COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF CHORTEN (STUPAS) IN BHUTAN

A research report submitted by

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Date: 15th January, 2017

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List of Abbreviations

GNH   Gross National Happiness

BBS   Bhutan Broadcasting Service

MoH&CA   Ministry of Home & Cultural Affairs

RBP   Royal Bhutan Police

NCB   National Council of Bhutan

NA   National Assembly

NCCA   National Commission for Cultural Affairs

PCB   Penal Code of Bhutan

CHOBTF   Cultural Heritage of Bhutan Trust Fund

Qual   Qualitative

Quan   Quantitative

RGOB   Royal Government of Bhutan

MOE   Ministry of Education

SPSS   Statistical Programme for Social Sciences

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the phenomenon of Chorten (stupa) vandalism in Bhutan. Using sequential mixed methods research approach 500 Bhutanese citizens were surveyed across the country. Thereafter, five senior citizens were interviewed for the study. The study found that the phenomenon of Chorten vandalism is a rampant one. Even though the participants consider Chortens as cultural and religious icons, there is a lack of public awareness on the legal penalty for vandalising Chortens. Even though no concrete strategy was found for formalising the preservation measures one of the informal strategies was found to be creating public awareness through informal education. The study further makes some recommendation for the future preservation.

Key words: Chorten vandalism, Bhutan, Buddhism, Preservation

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

For a country like Bhutan, whose national income, to a large extent, is dependent on ecotourism, promotion and preservation of the cultural heritage of the kingdom becomes inevitable. Besides generating income for the kingdom, the sustainability of the ecotourism business is also at stake if the government does not preserve and promote the rich cultural heritage of the kingdom. Since time immemorial, Bhutan has recognised the preservation and promotion of its unique cultural heritage. And ever since Gross National Happiness (GNH) became the national philosophy the government has further strengthened and promoted the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage as one of the main philosophies of GNH. One of the most prominent symbols of Bhutan's rich religious and cultural heritage is the presence of numerous Chortens (stupas) in every corner of the kingdom. However, there have been numerous cases of these chortens being vandalized by vandals for their antiques and relics.

There is no systematic study conducted on the phenomenon of chorten vandalism in Bhutan. However, the Bhutanese media have consistently raised and reported the phenomenon of Chorten (Stupa) vandalism in the country. In a span of nine years (2000 to 2009), 1028 cases of Chorten vandalism were reported (Bhutan Observer, 2009). Chortens are vandalised for the precious relics installed inside them. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to explore: the perception of chorten vandalism, significance of chortens, and measures for chorten vandalism.

This chapter presents the context of the study, followed by statement of the problem with key research questions. The chapter then presents the objectives of the study, followed by significance of the study and limitations of the study.

1.2 Context of the Study

Bhutan is predominantly a Buddhist country, and Bhutanese by nature are compassionate people. Prior to building of palaces, mandalas and temples in the world, people learnt to build stupas. That is why, the designs and measurements to building palaces, mandalas and temples were originally drawn from stupas (Dorji, 2009).The country is adorned with Chortens in every nuke

and corner. It can be seen almost everywhere; on hilltops, in the valleys and even on the highways. According to a media source (BBS Jun 1 2015) there are more than 8,0000 chortens in the country. Unlike other cultural and religious heritages like Lhagangs (Temples) and Gompas (monasteries), most of the chortens are neither connected with electricity nor do they have caretakers or guards. Although there are chortens built a thousand years ago in Bhutan, we do not have a clear picture about their past history since the art of reading and writing was introduced in Bhutan only in the 8th century. The little we know today has been passed down by way of oral tradition. It is probable that there were few recorded histories of the chortens but that too were lost to fire and water in the absence of any arrangement for preservation compounded with little or no interest shown by people towards preserving them, a matter of great regret indeed. However, according to Dorji (2009), the first chorten ever built in Bhutan is the one at Shar Razawang in Wangdi Phodrang district, in central Bhutan which is believed to contain the tooth relic of Buddha Vairocana. The other is the one at Dzongdakha in Paro (western Bhutan) which was built in the 13th century called Chorten Karmo Guelshey. This chorten also contains the relic of Buddha Vairocana, the size of a small bird's egg (Dorji, 2009). This treasure was supposed to have been discovered by the Buddhist master Goenpo Dorji. Then there is the chorten inside Choetengang Lhagang (Temple) in the village of Shaba in Paro built by another Buddhist master called Thangton Gyalpo in the 15th century (Dorji, 2009).

In discussing the ancient history of Bhutan, much of the information relates to Buddhism and that temporal matters are reflected only sparsely. Such information is again traceable to biographies, write-ups on hilly places or histories and events relating to the stories of Buddhism in Bhutan. Others are based purely on oral transmission and have been recorded the way they are told by the people concerned.

There is a legendary belief that the Chorten is the oldest Buddhist religious monuments and was originally only a simple mound of mud or clay to cover relics of the Buddha (Dorji, 2009). After the Parinirvana of the Buddha, his remains were cremated and the ashes were divided and buried under eight stupas. Built for a variety of reasons, Buddhist Chortens are classified based on form and function. There are eight different kinds of Chortens in Tibetan Buddhism, each referring to major events in the life of a Buddha. It is rare to sight all the eight different kinds of Chortens together. As holy entities, people pay homage to stupas by circumambulating, which is walking

clockwise around the stupa, and reciting prayers to the Buddha. They consider this a blessing in itself that can pacify negative propensities and help others out of their troubles. The chorten can have many levels of meanings but they generally are concise comprehension of the philosophy. For instance, it is a Bhutanese common belief and categorization for all life and physical things to be made from four elements, which are earth, water, fire and wind. The additional fifth element of emptiness however does not imply nothingness but rather the indetermined potential (to become any one or any combination of the four elements) (Stutchbury, 1991). In the chorten, the square base signifies the element of earth. The hemispherical dome (*bumpa*) signifies the element of water. The conical spire signifies the element of fire. The parasol signifies the element of wind and the jewel tip with the sun and moon the element of emptiness (Dorji, 2009).

From another perspective, the nature of earth represents stability. The nature of water represents penetrability. The nature of fire represents vitality. The nature of wind represents spontaneity. The nature of emptiness represents non-obstructiveness. These natures are present everywhere even within us. However, the degree of presence depends on one's adaptation to the contextual limitations. For instance, vitality decreases with age as the human body getting older and more difficult to adapt to life conditions.

If one goes by the history of Buddhism, there is a need to cover all the chortens that were built in India and other Buddhist countries in the world. However, since the purpose of this research is to explore the phenomenon of chorten vandalism in Bhutan much of the discussion on chorten revolves around chortens in Bhutan.

1.3 Problem Statement

According to the official figures issued (as cited in Whitecross, 2000) in July 1999, 1,132 chorten had been subject to theft, arson, desecration and their caretakers attacked and murdered. The thefts and the desecrations were a recurrent topic, which fueled discussion, and at times, disagreement. Arguably, they serve as a metaphor for the changes and the problems facing contemporary Bhutan. The events discussed focus on a major issue, which has caused widespread concern amongst both the government and the ordinary people. In the past years, the phenomenon of chorten vandalism has been a national concern. A quote from a media, Bhutan

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Observer, perhaps best presents the seriousness of the phenomenon of chorten vandalism in Bhutan:

> In July month alone, Pemagatshel lost eight chortens to vandalism Pemagatshel: Pemagatshel continues to lose its chortens to vandalism. In July this year alone, eight chortens were desecrated in the dzongkhag. The locals are left wondering how the sacred monuments in the dzongkhag, most of which are located away from human settlements, can be protected. Out of the eight chorten vandalism cases reported, four were in the two villages of Thongsa and Mandi under Chongshing Gewog and two each in Bangdala village under Yurung Gewog and Resinang village under Zobel Gewog. An attempt was also made on an old chorten in Nangkor. This is one of the highest cases of chorten vandalism recorded in a single month since August 2009 when eight chortens were hollowed out in the dzongkhag. Earlier in May this year, three chortens in a village under Shumar Gewog were vandalized in a single night. (Bhutan Observer, August 05, 2011)

Maximum number of chorten vandalism took place in the Eastern districts, particularly Monggar and Trashigang in 2013-14 (BBS, Feb 25 2015). In Monggar, 43 chortens were vandalized in 2014, and 54 in 2013. Trashigang saw 35 cases of chorten vandalism in 2014, and 58 in 2013. Records maintained with the police show an increase of 32 cases of chorten vandalism in 2014 from that of 2013. In 2013, 210 chortens were vandalized in the country (BBS, Feb 25 2015).No concrete research has been conducted to figure out the attack on chortens. However, police claim that many chortens were vandalized for the sacred relics. Most chortens are located in far-flung

areas and are old, making them susceptible to vandalism. Records maintained by the police show that nearly 4,000 chortens (including Lhakhangs [Temples]) were vandalised in the last 27 years (BBS, Jun 1 2015).

One of the many chortens vandalized in Bhutan: Source: BBS (Feb 25, 2015)

When discussing the attacks on chorten, three main themes emerge. First, is the reaction to the violence which is now associated with the robberies. The second is the belief that those engaging in these actions are being encouraged by individuals or groups of individuals residing outside the country. The stolen items are then transported out of Bhutan and clandestinely sold to collectors. The third theme is concerned with the spiritual harm caused to the local area and to the country as a whole arising from the desecrations.

A central element in many of the incidents of chorten vandalism recounted highlights the increasing use of violence by those engaging in the robberies. Yet, the lack of respect was not described as restricted to those who committed the crimes being discussed. It was an underlying theme to which people returned when discussing changes in Bhutanese society.

The chorten robberies highlight what for many represents a more general decline in traditional values which many people fear will undermine their society. Many spoke of the need for more religious education for young people, and for them to understand how important the traditional values of respect are to the social wellbeing of all Bhutanese. These views were not restricted to older people. Many of the young Bhutanese interviewed commented on the social changes and the need for a balance between openness to new opportunities and the importance of traditional values which have held Bhutanese society and especially, families together. However, many people described the robbers as "poor, ignorant farmers", "young, bored and greedy men" and "those who do not respect the dharma or the gods".

There is no consistency or agreement as to whether they believe those engaging in such actions are primarily from the rural villages or the poorer elements of the developing towns of Thimphu, Phuntsholing and Samdrup Jongkhar. Nor even as to their ages, it is not simply a question of juvenile delinquency. However, there is consistency, in perceiving these people as "enemies of the dharma". Bhutanese frequently commented on the spiritual significance and role of chorten. Emphasis was often given to the pacification and honouring of local deities through the construction and location of chortens.

The phenomenon of chorten vandalism is a serious concern for Bhutan. However, there is not much of scientific study done on it. This study, therefore, explored the phenomenon of chorten vandalism with an aim of answering the research questions mentioned in the following section.

1.4 Research Question

The purpose of this research was to find answers to the following research questions.

1. What is the significance of chortens for Bhutanese people?

2. What are the perceptions of Bhutanese people on the preservation and community management of Chortens in Bhutan?

3. What can the community do to curb the phenomenon of chorten vandalism in Bhutan?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. explore the significance of chortens for Bhutanese people;
2. find out the general perception of Bhutanese people on the preservation of chortens in Bhutan, and
3. explore the measures for the preservation of chortens in Bhutan.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is seen at various levels. One concerns the contribution of scientific information and knowledge on the phenomenon of chorten vandalism in Bhutan. So far, much of the information on chorten vandalism is based on either people's intuition or hearsay. In the absence of past research, this study will contribute in giving a scientific perspective to the phenomenon of chorten vandalism. At another level, the study will enlighten about the general perception of Bhutanese people toward chorten vandalism. And finally, the study can help Bhutan government make concrete preservation strategies in preserving and protecting chortens against vandalism.

1.7 Limitation of the study

This research has two probable limitations, both concerns methodology. One is the design of the method. Although the mixed method appears to have major strengths the mixing of numbers and words proved difficult especially in linking what the same person said in number to his/her comments in words. Finding any relationship between numerical responses and verbal

perspectives were near impossible. The other refers to participant representation. Because educational institutions were the most convenient and accessible, locations there are more student participants than other participants. This also has implication on other factors such as age of the participants and educational qualification.

1.8 Structure of the report

This research report has five chapters. An outline of each chapter is presented consecutively.

Chapter 1 sets the scene for the study. It provides a rationale for the researcher for choosing the topic. It also gives an overview of the entire report with a brief detail of each chapter. Significance and limitations of the study are highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter 2 reviews related literature on chortens in Bhutan and in other Buddhist countries.

Chapter 3 explains the choice of research design and methods used in this study. The choice of sample, instrument design, data collection procedures, including pilot testing of the questionnaire, how the information were analyzed are also explained in this chapter. Ethical considerations, a necessary aspect of social research and how various steps are considered are described. Strategies employed to ensure validity and reliability are also briefly presented.

Chapter 4 makes a detailed presentation of data collected by the questionnaire, open comments and interviews. The chapter attempts to answer the major questions using statistical data supported and complemented by comments.

