral Process*), 66: “A truelku [incarnated Buddhist master], lam [Buddhist master], any influential religious personality or ordained members of any religion or religious institutions excluding the laity, as determined/registered as religious organisations or religious personalities under the provisions of the Religious Organizations Act 2007, shall neither join a political party

One concrete example of the need to carefully consider the different languages in discourses about secularisation and modernisation in Bhutan should be demonstrated here. Ulrike Roesler has pointed out that the most common term for religious belief systems in pre-modern Tibetan textual sources appears to be “chöluk” (Tib. *chos lugs*), which can be translated as “religious tradition”. It is also commonly and widely used today in the Tibetan cultural area, with the addition of the individual belief system considered, for example *ye shu'i chos lugs* for “Christianity”.<sup>78</sup> The phrase used in art. 3 (*Spiritual Heritage*), sec. 3 of the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan* that stipulates the separation of religion from politics uses the Dzongkha term “Druk lu” (Dzo. *'brug lu chos*; Tib. *'brug lugs*), “the tradition of the Drukpa Kagyü” for ‘religion’. By merely considering the English terms used here, we are easily misled that this might include all religions, suggesting the separation of the societal spheres of religion and politics *per se* in Bhutan. However, in this case, the English term ‘religion’ refers to merely one Tibetan Buddhist confession, that of the Drukpa Kagyü in Bhutan. This is, however, the most significant Buddhist confession in Bhutan, with its status as representant of the religious branch of the Joint Twofold System of Governance.

On a side note, concerning adherents of other belief-systems: The *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729* employs the term “people who [pursue] philosophical systems different [from our own]” (Tib. *grub mtha' mi gcig pa'i rigs [pa]*) found in two instances in the second and third part (*The duties of rulers and ministers, The duties of government officials*) laying out how to deal with such persons (and their use of hot springs!). It is to be differentiated from the mere designation of “people of different nationalities” (Tib. *mi rigs mi gcig [pa]*) also found once in the same text.<sup>79</sup>

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nor participate in the electoral process as they must remain above politics and cannot use their influence for the benefit of any party or candidate.”

78 See Roesler, “Die Lehre, der Weg und die namenlose Religion,” 141–48. Other terms include “insider” for Buddhist (Tib. *nang pa*), “person who is following the Buddha” (Tib. *sangs rgyas pa*), or respectively “outsider” for a non-Buddhist (Tib. *phyi rol pa*), “Hindu” (Tib. *mu stegs pa*), or also derogatory terms such as “barbarians” (Tib. *kla klo'i chos lugs*) for Muslims (found in some pre-modern textual sources). The Buddhist doctrine is also called “inner teaching/doctrine” (Tib. *nang chos*).

79 *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729*; in Aris, *Sources for the History of Bhutan*, 142, 152, 156 (Tib.); 143, 153 157 (Tib.).



Having provided insights into the formal relationship between religion and politics in Bhutan in the present day as found in the constitutional framework of Bhutan and connected emic terms from a diachronic perspective, we turn now exemplarily to the ideas and policies of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and its conceptual relation to the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729* under consideration of crucial emic terms.

## 2.5 Shaping: Gross National Happiness (GNH)

The ideas and policies of Gross National Happiness (GNH) that aim to facilitate the happiness and well-being of Bhutan's citizens, have also been met with widespread appreciation and popularity outside of Bhutan. In particular, Bhutan's creation and implementation of an alternative path of development, focussing on sustainability and socio-economic inclusion based on the principles of Buddhist ethics, has awoken international admiration for Bhutan's courage in setting out into uncharted territory. This despite being a tiny still-developing country sandwiched between the Asian giants of India and China.<sup>80</sup>

One of Bhutan's major achievements on the global stage was the inclusion, thanks to Bhutan's efforts, of subjective well-being and happiness in the official development agenda the United Nations in 2011. Following Bhutan's lead, the global community thereby acknowledged the importance of a more holistic approach to development policies and economic planning.<sup>81</sup> In particular, in the context of the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008, and the rapid progression of the environmental crisis stemming from climate change, Bhutan's example calls for applicability elsewhere. Since then, Bhutan has continued to play a pioneering role globally, raising awareness of the need for other economic models and indicators to

80 The *2017 Population & Housing Census* counts the total population of Bhutan as 735,553 persons (681,720 Bhutanese plus 53,833 non-Bhutanese including 8,408 tourists); see National Statistics Bureau of Bhutan, *2017 Population & Housing Census: National Report*, 15, accessed June 22, 2019, [http://www.nsb.gov.bt/publication/files/PHCB2017\\_national.pdf](http://www.nsb.gov.bt/publication/files/PHCB2017_national.pdf).

