

**Priming the Printing Press:
The Growing Print Media in Bhutan**

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S.I.T. Tibetan and Himalayan Studies
Spring 2007**

Abstract

When *Kuensel*, the first Bhutanese Newspaper, and one subsidized by the government, was created with weekly circulation in August of 1986 it was the only news print medium in the country¹. However, as of April 20, 2006 with the launch of the *Bhutan Times*, a private newspaper, *Kuensel* has had its first competition. My research looked at the ways the three newspapers; including the *Bhutan Observer* which was published one month after the *Bhutan Times*, manage the flow of information in Bhutan. I explore the reactions three groups of people had to the idea of print media in Bhutan; the readers of the newspapers, the government officials within the media realm, and the journalists and editors of the papers. I talked to employees and readers from both newspapers and see if the management of information differs between the three institutions, and if their methods differ from those used by other newspapers from around the world.

¹ Raptan, Phuntsho. "Mass Media: Its Consumption and Impact on Residents of Thimphu and Rural Areas." *Journal of Bhutan Studies* 3 (2001). Digitalhimalaya.Com. Dharamsala.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank editors at the three newspapers, namely, Phuntsho Wangdi at *Kuensel*, Gopilal Acharya at *Bhutan Times* and Tashi Dorji at the *Bhutan Observer*. It was really great for everyone I spoke with, to put up with an opinionated journalism student with such grace and courtesy. Each newspaper was wonderful in making me feel at home with the other reporters and editors and in the newsrooms where we could converse as peers and scholars, which was such a wonderful experience. Additionally, Tshering Yonten at the Department of information was such a big help, and Lisa Napoli, all the way back in the United States, who befriended me and shared my passion; thank you both.

I would also like to thank Francoise Pommaret, who's inside view of Thimphu saved us from making many a social faux-pas, as well as introducing us to many of our main sources. And thank you Chukey and Tobgay at ABC Travels who befriended us and made us feel at home in Bhutan. Without your kindness and friendship, we would probably still be lost and alone at the Paro airport, unable to make it even to Thimphu.

Finally of course, thank you to the Royal University of Bhutan, especially the wonderful Kezang Doma and Phintso Choden who took us under their wing, because without their permission, we would not have been able to study in the Country of Bhutan.

Table of Contents

Introduction: The Newspapers of Bhutan	5
• Freedom of the Press from three perspectives	5
• Introduction to Bhutan’s Three Newspapers	7
Part I: The Newspaper Men and Women	8
• Introduction	8
• Bhutanese Journalists	9
• Journalism in the West	13
• Conclusion	14
Part II: Government Opinion and Participation	14
• Introduction	14
• Bhutanese Government Officials	16
• Publications	17
• Conclusion	19
Part III: The Readers and the Thinkers	20
• Introduction	20
• Readers	20
• Conclusion	23
Conclusion: The Newspapers of Bhutan	24
Part IV: Methodology	27
Appendix A: Bibliography of Françoise Pommaret, PhD	28
Appendix B: <u>The Media Act</u>	29
Chapter Six: Printing Presses, Books and Newspapers	
Appendix C: <u>The Abridged Version of the Code of Ethics for Journalists</u>	33
Appendix D: Glossary of Terms	34
Appendix E: Graphs from: <u>The Role of Kuensel in Fostering Democracy in Bhutan</u> by: Mehta and Tshering	36
Appendix F: Information on Interviewees	38
Bibliography	40
Suggestions for Further Research	42

Introduction

The Newspapers of Bhutan

Freedom of Press from three perspectives:

While it will not be introduced until 2008, the new Bhutanese Constitution promises the freedom of the press in Article Seven under the title of “Fundamental Rights²”. However, the definition of freedom of the press seems to differ from country to country. An official definition of free press is, “a press not restricted or controlled by government censorship regarding politics or ideology³”. The idea of a free press is a new concept in Bhutan, it was written that the media here, “...must help society to understand change and, in the process, define and promote the right values, including public values...we are responsible for culture, happiness, liberty, spirituality, even survival of society⁴.”

This being said, the views of the print media and free press in Bhutan differ when viewed from different perspectives; this paper will discuss how readers, employees of newspapers and government officials all have different points of views on what it means to have a free press, and whether or not the press in Bhutan is open.

This paper will explore the opinions of those inside the newspaper industry in Bhutan who seem to consider the print media in the country as free; the readers of the newspapers who believe that it is a good thing that the newspapers are managed by the

² Wangchuck, Jigme S. Bhutan. The Draft Constitution of Bhutan. 26 Mar. 2005.

<<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bhutan/document/actandordinances/constitution1.htm>>.

“4. There shall be freedom of the press, radio and television and other forms of electronic dissemination of information.”

³ "Free Press." Def. 2. Dictionary.Com. 26 Apr. 2007

<<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/free%20press>>.

