

Devotion, Culture, and Social Work: Royal Patronage in Bhutan

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Patronage of the arts has been an undertaking of royal families in all monarchical cultures. Examples abound: In the 12th century, Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122 or 1124-1204), Queen of France and then of England, had numerous castles and abbeys built; the Sun King, Louis XIV (1638-1715), is synonymous with the grandeur of the palace of Versailles near Paris; the Habsburg dynasty imprinted its architectural mark across the whole of Central Europe; different dynasties that ruled China, either Mongol, Manchu, or Chinese, embellished their capitals and sponsored artists, including foreigners such as the famous Jesuit painter Giuseppe Castiglione, who was at the court of the Manchu Emperor Qianlong (18th century).

The existence of *les cabinets de curiosité* (rooms of wonders), the ancestors of today's museums, was largely due to the interest of royal personages who had the means to constitute and maintain them. The *cabinet* of Rudolf II, Holy Roman Emperor from 1576 to 1612, is housed in Prague, while the collection of Rudolf's uncle, Ferdinand II (1529-1595), Archduke of Austria, remains largely intact in Ambras Castle in Austria. Charles I of England (1600-1649), Frederick III of Denmark (1609-1670), and Peter the Great of Russia (1672-1725) also had their collections.

This royal interest and competition amongst the ruling families of Europe was fuelled by a genuine desire to accumulate knowledge but also by political grandeur.

In the Himalayas, the Malla dynasties of the Kathmandu valley adorned their capitals of Patan, Bhaktapur, and Kathmandu with temples and sculptures. The golden ages of the arts in Tibet took place during the reigns of the princes of Gyantse in the 15th century, then under the Fifth Dalai Lama in the 17th century and in Eastern Tibet during the rule of the House of Derge in the 18th.

To be a patron of the arts generally requires interest and dedication, as well as the capacity to mobilise and sustain funds and human resources. In English the term 'patron', which is equivalent to benefactor, is derived from 'patronage', which in turn

comes from Old French and appeared in late Middle English (15th century). In colloquial English today it is being replaced more and more by ‘sponsor’, a term with a more commercial origin. The word ‘patron’, in English, has now completely lost the religious connotation that was often associated with it in the Middle Ages when the royal families were patrons of monasteries, churches and abbeys.

This short etymological digression brings us to Bhutan where the term for patron has a strong religious connection. *Jinda* (sbyin bdag), ‘Master/Patron of blessings’, is the term in Dzongkha; the same term is used in the other Himalayan Buddhist areas as well. Because of the history of Bhutan where religion and state were intertwined, most art works were religious. They were initiated and sponsored by a benefactor, the *jinda*, and this is how the term should also be understood today.

In such a society, the arts could only flourish if sponsored for religious purposes, as art for the sake of art, as it is known in the modern western world, did not exist.¹ Art was primarily sponsored and executed to gain religious merit or came out of religious dedication, and this is what the great 13th century Christian theologian St. Thomas Aquinas said: ‘Religion is not faith but the proof of faith with external signs’. In the Himalayas, all religious objects are ‘support of faith’ (*ten/rtan*); statues and paintings are the body of the Buddha, books are his words and stupas (*chorten*) are the mind of the Buddha.

Most of the great works of art of Bhutan, including architecture, were initiated and sponsored by eminent lamas or important officials. The fourth *Desi*, Tenzin Rabgye (1638–1696), left his indelible mark on Bhutan through the commissioning of, among others, Taktsang and Tango monasteries as well as the great banner (*throngdroel*) of Paro Dzong.² The thirteenth *Desi*, Sherab Wangchuk (1697–1765), besides helping to restore the seat of the Drukpa Kagyupa Ralung monastery in Tibet around 1749 and many other religious establishments, sponsored the making of a new large banner (*thongdroel*) of Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezi) and the golden dome for Punakha Dzong, consecrated in 1756.³ The Dragon’s Gift exhibition, which toured the United States and Europe, provided a glimpse into the wealth of Bhutanese religious art of the past centuries.⁴

¹Although it can be argued that in the West today, merchants, galleries and wealthy business houses and individuals could be assimilated to sponsors for the artists.

²John Ardussi, ‘Gyalse Tenzin Rabgye (1638–1696), Artist Ruler of 17th Century Bhutan’, in Bartholomew and Johnston, eds., *The Dragon’s gift*, 2008, 88–99.