81 See United Nations General Assembly resolution 65/309, *Happiness: toward a holistic approach to development*, A/RES/65/309 (19 July 2011), available from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/715187>. Furthermore, this year the Fifth King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck received a Special Award of Recognition from the United Nations Development Programme "to honour his leadership in advancing human development and the well-being and happiness of the people of Bhutan;" see "UNDP award to Bhutan's King for advancing country's well-being," *South Asia Monitor*, March 15, 2019, accessed June 21, 2019, <https://southasiamonitor.org/news/undp-award-to-bhutan-s-king-for-advancing-country-s-well-being/inthenews/29129>.

be included in economic planning and development policies, an ongoing urgent challenge in the world today.<sup>82</sup>

Gross National Happiness (GNH) was developed through intercultural discourse and co-operation between societal elites from Bhutan and Asian and Western scholars of economic and social sciences, and thereby from its inception transcended not only national borders within Asia (mainly Thailand, India, and Japan) but also outside of Asia. The driving forces in Bhutan behind these ideas and policies are the Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research, and the GNH Planning Commission. Beginning in 2008, the democratisation process has also led to a greater role for civil society organisations, and, increasingly, the people of Bhutan. To date, seven international and interdisciplinary GNH conferences have taken place inside and outside of Bhutan.<sup>83</sup> The proceedings published by the Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research document in detail the conceptualisation, concretisation, and finally implementation of Gross National Happiness (GNH) in Bhutan. Consequently, they are a treasure trove for researchers wishing to understand Bhutan's encounters with and reaction to Western concepts of modernity and secularity, against the backdrop of its own cultural (mostly Buddhist) imprints. Accompanied by necessary ethnographic field research, the study of these proceedings would thus be a crucial next step in the analysis of social distinction and differentiation processes in Bhutan.<sup>84</sup>

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82 Some alternative economic models and approaches relevant in the context of GNH would include institutional economics, sustainable ecology, environmental economics, and happiness research. In Asia, they include Thailand's 'Sufficiency Economy', and the 'Santi Asoke Buddhist Reform Movement' as well as Ven. P. A. Payutto's 'Buddhist Economy'. See also the numerous publications by the distinguished economist John Helliwell; an overview is found here: [https://faculty.arts.ubc.ca/jhelliwell/prof\\_act.php](https://faculty.arts.ubc.ca/jhelliwell/prof_act.php).

83 The seven conferences are: (1) "Operationalization of Gross National Happiness", Bhutan, 2004; (2) "Gross National Happiness and Development", Canada, 2005; (3) "Towards Global Transformation: Rethinking Development", Thailand 2007; (4) "Gross National Happiness: Practices and Measurement", Bhutan, 2008 (5) "The Implementation and Practice of GNH", Brazil, 2009; (6) "From GNH Philosophy to Praxis and Policy", Bhutan, 2015; and (7) "Business of GNH", Bhutan, 2017. For the proceedings of the conferences, see <https://www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/category/conference-proceedings/>, accessed June 22, 2019.

84 I follow the threefold-approach to investigating non-Western pathways towards modernity, proposed by Christoph Kleine and Monika Wohlrab-Sahar; "As with the Multiple Modernities programme, we are also taking a threefold approach: a) cultural imprints, b) encounters with Western modernity/the Western concept of secularity and c) the handling of these encounters against the backdrop of cultural imprints. In accepting the existence of the cultural imprints of modern forms of secularity, it is necessary to pursue

As background, in the 1970s the Fourth King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck first coined the term “Gross National Happiness”. When asked by a journalist to comment on the very low Gross National Product of his country, the Fourth King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck answered that Gross National Happiness was more important than Gross National Product.<sup>85</sup> But it was not until 1998 that this concept was first made a concrete and official policy, being included in Bhutan’s Eighth Five Year plan for economic and social development.<sup>86</sup> Later, in the year 2008, Gross National Happiness was integrated into the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*, in two separate instances.