⁴ Dorji, Dasho K. "Media in Bhutan: Now and Then." Journal for Bhutan Studies 14: 4-10. Digitalhimalaya.com. Thimphu. (p.5)

government; and the government officials themselves, who seem to be weary of a press that can become commercially driven. All three of these points of view agree that there are some issues that are culturally sensitive, and because their Bhutanese identity comes before their job description or any political ideals, many times these stories are either not written, or written in a very careful manner.

Those from within the government seem to be worried about a free press that sensationalizes and does not have the best interest of the readers in mind. They fear that if the newspapers are given free reign they will sensationalize stories in order to build their readership. While none of the three newspapers receive subsidy from the government, their main source of advertising is the government, the government therefore indirectly funds all three newspapers. This idea of government control through subsidy has been written about in both Bhutanese publications as well as publications from around the world.

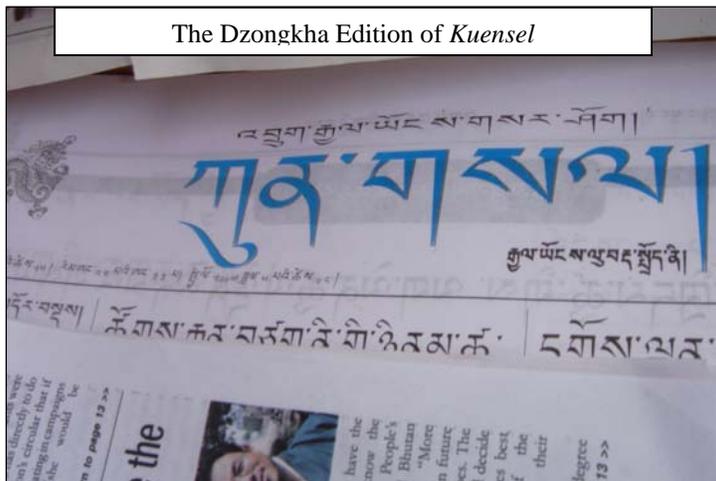
The readers of the three newspapers in Bhutan all have different ideas about whether it is in fact free or if it is managed by the government. It seems as though many Bhutanese readers believe that all the newspapers are in some way controlled by the government. They consider this in their best interest due to Bhutan's fragile state globally, because it is a time of governmental change, and because the media in the country is so new.

As stated earlier Bhutan is a country in a delicate position globally and it is going through an important governmental transition; the readers of the print media, the journalists themselves and the government employees all seem to agree that the self

ensorship that comes from within the newspapers is not a negative quality for the print media in Bhutan to possess.

Introduction to Bhutan's Three Papers:

There has been a print media presence in Bhutan since 1967 when a government bulletin called *Kuensel* was first published. In 1986 *Kuensel* became a weekly newspaper, and in February of 2005 it became bi-weekly. Until 1998, *Kuensel* received subsidy from the government, and today the majority share of the company is owned by the government. *Kuensel* was published in three languages, English, Dzongkha and Nepali,



until 2006. Today it is available in both English and Dzongkha.

On April 30, 2006, the first edition of the *Bhutan Times* was published. The *Bhutan Times* was Bhutan's

first private paper and the first form of competition *Kuensel* had ever faced. However, shortly after in June of 2006, the *Bhutan Observer*, Bhutan's second privately owned newspaper was printed.

Each newspaper began with a different focus; *Kuensel* began as a government information bulletin, *Bhutan Times* started as the first private newspaper with an urban focus and the *Bhutan Observer* began with a rural focus, trying to bring news to the large rural population of Bhutan.

Part I

The Newspaper Men and Women

Introduction:

Free press in Bhutan is a new idea; however it is an important concept to those who work within the media. Competition between reporters and newspapers as well as the notion of a newspaper community within the country of Bhutan helps the print media grow, and helps to shape each paper's own character. The main struggle the newspapers seem to be having is with the idea of sensationalism, the managing director at *Kuensel*, Kinley Dorji⁵ wrote, "Today we are mistaking sensationalism for freedom of speech. That is why I stress the responsibility of the media⁶". The responsibility the print media seems to be stressing is the responsibility to uphold cultural values. In his keynote address at the second International Seminar on Bhutan Studies, Sudhir Vyas said, "Some may argue that the media, to be truly free, should not be restricted by cultural constraints. I am unable to agree with this view. An enlightened media should strive to inform the public, to create and sustain as wide a range of interests as possible and encourage debate...but within...the public culture of the society it serves⁷".

This section explores how Bhutanese journalists identify themselves as well as how they define their idea of free press and whether or not their relationship with the government impinges on that idea. It also explores difficulties Bhutanese journalists have in reporting news in the same way as reporters in the West due to the small size of the country. Finally it looks at how journalists from around the world view the print

⁵ See Appendix F for Dzongkha translation of all Bhutanese names.

