

Pro Bhutan e.V.

a philanthropic, charitable association dedicated to active development
assistance to the Himalaya Kingdom of Bhutan



The Coronation of H.M. Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, 5th King of Bhutan or Druk Gyalpo (Dragon King) in the Punakha Dzong on 1. November 2008



from Harald N. Nestroy
„Pro Bhutan e.V.“, Loerrach

(date : 1.12.2008)

The Coronation of H.M. Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, 5th King of Bhutan or Druk Gyalpo (Dragon King) in the Punakha Dzong on 1. November 2008

(from Harald N. Nestroy)

This event, the Bhutanese people were looking forward with such anticipation, was divided in two parts: the spiritual coronation and the formal state coronation.

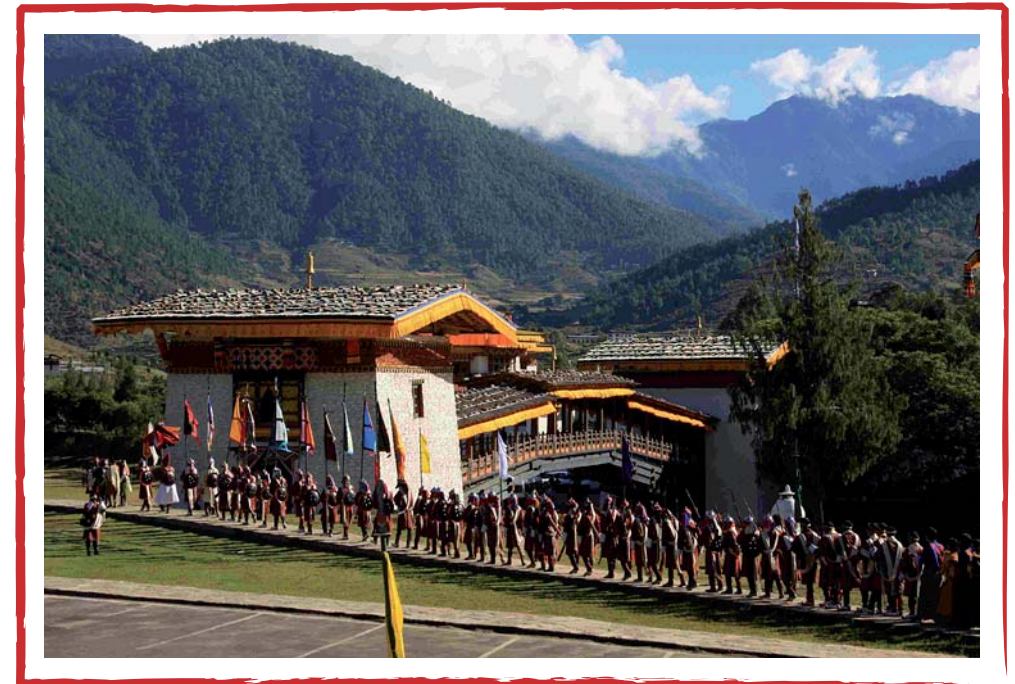
The astrologer-monks had found the 1. and the 6. November, 2008, in Bhutanese calendar the 8th and the 13th day of the ninth month of the Earthen Rat Year, as the most auspicious days for the two paramount events; the former in the Punakha Dzong, the latter in the Thimphu Dzong.

The procedures and protocol of the spiritual coronation of the Bhutanese Kings refer back to Guru Padmasambhava, himself of princely origin: this enlightened lama anointed the first Buddhist King in Tibet, Trisong Detsen; for this reportedly first Buddhist coronation he invoked a blessing named “Ngawang Rinchen Barwai Wangkur” (Blazing Jewel of Sovereignty). Padmasambhava, revered in Bhutan as a living Buddha, brought Buddhism and this coronation ceremony to Bhutan in the 8th century which was, according to Bhutanese sources, applied for the coronation of Bhutanese regional rulers.

Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the Tibetan Abbot who, in the 17th century, united Bhutan into the first relatively homogeneous political and administrative unit and a state, confirmed this ceremony in 1656 when he invested Tenzing Dugyel as the first Deb Raj (worldly ruler) and Pedar Jungye as the first Dharma Raj or Je Khenpo (spiritual ruler) of Bhutan.

From 1907 on, when the other 17 Bhutanese Princes elected Ugyen Wangchuck, Penlop (Ruler-Prince) of Trongsa, as the first hereditary King, this tradition was followed for His coronation in the Dzong of Punakha and his successors to the throne.

For his spiritual coronation, HM the 5th Druk Gyalpo arrives on 31. October 2008 in Punakha, accompanied by the Royal Entourage, by PM Jigmi Y. Thinley, ministers, other Bhutanese dignitaries.