First in art. 9 (*Principles of State Policy*), sec. 2:

The State shall strive to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of Gross National Happiness.<sup>87</sup>

And, second, in art. 20 (*The Executive*), sec. 1:

The Government shall protect and strengthen the sovereignty of the Kingdom, provide good governance, and ensure peace, security, well-being and happiness of the people.<sup>88</sup>

Today Gross National Happiness (GNH) consists of ‘Four Pillars’ which form, the basis for policy development and administration: (1) environmental conservation, (2) sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, (3) good governance, and (4) preservation and promotion of

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their historical roots. This is where our project comes into play and where we want to fill a gap in the existing research;” Kleine and Wohlrab-Sahr, “Research Programme of the HCAS ‘Multiple Secularities,’” 6. Further research into Bhutan’s development path in the 20<sup>th</sup> century would have to take into account Bhutan’s strong political and economic dependence on India, as well as its shared and entangled histories with India, Nepal, and other Asian Buddhist countries, such as Thailand. Such an approach would be essential for a systematic analysis of external, secularist and pluralistic challenges in Bhutan. In addition, Bhutan’s geopolitical relevance as a buffer between India and China (along with unsolved border conflicts with China) must be considered.

85 See Phuntsho, *History of Bhutan*, 397.

86 See Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC), “Eighth Five Year Plan” (1998), accessed June 22, 2019, <https://www.gnhc.gov.bt/en/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/08fyp.pdf>.

87 See *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*, art. 9, sec. 2, 18 (Engl.). The Dzongkha term for “Gross National Happiness” is *rgyal yongs dga’ skyid*; see *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*, art. 9, sec. 2, 25 (Dzo.). Karma Phuntsho mentions the Dzongkha (or possibly Tibetan) term *rgyal yongs dga’ skyid dpal ’dzoms* as an approximate equivalent, which was only coined at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; see Phuntsho, *History of Bhutan*, 398.

88 See *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*, art. 20, sec. 1, 38 (Engl.). The Dzongkha terms for “well-being” and “happiness” are *bde skyid* and *dga’ skyid*; see *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*, art. 20, sec. 1, 52 (Dzo.).

culture.<sup>89</sup> In addition, nine domains (and, currently, thirty-three further sub-domains) constitute the basis for surveys and data evaluation: (1) living standards, (2) education, (3) health, (4) environment, (5) community vitality, (6) time use, (7) psychological well-being, (8) good governance, and (9) cultural resilience and promotion.<sup>90</sup>

As already briefly touched upon in the introduction, the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729* is used as a positive recourse for the development of the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH), as it represents the underlying Buddhist knowledge system – the ‘spiritual heritage’. In GNH literature, the most common reference (often adapted) addresses the purpose of the law and the duty of the government (here represented by the lineage holders of the Drukpa Kagyü school) to ensure the happiness of the people. It is found in the first part of the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729 (Introduction into the principles of theocratic rule)*:

If there is no law, happiness will not come to beings. If beings do not have happiness there is no point in the Hierarchs of the ‘Brug-pa [Drukpa Kagyü] upholding the doctrine of the dual system [i. e. Joint Twofold System of Governance].<sup>91</sup>

Furthermore, the religious morality of the Buddhist ruler was supposed to spread to all levels of society, including the government and administration. This interdependence of the different spheres of society is now-adays expressed in the value-based conception of Gross National Happiness (GNH).<sup>92</sup> Here it is exemplified based on a quote from the

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89 See Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH, “The 4 Pillars of GNH,” accessed June 21, 2019, <http://www.gnhcentrebhutan.org/what-is-gnh/the-4-pillars-of-gnh/>. For a detailed overview of the concept of GNH and its measurement indices and statistical method, see Ura et al., “A Short Guide to Gross National Happiness Index.”

90 See Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH, “The 9 Domains of GNH,” accessed June 21, 2019, <http://www.gnhcentrebhutan.org/what-is-gnh/the-9-domains-of-gnh/>.

91 *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729*; in Aris, *Sources for the History of Bhutan*, 130 (Tib.); 131 (Engl.)