³rJe Yontan mTha’ yas /rJe Kun dga’ rgya mtsho, *Chos rje Shes rab dbang phyug gi dge ba’i cho ga rab tu gsal ba’i gtam mu tig do shal* (‘The Necklace of Pearls: Biography of the 13th Druk Desi Sherab Wangchuk (1697–1765)’, Thimphu: CBS, 2003, 246 pp. and John Ardussi, ‘The Rapprochement between Bhutan and Tibet under the Enlightened Rule of Sde-Srid XIII Shes-Rab-Dbang-Phyug (R.1744–63)’, JBS vol. 1, n° 1, Autumn 1999, 64–83.

⁴Terese Tse Bartholomew and John Johnston, eds., *The Dragon’s Gift: The Sacred Arts of Bhutan*, Chicago and Honolulu: Serindia and Honolulu Academy of Arts, 2008.

These are just random examples of important state figures who contributed to the flourishing of artists in Bhutan, and *Desi* Tenzin Rabgye was so interested in artistic pursuits that he codified the Bhutanese ‘Thirteen Arts’ (*Zorig chusum*), a mix of arts and crafts in the western sense, which went on to become part of the artistic national heritage of Bhutan.

Painters, masons, woodcraft artists, clay-statue makers, metal workers and paper makers all benefited from activities initiated by the powerful figures, not only for their daily and religious lives but also in ensuring that their art and craftsmanship continued to thrive.

When the monarchy was installed in Bhutan in 1907, the royal family naturally and seamlessly took over the role of religious and artistic patronage, as was the practise of the wealthy noble families of central Bhutan since at least the mid-19th century.⁵ They were also devoted Buddhists, patrons of many famous Tibetan *lamas*, and had family links with prestigious religious Bhutanese figures such as Pema Lingpa (1450-1521) and his reincarnations.⁶ They also had the power to mobilise human resources and funds from their private wealth.

Until the 2008 Constitution, only the kings were really part of the state institutions as the head of state and government. The royal family (*kukhor/sku 'khor*) as a whole had no written institutional status per se. The word *kukhor* is in itself revealing as it means ‘the circle of the King’. Nevertheless, they played an important political role by occupying official functions and representing the king (*kutshab/sku tshab*). The respect they were shown and the legitimacy they held was by virtue of being of the same bloodline as the king. They could issue written orders (*kasho/bka' shog*) on land and tax issues, as long as they did not concern the state lands and taxes which were the prerogative of the king.

The 2008 Constitution (Sections 12, 13, 14 of Article 2 which deals with the Institution of the Monarchy) gave a strict definition to the term Royal Family and a list of their privileges. As a consequence they now officially belong to the state institutions and a privy council is responsible for matters pertaining to the royal family.

However, the past lack of written status for the royal family did not matter in Bhutan which had a society largely based on an innate respect for the family members of

⁵Kunzang Choden & Dolma C. Roder (eds.) 2012. *Ogyen Choling/A manor in Central Bhutan* Riyang Books, Thimphu, 2012 ISBN 978-99936-899-0-9, with texts from Kunzang Choden, Pierre Pichard and Françoise Pommaret, Architectural drawings by Pierre Pichard.

⁶Françoise Pommaret, “Note on the palaces and mansions of Bhutan” in J-L Achard (ed.) *Etudes tibétaines en l'honneur d'Anne Chayet*, Paris: EPHE-Droz, Paris, 2010, 205-216.

the kings. Royal patronage was always welcome and considered prestigious for the communities that benefited from it.

Moreover, the royal patronage was a personal endeavour and was not part of organised charities, like in the UK for example. The kings and the royal family, outside any institutional framework, continued the tradition of patronage that had been alive in Bhutan before the monarchy.

Gongsa Ugyen Wangchuck, even before he became the first king, enlarged, among other establishments such as Wangdue Choling palace, Jampa *Lhakhang* and Kurje *Lhakhang* in Bumthang on the advice of his lamas.⁷ In particular, the statue of Guru Rinpoche in the *Zilnon Lhakhang* of Kurje involved many famous craftsmen and required considerable financial input. It is said that *Gongsa* Ugyen Wangchuck spent all his wealth on this work.