Chapter 5 presents the discussion of results presented in chapter four. Appropriate linkages are made with the existing knowledge delineated in the literature review chapters. This chapter also provides the conclusion of the study. A list of recommendations is proposed.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introductions

As mentioned in chapter one, the purpose of this study is to explore into the phenomenon of chorten vandalism in Bhutan. However, it is deemed important and pertinent to review literature related to chortens in Bhutan. Hence, this chapter discusses major themes that pertain to chorten. Section 2.2 presents the basic concept definition of chorten, followed by how chortens originated in the first place in section 2.3. We then turn to the methodological procedures in the construction and consecration of chortens in section 2.4. In this section, we discuss the fundamental features of chorten. In section 2.5, the different types of chortens and their significances are presented. Then in the remaining sections, section 2.6, 2.7, and 2.8, reports of the phenomenon of chorten vandalism in Bhutan, penalties for the chorten vandalism, and preservative measures initiated by the government are presented respectively. Finally, section 2.9 presents the summary of this chapter.

 On the very onset, it may be mentioned that literature in scientific study in many subjects on Bhutan is scarce, and literature in preservation of cultural heritage is very limited. Few papers available are either opinion papers or papers based on individual observations and intuitions. In such literature, Bhutan's effort in preserving cultural heritage is reported as a trivial matter (Dorji, 2009), and lack of preservation measures in education curriculum (Penjore, 2005). However, as reported in Galay (2001) the sense of solidarity among Bhutanese people and communities in managing village resources such as pastures, drinking and irrigation water systems, roads, bridges community halls, and monasteries are found to be very communal and strong.

2.2 Concept definition

The stupa, known as chorten in Bhutan and Tibet is a construction in the form of hemisphere or mound used to contain Buddha's relics or ashes of Buddhist monks and thus for memorial services. Though carrying similar functions, the stupa assumes different architectural forms and takes on regional names when it was spread across various location of Asia. The stupa is the ubiquitous symbol of Buddhism, occurring in every country where Buddhism has been practised, and in many stylistic variations, from the burial tumulus of *Sanchi* in India, to the stupa-mandala

of *Borobodur* in *Java*, to the stupa of *Swayambhu* and *Bodhanath*. Chortens are known by different names in different countries, for instance, it is called *Jarungkashor*, in the Kathmandu valley, and *Samve* (bsamyas) in Tibet (Stutchbury, 1991). Originated as a pre-Buddhist burial mound, the chorten is a special structure developed in early Indian Buddhism alongside with architectural typologies (Phuoc, 2010) such as the *Ashoka* pillar, monasteries, caves and temples. As the first building construction in Buddhism, its origin and meaning are worthy of research studies.

The chorten can have many levels of meanings but they generally are concise comprehension of the philosophy. For instance, it is a Tibetan common belief and categorization for all life and physical things to be made from four elements, which are earth, water, fire and wind. The additional fifth element of emptiness however does not imply nothingness but rather the indetermined potential (to become any one or any combination of the four elements).

In the "The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs", Robert Beer (1999) explains the stupa to correspond to various Dharma meanings : four mindfulness, four correct endeavors, four miraculous legs, five moral faculties, seven conditions of enlightenment, eightfold path, ten knowledge of the Buddha as well as relative and absolute Bodhicitta. This presents a way of learning and realization from our ordinary mind to attain the enlightened mind.

2.3 Origin of chorten

The oldest chorten in brick is the remnant at *Piprawha*, in India (Tuladhar, 2002) although other scholars, including few Bhutanese scholars believed it to be at Kapilvastu in Nepal (Dorji, 2009; Namgyel, 1998) which probably dates from about 450 BC. The remains at *Piprawha* show that brick was used for building long before the birth of rock architecture. The most typical form of the chorten, which is known to be the earliest Buddhist building, is furnished by the stupas at *Sanchi*, in India. It is said to be the great stupa that it was originally built by *Ashoka* and hence dates back to the third century BC.

According to a legend, Buddha in the *Mahaparinibbanasutta* told his disciple that his body after his death should be cremated and the relics distributed with stupas constructed upon them. More than 2500 years ago, after the passing way of the Buddha in *Kushinagar*, his body was cremated and the ashes were treated as holy relics. About two or three centuries passed with the quiet

period of early Buddhism, the great *Mauryan King Ashoka* revived Buddhism and built many stupas to house relics of the Buddha and his significant disciples as well as to mark the location of important events of the Buddha's life. For instance, the location of the first sermon of the Buddha at deer park (*Rishipattana*) was marked by the *Dhamek* Stupa built in 249 BCE at *Sarnath*, India, by King *Ashoka*. This stupa is the oldest one in existence. It was said that he commissioned 84,000 stupas all over India.

According to ancient Buddhist texts, the story of the first stupa that ever appeared in the world and during the present Buddha *Sakya Thupa's* era is contained in the *Jampa Lungtengye Tokjoed*. According to this story, *Zowa Biswakarma*, the king of the carpenters built a stupa in the Naga world at the behest of lord Brahma. This stupa was in turn brought to the world by the Buddha. *Kyerab Paksam Tshering*, another Buddhist text has a different story to tell. It says lord *Brahama* built five stupas at *Diyiri* with various kinds of precious materials. These included the stupa of the past Buddha *Khorwajig, Serthub, Yoedsung, Ngoenpai Chorten* and that of Buddha *Sakyamuni.* Other notable stupas are *Bolokai* chorten built by the merchant *Gyewa Rabsel* and the one in the town of *Patra*, which was built by man called *Khimdag Druzin* containing the hair and n ail relics of the Buddha. There is also a story of *Shejai Dzoed* and *Gutra Chojung*, written by *Kongtruel Rimpoche* that *Zowa Biswakarma* inspired by the luminosity of the Buddha built a stupa on the beach of *Kongkuna*, somewhere in South Asia called the *PelRigpai Mepai Chorten*. It was thereafter that the eight different kinds of chorten came to be built in remembrance of the Buddha and his achievements. However, the credit of building the greatest number of stupas goes to king *Ashoka*. After the Buddha entered *parinirvana*, he was supposed to have built as many as eighty four thousand stupas with the treasure recovery of King *Makye Dra's* share of relics. It was from then that the building of stupas spread far and wide in all the Buddhist countries.

2.4 Construction and consecration of chorten

The basic structure of a Chorten consist of a square foundation symbolizing the earth, a dome symbolizing water, and thirteen tapering steps of enlightenment symbolizing the element of fire. These steps lead to a stylized parasol, the symbol of wind, which is topped in the ethereal sphere by the well-known 'twin-symbol' uniting sun and moon, which is the shimmering crown of the Chorten.

A detailed procedure of constructing a Tibetan stupa is presented in a PhD thesis titled: 'Pearls from bones: Relics, Chortens, *Tertons* (treasure revealers) and the signs of saintly death in Tibet' (Stutchbury, 1991). Stupas are not only large architectural structures, but may be small portable just a few centimetres tall, or about half a metre to a metre high. These reliquaries, which are made in the shape of stupa and are hollow until filled in the ritually prescribed manner and sealed, are a cultural manifestation of the veneration of relics of spiritual teachers within the Tibetan tradition, like the small portable shrine boxes, called *ga'u*, in which are placed photographs of teachers and their relics, as well as written mantra and mandala.

Tsatsa (tshatsha), which are made in moulds from clay mixed with sacred substances such as the ash of the cremated remains of a teacher, may be made in the form of chorten, Buddhas, deities and highly revered teachers, and may be three dimensional or bas-relief (Martin, 1985; Norwick 1985; Skorupski 1982; Tucci 1932 and 1973, as cited in Stutchbury, 1991). Thousands of *tsatsa* can be made in a relatively short time to be distributed among disciples or placed within a chorten, for instance. The sacred substances added may be a minute proportion of the ingredients. It is also important to add even a very small amount of whatever relics and sacred substances were available. Moulds are used to make similar small objects of devotion out of 'blessing medicine' or *dutsichosmen*, 'amrita dharma medicine'), which also contain relics and are ritually blessed. These are likely to be kept in portable shrine boxes.

Relics, both *ringsel*, ('kept for a long time, cherished') and *dung* (honorific for 'bone', also 'ancestry, clan', and extended to mean 'remains') which are objects of veneration within the Tibetan tradition are an important item used in filling chorten.

When Buddha was about to die, he gave instructions that his body should be cremated and his remains divided and placed in monuments erected in the four sites where the major events of his life occurred. His birth took place in Lumbini, his enlightenment in Bodhgaya, the first teaching (the turn of the wheel) in Sarnat and his death (Parinirvana), in Kushinagar. By building these stupas, Buddha's wish was not to remind others of the historical person Shakyamuni but of his biggest achievement, enlightenment. This explains the reason early Buddhist art avoided the creation of Buddha images.

Instead, the Buddha was represented symbolically by his footprints, a wheel, a lotus flower or a tree of life. Only in later forms of Buddhism was the Buddha was depicted as a person. The design of the Stupa was created by *Shakyamuni* himself. He folded his clothing in a square shape and over it, placed his inverted alms bowl, creating the dome of the stupa.

Early Indian stupas, like the stupa of *Sanchi* in figure 01, were formed by a big dome symbolizing an egg (*anda*) or a womb (*garbha*). This dome was crowned by a *harmika*, a square volume that encapsulated relics. On top of the *harmika* stood a small umbrella, (Sanskrit; *Chattravali*) representing the tree of life (Takeyama, 2010).
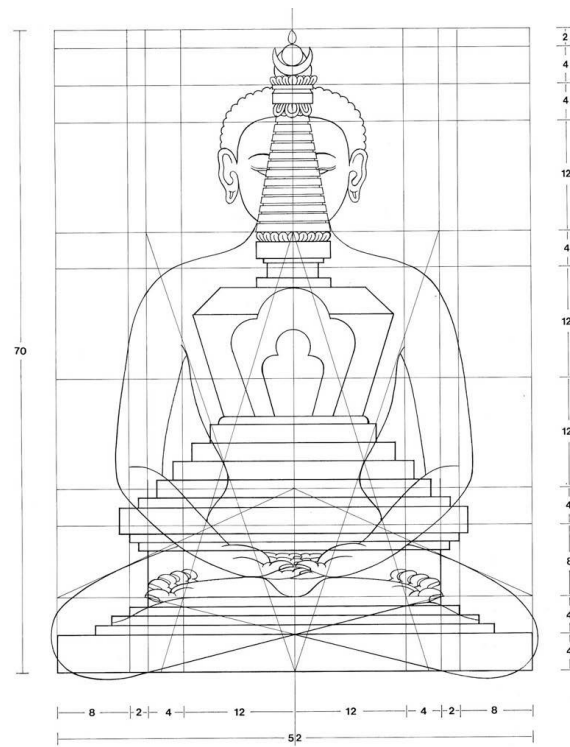
Architecture of a stupa. Picture courtesy: (Takeyama, 2010)

With the spread of Buddhism throughout Asia, the design took different characteristics like the pagodas in Japan, Korea and China, and the chorten in Tibet, etc.

Because Buddha's relics were placed inside the original stupas, the association of the stupa with his actual body was a natural process. The base of the stupa corresponds to Buddha's throne in an analogy with the solidity of the earth, the dome symbolizes his torso, and the *harmika* is his face. This explains the representation of the pair of eyes in the *harmika* of Nepalese Stupas, a

feature that makes them so distinct from others. On top of the *harmika*, there is an umbrella in correspondence to Buddha's *unisha* (protuberance on the head) (Beer, 2004).

In Tantric Buddhism we can find a highly geometric stupa composed of five superposed geometric forms in correspondence with the five elements: earth, water, fire, wind, and ether. At the base of this stupa we find a square for the earth element, on top of it a sphere for the water element, above that a triangle for the fire element, above that a half-moon for the air element and finally, at the very top we find a flame or a drop representing the ether element.

According to Snodgrass, the symbolism of the stupa is manifold (Adrian, 1985). For analysis purposes this research will only refer to the very basic elements of the stupa which are: the dome according to its name either *anda* (egg) or *garbha* (womb); the spire on top of it, which will be called here the tree of life; and above it a vase or jewel.

2.4.1 Symbolism of the *garbha*

The dome of the stupa symbolizes the *garbha* (womb) or *anda* (egg) representing the fertile, creative forces closely connected to the mother's womb. The egg is considered to be the symbol holding the seed from which manifestation originates (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1996). In India references to the cosmic germ represented in the form of an egg as the source for the origination of the universe, date as far back as Vedic literature.

2.4.2 Description of the egg/womb in the stupa

Takeyama (2010) records the designs of different stupas in Asia. It is interesting to note that the design of the dome, or *garbha*, of the stupas differs greatly from country to country. The differences are seen mainly in the shape, colour and the materials used. In the stupa in *Sanchi*, India, which is one of the most important and earliest examples of this type of building, constructed in the middle of the 3rd century B. C, the predominant *garbha*makes very clear the relationship of the stupa with its meaning as a cosmic womb. In *Yatala*, Sri Lanka, built in the 3rd century B.C. the shape of the dome is like the stupa in Sanchi, which displays the same roundness of the *garbha*, which delineates the shape of the building. In *ChabahilMahachaitya*, which was built in the 5th-7th century, which is one of the oldest stupas in the Katmandu valley of Nepal, the stupa has eyes painted in the *harmika*. In *Pyay*, Myanmar, which was built in the

5th-9th century, it is a slightly different example since the dome is in a shape of a cylinder. In *Bupaya*, the old stupa in Bagan, Myanmar, built in the mid-ninth century, the dome is shaped like a cylinder. In *Swezigon Paya, Bagan*, Myanmar, it is a bell-shaped stupa, very different from the previous example. This shape resembles the shape of a mountain. In *Shwedagon Paya,* Yangon, Myanmar, built in 1769, is one of the finest examples of stupa in the capital city of Yangoon. The body of this stupa is painted gold. In *Ananda Pahto, Bagan,* Myanmar, built in 1105, the dome of the three stupas assumes a more elongated, almost bell-like shape, making an elegant and smooth passage between the body of the stupa to its finial. Most of the stupas in south East Asia are bell-shaped like in these three examples.