92 For an extensive analysis of the similarities between the ‘social contract theory’ in relation to Buddhist rule through meritocracy embodied today by the Bhutanese monarchy, insights into the drafting process of the constitution, and the role of the judiciary in Bhutan, see Dasho Lungten Dubgyur, *The Wheel of Laws: An insight into the origin of Buddhist Kingship, Constitution and Judicial Independence in Bhutan* (Thimphu: Royal Court of Justice, High Court of Bhutan, 2015). For an analysis of Bhutanese law under consideration of ethnographic field research, see Richard W. Whitecross, “The Zhabdrung’s Legacy: State Transformation, Law and Social Values in contemporary Bhutan” (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2002); see also Richard W. Whitecross, “The Trimzhung Chenmo and the Emergence of the Contemporary Bhutanese Legal System,” in *The Spider and*

second part (*The duties of rulers and ministers*) of the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729*:

If the king becomes enamoured of religion,  
It is the path to happiness both in this and future lives  
Subjects will also act as the king acts;  
Therefore he must learn how to live in accord with religion.<sup>93</sup>

Different emic terms within the range of the semantic field of ‘happiness and wellbeing in society’ are used throughout the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729*. The semantic field of each of the terms is naturally much more comprehensive if additional textual sources are used in the analysis but, nonetheless, observations based solely on the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729* prove fruitful for this research. Whilst at first glance the different terms seem to be employed quite synonymously, it appears that their applications have different connotations in the respective contexts.<sup>94</sup>

(1) “Happiness” (Tib. *bde skyid*) was used in our first example, and throughout the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729* as well as in the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*. It refers to the happiness and well-being of the subjects of the nation *in a general sense*, for example that achieved through following the Buddhist doctrine or emphasised as a value in itself to be established and maintained in a functional Buddhist society.<sup>95</sup> (2) A second term for “happiness/joy” (Tib. *bde ba*) was similarly applied in our second example and in other instances in the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729*.<sup>96</sup> (3) Furthermore, a distinct term is used repeatedly for any “means/actions/ceremonies” which are carried out to create or maintain happiness

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*the Piglet: Proceedings of the First Seminar on Bhutan Studies*, ed. Karma Ura and Sonam Kinga (Thimphu: Centre for Bhutan Studies, 2004).

- 93 *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729* in Aris, *Sources for the History of Bhutan*, 135 (Tib.); 136 (Engl.) In the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729* this quote is attributed to the Buddha. I have located the quote in two instances in the Tibetan Buddhist Canon. They belong to the genre of former-birth stories (Skt. *jātaka*) that are found in the corresponding section of the Tibetan Buddhist canon (Tib. *skyes pa'i rabs kyi rgyud*). See Āryaśūra, *Jātakamāla* (D 4150, vol 168, fol. 81a6) and Vīryasiṃha, *Jātakamālapañjikā* (D 4460, vol. 213, fols. 300b7-301a1, corresponding commentary).
- 94 It should be kept in mind though that the semantic field of these terms is of course even more comprehensive when used in other genres and contexts, for example, “bliss” for the Tibetan term *bde ba* in Tantric literature. This is not part of my analysis though, which is here limited to the explicit usage in the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729* itself.
- 95 *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729*; in Aris, *Sources for the History of Bhutan*, 124, 130, 136, 138, 142 (Tib.); 125, 131, 137, 139, 143 (Engl.)
- 96 Aris, 122, 124, 126, 134, 138, 146 (Tib.); 123, 125, 127, 135, 139, 147 (Engl.)

and well-being of the subjects (Tib. *bde thabs*).<sup>97</sup> (4) Then, the compound “benefit and happiness,” “beneficial happiness,” or “beneficial [for]” (Tib. *phan bde*) is always employed in conjunction with a concrete reference to the state, the religion, the laws themselves, or the districts and country.<sup>98</sup> (5) “Kidu” (Tib. *skyid sdug*),<sup>99</sup> the royal prerogative of the Kings of Bhutan and the former informal principle of mutual aid or support, is used in the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729* when pointing out the concrete responsibilities of rulers, ministers and government officers alike to observe and, if necessary, to balance the *collective happiness and welfare status* of the subjects. One example given is the distribution of surplus in granaries, in order to narrow the gap between those in the state of misery (Tib. *sdug*) and those in the state of well-being (Tib. *skyid*).<sup>100</sup> Failing to look after the welfare of the subjects was considered serious neglect of duties, and was quite severely sanctioned.<sup>101</sup> As this suggests, the happiness and welfare of the population were taken very seriously in pre-modern Bhutan (at least according to this text).

