EDITORS' NOTE

The papers in this publication were presented at the first International Seminar on Bhutan Studies, which was held from 20-22 August 2003 in Thimphu. The seminar was attended by 23 scholars from various parts of the world. But, a total of 29 papers on a wide range of themes such as culture, religion, economy, environment, development issues and international relations were submitted for the seminar. Among the papers presented during the seminar, two were in Dzongkha. However, one original Dzongkha paper could be translated into English and included in this publication. The other two ethnographic studies in Dzongkha, one on Mongar and the other on Bumthang, are being published as monographs. The Centre for Bhutan Studies has recently published the biography of Hungrel Drung Drung titled 'The Gem-Necklace of Short Biography of Hungrel Drung Drung and His Descendents'. Its English translation, 'A Brief Account of Hungrel Drung Drung' has been included in this volume. The Centre for Bhutan Studies would like to thank the authors for their contributions.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE OPENING OF THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON BHUTAN STUDIES

LYONPO JIGMI Y. THINLEY

Your Excellencies
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a matter of great pride and satisfaction for Bhutan to host the First International Seminar on Bhutanese Studies. This festival of knowledge which has attracted the interest and participation of many authors, researchers and others, draws on the scholarship of indigenous and foreign scholars devoted to the study of Bhutan.

The reputation of the participants and the interesting themes of their papers have conspired to attract and audience that we can barely accommodate in this hall. We have amongst us today, in random order, Dr. Romola Gondolfo from Italy, Prof. Samten Karmay from Tibet, Dr. George van Driem and Mrs. Rieki Crins from The Netherlands, Prof. Unni Wikan from Norway, Dr. Francoise Pommaret from France, Dr. Alex Mckay, Dr. Richard Whitecross and Dr. Adam Pain from the United Kingdom, Ms. Elizabeth Allison and Mrs. Martha Carlough from the United States, Dr. Prabhat Pankaj from India and Dr. Akiko Ueda from Japan.

We are also honoured by the presence of our own scholars and researchers. They include Dasho Lam Sanga, Dasho Sangay Dorji, Dr. Jagar Dorji, Khenpo Phuntsho Tashi, Lopen Lungten Gyatsho, Tashi Wangyel, Dr. Tandin Dorji, Karma Phuntsho, Ugyen Pelgen and Lungten Dubgyur. In deriving immense pleasure from this wide range of participants to make this a truly international affair, I must acknowledge the support and contributions of the many parent institutions and sponsors of the scholars both here at home and abroad.

On behalf of the Centre for Bhutan Studies, I extend a warm welcome to all of you, and thank you for your interest and contributions. I would like to put on record a special note of appreciation for those scholars who, upon having initially committed to participate in the seminar, had to withdraw for reasons beyond their control. Our appreciation is due all the more because they have sent us fascinating and original research papers written mainly for this occasion. For example, we have a paper from Dr. John Ardussi from the United States titled, "A Reappraisal of the Origin of Dung Lineages of Bumthang and Eastern Bhutan based on Literary Sources". An equally engaging paper

titled "Bhutan-China Relations: Towards a New Step in Himalayan Politics", has been sent in by the French diplomat-scholar, Dr. Thierry Mathou. These papers have been included in the handouts already with you and will form part of the final publication of the seminar.

People in Bhutan and outside have profited from the worthy pursuits and works such as those we will witness in the three days. This in turn has aroused the enthusiasm and commitment of the Centre to facilitate and inspire, albeit in a modest way, a sustained and coordinated effort in furthering studies on the many facets and elements that form the Bhutanese entity, the subject of our common interest. Indeed the purpose of this seminar is to pay tribute to those scholars who, with courage and pioneering spirit, have dared to explore and write on what was once an obscure subject. Most certainly, this seminar also brings us together to strengthen our friendship; to strive together to deepen our understanding of Bhutanese society and to enhance our combined scholarship. Since its birth, the Centre has followed with deep interest the works of scholars who are here today and of others as well, and has published some of their excellent writings. I am confident that the International Seminar on Bhutanese Studies will grow in strength and facilitate the development of a network of authors and scholars devoted to Bhutanese studies.

Traditional scholarship over the centuries has created an immense body of literature particularly on subjects related to Buddhism. The most important area of scholarship that motivated the interest of traditional scholars was the writing of biographies of eminent leaders and lama. These efforts had both spiritual and state policy objectives. Writing biography of one's master and disseminating it was an exalted and virtuous practice to earn spiritual merit. These biographies not only promoted faith in the lamas but also served as records of individual efforts to foster the consolidation and prosperity of the Buddhist state. These works also manifest the desire and wisdom of the Bhutanese leaders to perpetuate the consciousness of statehood through scribes. Most notably, he eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the publication of many biographies, which have become today sources of knowledge and information on medieval Bhutan. The biography of Desi Tenzin Rabgye, the biography of Desi Mipham Wangpo by Je Shakya Rinchen and the first national history, Lhoi Choejung published at the behest of Desi Sherub Wangchuck, are fitting examples.