2.4.3 Symbolism of the tree of life

A tree can be considered a miniature of a living cosmos, it is the axis mundi in the sense its branches stretch to the heavens, and the roots delve into the soil connecting to the chthonic waters, the underworld, making the connection of heaven, earth and underworld. The tree, as a symbol of the axis mundi, appears in all the important events of Buddha's life. Like when Buddha's mother, Queen *Maya* was about to give birth to him, she leaned by a tree and a branch bent towards her and she grabbed it with her right hand and Buddha was born from the right side of her body, in the open air, open nature, right by a tree. Buddha's enlightenment happened under the Boddhi tree.

In the tree, we find the combination of the elements of earth, water, fire and wind. The tree absorbs the nutrients of the earth and water and transforms it into sap, essential for its life. The sun, as the fire element catalyses, its growth developing the trunks and branches that will grow towards the air. The tree also represents the Great Mother, in touch with the regenerative energies of the earth and the water, representing the cycles of life and constant renewal, resurrection, and immortality. The symbolism of the tree of life is very multi-layered and complex. Eliade classified its meanings in the following groups (Mircea, 1958): 1. the pattern of stone-altar, the tree as a microcosm; 2. the tree as image of the cosmos; 3. the tree as a cosmic theophany; 4. the tree as a symbol of life, of the inexhaustible fertility, of absolute reality; as related to the Great Goddess or the symbolism of water (Yaksa); 5. the tree as a center of the world; 6. mystical bonds between tree and man (trees giving birth to men; the tree as the repository of the souls of man's ancestors; the marriage of trees; the presence of trees in

initiation ceremonies, etc) and; 7. the tree as a symbol of the resurrection of vegetation, of spring and the 'rebirth' of the year.

Since the stupa is the monument built to enshrine Buddha's relics, the dome is a representation of the cosmic womb (Sanskrit; *garbha*). The relics of the Buddha are considered to be a representation of seeds (Sanskrit; *bija*) of his teachings and enlightenment. They are deposited inside a vase buried in the foundation. From this vase, the seeds are supposed to germinate and grow in the form of tree of life. This tree of life represents the eternal regeneration of Buddha's teachings and the qualities of his enlightenment (Govinda, 1976).

3.4.4 Symbolism of the vase/jewel

The vase is one of the eight auspicious symbols together with the parasol, a pair of golden fish, a lotus, a right-spiraling conch shell, an endless knot, a banner of victory and a golden wheel. Such a group of symbols is found with variations in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Especially in Tantric Buddhism, they are symbols of good luck and can be seen applied in the ornamentation of buildings, daily objects and even clothes. The symbolism of the vase as part of the eight auspicious symbols is of fulfillment of wishes, as the inexhaustible vase of prosperity.

Adding to this idea of the vase as a source of prosperity, Hinsley (1981) stated that in Indian iconography, the drink or food of the gods (soma, amrita) is always conceived in a special vessel. He adds that in art, when soma is represented, it is always in a full or brimming vessel, one of the most common symbols of plenty, often represented as a source of vegetation.

Usually three vases or urns are actually found in the stupa and their meanings vary depending on where they are placed. The vase in the foundation of the spire (tree of life) represents the fertility of the chthonic water. For Adrian (1985), this vase is equivalent to *Hiranya-garbha* representing the potentiality of life, or the vase of plenty (*purna-kalasa*) carrying the *rasa*, that is analogous to the sap of the trees, the life-giving waters.

The vase at the top of the spire is called *amrita-kalasa* (vase for amrita). As the name in Sanskrit suggests, the vase carries the elixir of immortality. Adrian (1985) points out that the rasa from the bottom of the spire is purified and transformed to amrita. Actual vases as finials or building spires are more commonly seen in Hindu buildings.

2.5 Type of chortens and their significance in Bhutan

2.5.1 Significance of Chortens in Bhutan

Chortens in Bhutan are religious monuments that are built in a precise way and are a receptacle for worship or offering. Chortens were originally built to keep the relics of the Buddha and other Buddhist saints but with time, building a stupa is considered a pious thing to do and the builders and those who pay to make a chorten are believed to earn merit for it. Chorten is considered to support faith and represent Buddha's Body.

According to Buddhist philosophy, chortens also symbolize the five elements of the Universe. Its square base represents earth, the dome represents water, the shaft represents fire, the crescent represents air and the circle represents ether. One of the five 'Jina' (also known as *Dhyani* Buddhas or primordial Buddhas) corresponds to each of these elements. For religious and didactic reasons, the chorten has always been an object of faith and devotion for the entire Buddhist world. All the major *gompas* or monasteries in Bhutan have their own chortens, preserving the remains of the head or senior *Lama*. The walls of the chorten are painted from inside with murals, each telling a different story. Sometimes thick prayer walls called '*mani*'

connect chortens. Chortens may be built in various ways. The most common one in Bhutan is called '*Khangtseg*, that' or house chorten, which is simply a building with a square base, enclosed on all four sides sealing sacred objects and relics inside it and perhaps an ornamental roof.

A picture of Khangtseg (house chorten)

There is a wooden square known as *'sokshing'* that acts as the central post of the chorten, around which it is built. It is adorned and has inscriptions of sacred text representing the vital principle

and 'life spirit' of the chorten. While building a chorten, there are special rituals and ceremonies for each stage of work as it commemorates the death (*Parinirvana*) of the Buddha *Sakyamuni*and his spiritual progress towards enlightenment. The other types of chortens are *Chendebji*or *Chorten Kora* that follow the model of Bodnath in Nepal, made up of lime washed stone and are huge; smaller Tibetan style chortens; and pure Bhutanese square chortens or stupas with four-sided roofs. The red stripe below the roof called '*khemar*' mark the religious nature of chortens, just like *dzongs*.

2.5.2 Types of chortens in Bhutan

In Bhutan, there are eight different kinds of chortens, each referring to major events in the Buddha's life.The traditional eight types of chortens, which are generally referred to as the classical chortens are very common in the Himalayas. They spread from India to the Himalayan countries including Bhutan. Each one of these classical chortens signifies the major events of the life of the Buddha.

2.5.2.1 Lotus Blossom Stupa or the *Desheg Chorten*

The first of the eight types is *Desheg Chorten*. *Desheg Chorten* signifies the birth of the Buddha. This type of stupa is also known as 'Stupa of Heaped Lotuses' or "Birth of the Sugata Stupa,". At birth, the Buddha took seven steps in each of the four directions – East, South, West and North. In each direction lotus sprang, symbolising the four immeasurable: love, compassion, joy and calmness. *Desheg Chortens* are bejeweled with lotus-petal designs along with seven heaped lotus steps. The base of this stupa is circular and has four steps, and it is decorated with lotus-petal designs. Occasionally, seven heaped lotus steps are constructed. These refer to the seven first steps of the Buddha.

2.5.2.2 Enlightenment Stupa or the *Jangchub Chorten*

Jangchub Chorten or the chorten of enlightenment commemorates the Buddha's enlightenment. This chorten is also known as the "Stupa of the Conquest of *Mara Buddha,* who attended enlightenment at the age of 35 at Bodhgaya under the Bodhi tree. It is said that the chorten of enlightenment was built by the beings of all realms to mark the enlightenment of the Buddha.
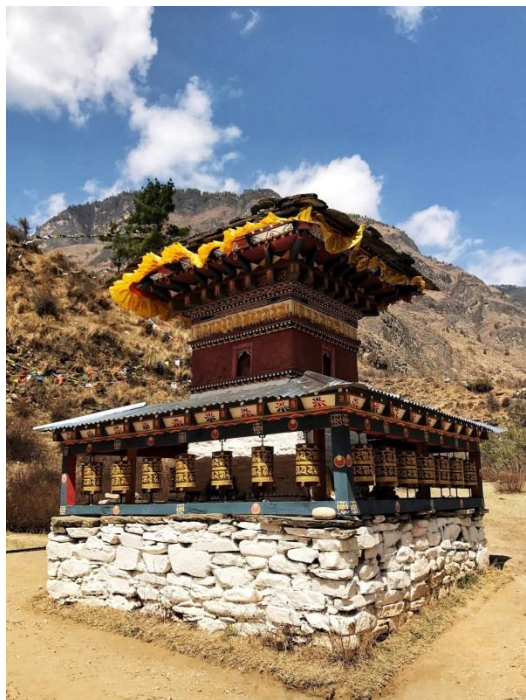
A picture of Jangchub chorten

2.5.2.3 Stupa of Many Doors or the *Lhabab Chorten*

Lhabab Chorten commemorates the return of Buddha to the earth from the heaven. This stupa is also known as the "Stupa of Many Gates". At the age of 42, the Buddha visited the heaven to teach his mother and returned to earth following respectful request from his disciples. Hence, some refer to this chorten as the chorten of descent from the God Realm. This chorten is said to be modelled after building at *Samkasya* in India, on the very spot where Buddha descended from heaven. Steps on all four sides up to the dome make it distinctive from other chortens. After reaching enlightenment, the Buddha taught his first students in a deer park near *Sarnath*. The series of doors on each side of the steps represents the first teachings: the Four Noble Truths, the Six *Pāramitās*, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Twelve *Nidānas*.

2.5.2.4 Stupa of Descent from the God Realmor the *Choekhor Korwai Chorten*

Choekhor Korwai Chorten is to honour the first sermon of Buddha. Lord Buddha gave his first sermon after attaining enlightenment at Deer Park in *Sarnath* in India, which is known as Varanasi these days. He 'turned the wheel of dharma' to show all sentient beings the path to enlightenment. This chorten is characterized by various entrances to signify various paths to

enlightenment. At 42 years of age, Buddha spent a summer retreat in the Tuṣita Heaven where his mother had taken rebirth. In order to repay her kindness he taught the dharma to her reincarnation. Local inhabitants built a stupa in *Sankassa* in order to commemorate this event. This type of stupa is characterized by having a central projection at each side containing a triple ladder or steps.

2.5.2.5 Stupa of Great Miracles or the *Chotrul Chorten*

Chotrul Chorten was built to observe Buddha's deed of subjugation of *Mutikpa* or the heretics. The Buddha subjugated the heretics of *Sravasti* at Uttar Pradesh in India by showing miracles. Thus, the chorten is also called Miracle Chorten. This chorten is also known as the "Stupa of Conquest of the *Tirthikas*". This chorten refers to various miracles performed by the Buddha when he was 50 years old. Legend claims that he overpowered *maras* and heretics by engaging them in intellectual arguments and also by performing miracles. This stupa was raised by the *Lichavi* kingdom to commemorate the event.

2.5.2.6 Stupa of Reconciliation or the *Yendum Chorten*

Yendum Chorten was built to celebrate the victory of the Buddha over the evil *Devadatta*. *Devadatta* was by tradition a Buddhist monk, cousin and brother-in-law to Gautama Buddha. However, he grew jealous of the Buddha and given much threat to the life and teachings of the Buddha. This stupa commemorates the Buddha's resolution of a dispute among the *sangha*. A stupa in this design was built in the kingdom of *Magadha*, where the reconciliation occurred. It has four octagonal steps with equal sides.

2.5.2.7 Stupa of Complete Victory or the *Namgyal Chorten*

Namgyal Chorten was built to rejoice the prolonged life of Buddha. It also symbolises the victory over all evils, including the mystery of death itself. Despite the pressure from the king of the evil, the Buddha decided to attain the state of *Parinirvana* only after prolonging his life by three months. This stupa commemorates Buddha's successful prolonging of his life by three months. It has only three steps, which are circular and unadorned. The best example of this type of chorten is the 108 chortens built by Queen Mother to honor the Bhutanese soldiers who were

killed when fighting the Indian rebels in 2003. These chortens are located at the most well-known pass in Bhutan, Dochula Pass, which is about 30 km away from the capital of Bhutan, Thimphu. Bhutan was forced to repel the rebels as failing to do so, India threatened to enter the country to do so themselves. The 4th King led a volunteer army of about 7,000 men to force the rebels to exit the country. Though Bhutanese have wanted to build this chortens to mark the victory of Bhutanese army the King has rejected this offer and instead uses the chortens to commemorate the deceased.

2.5.2.8 Stupa of Nirvana or the *Netendey Chorten*

The last, *Netendey Chorten* or the chorten of *nirvana* is to remember the day when the Buddha passed into *Parinirvana*. It symbolises the Buddha's complete absorption into the highest state of mind. The characteristic feature of the chorten of *nirvana* is its bell shape and it is usually not ornamented. This symbolises the expression of mourning over the death of the Enlightened One. This stupa refers to the death of the Buddha when he was 80 years old. It is bell-shaped and usually unornamented. The best representation of this type of chorten is the National Memorial Chorten in the heart of Thimphu city. This large Tibetan-style chorten is one of the most visible religious structures in Thimphu, and for many Bhutanese it is the focus of their daily worship. It was built in 1974 as a memorial to the third king, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck (1928–72). Early

The National Memorial Chorten in Thimphu

morning is especially tranquil as elderly people shuffle in, and spruced-up kids on their way to school whiz in and out to pay homage.