Although this variety of terms for ‘happiness and wellbeing in society’ is only one particular example, a wider point is clearly demonstrated here, in highlighting the usefulness of analysis of emic terms. Such analysis helps to clarify how functions within, and arrangements between, the different societal spheres of religion and politics within the Joint Twofold System of Governance in pre-modern Bhutan were conceptualised and implemented. The observations made here also show that Buddhist moral codes and values, which in many cases had a longstanding history in the Tibetan cultural area, were stipulated as guidelines for the governance of rulers, ministers and government officials alike. Furthermore, the government officials were responsible for not only enforcing religious and moral codes on the general populace but also regulating religious institutions and their monastic rules (Skt. *vinaya*) in the public sphere. Hence, religious and moral codes of conduct penetrated the everyday work of public servants and created an intricate set of interactions between religious and

97 Aris, 136, 138, 140, 142, 148 (Tib.); 137, 139, 141, 143, 149 (Engl.) For welfare and happiness rites (Tib. *bde thabs*), see also n. 53 on p. 22.

98 Aris, 122, 124, 130, 162 (Tib.); 123, 124, 131, 163 (Engl.)

99 Aris, 136, 140, 144, 148, 150, 160 (Tib.); 137, 141, 145 151, 161 (Engl.).

100 Aris, 148 (Tib.); 149 (Engl.).

101 Several draconian punishments prescribed for this dereliction of duty are listed in Aris, 161–62 (Tib.); 163–64 (Engl.).

non-religious spheres in the Joint Twofold System of Governance in pre-modern Bhutan. These social spheres may thus be seen as overlapping but not undifferentiated.<sup>102</sup>

In summary, the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729*, in its conception of the Joint Twofold System of Governance in Bhutan, emphasises the legitimisation of Buddhist rule and governance through meritorious Buddhist conduct in office. The merit of said conduct was to be measured by the resulting happiness and well-being of the subjects.<sup>103</sup> Material and spiritual well-being and happiness of the subjects, and harmony and peace within the country were to be achieved by following Buddhist doctrine in all areas of religion and politics. According to the cosmological order of Tantric Buddhism, this would secure the region's protection by the Buddhist protector deities of the Drukpa Kagyü school, as referred to throughout the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729*, against inner and outer enemies and other calamities.<sup>104</sup>

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102 For example, the duty of government officials to ensure that the populace follows the “Ten rules of virtuous conduct” (Tib. *dge ba bcu'i khirms*); that is avoid killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, harsh speech, slander, idle gossip, ill will, covetousness, and wrong views; see Aris, 145 (Tib.); 146 (Eng.); cf. also Gayley and Willock, “Introduction. Theorizing the Secular in Tibetan Cultural Worlds,” 23. Other common Buddhist codes of conducts employed in the text are the “Ten religious practices” (Tib. *spyod bcu*), see *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729*; in Aris, *Sources for the History of Bhutan*, 136 (Tib.); 137 (Eng.); “Rules of the Vinaya” (Tib. *dge slong bslab pa*), see Aris, 140 (Tib.); 141 (Eng.); “Five precepts” (Tib. *bslab pa gzhi lnga*), in particular infusing the whole text; the “Sixteen pure rules of human conduct” (Tib. *mi chos gtsang ma bcu drug*), see Aris, 128, 130 (Tib.); 129, 131 (Eng.); and the “Four actions” (Tib. *phrin las bzhi*), i. e. “pacifying, multiplying, ruling, and subduing in order to fulfil” the role of a just ruler; see Aris, 138, 144, 164 (Tib.); 139, 145, 165 (Eng.); see also Cüppers, “Bstan 'dzin chos rgyal's Bhutan Legal Code of 1729,” 50.

103 In general, Buddhist ethical principles and connected Buddhist knowledge systems and binary codes are also found in earlier legal codes in the broader Tibetan cultural area, for example *Guidelines for Government Officials* (Tib. *Blang dor gsal bar ston pa'i drang thig dwangs shel me long nyer gcig pa*). This document, written in 1681 by the Tibetan regent Sangye Gyatso (1653–1705), concerned the administration of the Joint Twofold System of Governance in Tibet. However, Christoph Cüppers notes, in his concise comparison of the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729* to this earlier document, that while the Bhutanese had copied quite significant portions from the Tibetan text (a quite common practice in the Tibetan cultural area) the emphasis on Buddhist morality and Buddhist codes of conduct to enable happiness and well-being and to monitor the welfare of the subjects is not found in the Tibetan counterpart. In addition, the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729* is much more concerned with addressing legitimisation and justification of Buddhist rule; see Cüppers, “Bstan 'dzin chos rgyal's Bhutan Legal Code of 1729,” 45, 47–50.