Part of the procession

Sounds of the “Serda”, salutation music played by the monastic orchestra, stationed colourfully at the roof of the Dzong, greet the King. This most impressive monastery castle of Bhutan rejoices in splendid decorations of golden cloth (Chenzin), multicoloured banners and umbrellas (Dhug), swinging in the breeze from the roofs and the corners of the “utzes”, the 3 imposing towers.

The “Grand Chhipdrel”, the ceremonial procession, reserved for the Kings and Je Khenpos of Bhutan, is ready: splendidly saddled and decorated horses, among them a black stallion with a black saddle blanket depicting red skulls, the mount of the local deity; then, dressed in traditional medieval costumes, 62 bearers of banners and flags; a large number of musicians with traditional drums, trumpets, oboes, cymbals; singers, dancers; soldiers with blinking steel helmets, swords, lances, match lock guns, bows and arrows; monks in their red robes and hats reminding those of catholic bishops.

At the sound of the traditional music, the “Chipdrel” escorts HM the King over the wooden cantilever bridge, (built and financed by “Pro Bhutan, Germany”, contribution to the coronation and the jubilee of 100 Years Wangchuck Monarchy) to the “Lingka”, the Royal Palace outside to the Dzong. In its court yard, the “Marchhang”, the ceremonial welcome to the King, is performed by the Chamberlain of the H.M. the 4th King.

After the ceremony, HM the King and his entourage proceed to the near archery ground: an estimated 10.000 Bhutanese of all walks of life enjoy a sophisticated cultural programme and a match of archery. The King takes part in the friendly game. The “Tokha”, feeding of the audience, at which Their Majesties the 5th King and 4th King, Her Majesties the 4 Queen Mothers personally serve food to their subjects; a logistic master piece: in 1 ½ hours about 10.000 persons have been fed.

The next morning, November 1., HM the King, preceded by the “Chipdrel”, enters the Dzong for His spiritual coronation. This profound and poignant ceremony invariably has been held in the Puankha Dzong, in the “Machhen Lhakang”, the secret temple where Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, embalmed, is laying in-state and venerated as a living god. This temple is so sacred that normally only 3 personalities are allowed to enter: HM the King, His Holiness Je Khenpo and H. Eminence, the Machhen Zimpon, Chamberlain of the embalmed Shabdrung. At the coronation of HM the 5th King, HM the 4th King is also present.



Part of the procession

According to some learned high personalities, the ancient rituals of the spiritual coronation are executed by H.H. the Je Khenpo. It is a unique and sacred empowerment ceremony which symbolizes the transcendence of the King from the ordinary and temporal to the personification of the divine wisdom. During this ceremony, the King, in unprecedented humility, sits on a rug on the floor; the Je Khenpo, symbolically representing the Shabdrung and chanting the empowerment prayers, confers to the King the “Dar Na-Nga” with 5 silk shawls. Each of one of the primary colours signifying the five elements: white = water, yellow = earth, red = fire, green = air/wind, blue =space. These elements are the basis of physical existence which the King now personifies as well as the underlying energies from which the physical world arises. In deep meditation, the King in these crucial moments, visualizes the presence of the Shabdrung. Then he offers a white “khada” (silk scarf) to the deities Legon Jarog Dongchhen, Yeshey Goembo and Palden Lhamo who were the Shabdrung’s protectors.

From now on, by the empowerment of the Shabdrung through HH the Je Khenpo, the HM the King himself personifies the supreme warrior manifestation of Yeshey Goembo (Mahakala) who is the supreme protector deity on Bhutan; and of Jarog Dongchhen who, with his wrathful raven head, is presented as a totally black figure; symbolizing that all colours are absorbed and dissolved into black, just as all names and forms are absorbed into Mahakala, black signifying the total absence of colour, meaning ultimate or absolute reality, surpassing all quality and form.

Through the empowerment, HM the King now has become a Dharma King: Dharma as the divine law, the King as protector of the Dharma. That is why HM can not be above the law. This concept drastically differs from the notion of the divine power of a king. In some Monarchies, the King is considered as vested with the power of god, thus being above the law. This has allowed the emergence of “divine autocrats”.

After this sacred ceremony, HM the King, HM the 4th King and HH the Je Khenpo proceed to the near “Kuenra”, the splendid, dome-like, in its beauty overwhelming main prayer hall of the Dzong. HM the King ascends the Ceremonial “Zhug-tri (golden Throne). H.M. the 4th King and HH Je Khenpo take their seats at their “Zhug-tris” (thrones) right and left of the Ceremonial Throne. Follow the “Zhug-drel Phuensum Tshogpi Tendrey” (celebration of harmonious fruition) with serving ceremonial tea. Then the “Marchhang” welcome ceremony offered by 3 high ranking officials and one Lopen (very high lama). Now His Majesty receives the 6 symbols of “Mendrey” (Mandala), “Ku” (body), “Soong” (speech), “Thuk” (mind), “Yonten” (qualities), “Thrinley” (deeds).