The whitewashed chorten, with its sun-catching golden finial, is decorated with richly painted annexes facing the cardinal directions, and features elaborate

mandalas, statues and a shrine dedicated to the popular king. Throughout the day people circumambulate the chorten, whirl the large red prayer wheels and pray at a small shrine

inside the gate. Particularly charming is the dedicated group of old timers hauling away at room-size giant prayer wheels beside the main entrance.

2.5.2.9 Other chortens

The other chortens are *Chorten Kangnyim* (stupas two legs), *Mani Chukhor* (Prayer wheel), *Tashi Gomang* (Glorious Chorten of Many Doors), and *Mani Dangrim. Chorten Kangnyim* and *Tashi Gomang* chortens are rather rare in Bhutan. However, *Tashi Gomang* exists as a mere miniaturized monument.

There is an aphorism that "if you save a worm from the army of violent ants, the merits are equivalent to that of building a chorten." Such expression only means that there is nothing greater way of accumulating merits than constructing a chorten. Chortens for Bhutanese are the source and symbol of peace and harmony. For instance, the legendary *Chorten Kora* in *Trashiyangtse* was built in the 18th century by *Lama Ngawang Lodroe* to subdue a harmful demon. People started to enjoy boundless peace and harmony after the completion of the peerless relic of the kingdom.

The chortens for Bhutanese are also shrines. The presence of chortens in abundance shows the faith people have in Buddhism. Even the mere sight of chorten brings immensurable faith and devotion in the minds of the Bhutanese people. This is the reason why people build chortens in public places.

Druk Wangyel Chorten at Dochula is the masterpiece of the modern Bhutanese art and architecture. But it has more spiritual value beyond the outer aesthetic beauty. It is a heartfelt expression of the royal family and the people of Bhutan to His Majesty Jigme SingyeWangchuck, the Fourth King, and his reign. It is a symbol of gratitude, victory and peace frozen in the form of sacred stupas.

As chortens are considered the *Gyelwai Thug* or the mind manifestation of the Buddha, people seek refuge in it. There is not a single mountain pass in Bhutan without a chorten. For some, it may be the ornament to the woods and mountains but it also brings a sense of presence of gods. Travellers pray for their safe journey with deep devotion every time they come across the chortens. It is common to see the Bhutanese people circumambulating a chorten.

Circumambulating a chorten enables a positive reincarnation and spends positive energies. Circumambulating the representation of mind of the enlightened one is a judicious means to accumulate merits.

Chortens are the eternal representations of the enlightened ones. If something remains for eternity, it would be chortens. It is a wish-fulfilling jewel of our country. It is the peerless relic, radiance of which will bestow us with peace, harmony and tranquility.

2.6 **Reports of chorten vandalism in Bhutan**

As presented in chapter one, the phenomenon of chorten vandalism is a matter of serious concern in Bhutan. Every year scores of chortens are vandalized. According to Kuensel (July 10th 1999), the official figures issued in July 1999, 1,132 chortens had been subject to theft, arson, desecration and their caretakers attacked and murdered. The thefts and the desecrations were a regular topic that fired discussion, and at times, disagreement. Debatably, they serve as a metaphor for the changes and the problems facing modern Bhutan. The happenings deliberated emphasize on a major matter, which has caused extensive anxiety amongst both the government and the ordinary people.

According to Whitecross (2000), three main themes emerge While deliberating on the attacks on chortens. First, is the response to the violence, which is now related with the burglaries. The second, a belief that those engaging in these actions are being invigorated by individuals or groups of individuals residing outside the country. The stolen items are then transported out of Bhutan and secretly sold to collectors. The third theme is concerned with the spiritual harm caused to the local area and to the country as a whole arising from the desecrations.

As a matter of fact, the maximum number of chortens got vandalized in the Eastern Bhutan (BBS, Feb 25, 2015). According to the Department of Culture, Ministry of Home & Cultural Affairs (MoH&C) and the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP), it was reported that out of the total of 8462 chortens in the country, the highest number of vandalism and deterioration of chortens occurred in Mongar, Trashigang and Pemagatshel, while Sarpang, Tsirang and Samtse had the lowest cases (The Resolutions of the Eleventh Session of the National Council of Bhutan (NCB), 2013). One of the highest cases of chorten vandalism recorded in a single month since August 2009 was in July, 2011 when eight chortens were vandalised out in the dzongkhag in

Pemagatshel (Eastern Bhutan) (Bhutan Observer, August 05, 2011). In *Monggar* too (again in eastern Bhutan), 43 chortens were vandalized in 2014 and 54 in 2013. *Trashigang* (again in eastern Bhutan) saw 35 cases of chorten vandalism, 2014, and 58 in 2013 (BBS, Feb 25, 2015). The police records showed that a total of 210 chortens were vandalized in 2013 alone (BBS, Feb 25, 2015). So far, there is no scientific study conducted in the phenomenon of chorten vandalism, however, Bhutan police attribute the reason for vandalism for the precious relics inside those chortens. The location of the chortens in the remote areas further abetted vandalism.

The issue of chorten vandalism was also deliberated in the two highest law making bodies, the National Council and the National Assembly, of the kingdom. In 2002, the National Assembly (NA) deliberated thoroughly on the problem of chorten vandalism. As a result of the deliberation, a Review Committee was established, comprising of officials from the Home Ministry, NCCA, *Dratshang Lhentshog* (the monk body), Royal Bhutan Police and the Office of Legal Affairs, to review the Royal *Kashos* (decrees), laws, penal provisions and preventive measures to safeguard the *tensum*, cultural and religious heritages (The Resolution of the 80th Session of the National Assembly, 2002).

 The Eleventh Session of the National Council of Bhutan 11 – 28 September 2013 too deliberated about the issue of chorten vandalism and the importance and benefits of chortens in the country and root causes of vandalism to the House. The Committee submitted that while there was a need to think over how to renovate deteriorated chortens, it was equally important to take preventive measures to preserve undamaged ones (The Resolution of the Eleventh Session of the National Council of Bhutan, 2013).

The concern for the phenomenon of chorten vandalism is shown both at the individual and national levels.

2.7 Penalty for chorten vandalism

According to the Penal Code of Bhutan (PCB) (2004), the penalty for Chorten vandalism is the most stringent; it falls under the 'Felony of the First Degree'. According to the Felony of the First Degree, "A defendant convicted of a felony of the first degree shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment, a minimum of which shall be fifteen years and a maximum of which shall be

life imprisonment" (Penal Code of Bhutan, 2004). Despite such stringent law numerous Chortens have been vandalized.

Since time immemorial, Bhutan has recognised the preservation and promotion of its unique cultural heritage. In addition, ever since Gross National Happiness (GNH) became the national philosophy the government has further strengthened and promoted the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage as one of the main philosophies of GNH. This importance is clearly stated in the Article 4 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan (2009):

> The state shall endeavour to preserve, protect and promote the cultural heritage of the country, including monuments, places and objects of artistic and historic interest, Dzongs (fortresses), Lhakhangs (temples), Goendeys (monastic institutions), Ten-sum (relics and antiques), Nyes (religious and sacred sites), language, literature, music, visual arts and religion to enrich society and the cultural life of the citizens.(p. 14)

Under the penal provision of *Thrimzhung Chhenmo*, Chapter 10 Part 1, THA 1-1 to THA 1-14 was devoted to theft and desecration of tensum, THA 1-9 to THA 1-11 with life imprisonment to persons involved in the theft and desecration of tensum and THA 1-12 on more severe punishment for repeated offence. However, according to Whitecross (2000), in practice, the more severe punishment for the repeated offences were not practised. The repeated offenders were accorded capital punishment. The 77th session of the Assembly had adopted eight additional provisions to prevent theft and vandalism of *tensum* (relics). Although the provision of laws covering accomplices/ abettors/ conspirators were not specifically mentioned under THA 1 of *Thrimzhung Chhenmo*, it was however covered in Chapter 13 PA 1 and Chapter 13 MA 1 under all types of theft and crimes.

2.8. Preservation measures against vandalism

Owing to degree of seriousness of the crime of chorten vandalism, numerous preservation strategies and measures were adopted. They range from issuing of *Kashos* (Royal Decrees) to using modern technology and fortifying community services. A *Kasho* in 1993 had decreed that all monks, DYT members and the local community were responsible to look after the *kusungthugten* (relics) in their respective community. In 1999, a *Kasho* was issued to install fireproof safes and theft-proof steel cupboards in *Lhakhangs* (Temples) and *Goendeys* (religious

objects) to safeguard the sacred *nangtens* (relics). A *Kasho* was again issued in 1999 for the establishment of Cultural Heritage of Bhutan Trust Fund (CHBTF) (The Resolution of the 80th Session of the National Assembly, 2002). Accordingly, fireproof and reliable steel safes were installed in the temples and monasteries. After the proper recruitment and efficiency training of(caretakers), the process of handing/taking over was improved. A total of 697 Konyers and Dzongpons had been trained on the protection and caring of *nangtens* over 10 years (The Resolution of the 80th Session of the National Assembly, 2002). However, very little was done for the chortens.

Besides establishing *Shedras* (schools for monks) in appropriate *Lhakhangs* and *Goendeys* wherever possible, the *gups* (local leaders) and *mangaps* (people's representatives), as well as the *konyers* (caretakers) were included in the committee of documentation of nangten (relics) in their respective localities. It was also recognized that imparting moral and religious education in schools and teachings on the rewards of virtuous deeds and retribution of sinful actions to the people would help in protecting the *tensum*. Above that, the resolution of the 72nd session of the Assembly to give incentive, 25 percent of the estimated value of the recovered nangten, to the person who gave information leading to their recovery, had helped greatly in recovering several lost *nangtens* (The Resolution of the 80th Session of the National Assembly, 2002).

To prevent chorten vandalism, the Bhutan police planned several preservation measures. They ranged from installation of shock sensors and CCTVs to covering of the chortens with concrete. But these plans were never realized due to budget constraints (BBS, 1st June 2015).

2.9 Chapter summary

In this chapter the literature related to the phenomenon of chorten vandalism was discussed. Major themes in this chapter pertained to pertains to the basic concept definition of chorten, followed by the origin of chortens. The chapter also reviewed the methodological procedures in the construction and consecration of chortens and the fundamental features of chorten. Different types of chortens and their significances were also reviewed. Then in the last three sections, reports of the phenomenon of chorten vandalism in Bhutan, penalties for the chorten vandalism, and preservative measures initiated by the government are presented respectively.

In the next chapter, chapter three, the methodological procedures for the study are presented.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to maximize clarity and to delineate fundamental elements of methodology and method considered of significant importance in this research.Methodology is the study of methods and a method is the means by which a researcher collects and analyses research material or data (McConnell-Imbriotis, 2004). McConnell-Imbriotis delineates that:

> All methods are underpinned by a system of implicit beliefs and in any research project it is critical to know why certain approaches and their associated methods are chosen. These approaches or methodologies determine all aspects of the research process from what it is possible to ask of the research to aims, methods, ethics and outcomes (2004, pp. 29-30).

Similarly, Marrais and Lapan (2004) assert that the methodology must describe theory, principles and procedures of a particular field of inquiry. They provide a succinct difference between a method and methodology:

> … A method is a particular research technique or way to gather evidence about a phenomenon. Methods are the specific research tools we use in research projects to fuller understanding of phenomenon. Examples of methods include surveys, interviews, and participant observation. …Methodology encompasses our entire approach to research. Our assumptions about what we believe knowledge is are embedded in methodological discussions and therefore have consequences for how we design and implement research studies (Hutchinson, 2004 as cited in deMarrais & Lapan 2004, pp. 4-5).

Furthermore, (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) list essential phases involved in research design. These phases and their elements that are consistent with the study are considered. For example, paradigms: constructivism and interpretive; strategies: grounded theory; methods of data collection and analysis: interviewing and computer assisted analysis, textual analysis; interpretation and presentation: the art of politics of interpretation, writing as interpretation, and policy analysis. These inform the choice of the components that a researcher would make which are pertinent to the topic.

The chapter has four broad sections namely interpretative research paradigm; mixed methods research design; research procedure and ethical considerations. Each of these is described in the respective sections.

3.2 Interpretative Research Paradigm

In simple terms, paradigm is a basic set of beliefs that guide action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). They maintain that paradigms deal with principles, they are human constructions, and they define worldview of the researcher. A paradigm encompasses ethics, epistemology, ontology, and methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Description of these is not within the purview of this study and hence is not considered. Frequently, the subject of paradigm is associated with way of knowing and the nature of knowledge. Ways of knowing concern objectively or subjectively; in quantitative or qualitative terms (Creswell, 2008). Invariably, positivist views and interpretative views play a significant part in social science research.

In terms of positivist and interpretive approaches used in the social sciences, the interpretive paradigm takes precedence in this study. This is because the production of knowledge in the social world is possible through understanding the environment by interacting with subjects, observing critically their actions and interpreting the meanings (Neuman, 1991). The study required interaction in natural settings to understand the subjects properly and analysis of interview data in order to better understand the views of the subjects (Denzin& Lincoln, 2005; Neuman, 1991; Seale, 1999). Participants were asked to share their views and opinions of the perception on the phenomenon of chorten vandalism in order to interpret and construct meanings. Thus, the study in question anchored around the interpretative paradigm.

3.3 Mixed Methods Design

This section briefly describes mixed methods and its type, the purposes and strengths of the methods chosen in the study: Survey, and Grounded Theory. The data collection instruments used was survey questionnaire and interviews. This section also discusses samples and sampling technique employed in the study.