104 On the function of religion and, in particular, Buddhism as a social system in the ultimate sense supposed to overcome any contingency, see Kleine, “Religion and the Secular in Premodern Japan,” 11–13; see also Kleine, “The Secular Ground Bass,” 24.

How do these conceptions and practices relate to social differentiation in Bhutan today? Considering the background of these cultural imprints, the ideas and policies of Gross National Happiness (GNH) seem indeed to be a promising, though complex, topic of interest for research into imagined or institutionalised boundaries between societal spheres in Bhutan today. These ideas and policies point, in particular, to distinction and differentiation between legality and morality in factual institutional arrangements or symbolic spaces. As paradoxical as it may seem, Buddhist knowledge systems, Buddhist ethics, and binary moral codes within the ideas and policies of Gross National Happiness (GNH) are of central interest to point towards critical distinction and differentiation processes, and thereby secularities in Bhutan today. One of the main questions still to be considered regarding the religious heterogeneity<sup>105</sup> in Bhutan is: Are Buddhist knowledge systems modernised, thereby representing ‘Buddhism in a new dress,’ or are they in fact transformed and thereby ‘secularised’ in Bhutan; or moreover, do both processes happen simultaneously in the practice and implementation of Gross National Happiness (GNH)?<sup>106</sup>

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105 No official numbers are found in the current *2017 Population & Housing Census*, therefore, the numbers provided are based on estimations by the Pew Research Center for the year 2010: 74.7 % Buddhist, 22.5 Hindu, 1.9 % folk religions, 0.6 % Christian, 0.2 % Muslim, < 0.1 % unaffiliated, < 0.1 Jew, other < 0.1%; see Pew Research Center, “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2015,” April 2, 2015, accessed June 22, 2019, <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projection-table/>. No significant differences in the sources at hand are identified, cf., for example, [www.indexmundi.com](http://www.indexmundi.com) or [www.worldpopulationreview.com](http://www.worldpopulationreview.com).

106 A clear example of the latter case, the ‘secularisation of Buddhist knowledge systems and practices’ is found in mindfulness training in schools throughout Bhutan, for example, carried out by the Early Learning Centre initiatives (for further information, see <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/College---University/Early-Learning-Centre-Thimphu-172275416158080/>, accessed June 24, 2019). They do not teach traditional Buddhist mindfulness and meditation techniques according to the Drukpa Kagyü school (or other Bhutanese Buddhist schools) but Western mindfulness approaches and techniques (interestingly often derived themselves originally from Buddhist meditative traditions as in the case of Jon Kabat-Zinn’s approach of ‘Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction’).



### 3 Conclusion

To sum up, I would like to highlight three significant findings that promise to be fruitful for further research:

First, an approach that traces pre-modern and modern ‘emic’ terms and clarifies their correspondence to ‘etic’ terms in English, such as ‘religion’ and ‘politics,’ has proven necessary and productive based on examples laid out in the course of this paper. This procedure establishes, as far as possible, a common background and vocabulary in international and interdisciplinary discourses that address secularity, religion, and modernity in Bhutan. An important first step in this process is to determine, from the collected emic terms, areas relevant in relation to conceptualised or institutionalised boundaries between the “religious” (Tib. *chos*) and “political” (Tib. *srid*) sphere within the conception and institutionalisation of the Joint Twofold System of Governance. By so doing, research illuminates the intricate distinction and differentiation processes and the resulting secularities in Bhutan, in the spirit of the ‘multiple secularities’ approach.

On the basis of the analysis of emic terminologies in this paper, performed in a diachronic perspective, the following areas seem to be relevant for analysis of the relationship between religious and political spheres in Bhutan, indicating negotiations over or formalisation of boundaries between them: (1) functions in society (religious/political/administrative); (2) actors (lay/monastic); (3) participation of the Buddhist ruler/king in politics (‘Kidu’); (4) status of the Buddhist ruler/king ; (5) legitimisation of Buddhist rule (incarnation/abbatial/hereditary/meritocratic); (6) ‘modernised’ or ‘secularised’? Buddhist ethics and morality as now institutionalised on the national, and not just civil societal, level in a religiously heterogeneous country; and (7) social practices of Buddhist communal and state rituals interpreted either as cultural or religious practices. In brief, emic, classical Tibetan terms that are found in earlier Bhutanese textual sources, within the Joint Twofold System of Governance in pre-modern Bhutan, require careful study. They are indispensable for a first understanding of secularisation processes and their possible reasons also today.