Ten years after he became king, in 1917, *Gongsa* Ugyen Wangchuck sent monks from Trongsa and Punakha *Dzongs* to Kham in eastern Tibet to pursue religious studies, as well as to become refined artisans. He also had the central tower of Trongsa *Dzong* restored, along with Jakar, Wangdue and Daga *Dzongs*. He also contributed a large amount of money for the restoration of the Swayambu stupa in the Kathmandu valley; the work was carried out by the great master Tokden Shakya Sri.⁸

The Second King, Jigme Wangchuck, followed in the footsteps of his father and at his enthronement in 1927, gave a set of the Buddhist canon, thirty-five mask dance costumes, and a golden pinnacle to Punakha. He also had the palaces of Kunga Rabten, Domkhar, and Samdrup Choling built and had many temples and *Dzongs* renovated, including Yonphula and Kyichu *Lhakhangs* and Trashigang and Paro *Dzongs*. He had Trongsa *Dzong* renovated and built the Jigje *Lhakhang* in 1933.

With his senior queen, Ashi Phuntsho Chodron, the Second King renovated Tashi Kyedron's temple in Kurje and had the statues of the eight manifestations of Guru Rinpoche installed.⁹

Queen Ashi Phuntsho Chodron is known for her religious establishments in many parts of Trongsa including the exquisite Ugyen Tsemo above Paro Taktshang and

⁷Françoise Pommaret, 'Historical and Religious Relations Between Lhodrak (Southern Tibet) and Bumthang (Bhutan) from the 18th to the Early 20th century: Preliminary Data', in A. McKay (ed.), *Tibet and her neighbours. Proceedings of the History of Tibet Conference* St Andrews University 2001, London: Hansjörg Mayer, 2003, 91-106.

⁸Lham Dorji, *The Wangchuck Dynasty*, Thimphu: CBS, 2008, 21-23.

⁹Lham Dorji, *The Wangchuck Dynasty*, Thimphu: CBS, 2008, 32-35.

Padmasambhava temple in Bumthang, without forgetting her restoration of Kurje in Bumthang, Drametse in eastern Bhutan and temples in Nepal, and Darjeeling and Kalimpong in India.¹⁰ The list of her religious constructions in her biography covers more than 120 pages, which shows the extent of her activities. Ashi Phuntsho also sponsored a set of the Buddhist canon to be written in gold for her son the Third King and upon his untimely passing in 1972, she initiated and sponsored the construction of the Memorial Chorten in Thimphu with its refined clay statues and paintings.

Although less well documented, the royal ladies of the first two kings were also active as they had their own financial means through their inheritance and properties. In 1905, J.C. White documented the workshop of the royal weavers under *Gongsa* Ugyen Wangchuck's eldest daughter¹¹ and praised the Bhutanese craftsmen saying that 'each Penlop and Jongpen has his own workmen amongst his retainers.[...] They put their souls into what they do, with the result that some pieces of splendid individuality and excellent finish are still made'.¹²

This flurry of royal patronage during the reigns of the first two kings was centred around religious and architectural works, which offered ample opportunities to the best painters and sculptors in Bhutan. Calligraphers and paper makers also prepared the numerous prayers (*zung*) to be inserted into the statues, as is the custom in Bhutan.

Like his forefathers, the Third King was a royal patron who engaged personally in religious activities. In 1966, he commissioned a golden manuscript of the *Kanjur*, 10,000 statues of the Buddha and a large banner (*thongdroel*) for Kurje monastery in Bumthang, as well as the Kharbandi monastery in Phuntsholing where his mother, Queen Ashi Phuntsho Chodron, resided.¹³

However, the Third King's reign also marked a shift in royal patronage. While religious activities were still sponsored, royal patronage was also given to cultural activities not directly related to religion. This coincided with the opening to the world beyond the Himalayas and a transformation of the monarchy into a more modern institution.

Although they were not instances of royal patronage per se, but rather royal initiatives executed by the state, the Third King established several institutions that would have

¹⁰Queen Phuntsho Chodron biography in Dzongkha : Yonten Phuntsho, *Brug gi Yum chen rjes dran. Mi dbang rgyal yum A zbe Phun tshogs chos sgron dbang phyug mchog gi mdzad rnam bstan 'gro'i mdzes rgyan*. Thimphu, 2013.

¹¹J.C. White (1909) *Sikkim and Bhutan 1887-1908*. 1971 reprint. Delhi: Vivek & Asian Educational services New-Delhi Madras, 2000. p.164.

¹²ibidem, p.299.