Mixed methods are presented by types and models. First, a simple definition and a purpose of mixed methods are provided in the following words:

> Mixed methods designs combine quantitative and qualitative approaches by essentially mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study. The purpose of mixed methods research is to build on the synergy and strength that exists between quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to understand a phenomenon more fully that is possible using either quantitative or qualitative methods alone.(Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006)

Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006) propose three types of mixed methods designs: the QUAL-Quan Model (A), the QUAN-Qual Model (B) and the QUAN-QUAL Model (C). The importance and preference of these three types of mixed methods is determined by uppercase and lowercase letters used for each of the models. According to Gay et al (2006) in Model A, also known as exploratory mixed methods design, qualitative data are collected first and more weight is given to the qualitative data. In a second phase study, variables are identified from concepts derived from the qualitative analysis and hypotheses are tested with quantitative techniques. In Model B, also known as explanatory mixed methods design, the priority of data collection and weight given, are the reverse to Model A. But in Model C, which is also known as triangulation mixed methods design, both the quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently or in parallel and equally weighted (Creswell, 2008, Gay et al, 2006).

Essentially, in mixed methods one is discussing and making a case on "confluence of designs". The quantitative research may achieve the same purpose by a larger number of respondents participating in the research and repeating the research more than once. By the same token, the issue of reliability can be addressed. More about reliability is presented later in the chapter.

Some educational researchers have employed mixed approaches (Namgyel, 2003; Dorji, 2003) in which the qualitative and quantitative data are interwoven, complementing and supplementing each other; resulting in a strong evidence of triangulation. Instead of using only a test, which takes precedence in the quantitative school, a researcher uses combination of qualitative data collection methods (Creswell, 2003; Mertens, 1998).

Qualitative research involves performing a large number of tasks from interviewing to observing. Even within the qualitative method, there is a degree of mixed as stated here:

> Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them... Qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected methods, hoping always to get a better mix on the subject at hand (Denzin & Lincoln 1994, p. 2).

Finally, the standpoint for choosing mixed or multi-method in this study is that the method has a number of benefits. One concerns how the subject treats a particular reality, in that, one might respond better through self-administered questionnaire whereas other might feel more comfortable with interviews. The use of quantitative and qualitative methods allows for the opportunity to look for compatible findings between the methods, thus … "the use of more than one method in the study of a phenomenon is helpful in the development of construct validity" (Schutz et al, 2004, p. 276).

The mixed method is also an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. In sum, the benefits of the proposed method revolves around finding compatibility, corroboration, seeking convergence, finding complimentary, using the results for expansion, investigating possible paradoxes and contradictions that might emerge from the data (Schutz et al, 2004). To a large extent, the multi-method has potential to maximize the validity of the study. The issue of validity is presented later in this chapter.

3.4 Survey and Grounded Theory

Essentially, mixed methods is the mixed of quantitative and qualitative methods. Here, the design is a mixed of survey, which is quantitative in nature as the data collected is generally in the form of numbers. It is mixed with grounded theory, a design that is qualitative in nature. Therefore, a brief introduction to survey and grounded theory is considered and how each is treated in this study is presented.

3.4.1 Survey and Quantitative research

Survey research is discussed here encompassing definitions, advantages and strengths of using it, why it is appropriate in this study, and limitations and considerations to address them. Survey

research can be defined as "a means of gathering information, usually through self-report using questionnaires or interviews. … surveys are more commonly considered the medium used for data collection" (Hutchinson, 2004, p. 285). Hence, it is also known as self-report research (Gay et al 2006).

Of the various types of surveys, Cross-Sectional Survey Design is the most popular one, and in this survey design, … "the researcher collects data at one point in time, … has the advantage of measuring current attitudes or practices. It also provides information in a short amount of time" (Creswell 2008, p. 389). But, how survey has been classified as quantitative in nature is detailed here:

> "… you may not want to test an activity or materials or may not be interested in the association among variables. Instead, you seek to describe trends in a large population of individuals. In this case, a survey is a good procedure to use. Survey designs are procedures in quantitative research in which you administer a survey or questionnaire to a small group of people (called the sample) to identify trends in attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of a large group of people (called the population)" (Creswell, 2008, p. 61), and survey researchers collect quantitative, numbered data using questionnaires (p. 388).

Creswell (2008) also identifies possible areas of social science research that survey could possibly and effectively engage in namely trends in attitudes, people's opinions, behavioural changes, other characteristics of population. Opinions and attitudes about the phenomenon of chorten vandalism, perception about chorten vandalism could be gathered employing agreement and preferential scales.

4.3.2 Advantages and strengths of a survey

A notable strength of a survey method is that it gathers data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions. Such conditions help identify standards against which existing conditions can be compared (Alreck & Settle, 1995; Cohen & Manion, 1997; Sapsford, 1999). Best and Kahn (2006) are cognizant: "the survey method gathers data from a relatively large number of cases at a particular time. It is not concerned with

characteristics of individuals as individuals. … It is essentially cross-sectional" (Best & Kahn 2006, p. 121).

In the same vein, the survey has its noted strength in its ability to measure attitudes, and, "attitudes are dispositions to react positively or negatively to some object. … Most definitions of attitudes suggest there are three major components: the cognitive, affective and behavioural components" (Burns 2000, p. 555). Invariably, questionnaire items and interview questions constitute these three domains. The survey method in this study is confined to descriptive analysis.

4.3.3 Limitations of survey and considerations to address them

Survey design does not escape its limitations and they are mainly in the sample size, construction of questionnaire items and response rates and hence the generalizability of the findings. The study ensured the samples were enough to be representative and statistically significant, care was also taken to developing clear and non-leading and/or non-threatening questions and every means was tried to ensure return rate of the questionnaires was high. More on this is highlighted later in the chapter.

Appropriateness of survey to this research is that it has potential to collect data from a large sampled population within a short amount of time (Alreck & Settle, 1995; Burns, 2000; Creswell, 2008). The study intended to administer questionnaires to as many as 500 respondents. The study also entailed collecting data that needed a degree of confidentiality in that respondents would privately expressed their honest opinions. Therefore, considering the strength and popularity of the design, survey has been found appropriate to be employed in the study.

4.3.4 Grounded Theory and Qualitative research

Qualitative research has more than one method: biography, case study, ethnography, phenomenology and grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994 ; Mertens, 1998; Creswell, 2003). Grounded Theory is presented encompassing its definition, its strength, when it is generally used, weaknesses and considerations for overcoming the identified weaknesses, and its appropriateness to the current study.

Grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon.

Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory and then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge (Strauss & Corbin 1990, p. 23).

Charmaz (2005) and Creswell (2008) also define grounded theory. According to Charmaz, the term Grounded Theory,

> … "refers to both a method of inquiry and to the product of inquiry. However, researchers commonly use the term to mean a specific mode of analysis. Essentially, grounded theory methods are a set of flexible analytic guidelines that enable researchers to focus their data collection and to build inductive middle-range theories through successive levels of data analysis and conceptual development (Charmaz, 2005, pp. 507-508).

Creswell's (2008) definition appears to emphasize, systematic and qualitative procedure: … "A grounded theory design is a systematic, qualitative procedure used to generate a theory that explains, at a broad conceptual level, a process, an action, or an interaction about a substantive topic" (p. 432).

4.3.5 Strengths of Grounded Theory

One of the strengths of the Grounded Theory is the… "approach encourages researchers to remain close to their studied worlds and to develop an integrated set of theoretical concepts from their empirical materials" (Charmaz, 2005, p.508). Concepts and empirical materials are arranged or coded into categories and themes. In addition, it seems the process of coding helps see a quality interaction of the researchers' and research participants' assumptions.

It appears grounded theory has the strength of being user-friendly for the beginning qualitative researcher, because it … "offers a step-by-step, systematic procedure for analyzing data. As a systematic process, grounded theory exhibits the rigour quantitative researchers like to see in an educational study" (Creswell 2008, p. 432). The other strength is as a tool to analyze process: "A

major strength of grounded theory is that they provide tools for analyzing processes" (Charmaz, 2005, pp. 507-508). It also assists qualitative analysts to extract other views and inductively theorize about the phenomena (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Patton, 2002).

One may also be tempted to discuss the benefits of grounded theory from the viewpoint of the researchers' position and roles. It is often the case that the researcher's role is that of an "analyst becoming implanted in the data" (Patton, 2002, p. 454). Data is sourced from interview, observations, and other qualitative data collecting instruments namely personal experiences, and various documents (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 34; Strauss &Corbin, 1994, p. 274). In grounded theory in-depth interviews and/or semi-structured interviews, diary entries, participant observations and the like may be used to collect data (Morse, 1994a, pp. 224-225).

The other notable strength concerns its approach, in that, the grounded theory offers a well-established approach to ensuring that ideas and recommendations which the researcher develops and emerge from the data, are grounded in what key participants have contributed through their words and experiences (Goodley, Lawthom, Clough, &Moore, 2004, p. 119). The approach is rigorous as it enables the researcher/analyst implanting in the data and extracting theory via induction/deduction and comparative methods.

4.3.6 Appropriateness of Grounded Theory to the current study

Thus far, grounded theory has been presented encompassing its definition, uses, and strengths. Now the design's appropriateness to the study is discussed mainly in areas of methodology and mode of analysis, and its versatility nature of approach.

The study in question set out to find the perceptions of the Bhutanese people about the rampant phenomenon of chorten vandalism in Bhutan. A huge amount of qualitative and/or textual data was collected via the interviews and open comments. They were qualitative because "findings, or concepts and hypotheses… are not arrived at by statistical methods" (Glaser, 1992, p. 11). The grounded theory was considered appropriate because as a qualitative research methodology, the design is considered suitable for studying a diverse range of phenomena and analysing the unpredictable (Goodley et al, 2004).

Grounded theory is "a way of thinking about and conceptualizing data" (Strauss &Corbin, 1994, p. 275) that requires the researcher to become closely associated with and immersed in the data. The researcher in this study was deeply immersed in the interview process. From analyzing the same data and texts of the open-ended comments or the qualitative data to treating them and conceptualizing and then drawing thematic categorization with the help of emerging trends and patterns. Hence, the grounded theory as a mode of analysis was appropriate in this study.

The versatility nature of grounded theory makes it appropriate to this study. It is versatile because it guides a researcher through the process of producing theory that is conceptually dense (Patton, 2002). The interview process in grounded theory seeks to elicit a participant's story (Morse, 1994b), and the story in the study concerned the story of the phenomenon of chorten vandalism. From this story unfolded unexpected sub-stories. The other versatility of grounded theory concerns its flexibility in that it supports the researcher who seeks to form a broad story of the phenomena and to expose the dimension, variations (Morse,1994b, p. 39; Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 32). It is this approach that allowed the researcher to develop broad concepts, narrow down to themes and draw presentable conclusions in this study.

4.4 Design of instruments

This section details the design of the research instruments: how the researcher developed the questionnaire and interview schedule. Purpose and contents of the instruments are also highlighted.

4.4.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a self-administered instrument of the survey family (Alreck& Settle, 1995). A major advantage of the questionnaire is that a large number of respondents can participate in the project enhancing the validity of the research. The researcher found the survey questionnaire as an appropriate tool to collect data for the first two questions as the first two questions demand quantitative data. What follows is the content of the questionnaire items.

The questionnaire had six sections (1-6) namely, biographical data, public awareness on chorten vandalism, significance of chorten in Bhutan, legal issues for chorten vandalism, preservation measures and, open comments. A brief overview of each section is relevant here.

Section 1 asked the participants to identify their gender, age range, and their occupational positions. These demographic data was thought to be useful in the identification and discussion of the differences of opinions (if any) among data of the rest of the other sections and/or within the section. Questionnaire items in section 2 were to find out respondent awareness on chortens and chorten vandalism, section 3 was to find out the significance of chortens, section 4 was on the legal issues for vandalism, section 5 was on preservation measures, and section 6 is and open comment section.

4.5 Participants and sampling procedure

Respondents to the questionnaire included civil servants, school and college students, business people and others. In survey research, understanding the target population and sampling population is important (Gorard, 2001). Study target population is a list of all the cases the researcher desired to include in the study. Due to a range of practical reasons: time constraint, geographical considerations, among others, the researcher had to restrict the sample size to 500. This sample was selected using stratified random sampling. The purpose of using stratified random sampling was to make sure that the sample consisted of the approximately equal representation in terms of gender, age, educational qualification, regional background, gender, religion and, occupation of the participants.

The choice of this type of population size in this study was because the study requires the participation of people belonging to different occupations. Wiersma (1991) and Silverman (2000) maintain that purposive sampling allows the researchers to choose a case, which illustrates features in which they are interested. From purposefully selected population, individuals were listed using random sampling technique. It is random or by chance because any individual of the population could have been included as part of the sample.

As far as the sample size in the survey is concerned Alreck and Settle (1995) mention minimum and maximum limits. They maintain that most experienced researchers regard 100 to be a minimum sample size and the maximum practical size to be 1000. Under normal circumstances "it is necessary to sample more than 10 percent of the population to obtain adequate confidence, providing that the resulting sample is less than about 1,000 and larger than the minimums noted earlier" (Alreck& Settle, 1995, p. 89).