Second, any research into Bhutan’s development path has to consider the diversity of additional emic terms in Dzongkha, English, and other vernaculars. My glimpse into the constitutional framework here has been severely constrained by my limited understanding of Dzongkha, save

for the fact that its vocabulary and syntax overlap strongly with classical Tibetan. Consequently, there is need of further research, by scholars trained in classical Tibetan, Dzongkha, and English (and, ideally, also in other vernaculars of Bhutan). This would enable them to sufficiently address the challenges caused by the language shifts from classical Tibetan to Dzongkha (and English) as a literary medium, and to access oral discourses on modernisation and secularisation in Bhutan.

Therefore, the handling of encounters with Western notions of secularity and modernity against the backdrop of the strong cultural imprints of Buddhist rule and morality as represented by the Joint Twofold Systems of Governance, have to be related in detail to the newly created emic terms used in discourses about secularity, religion, and modernity in Bhutan today, and to our etic terms.

The impact of this analysis lies in locating culture-specific imprints found in Bhutan, and the documentation of their manifestation in emic terminologies in the past and present. It may also indicate culture-specific areas of interest for distinction and differentiation processes for further research. Bhutan is a unique case as it shows a structural continuity in the form of the transformed Buddhist Joint Twofold System of Governance. In addition, it is the only one of the three major Buddhist governments in the Tibetan cultural area that is still in existence today.

Third and finally, the transformed Joint Twofold System of Governance and the underlying Buddhist knowledge systems of Buddhist ethics in the conception of Gross National Happiness (GNH) are today still profoundly grounded in a non-Western cosmological order – that of Tantric Buddhism. I argue that if there is the sincere wish to understand secularity, religion, and modernity in a holistic and culturally non-biased way, our analytical framework should be expanded. It should transcend discourses constrained to, for example, a mere state-religion relationship such as “theocratic constitutionalism”<sup>107</sup>.

Consequently, I have proposed an additional analytical framework that may hopefully prove fruitful for the case of Bhutan as a non-Western

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107 As part of a comprehensive analysis, an investigation into the institutional arrangements and legal framework is nevertheless sensible. A possible starting point for such research could be Ran Hirschl’s categorisation of nine archetypical state-and-religion models; see *Constitutional Theocracy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), 26–40; see also Larry C. Backer, “Theocratic Constitutionalism: An Introduction to a New Global Legal Ordering,” *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 16, no. 2 (2009).

society. It was with this in mind, that I intentionally chose to allude to a Buddhist Maṇḍala in the title of my paper and in the captions of section two. In particular, I suggest arranging the areas of interest that I have identified throughout the paper in a preliminary matrix that juxtaposes the opposing poles of ‘relative/absolute transcendence’ and ‘immanence’ roughly with the spheres of ‘religion’ and other ‘secular’ societal spheres such as politics.<sup>108</sup> This enables us to visualise the aforementioned Buddhist conceptual emic dyad and binary “belonging to the world/ordinary life” (Tib. *’jig rten pa*: Skt. *laukika*) and “transcending/excelling/surpassing the world” (Tib. *’jig rten las ’das pa*: Skt. *lokottara*) as opposing poles between which the respective areas of interest that mark boundaries (and the related emic terminologies) are located.

I here adopt Christoph Kleine’s approach that, based on the theoretical framework of Niklas Luhmann’s ‘systems theory’, has established the Buddhist conceptual emic dyad and binary “belonging to the world/ordinary life” (Tib. *’jig rten pa*: Skt. *laukika*) and “transcending/excelling/surpassing the world” (Tib. *’jig rten las ’das pa*: Skt. *lokottara*) as a ‘culturally specific version of the binary code transcendence/immanence’. In addition, Christoph Kleine has developed a “three-layered concept of immanence, relative transcendence and absolute transcendence” as a graded scheme.<sup>109</sup> Accordingly, to understand and describe distinction and differentiation

108 Cf. also Seyfort Ruegg, *Ordre spirituel et ordre temporal*, 149–56. David Seyfort Ruegg has also pointed out the problem of drawing “a sharp and absolute boundary” between the religious and non-religious spheres of society in the Tibetan context; see Seyfort Ruegg, 151.