¹³Lham Dorji, *The Wangchuck Dynasty*, Thimphu: CBS, 2008, 65-66.

important implications at the cultural level to ensure the recognition and survival of artistic traditions in Bhutan in a world that was changing. This was evident in the setting up of several institutions.

The National Museum established in 1968 in Paro was the first in the country and contained examples of all the arts of Bhutan. The National Institute of Zorig Chusum (arts and crafts) was established in 1971 in Thimphu, to teach the young generations the traditional artistic skills and methods in a course that took several years to complete. The Royal Academy of Performing Arts (RAPA) created in 1954 became an academy in 1967, and its mandate was to train dancers and singers in folk and mask dances. The Rigney School—which has evolved over the years into the Institute of Language and Culture Studies (ILCS) of the Royal University of Bhutan—was created in 1961 to train teachers of Dzongkha, the national language, for which a script had been adopted and could now be written.

While these institutions created on the command of the Third King are not under royal patronage, they demonstrate the keen interest of the Third King in strengthening the culture and language of Bhutan at the time when Bhutan was engaging itself with the world and was introducing modern education. He secularised and institutionalised under state responsibility many cultural fields that were for centuries the domain of the monks. Clearly, the farsighted vision of the Third King prevented Bhutan from losing part of its cultural heritage at a challenging time. His legacy today is more than vibrant and relevant.

His brother, HRH Prince Namgyal Wangchuck, on his own personal initiative contributed much to the uplifting, mainly through education scholarships, of the impoverished district of Zhemgang. Many youth sent to school went on to become officials in the government. In 1973, he established the first school for the blind in Khaling in Eastern Bhutan, thus saving dozens of children from a life of drudgery.

The Fourth Druk Gyalpo, like his father, engaged himself in works such as the renovation of more than two hundred monasteries and *Dzongs*, especially Yongla Monastery in Eastern Bhutan, and sponsored rituals for the wellbeing and protection of the country, especially at Yongla and Singye *Dzong*, as well as the reading of the Buddhist canon. He also contributed many objects and scriptures to many places.

In addition, in what can be considered another shift in royal patronage, from 1974 he involved himself in cultural policy, making culture as a whole a priority of the government.

In the 1990s, culture became a pillar of the Gross National Happiness (GNH) concept, having equal standing with socioeconomic determinants.

One can argue that this policy is not technically royal patronage but, given the charisma of the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, it made a real impression on the people and was, in essence, royal patronage.

Her Majesty the Royal Grandmother, Ashi Kesang Choeden Wangchuck, the Third King's Queen, has always involved herself as a patron of important religious figures, monasteries, and rituals. She provides a subsistence allowance to about two hundred monks and *tshampas* (religious practitioners) in various monasteries, in Bumthang, Dokar Phurdruk Gonpa and Euto Gonpa in Paro, and Njala Gonpa in Trongsa. Her devotion to the Dharma is complete and she is one of the most prolific builders of our time.

Her meritorious actions are too numerous to be listed here but amongst the most well-known we count the following: the enlargement and repair of Kyichu *Lhakhang* in Paro in 1968; the building of a third temple at Kurje *Lhakhang* in Bumthang, as well as the 108 stupas that surround the complex, on the model of Samye in Tibet; the building of the Zangdo Palri temple near Kurje in 2008 in memory of her grandfather *Gongzim* Ugyen Dorji, grand aunt Ane Thukten Wangmo, and parents *Gongzim* Sonam Tobgye Dorji and Choying Wangmo Dorji.¹⁴

She also sponsored the making of the large banner (*thongdroel*) at Silung Pekar Choling monastery in Paro Dawakha in 2015,¹⁵ and in 2014 she contributed to the restoration of the Drechagling temple in the Phobjikha Valley, which had been one of the seats of the great 14th century master Longchen Rabjam.¹⁶ All these impressive and long-term works employed the best craftsmen and artists from all over Bhutan, including clay sculptors and exceptional painters.

However, besides these purely religious endeavours, the Royal Grandmother is also patron of the Bhutan Foundation and has commissioned several booklets, as well as two large books: one on the representations of *Zangdo Palri* (the paradise of Guru Rinpoche) in Bhutan, and another on the Kyichu temple in Paro.¹⁷ In addition to their religious value, these books provide superb documentation on architecture and

¹⁴www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=10608 accessed September 2015

¹⁵www.bbs.bt/news/?p=51878 accessed September 2015

¹⁶Kuensel, 1 November 2014, p. 18.