4.6 Interview

Interview has been considered a second major data collection technique (Gay et al, 2006) and a cross cutting tool of inquiry in all types of qualitative researches, including Grounded Theory. Interview is a purposeful verbal interaction intended to dig information on a research study (Alreck & Settle, 1995; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Fontana & Frey, 2005; Gay et al, 2006). "An interview is a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study" (deMarrais, 2004, p. 54). In order to elicit data and answer the third research question, which was 'what can be done to curb the phenomenon of chorten vandalism in Bhutan?' this study adopted interview as the second data collection tool. This was done so because the third question demands qualitative data as the question was an open-ended one.

Interviews can be highly structured, semi-structured, to highly unstructured or open-ended and in-depth. It is also known by being very formal to very informal (Best &Kahn, 2006). The structured option tends to have a standardized list of questions. In some ways, survey interviews follow this approach, and may be criticized as being too mechanical and quantitative data collection technique. Conversely, unstructured interview by definition does not seem to have a list of questions, but an idea to explore. It is being criticized for being too open and often gets deviated from the area of study, and therefore arise the problem of validity (Burns, 2000).

4.6.1 Semi-structured Interview

Along the continuum, semi-structured interview option is being increasingly used, as a middle pathway. It is one that, "Rather than having a specific interview schedule or none at all, an interview guide may be developed…" (Burns, 2000, p. 424). The semi-structured interview has potential to provide a direction without fixed wording or ordering, but at the same time it also permits greater flexibility than the close-ended type and thus a more valid response can be expected (Burns, 2000). The strength of the semi-structured interviews is that it not only provides liberty to the interviewer but also to the interviewees and would make the atmosphere of the interaction relaxing. The creation of a collegial atmosphere is essential to harvest quality data without which there is likelihood of interviewing bias (Alreck & Settle, 1995) taking

precedence. Considering the strengths and advantages of semi-structured interview the same was employed in this study.

4.6.1 Interview Participants

The research invited seven participants, five of them were senior citizens and holding or had held administrative and managerial positions. The interview participants included senior citizens, local government leaders, former member of national councilors, local government leaders and directors. deMarrais (2004) shares a possible criterion to select interviewees for qualitative research, "Interview researchers select people to talk with who have the knowledge and experience about the particular focus of the study. A primary consideration is to select participants who can talk about the topic" (p. 59). The five participants were those who the researcher thought had the knowledge about the subject and could talk. They were selected on the basis of their availability and representation.

In qualitative research, it is the in-depth inquiry into the phenomenon and not the number of participants which is more important. Therefore, it is fair to say that qualitative data collected from five persons through semi-structured interviews harvested substantial amount of data.

4.6.2 Interview Guide: Semi-structured

Contents of the schedule were similar to the questionnaire items but were left rather broad, flexible enough within each area to ask sub-questions and room for interpretations by the interviewee and the interviewer. It had six sections, 1-6. Each section asked a broad question concerning an educational area. As is permissible in a semi-structured interview, the researcher asked several questions within that broad area in any order (Best & Kahn, 2006; Gay et al, 2006). For example, Section 4 invited interviewees to share their views on the severity of punishment for chorten vandals in Bhutan. They were permitted to express their absolute views on the subject.

4.7 Data Collection Procedures

This section, research procedure, elucidates the steps involved in the administration of questionnaire and conduct of interviews to collect data. The section also briefly presents data analysis procedures that were employed in this study.

Between January and March 2014 questionnaire and interview schedules were ready. The data collection instruments were reviewed, revised and further refined. Data collection was done following these procedures.

4.7.1 Initial Pilot study

The questionnaire was completed by 15 Bhutanese people in Thimphu. The exercise was scheduled for the end of March, 2014. They were civil servants by profession. Three of the same individuals also piloted the interview questions. A letter inviting them to participate in the pilot study was drafted and reviewed with the incorporation of comments.

4.7.2 Pre-testing of the questionnaire

Fowler (2002) maintains, "once a set of questions has been drafted, and revised as warranted, the next step was to find out if they are questions people consistently can understand and can answer" (p. 108). Similarly, Alreck and Settle (1995) and Gay et al (2006) also reiterate the importance of pre-testing for clarity of instructions, the scales, question items, and time taken.

The questionnaire was pre-tested with ten school teachers in Paro Valley (Paro is one of the 20 Districts of Bhutan and is located in the country's western region), eight students of the Paro College of Education (erstwhile NIE), and ten civil servants based in Thimphu. The questionnaires were sent to the participants in the first week of April 2006 each with a self-addressed envelope to be returned to the researcher.

Twenty one sets of questionnaires were returned. Based on the written feedback of the respondents five ambiguous items were removed to make the items of the questionnaire clearer and more comprehensive. Some minor changes were also made by way of adding or deleting words, and the order of items got revised from the earlier draft. With these changes and improvement the final questionnaire was ready and administered.

4.7.3 Administration of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered in the month of May 2014. A cover letter with clear instructions accompanied each questionnaire booklet. The respondents were asked to send back

the questionnaire to the researcher at the department of culture, National Library, Thimphu using the self-addressed envelope.

4.7.4 Interviews

Between April and May 2014, the researcher conducted five interviews. After securing authorization from the Ministry of Home, Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB), individual interviewees were contacted over phone or in person and appointments made with them at their convenience. The researcher interviewed five interviewees ensuring as far as possible regional, positional and gender representation.

Each interviewee received a copy of the semi-structured interview guidelines before the interviews in order for them to mentally prepare and feel comfortable during the conversation. The researcher took a detailed note of the conversation, expanded and transcribed later. Initially the conversation was taped but this technique made the interviewees uncomfortable and artificial. The ensuing interactions were not tape recorded. Owing to the geographical distance and time constraint reminding through mails was not realistic. The researcher made calls to the respondents.

4.8 **Data analysis procedures**

This section briefly discusses how quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed. Questionnaire and interview were used as data collection techniques. A huge amount of both types of data were collected from civil servants, students, and business people, who were the participants of the study.

Questionnaires were checked to see if any pages were missing and whether or not the question items were answered properly and completely. None of the questionnaires had to be discarded. Each set of questionnaires was labeled with a serial ID for identification before finally punching the data into the computer.

4.8.1 Quantitative Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data collected via the questionnaire was analyzed using "Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)". The SPSS provides several programs for analysis, such as inferential,

multivariate, test of significance, correlation statistics, and the like. These more complex analytical statistics have utility in quantitative methods that are consistent with the scientific, technical or positivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

They may not be, however, appropriate in the interpretative paradigm that underpins this study. Essentially, statistical data in this study were analyzed using one levels of analysis within the largely simple descriptive statistics, which was the Distribution of Frequency and Percentages.

What, why and how each one is relevant in this study is discussed. The use and purpose of Frequency Distribution, as Rose and Sullivan (1996) state, is: "… frequency distribution (the number of cases and in the categories of a variable) and percentage distributions (p. 84). Using Frequency Procedures of the SPSS Tables of Frequencies (also called General Tables) were generated. This procedure was employed for generating frequency distributions of the "Biographical Information" of the respondents and "Degree of agreement and degree of preference to various aspects the respondents' attitude toward chorten vandalism ". The purpose and strength of this procedure is that it provides a convenient two-way contingency table (Field, 2000; Gravetter &Wallnau, 2005; Kinnear & Gray, 2008). The SPSS output tables have been cleaned up to present only the variables (bio-data; degree of agreement; degree of preference, so on) on the columns and frequencies and percentages on the rows. Each questionnaire item had a frequency distribution table. These data provided an overview of the data because "a frequency distribution is an organized tabulation showing exactly how many individuals are located in each category on the scale of measurement" (Gravetter, 2007, p. 15).

4.8.2 Qualitative Data Analysis Procedures

Richards (2005) emancipates the richness of qualitative data, but only if they are treated with heart and analyzed well.

> The researcher discovers themes, or threads in the data, by good exploration, good enquiry. By handling the data records sensitively, managing them carefully and exploring them skillfully, the researcher "emerge" ideas, categories, themes, hunches, and ways of relating them (Richards, 2005, p. 68).

Textual data collected via the open-ended questions were transcribed and recorded against the respective Ids of the quantitative data because they were the same persons. The data was cleaned up by way of deleting those Ids who did not write any comment. Five separate files were created for each of the five aspects of quality.

Similarly, interviews were also transcribed referring to the notes, and were recorded. Since the semi-structured interviews had five categories of questions, Sections $1-5$, each one of them was put under respective section and merged with open comments. This way qualitative data collected through two techniques were considered as one and analyzed accordingly.

The researcher read the data several times to develop a feel and to make sense of them because "analysis initially consists of developing a general sense of the data, and then coding description and themes about the central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2008, p. 244).

The central phenomenon in the study was the perception of chorten vandalism and intended to explore ideas that support the main theme.

Essentially, "the purpose of analyzing the data is to find meaning in the data, and this is done by systematically arranging and presenting the information" (Burns, 2000, p. 430). As delineated elsewhere the grounded theory procedure allows the researcher to remain close to the studied worlds and by following a systematic procedure during data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2005 and others). In the same vein, the data were systematically arranged, and presented.

4.9 Measures for ensuring validity and reliability in the study

The study made attempts to address these issues in order that validity was ensured. The research design, data analysis procedures employed, ethical considerations that follow and these all along addressed possible validity issues. Care was taken to include the contents of the questionnaire items that were familiar to the respondents.

The pilot and pre-testing of the questionnaire further improved the specificity of the instrument. Similarly, the contents of the semi-structured guidelines included the concepts and issues with which the participants were familiar. By the same token, plain and non-technical language and fairly short and simple questions ensured the mitigation of construct validity problem.

One of the main purposes of employing mixed methods was to maximize reliability in that the data collected from different sources complemented. The QUAN-QUAL design allowed triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data by concurrently analyzing and reporting.

4.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations and how permission was sought are highlighted in the last section of this chapter. It is of great importance that social researchers consider ethical issues in the study has potential to encounter extremely complex and subtle situations (Cohen & Manion, 1997). Ethical considerations concern three stages: pre-data collection, during data collection and post-data collection (Gay et al, 2006).

Each of the stages was addressed in the following ways.

4.10.1 Pre-data collection

For the study to be valid and reliable and to fulfill the research norms of Bhutan it is important for the accrediting body to approve the study. Therefore, approval was sought from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan. Necessary forms and documents were filled up prior to data collection. The importance of such approval is shared here:

> If you will be conducting your research under the auspices of a government system, you will be required to submit an application for approval of research with human subjects prior to conducting the study. … The purpose of the approval process stems from a federal mandate to protect the rights of research participants, particularly those considered vulnerable, such as children or institutionalized individuals. (Hutchison, 2004, p. 298)

Whether it is a federal mandate or a mandate of the government, the purpose for requiring approval is geared towards protecting the subjects. In the same vein, the research in question was conducted under the auspices of the National Library of Bhutan, and its research policy requires the researchers to seek prior approval.

It is a moral responsibility of the researcher to apply for and receive consent of the institutions that are responsible for the proposed participants. Hence, permission was sought from the Office of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Royal University of Bhutan to conduct the research. Since the study had a number of participants from districts, schools and education head office permission was sought from the Ministry of Education (MOE) too.

4.10.2 During data collection

The researchers are often faced with serious dilemmas between the demands placed on them as professional scientists and participants' rights and values. The process places a moral obligation upon the researcher. Tisdale (2004) equates this obligation to protecting the vulnerable subjects of the research. Be it self-administered questionnaire or interviews a noble responsibility of the researcher is to protect the participants who because of their expressed views might feel threatened at worst and uncomfortable at best. Every means was considered to make the participants comfortable, protected, and not to intimidate them. Because without assuring their maintenance of confidentiality and anonymity the intended data may not be valid or reliable.

Individual participants were invited through consent letter or by meeting them personally to participate in the study. The cover letter that accompanied the questionnaire explained the purpose of the study. The information in the letter mentioned about the freedom of the participants to discontinue if they felt uncomfortable at any stage of completing the questionnaire or the interview. The researcher explained the purpose of the study to the interviewees. Optimum care was taken in considering the opinions and beliefs of the respondents.

Another ethical issue involved during the data collection, concerned tape recording of the conversation. In order not to lose data and responses, the researcher tape-recorded the interviews. Due permission was sought from the participants. However, the initial interviews, using a tape, experienced some unnaturalness of the conversation. Hence, tape was not used in the subsequent interviews. The researcher was more diligent in note taking during the interviews.

4.10.2 Post data collection

Ethical obligation of the researcher to the participants after data collection is as important as before and/or during collection. It involves the storage of the information, access to them,

analyzing them and to publication of the same (Creswell, 2003). The researcher maintained the data that were collected using questionnaire and interviews.

They were stored in the filing cabinet under lock and key for ensuring their safety. The researcher provided pseudo names or alternative identity to each participant and entered into the computer program for analyzing. This information was clearly mentioned in the covering letter of the questionnaire. Similarly, interviewees were given the freedom to discontinue if they felt uncomfortable at any stage of the interaction.

The next concern was access to the information. At the initial stage, only the researcher could access the collected data. At a later stage, if necessary, the Office of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan may also have access. In consultation with the researcher other researchers in the same area of study could also have access if the future study was to carry out within two-three years from the time this initial data was collected. As the researcher had invited the participants to share their personal views that in some ways may be detrimental to other parties, it was essential to ensure individuals could not be identified.

4.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the methodological procedures used for this study. A mixed methods methodology with an Interpretative Research Paradigm and Grounded theory approach was presented. The details of the two data collection tools, questionnaire and survey were also discussed in detail. Finally, ethical considerations and reliability and validity measures were also discussed.