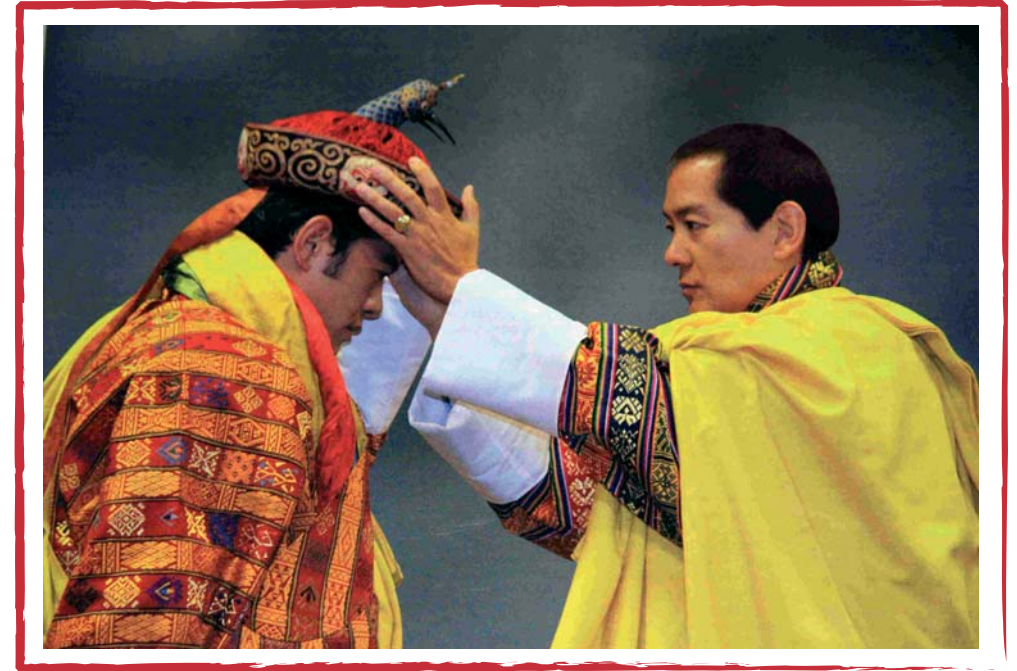
H.M. the new King (long saffron scarf) approaches the bridge to the Dzong

Follows the symbolic offerings to His Majesty: HH Je Khenpo makes offerings of empowerment:

- a set of 3 “Tshe-lha Nam-sum” statutes, (Bodhisattvas of longevity) for eternal life;
- the 5 “Gyelwa-rig-nga”, symbols of empowerment: “Dorji” (indestructibility), “Rinchen” (wealth), “Pedma” (beauty and purity), “Reldri” (wisdom), “Khorlo” (universality);
- the 8 “Tashi Zegye” (auspicious articles): Mirror, Medicine, Curd, Incense, Bilwa fruit, Conch right whorled, Vermillion, Yellow Mustard;
- the 7 “Gyel-sid Na-duen”, the precious symbols of the Universal Emperor: the Wheel of Dharma, the Elephant of Fortitude, the Horse of Swiftness, the Jewel of Fulfilment, the Queen of Devotion, the Minister of Wisdom, the General of Valour;
- the 8 “Tashi-Tagye” (auspicious signs): the Knot of Eternity, the Wheel of Universality, the Lotus of Truth, the Umbrella of Supremacy, the Treasure of Prosperity, the right-whorled Conch of Fame, the Fish of Wisdom.

Now His Holiness presides over the “Nge-drub-langwa” ceremony (acquisition of worldly and spiritual virtues blessed by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas by offering of “Tshe-ril, Drang-gye, and Thru-chu” to His Majesty, HM the 4th King, Her Majesties the Royal Grandmother and Queen Mothers.

Beautifully recitations and prayers, sung by about 100 monks end this impressive formal “Tashi Nga-soel” ceremony.



His Majesty the 4th King coronates His Majesty the 5th King with the Raven Crown

Follows the “Thridar” (felicitation ceremony), starting His Holiness, HM the 4th King, all the Royal Family, all dignitaries and guests, all individually congratulate His Majesty by offering Him a “Khadar”, a white silk shawl. His Majesty thanks each well-wisher with a warm handshake and his charming smile.

Thus the spiritual coronation of HM the 5th Druk Gyalpo in the Punakha Dzong has ended.

The homepage www.proBhutan.com informs about the
activities from „Pro Bhutan e.V.“

Requests: at Harald N. Nestroy, German Ambassador - rtd.
Executive Chairman from „Pro Bhutan e.V.“:
h.nestroy@proBhutan.com