¹⁷*The glorious Copper Colored Mountain, Zangdo Palri of Kurje, Bumthang*, Bangkok: Supawan Pui Lamsam, 2010. *Kyichu Lhakhang, the Sacred Jewel of Bhutan*, Dungchen Sangay Dorji, Supawan Pui Lamsam, Kesang Choden Tashi Wangchuck. Pema Wangdi (eds.) Bangkok: Amarin, 2015.

iconography and promote the Buddhist heritage of Bhutan. The Royal Grandmother is now assisted in her endeavours by her granddaughter Ashi Kesang Choden Tashi Wangchuck.

In 2015, Her Majesty's love for spiritually meaningful landscapes was given public expression as she sponsored the establishment of a public garden, the Ludrong Memorial park, near the river and the *dzong* in Thimphu. It is the site where Ashi Wangmo (the daughter of the First King), Gongzim Sonam Tobgye Dorji and Lyonchoen Jigme Palden Dorji were cremated.¹⁸

Ashi Kesang Wangmo Wangchuck, the Royal Grandmother's daughter, contributes significantly to her mother's religious activities but her patronage is also very much directed towards medical and social causes. She is considered one of the foremost volunteers and philanthropists in Bhutan. In the late 1970s, leprosy was still an important health issue in Bhutan and she became active in the leprosy control programme, living amongst the people with leprosy in the East. (Today leprosy is considered eradicated in Bhutan.) She extended her patronage to the blood donors' group and has facilitated many health programmes, as well as providing funds for expensive medical equipment. She had guest-houses built for poor patients and homeless people at Thimphu, Mongar and Trashigang hospitals.

Her generosity, her care for needy people and her involvement with substance-abuse-affected youth is renowned.¹⁹ Although modest and shunning the limelight, she was awarded in 2008 the Mandala Award for Arts and Humanitarian Achievement by the Rubin Museum of Arts in New York. Ashi Kesang Wangmo added to the traditional royal patronage activities, which were religion and culture, a social dimension and made it the instrument of her deep faith.

The four Queen Mothers have a special place in today's Bhutan as they initiated the first non-governmental organisations (NGOs) under royal patronage and, in a globalised world, sought funding through external donors. They realised that if the NGOs were to reach out to the whole of Bhutan, the country did not have the necessary donors and external assistance would be needed to achieve their goals in an effective manner. They also recruited administrative staff on the model of other NGOs and are not, therefore, engaged in the day-to-day running of the organisations under their royal patronage.

¹⁸www.kuenselonline.com/ludrong-memorial-garden-a-gift-to-the-people-of-bhutan/ accessed September 2015

¹⁹*The Raven*, Nov-Dec. 2013. <http://theravenmag.com/bhutans-pioneer-volunteer/> accessed September 2015

Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck is the patron of the Tarayana Foundation (established in 2003), which looks after the welfare of rural populations and poverty alleviation in specific regions, provides scholarships to needy children, and revitalises crafts such as nettle-weaving and pottery.²⁰ The annual Tarayana fair provides an opportunity for remote communities to showcase their traditional crafts and culture in the capital city. In the same way, in order to present a testament to the vanishing rural way of life, Ashi Dorji Wangmo established in 2001, in Thimphu, the Folk Heritage Museum in a restored 19th-century house with a lovely garden.

Besides her charitable foundation, Ashi Dorji Wangmo also involved herself in making Dochula, the high pass between Thimphu and Punakha on the west-east highway, a place of worship and remembrance for the 2003 victory of the Bhutanese Army headed by the Fourth Druk Gyalpo against separatist insurgent groups from Assam in India encamped in Bhutan. She was inspired to build the 108 *chortens* (2004) and the Dochula Druk Wangyal temple (2008) at the pass, making it a cultural landscape in which the nation could remember and pray.

In 2011, she introduced and supported the organisation of the magnificent Dochula festival that now takes place annually on the 13th of December, and commissioned Dasho Karma Ura to choreograph the dances and design the costumes and masks. This festival commemorates an important milestone in the history of the Bhutanese nation and pays tribute to those who fought in 2003. In 2015, Ashi Dorji Wangmo, who is also a writer, released her book *Dochula: A Spiritual Abode*. The book was launched during the sixth Mountain Echoes festival, an annual literary and cultural festival of which Ashi Dorji Wangmo is the patron.²¹

Ashi Tshering Pem Wangchuck set up the Youth Development Fund (YDF) in 1999. Its aim is to support activities that promote values in youth, preservation of culture and traditions, and enhancement of recreational and sporting events. It provides programmes for physically and mentally challenged children, scholarships for disadvantaged youth, and addresses the needs of juvenile delinquents and school dropouts.²² It also hosts an annual Golden Youth Award for the best students of the schools.

Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck established the Bhutan Nuns Foundation (BNF) in 2009, in order to encourage and monitor the nuns' learning and the

²⁰www.tarayanafoundation.org accessed September 2015

²¹The festival is facilitated by the Government of Rajasthan, an initiative of the India-Bhutan Foundation in association with Siyahi, a literary consultancy firm.

www.mountainechoes.org accessed September 2015

²²www.bhutanyouth.org accessed September 2015

development of their skills and capacities related to health, nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation. These benefit not only the nuns themselves but also their communities as they put Buddhist practice into action.²³ Her deep faith also led her to build in 1999 the beautiful Khamsum Yuley Chorten at Nyizergang in the upper Punakha valley for the wellbeing of the country.

Ashi Sangay Choden Wangchuck was appointed UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) Goodwill Ambassador in 1999, and actively supports Bhutan's efforts to improve reproductive health, HIV/AIDS awareness, and to reduce domestic violence. In 2004, she created RENEW (Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women), an organisation that focuses on helping victims of domestic violence; its projects include education scholarships, vocational training and shelters.²⁴ She is also the royal patron of another NGO—Lhaksam—created by HIV-positive individuals.²⁵

Besides this social royal patronage, Ashi Sangay is also interested in promoting the art of weaving. She is the patron of the Bhutan Textile Museum in Thimphu, which she helped establish in 2001, and is the chairperson of the Royal Textile Academy, an NGO which is a centre for documentation, preservation, and training in the traditional art of weaving.²⁶ Her devotion also led her to commission a Tara *Lhakhang* (Tara Lhadhen Zhing kham) at the Pangri Zampa Astrology College near Thimphu and a twenty-one Taras banner (*throngdroel*), consecrated in 2015.

Royal patronage has evolved tremendously since the beginning of the monarchy. It now touches social issues, strongly inspired by the concepts of compassion and duty towards others. However, the cultural aspect of royal patronage, whether in relation to religious buildings, literary festival or museums, has provided a tremendous boost to the heritage of Bhutan. Each project has also provided jobs in all aspects of the culture of Bhutan: carpenters, painters, weavers, embroiderers, boot makers, sculptors, goldsmiths, dancers, musicians, and writers. All of them have been recognised as important agents of the arts.

As members of the royal family are considered role models by the Bhutanese, royal patronage has a multi-faceted outcome: it promotes the literature, arts, and crafts of Bhutan; it gives the people pride in their cultural heritage and convinces them of its value; and because of the visibility of the royal patrons, it is a real element of Bhutan's 'soft power' on the international scene and promotes Bhutan as a unique country.

²³www.bhutannuns.org accessed September 2015

²⁴www.bhutanfound.org/RENEW accessed September 2015

²⁵www.lhaksam.org.bt accessed September 2015

²⁶www.royaltextileacademy.org accessed September 2015

The royal patronage, which was until the early 21st century not institutionalised, underwent a shift at that time. Although a lot of the initiatives remain personal especially when religious, the constitution and the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Act of 2007 allowed the patronage to find an institutional framework.

Some of the recent royal patronage includes the Disabled Persons Association of Bhutan under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Namgyal Wangchuck²⁷, the Ability Bhutan Society under the patronage of Her Majesty the Queen Ashi Jetsun Pema²⁸ and the Scouts movement²⁹ under the patronage of His Majesty the Fifth King. In 2009, His Majesty the King established the Kidu Foundation to look after the wellbeing of the people, which has always been a royal prerogative, thus streamlining and integrating his prerogative into an official institution.³⁰

²⁷<http://dpab.org.bt/> accessed October 2015

²⁸<http://www.absbhutan.org/> accessed October 2015

²⁹<http://www.bhutanscouts.bt> accessed October 2015

³⁰<http://www.kidufoundation.org/about-us/> accessed October 2015

“The Kidu Foundation aspires to effectively complement government efforts to address critical issues in areas of education, the rule of law, democracy and media, sustainable economic development, and preservation of the country’s environmental and cultural heritage.”