Chapter Four: Findings and Conclusion

4.1 Introduction

The chapter four presents details of data collected by the questionnaire, open comments and interviews. The chapter attempts to answer the major research questions using statistical data supported and complemented by open comments. A number of tables are also used. As addressed in chapter three, two data collection tools were used: survey questionnaire and interviews.

The purpose of the survey was to explore the perception of Bhutanese people on the cultural and religious significance of Chortens in Bhutan, including the perception on the involvement of the local community in the preservation measures. The survey also explored the legal implications of vandalising Chortens in the kingdom. A survey questionnaire was administered to 500 randomly selected participants from different regions of the kingdom. The survey had in total 21 items: six demographic items, six items on personal awareness, four items on significance of Chorten, three items on legal penalty, and three items on preservation measures, followed by an open comment option. The survey was analysed using SPSS software.

Firstly, details of questionnaire respondents and interviewees are presented.

4.2 Biographical Information of Respondents and Participants

4.1.1 Questionnaire Respondents

Of the 500 sets of questionnaire distributed to the sampled respondents all of the 500 (100%) were returned. Tables 4.1 to 4.6 present response rates by Gender, Age Range, Regional background, Education qualification, Religion and, Occupation.

Gender

Table 4.1 shows that 50.8% of respondents were male and 49.2 % were female. Although females constitute only 29% of the civil servants, the data in table 4.1 show that the gender distribution was more or less equal (50.8% male, 49.2% female). This was possible because of the fact that the methodological procedure of sampling was a stratified random sampling. Ten respondents (2%) did not indicate their gender in the response.

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Table 4.1 Respondents by Gender

		Frequency	*Percent*
Valid	Male	249	49.8
	Female	241	48.2
	Total	490	98.0
Missing	System	10	2.0
Total		500	100.0

Age Range

The maximum number of participants belonged to age group 20 – 30 (65.5 %) while the
teenagers and above 40 were the least (9% and 6.6% respectively). The fact that most
participants belonged to the age group of 20 – 30 is due to the fact that a number of college
students participated in the study. Besides, most civil servant participants are also comparatively
young. Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) statistics show that 76% of the civil servants
are below 39 years of age, and majority of them are in the 25-34 brackets (n=9700; 52%)
(RGoB, 2008). 2.6% of the respondents did not identify their age range.

Table 4.2 Respondents by Age range

		Frequency	*Percent*
Valid	Below 20	45	9.0
	20-30	330	66.0
	31-40	79	15.8
	above 40	33	6.6
	Total	487	97.4
Missing	System	13	2.6
Total		500	100.0

Regional background

The participant's regional background was divided into three regions, Eastern Region, Central
Region, and Western Region, following the Royal Government of Bhutan's statistical regional
division (RGoB, 2008). The eastern region consisted of *Tashiyangtse, Lhuntse, Tashigang,*
Mongar, Pema Gatsel, and *Samdrup Jonkhar*districts. The central region consisted of *Bumthang,*

Trongsa, Wangdue, Zhemgang, Tsirang, Dagana and, *Sarpang* districts. And the western region consisted of *Gasa, Punakha, Haa, Paro, Thimphu, Chukha*and, *Samtse* districts.

There were more participants from eastern and central region than from the western region. As shown in table 4.3, most of the participants belonged to the central districts (42.8%). The eastern region has 36.8% participation, with a least participation from the western region (15%). 5.4% of the participants did not identify their regional background.

Table 4.3 Respondents by Regional Background

		Frequency	*Percent*
Valid	Eastern Region	184	36.8
	Central Region	214	42.8
	Western Region	75	15.0
	Total	473	94.6
Missing	System	27	5.4
Total		500	100.0

Education qualification

As shown in table 4.4, most of the participants either have completed undergraduate or undergoing undergraduate degree (52.2%). This may be because, as stated earlier, most of the participants were college students. 24.2% of the participants have either completed or undergoing high school education. Only 17.8% have postgraduate education.

Table 4.4 Respondents by Education Qualification

		Frequency	*Percent*
Valid	High School	121	24.2
	College Degree	261	52.2
	Postgraduate Degree	89	17.8
	Total	471	94.2
Missing	System	29	5.8
Total		500	100.0

Religion

As shown in table 4.5, almost all the participants were Buddhists (91%). This may be because of the fact that Bhutan is predominantly a Buddhist country. Furthermore, the religion of the state is also Buddhism. Only 5% of the participants were Hindu, and 1.2% Christian. The demographic

data on religion is significant for this study as the topic for the study is of paramount importance to Buddhist religion.

Table 4.5 Respondents by their Religion

		Frequency	*Percent*
Valid	Buddhist	455	91.0
	Hindu	25	5.0
	Christian	6	1.2
	Others	2	.4
	Total	488	97.6
Missing	System	12	2.4
Total		500	100.0

Occupation

By occupation, most of the participants were college students (54%). This is because of the fact that a large number of participants were high school and college students. 24.2% were civil servants; the rest (14.2%) belonged to other occupation such as business people, NGOs and other individuals.

Table 4.5 Respondents by their Occupation

		Frequency	*Percent*
Valid	Student	255	51.0
	Civil Servant	118	23.6
	Others	71	14.2
	Total	444	88.8
Missing	System	56	11.2
Total		500	100.0

4.3 Personal Awareness on Chortens and Chorten Vandalism

Under this theme, six questionnaire items were used to find out the participants personal awareness on chortens and chorten vandalism. Tables 4.5 presents a condensed response rates for the six items under this theme.

Table 4.5 Showing Personal Awareness on Chortens and Chorten Vandalism

		Frequency	*Percent*
Have you actually seen a chorten in your life?	Yes	487	100
Have you heard about chorten being vendalised in Bhutan?	Yes	477	97.9
	No	7	1.4
How often did you hear about chorten vendalism?	Often	260	53.4
	Very Often	223	45.8
	Never	2	.4
If yes, where did you hear it from?	People	70	14.4
	BBS	327	67.1
	Newspaper	40	8.2
How often do you hear (or read about) chortens being vendalised in Bhutan?	Once or twice a year	153	31.4
	Three to four times a year	148	30.4
	More than four times a year	171	35.1
	Never	9	1.8
Chortens in Bhutan are:	Public property	126	25.2
	Private Property	6	1.2
	Both public and private	334	66.8
	Don't know	30	6.0

The data in table 4.5 show that all the participants have actually seen a Chorten in their lives. As discussed in chapter one and two, chortens are seen in every part of the kingdom. The chortens are built on such locations that daily travellers and commuters cannot miss a sight of them.

Likewise, the participants have also frequently (at least once a year by 97% of the participants) heard about the phenomenon of Chorten vandalism (97.9%). As discussed in chapter one and two, the phenomenon of chorten vandalism is a frequently talked about subject both in Bhutanese media and by Bhutanese public. The findings here seem to suggest that chorten vandalism is, as reported in the media, a rampant phenomenon in Bhutan.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that most of the participants heard about the phenomenon of Chorten vandalism through BBS television (67%), which may infer that Bhutanese, by nature are poor readers, especially of newspapers (only 8%) despite the fact that every chorten vandalised is reported in the print media as well. Even though there are both private and government owned Chortens most Chortens have joint ownership (both private and government, 67%). The issue of ownership is also presented as one of the main challenges for the protection against vandals in the National Assembly (The Resolution of the 80th Session of the National Assembly, 2002).

4.6 Significance of Chortens

Under this theme, four questionnaire items were used to find out the significance of chortens in Bhutan. Tables 4.6 presents a condensed response rates for the five items under significance of chorten in Bhutan.

Table 4.6 Showing Significance of Chorten in Bhutan

		Frequency	*Percent*
Preservation of chortens in Bhutan is important.	SD	23	4.7
	D	3	.6
	CS	5	1.0
	A	37	7.6
	SA	417	85.6
Chortens in Bhutan have:	Cultural significance	41	8.4
	Religious significance	424	87.1
	Aesthetic significance	1	.2
	Other significance	1	.2
Do all chortens have zhungs (relics) inside them?	Yes	361	74.1
	No	23	4.7
	Don't know	98	20.1
Do chortens get vandalised for the relics (Zhung)?	Yes	402	82.5
	No	15	3.1
	Can't say	67	13.8

As shown in table 4.6, irrespective of the participants' age, regional background or religion the study found an overwhelming agreement on the importance of preserving Chortens (93% agreement, with 85.6% strongly agreeing). This may be because of the religious significance (87.1%) attached to the Chortens, as most of the participants were Buddhists (91.2%). Most participants know that all chortens have the precious relic (Zhung) inside them (74%), and the perpetrators vandalise the Chortens for the relics (82.5%). As discussed in the literature review, in chapter two, chortens are associated with Buddhism, hence, they have more religious significance than cultural significance. Furthermore, they were originally built to hold Buddha's precious relics. The findings from this study affirm that vandals attack chortens for the precious relics inside them.

4.7 Legal Penalty for Chorten Vandals

This theme had three questionnaire items to find out participants awareness and severity of penalty for chorten vandals. Tables 4.7 presents a condensed response rates for the three items under legal penalty for chorten vandals in Bhutan.

Table 4.7 Showing Awareness and Severity of Legal Penalty for Vandals

		Frequency	*Percent*
What is the legal penalty for chorten vandalism?	15 years - life imprisonment	215	44.1
	9 years - 15 years imprisonment	61	12.5
	5 - 9 years imprisonment	14	2.9
	3 - 5 years imprisonment	9	1.8
	Don't know	188	38.6
The penalty for chorten vandalism is too severe.	Yes	158	32.4
	No	159	32.6
	Can't say	162	33.3
The culprits vandalise the chorten despite knowing the severity of the penalty.	Yes	252	51.7
	No	36	7.4
	Can't say	188	38.6

According to the Penal Code of Bhutan (2004), the perpetrators of Chorten vandalism is sentenced to a term of imprisonment, a minimum of fifteen years to a maximum of life imprisonment. Despite the most stringent penalty, the perpetrators continue vandalising Chortens. As shown in table 4.7, this may be because of the fact that only 44% of the participants were found to be aware of the legal penalty for Chorten vandalism. Furthermore, 38.6% did not have any idea about the penalty for Chorten vandalism, and thereupon suggested the most severe punishment for the perpetrators (in the open comment data). This is an evidence to show the participants' ignorance on the legal penalty for Chorten vandalism. The data from the open comments too suggested awareness campaigns on the legal penalty for Chorten vandalism. The awareness campaigns may be effectively done through BBS television as most of the participants heard about the phenomenon of vandalism through television (67.1%).Though roughly half of the participants (51.7%) agreed that the perpetrators vandalise Chortens despite knowing the severity of the punishment 38.6% remained undecided. This data further explains why the participants responded equivocally on the severity of the punishment (32.4%, yes; 32.6%, no; 32.3%, can't say). Either the respondents did not know the legal implications for vandalism or

they were undecided. The findings seem to suggest that public in general, and the vandals in particular, were not aware of the first-degree felony punishment for chorten vandalism.

4.8 Preservation initiatives

This theme had three questionnaire items to find out the responsible bodies for preservation and strategies of preservation. Tables 4.8 presents a condensed response rates for the three items under preservation initiatives.

Table 4.8 Showing Preservation Initiatives

		Frequency	*Percent*
Is government doing its best to safeguard the chortens?	Yes	180	37.0
	No	127	26.1
	Can't say	176	36.1
Who is responsible for safeguarding the chortens in the country?	Government	42	8.6
	Local Community	112	23.0
	Individuals	295	60.6
	Can't say	24	4.9
Chortens can be best safeguarded by the local community than the government.	SD	27	5.5
	D	14	2.9
	CS	85	17.5
	A	196	40.2
	SA	158	32.4

As shown in table 4.8, for the preservation of the Chortens against vandals, the participants thought the government is not doing enough (only 37% opted for 'yes'). This concern is further expressed in the open comment data. Many participants believed that the government is not doing enough, firstly to safeguard the chortens, and secondly in making public aware of religious significance attached to the chortens and legal penalties for the perpetrators. For instance ID 305 states: "We see that government does not play much role in protecting our Chortens rather than penalizing after the vandalism. It becomes too late after the vandalism". Even though the participants thought that Chortens are best safeguarded by the local community (32.4% strongly agreed, 40% agreed) every individual citizen is thought to be equally responsible for safeguarding the Chortens (60.6%).

4.9 Qualitative data

This research interviewed five participants, all of them senior citizens and holding or had held administrative and managerial positions. The interview participants included senior citizens, local government leaders, former member of national councillors and directors. To maintain anonymity in reporting, interviewees are also allotted codes. For example, If the responses are concerning interview data, first interviewee is coded as INT001, second is INT002, and so on and so forth, and they are acknowledged accordingly in the texts. Codes are also allotted respectively to open comments. Open comment codes are allotted as S001 for the first respondent, S002 for the second, and so on and so forth.

As the interview data were analysed, six major themes emerged from the data. Each theme is discussed in the following sections.