The first generation of Bhutanese writers–writing in both Dzongkha and English as opposed to writing in choeked, has emerged only in the last decade. Nevertheless, the growth of literature in English on Bhutan began much earlier. The British political missionaries were the first people to record and write in English on Bhutanese society and culture

based on their personal observations. Later, the political officers based in Sikkim visited Bhutan on different occasions, and wrote travelogues. These early British contributions on the subject of Bhutan, more or less, ended with the demise of the British Raj.

After the Independence of India and embarkation of Bhutan on the path of development and modernization with Indian assistance, many Indians visited Bhutan in various capacities. In their attempt to understand Bhutanese society and culture, they also studied and wrote on various aspects of Bhutan. The book, "Bhutan - A Physical and Cultural Geography" by P.P Karan and published in 1967 is one of the earliest works on Bhutan by Indian authors. An increasing number of Indian authors continue to write on Bhutan. I had hoped that there might be a greater level of Indian participation at this conference and remain confident that many more will join us at future events.

The introduction of modern education system in the 1960's resulted in the creation of administrative and technical personnel that were required to launch and sustain national development efforts. One of the recent offsprings of this is the emergence of the first generation of Bhutanese scholars writing in English, especially in the 1990s. It is interesting to note that these authors chose to record and translate oral literature like proverbs and aphorisms, *lozey* and folktales. Their works are a response to the popular concern that oral tradition which was the main medium of transmitting lay views and values in medieval Bhutan, would be soon forgotten. Oral tradition had, indeed, been the most dominant form of literature, and the current efforts to ensure its survival in written form are, I believe, note worthy.

We are aware that there has not been much research conducted on social, cultural, economic and political aspects using systematic research methods and tools. On the other hand, Bhutanese society is faced with issues of socio-economic development that beg for objective research and analysis. The establishment of the Centre for Bhutan Studies in 1998, under a council to conduct interdisciplinary studies on various aspects of national life was, in fact, the resultant outcome. Among others, the objectives of this autonomous organization are to promote publications on Bhutan, commission research studies on Bhutan, encourage such publication in both Dzongkha and English, facilitate training in research skills through internships, collaborate with other agencies on research of mutual interests, hosts talks and lectures, and act as a clearing house for information about research conducted on Bhutan. Its mandates give equal importance to foreign and Bhutanese scholars.

The 28 papers submitted for this seminar encompass a wide variety of themes. There are seven papers on history, two related to medicine,

three on education, three on language, three on law, one on library and documentation, one on Bhutan's foreign relation, two on WTO related issues, two on social and political ideology, two on ethnographic studies and two on religion and environment. All of them bring fresh knowledge and enrich the growing body of literature on our country. The papers on the medical history of the early 20th century Bhutan and the first citing of Bhutan on European maps are good examples.

The seminar should serve to access knowledge and information on Bhutan that are often scattered worldwide. It also enables us to come into personal contact with the authors themselves. Beyond contributing to general scholarship on Bhutan, there is no doubt that the knowledge and information generated through this seminar will accrue great benefit to the cause of higher education in Bhutan.

Guided by an enlightened leadership, the Royal Government of Bhutan has encouraged the development of more indigenous components in our higher education curriculum, especially in social sciences. Indigenous inputs can be made only through original research and studies. I have no doubt that the papers written for the seminar will provide a wider range of options for use in higher education. In this regard, it is with a great sense of pride that I must inform this august gathering of the recent establishment of the Royal University of Bhutan. The Centre intends to work closely with the University and wishes to acknowledge the participation of officials of the the University in this seminar.

We are deeply encouraged by your enthusiastic responses to the call for the international seminar on Bhutan in Bhutan. It is the intention of the Centre to carry forward this event as one of its major activities. Yet its success can only be assured through the contributions of scholars such as yourselves. Therefore, it is important for you and for this seminar to discuss on the frequency, venue and themes for the future seminars. Because of the importance we attah to this, a separate session has been allocated for such a discussion. I urge you to begin thinking over these issues in the next three days so that a tentative decision can be made.

I wish to thank the Royal Government of Bhutan for the generous grant which has made this seminar possible. On behalf of the Council of the Centre, I would like to thank the Ministry of Finance and the Sustainable Development Secretariat for their support. I would also like to mention that the Centre and the Sustainable Development Secretariat have collaborated in the past to organize similar activities. Perhaps, it would be of interest to all of you to know that the Centre and the Secretariat are jointly organizing a major international seminar on the subject of Gross National Happiness to be held in early 2004.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlement,

Allow me once again, on behalf of the Director and staff of the Centre for Bhtuan Studies and on my own behalf to thank you all for having come to grace the opening of this important event. I feel encouraged that the first international academic conference has attracted such a large audience, and that it should receive the good-will and support from so many quarters. Here, I must mention particularly the helping hand of organizations such as the UNDP, DANIDA, SNV, SCF and the HELVETAS.

I wish this seminar a great success and our esteemed foreign pariticpants a pleasant stay in our country.

Tashi Delek.