109 For an introduction to Christoph Kleine’s “three-layered concept of immanence, relative transcendence, and absolute transcendence”, as exemplified by the theory of the three Bodies of the Buddha see Kleine, “Religion and the Secular in Premodern Japan,” 14–19. The three Bodies of the Buddha are: (1) the Dharmakāya (Tib. *chos skyi sku*), which is the embodiment of the true nature of all phenomena and is discernible only to Buddhas; and the two Rūpakāyas, which are the Form Bodies for the benefit of others; (2) the Saṃbhogakāya/Saṃbhogikakāya (Tib. *longs spyod rdzogs pa’i sku*) as the Body of Enjoyment, which is discernible to beings with a high realisation such as Bodhisattvas in, for example, Buddha realms such as Akaniṣṭha; and (3) the Nirmāṇakāya/Nairmāṇikakāya (Tib. *sprul pa’i sku*), the Emanation Body. For an overview of the three Bodies of the Buddha see Orna Almogi, *Rong-zom-pa’s Discourses on Buddhology: A Study of Various Conceptions of Buddhahood in Indian Sources with Special Reference to the Controversy Surrounding the Existence of Gnosis (jñāna; ye shes) as Presented by the Eleventh-Century Tibetan Scholar Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po* (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2009), 61–67. For Christoph Kleine’s highly engaging and detailed analysis of pre-modern Japanese textual sources that depict Confucianism, Daoism, Brahmanism, Shintō, and Buddhism as being in varying capacities able to offer access to relative and absolute transcendence see Kleine, “The Secular Ground Bass.”

processes within the cosmological order of Tantric Buddhism in Bhutan, this provides a more flexible and holistic (not strictly binary) avenue supplementing the Western analytical and ethic framework of 'religion' and 'other societal spheres'.

In closing, two brief examples elucidate this point. First, following Buddhist moral codes, let us take the example of environmentally responsible behaviour. It can be interpreted as contributing to the wellbeing and happiness of the society as a whole either according to the immanent framework of the ideas and policies of Gross National Happiness (GNH) or in a transcendent framework of liberation by accumulation of positive merit, Karma, and creating balance in society according to the cosmological order of Buddhism. The signpost on the way to the holy site of Taktsang in Bhutan, mentioned earlier in this text, promotes environmentally responsible behaviour in accordance with Gross National Happiness (GNH) and connects it with godliness and, therefore, accumulation of positive merit. Second, depending on the model of Buddhist kingship and rule that is imagined, for example, the King as Bodhisattva or as a Tantric Buddhist master such as Zhabdrung, they, in theory, serve in different capacities as mediators between the immanent and the relative/absolute transcendent sphere.

Figure 1 shows the basic matrix of this analytical framework with several tentative examples resulting from this research.

**Figure 1: Analytical framework: Joint Twofold System of Governance (Bhutan)**

based on the analysis of the *Bhutanese Legal Code from 1729*, the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan from 2008*, Gross National Happiness (GNH) with the 'areas of interest':



From a diachronic perspective, boundaries between the societal spheres of religion and politics around the areas of interest have permanently shifted through negotiation processes – as we have seen in several examples throughout this paper. In the future, research on Bhutan can, in a second step, analyse differentiation processes, resulting in secularities, in more detail as these often provide solutions for a specific ‘societal reference problem’. Such an analysis would enable us to see where negotiations over boundaries and functions in society are likely to be expected in future.<sup>110</sup>

In summary, the exploratory character and form of this working paper mirror the urgent need for further research into religion, secularity and modernity in Bhutan, and I hope that the findings presented elicit reflection and discussion in interdisciplinary discourses. Extending beyond Bhutan, the analytical framework used here can be adapted for further research into different pre-modern formations of the Joint Twofold System of Governance in the Tibetan cultural area as a whole. In particular, I would like this paper to function as a call for research on lesser known formations of the Joint Twofold System of Governance, besides the three major formations in Tibet, Bhutan, and Sikkim.

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110 Marian Burchardt, Matthias Middell, and Monika Wohrab-Sahr have so far identified four dominant reference problems, “(1) The problem of individual freedom in contrast to dominating social entities; (2) the problem of religious heterogeneity and the potential for conflict or actual conflict; (3) the related problem of societal or national integration and development; and (4) the problem of autonomous development of societal sub-domains;” Kleine and Wohrab-Sahr, “Research Programme of the HCAS ‘Multiple Secularities;” 6, 13–14.

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