4.9.1 Concern and apprehension

The most repeatedly raised anxiety by all the participants was their concern and apprehension about the phenomenon of chorten vandalism. All the five participants expressed their unpretentious alarm about the frequency and the number of chortens being vandalised. The survey participants in the open comment also expressed the same concern. The participant S101 expressed his concern as, "Chortens in Bhutan signify both cultural and religious importance and it needs to be preserved at any cost for our future generation". Further, the participants were more worried that in future the phenomenon could deteriorate if the issue is not resolved urgently. Participant S105 said, "Vandalism of chorten will become a great issue in the future and therefore we should do something about it before it is too late". This concern seemed genuine as we saw in the survey findings as well that 95% of the participants agreed on the importance of preserving chortens (with 85.6 strongly agreeing).

In the literature too, the phenomenon of chorten vandalism was reported as a matter of serious concern, as reported in the media, 1,132 chortens had been subject to theft, arson, desecration and their caretakers attacked and murdered (Kuensel, July 10th 1999). The same concern and anxiety was also raised in the 11th National Council of Bhutan (The Resolutions of the Eleventh Session of the National Council of Bhutan, 2013). The findings from the study affirm that

chorten vandalism is a serious threat to the preservation and promotion of the cultural and religious heritage, hence to the promotion of cultural and economic sustainability in Bhutan.

4.9.2 Significance of Chorten

Bhutan is predominantly a Buddhist country; hence, all the participants attributed religious and spiritual significance to Chorten, which literally means, 'the basis of offering'. Chortens are generally more associated with spirituality than cultural significance, though some participants said that Chortens also exhibit a great deal of our history, culture and practice. The participant S104 considers Chortens as "our integral assets and values which play significant role in protectingone's and people's ill fortune and negative aspects". Participant S102 expresses more elaborate and consolidated significance of Chorten:

> People erected Chorten as a mark of identity, cultural identity, and these are some of the cultural icons. When you walk along the path, you come across this Chorten, then, even as you walk, it reminds you of the dharma. Then whatever conversation, whatever thoughts cross your mind when you walk … as soon as you see Chorten, your mind, you know, immediately changes to something very dharmic. Then you stop and think about Buddhism; you have spiritual occurrences in your mind. For a moment, people stop their conversations, and then they make a round and then recite some mantras. (Participant, S102)

The findings from this study once more affirm that like in other Buddhist countries, in Bhutan too chortens are symbols of the Buddha and Buddhism, and used as an symbol for offerings and prayers (Stutchbury, 1991; Phuoc, 2010; Beer,1999).

4.9.3 Lack of awareness on legal penalty

All the participants unequivocally agreed that there is a lack of public awareness about both the significance of Chorten and the legal penalty for vandalism. This view very well confirms the survey finding that 55.9% of the participants did not know about the legal penalty for Chorten vandalism. The participants in the survey too expressed public ignorance about the significance of Chorten and the legal penalty for vandalism. One of the survey participants expressed this on the lack of public awareness about the significance of Chorten, "There is a need for chorten

vandalism education both through media and through public discussion. Many people don't understand the significance of chorten" (participant S204). Another participant puts forward his view about the lack of public awareness on the legal penalty for Chorten vandalism: "if there were awareness on the penalty for vandalism I think they [vandals] would avoid it in order to be with their family [instead of going to prison] rather than wanting to be rich" (participant S99). The interview participant INT004, who is a former member of the national council, expressed the repercussion of lack of awareness on the legal penalty:

> I am sure when the judges pass the law they are passing the judgement to a person who did not know anything about the legal implication. And, then as a judge, my [the judge's] conscience would not allow me [the judege] to punish a person who was ignorant. Crime might have been committed. Evidences point out that he or she has committed the crime. And, the legal councillor, in our case is the auditor general, they also argue that this person committed crime but this chap has committed the crime not knowing what the implications are. He only wanted to become rich [laughs…]. (Participant INT004)

It is interesting to note that many survey participants expressed their dissatisfaction about the leniency of the penalty while the Penal Code of Bhutan (2004) explicitly states that the punishment for vandalising a Chorten is a first-degree felony, which is a minimum of 15 years to life imprisonment. This further confirms our survey findings on the lack of awareness on the legal penalty for Chorten vandalism. The lack of awareness on the legal penalty was very evident from the following suggestions made by the survey participants: "For preservation of chortens the government could come up with such a severe penalty that would make those people to give second though before vandalising any chortens" (Participant S56). "Culprits should be given life imprisonment" (Participants S67, S70, &S50). "A punishment is given less, not life imprisonment" (Participant S301).

 This study robustly confirms that Bhutanese people in general are not aware of the legal repercussions for vandalising a chorten. This finding also conforms with the concerns raised by the 11th National Council of Bhutan on the lack of awareness programme on benefits of circumambulations and renovating chortens as well as penalties and imprisonment for vandalism (The Resolutions of the Eleventh Session of the National Council of Bhutan, 2013).

4.9.4 Preservation measures

The survey respondents strongly suggested that chortens in Bhutan may be best safeguarded by the village community. The survey found that individual citizens (60.6%) and the local community (23%) are the best options for safeguarding and protecting the chortens against vandalism. Furthermore, the respondents agreed that chortens may be better safeguarded by local community than the government (73% agreement). The government stakeholders such as cultural officials and Gups (local government leaders) when interviewed suggested that so far there is not any safeguarding and protection measures initiated either by the government or the local communities despite the alarming rate of vandalism. However, whenever vandalism occurred the village community at the individual level either reported the vandalism to the concerned authorities or helped the police identify the suspects if there were any.

When asked about concrete strategies to formalise the preservation measures, the cevil servant participants thought that it would be impractical. The reasons were many. Firstly, Chortens were built in every nook and corner of the country, especially in the remote places. Secondly, some Chortens are public property while others are private, which would be impractical for the government to formalise a uniform preservation measure. However, the participants suggested in future, Chortens should be constructed with concrete materials so that the culprits cannot break in easily. Another sensible strategy expressed by most of the participants was creating public awareness in the form of informal education at home and school by parents and teachers. This is expressed by one of the participants as:

> I have been to other countries, and there, parents have very high regard for the law. A good example is children below 18 are not allowed to drink, and parents advocate and educate children about the law. Therefore, they have a very high regard for the law. Unfortunately, in our country we do not have this culture. Therefore, there is a need to provide informal education by teachers and parents, I mean children do not learn everything under formal curriculum. Informally also they can learn a lot. Children should be made aware of fundamental duties and responsibilities through informal education, including religious ethics. The penal code is all interconnected with the values I have mentioned above. (Participant 003)

However, when the local government leader and cultural officer participants, who have immediate experience and affiliations with the village community, were interviewed, they suggested a practical and robust strategy. According to these participants, the village community could be best engaged in safeguarding the chortens by relieving them of the *Wula. Wula* is a mandatory social service provided by the village households to the government in the construction and renovation of temples, dzongs (fortresses), roads and bridges. *Wula* is an equivalence of taxes other civil servants and business people pay to the government. The participants further cautioned the researcher that this service is though done in the name of the government it is a kind of social service to their village community. According to the participants, the villagers do not take the responsibility of safeguarding the cultural heritage, including the chortens seriously because they do not benefit in anyway. They reiterated that once some form of remunerations are in place the job will be taken seriously.

This finding conforms with the recommendations made by the 11th National Council of Bhutan in 2013. Preservation strategies such as disbursing funds to the local governments for procurement of zungs (relics), frame preventive measures to protect undamaged chortens from vandalism, setting up CCTV and surveillance equipment at important chortens, frame renovation rules and guidelines, conduct awareness programme on benefits chortens as well as penalties and imprisonment for vandalism (The Resolutions of the Eleventh Session of the National Council of Bhutan, 2013). But, none of the recommendations got materialised owing to lack of money and resource.

4.10 Conclusion

Among many unique cultures of Bhutan, the presence of Chortens all over the country is not only a thing of beauty for the foreign tourists but also accorded high religious values by the Bhutanese people. Preservation of the Chortens therefore would not only help advocate Buddhism but also help in making tourism business sustainable in the country. The study showed that Bhutanese people are well aware of the phenomenon of Chorten vandalism in the country. Furthermore, of all the media, the BBS television medium was found to be the most effective channel for awareness campaigns. Respect, regard and concern for Chortens as religious symbols

were overwhelmingly expressed in the study. However, the study found that the government can take a more responsible role in the management and preservation of the Chortens. These roles include creating public awareness on the significance of Chortens and implication of Chorten vandalism, besides ensuring safety of the Chortens. Finally, the study also suggested that the local communities and individual citizens could play a better role in the preservation of Chortens in Bhutan.

4.10 Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study proposes the following recommendations.

4.1.1 Recommendation for government

4.1.1 Awareness programmes on the legal penalty for chorten vandalism

The survey findings suggested that most of the Bhutanese citizens are not aware of the legal penalty for chorten vandalism. The foremost intervention by the government must be educational awareness programmes on the legal repercussions of vandalising chortens. The survey also found that of all the media channels, the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS) was found to be the most effective medium to educate and propagate information about the legal issues pertaining to chorten vandalism.

4.1.2 Community Engagement

The second intervention the government should initiate is in engaging the village community in safeguarding the chorten. Even though the village community may be ready to initiate measures to safeguard the chortens they may not be able to do much at the either village level or the local government level. The central government must initiate, in collaboration with the local government and the village community, should deliberate on the possibilities of relieving the few selected households in the village of their *Wula* so that such households provide better service in protecting and safeguarding the cultural heritage in their locality.

The study indicated that the government is not doing enough to safeguard chortens in Bhutan. The government can play a significant role in controlling the phenomenon of chorten vandalism. This can be done without any political disputes as the study showed that Bhutanese people,

irrespective of their ethnic and religious background, held high regard for chortens in Bhutan. Bhutanese people regard chortens as a symbol of national identity rather than a religious symbol. Therefore, the government should first advocate preservation of chortens by creating awareness both on the importance of preserving chortens and by creating awareness on the penalty for chorten vandalism. The most appropriate medium to create awareness is through the BBS as most Bhutanese people tend to use BBS more than other media.

4.1.2 Recommendation for further research

Two important topics for further research emerged from this study. The first one is a district-wise enumeration and documentation of the chortens in different parts of the country. This study found no adequate documentation of the chortens in the country. The second probable topic for further research is on the categorization of all the chortens according to their origin, significance and types. Except the two most popular chortens (Memorial Chorten in the heart of Thimphu city and the 108 chortens at Dochula pass, on the Thimphu-Punakha highway) and few others, no study on the categorisations is done. The future research may document and categorise chortens found in Bhutan.

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http://www.bbs.bt/news/?p=44462

http://www.bbs.bt/news/?p=51179

http://www.kuenselonline.com/five-chorten-vandals-appeal-to-high-court/

www.nationalcouncil.bt/assets/uploads/docs/.../11th_session_english_resolution.pdf

Running Head: CHORTEN VANDALISM IN BHUTAN

Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF

CHORTEN (STUPAS) IN BHUTAN

Researcher: Ms. Tshering Choki (Archivist), National Library & Archive of Bhutan,

Thimphu.

Email: tsknlb@gmail.com

Office phone no: 02-333301

Dear respondent,

This is a quick survey to study the perception of Bhutanese citizens on the preservation of

Bhutanese cultural heritage, particularly Chortens (Stupas). Your honest opinion will help

the researcher in portraying a true picture of the attitude towards preservation of Chortens

in Bhutan. Your identity will be protected, and kept confidential.

1.   Demographic information

(Please write your age, home Dzongkhag, occupation, and tick the most appropriate option from

the rest).

Your gender: 1. Male   2. Female

Your age:

Home Dzongkhag:

Education level: High school   College degree   Post graduate degree

Occupation:

Your religion: Buddhism   Hinduism   Christianity   Others

2.   Public awareness (please tick the most appropriate option)

2.1   Have you actually seen a Chorten in your life?

Yes   No

2.2   Have you heard about a Chorten being vandalized in Bhutan?

Yes   No

2.3   How often did you hear about chorten vandalism?

Often   Very often   Never

2.4   If yes, where did you hear it from?

Heard from people   BBS news   Read in news papers

2.5   How often do you hear (or read) about chortens being vandalized in Bhutan?

Once or twice a year   Three to four times a year   More than four times a year   Never

2.6   Chortens in Bhutan are: (Tick one option)

Public property   Private property   Both public and private   Don't know

3.   Significance (please tick the most appropriate option)

3.1 Preservation of Chortens in Bhutan is important.

Strongly disagree   disagree   Can't say   Agree Strongly agree

3.2   Chortens in Bhutan have: (tick the most appropriate option)

Cultural significance   Religious significance Aesthetic (beauty) significance   Other
        significance

3.3 Do all chortens have Zhungs (holy relics) inside them?

Yes   No   Don't know

3.4   Do chortens get vendalised for the relic (Zhung)?

Yes   No   Can't say

4   Legal issues (please tick the most appropriate option)

4.1   What is the legal penalty for chorten vandalism?

15 years to life imprisonment 9 years to 15 years imprisonment   5 years to 9 years   3 years
        to 5 years   Don't know

4.2   The penalty for chorten vandalism is too severe.

Yes   No   Can't say

4.3   The culprits vendalise the chorten despite knowing the severity of the penalty.

Yes   No   Can't say

5   Preservation measures (please tick the most appropriate option)

5.1   Is government doing its best to safeguard the chortens?

Yes   No   Can't say

5.2   Who is responsible for safeguarding the chortens in the country?

Government   Local community   Individuals   Can't say

5.3   Chortens can be best safeguarded by the local community than the government.

Strongly agree Agree Can't say   Disagree   Strongly disagree

6   Write down any thoughts or views on chorten vendalism and preservation below (only if

you have).

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