⁶ Dorji, Kinley. "Perspectives on Bhutanese Media." *Journal for Bhutan Studies* 14 (2006): 1-7. [Digitalhimalaya.Com](http://www.digitalhimalaya.com). Thimphu. (p.4)

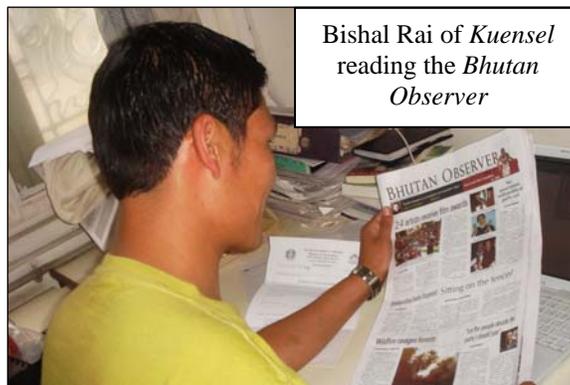
⁷ Vyas, Sudhir. "Media and Public Culture in Bhutan." Second International Seminar on Bhutan Studies. Thimphu. <<http://www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/journal/vol14/14-1.pdf>>. (p. 1-2)

media in Bhutan, and whether or not that view corresponds with those of the Bhutanese journalists.

Bhutanese Journalists:

Phuntsho Wangdi, the News editor at *Kuensel*, explained that because Bhutan, especially Thimphu, is such a small community, there are pressures from people that he knows to cover, or not to cover stories. He said, “We as a small community face challenges and pressures of what stories to cover” therefore, while *Kuensel* does not always succumb to social pressures within the community as to whether or not to cover a story, the pressures are there.

The general manager in the advertising department of *Kuensel*, Pushpa Chhetri continues, saying, “Bhutan is a small society, so articles are taken personally...people



Bishal Rai of *Kuensel*
reading the *Bhutan Observer*

tend to think that the newspaper should have thought about my feelings when they wrote the article”. The idea that journalists in small communities become intimate with their readership is not an issue found exclusively in Bhutan, in fact, it was found in a study published in the United States, that, “...the level of intimacy journalists have with their communities can influence how journalists do their job⁸”. On the same note, it seems that because there is a level of intimacy in small communities between the newspaper and

⁸ Reader, Bill. "Distinctions That Matter: Ethical Differences At Large and Small Newspapers." *J&MC Quarterly* 83 (2006): 851-864. *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. The Gelman Library, Thimphu. 15 Apr. 2007. (p. 852)

its readership, the public in those small communities "...are more likely to trust their newspapers⁹".

Kuensel is not the only newspaper that is facing pressures from outside the newspaper. Mitra Raj, the assistant editor at the *Bhutan Times* said of the government's pressures on the newspaper, "for any little thing, you can be dragged and quartered". It seems that the government tends disapprove of some of the stories the *Bhutan Times* covers, or the manner of which stories are covered. Mr. Raj continues saying, "the government doesn't interfere, but feels that we might mislead the public on certain issues...we don't believe we will mislead the public".

Senior reporter at *Kuensel* Bishal Rai says that there is self censorship within *Kuensel's* editorial policy, saying, "keeping in mind the state and traditional culture...we have self censorship...we don't cover the royals, they try to keep a low profile...religious things...like the clergy...the refugee issue in the South". However after saying this, he also added that in the past five years, *Kuensel* has opened up, and covers many more stories than before. He also said that if a story about one of the previously mentioned issues broke, it would be covered by *Kuensel* but they would "give the information while keeping their dignity...no sensationalism".

Mr. Rai compared the reporting at *Kuensel* to the reporting at *Bhutan Times*, he said, "*Bhutan Times* is zooming ahead, their reporting is very direct and hard hitting, they pick an idea and blow it up...we look at an issue from both sides and just write about it...when sensationalism happens you are either agreeing or disagreeing with a point of view, we just give the facts". The idea of sensationalism at *Bhutan Times* is one that the

⁹ Reader, Bill. "Distinctions That Matter: Ethical Differences At Large and Small Newspapers." *J&MC Quarterly* 83 (2006): 851-864. [Academic Search Premier](#). EBSCO. The Gelman Library, Thimphu. 15 Apr. 2007. (p. 853)

reporters there do not agree with. The Editor of *Bhutan Times*, Gopilal Acharya said, “Not everything is censored, in the beginning *Kuensel* used to be censored but not anymore, people think we’re bolder...a lot of government officials found the original content negative towards the government...felt we were overdoing it, told us to take it slow”. Mitra Raj agrees, saying, “We are a little bolder than the other two papers...we have been labeled as sensationalists but people find it more informative”.

Sonam Kinga, the Executive Editor at the *Bhutan Observer* discussed how the *Bhutan Observer* changed the Bhutanese definition of news. He said that before the *Bhutan Observer* was published, “news was something to do with the state...Bhutan’s people didn’t see rural news as news” therefore selling the *Bhutan Observer* with a rural focus was a “daunting task”. Additionally, Mr. Kinga said that media as a business is an idea that’s “a bit alien to the government” however, the *Bhutan Observer* is using private media as a way to “provoke debate and give information”.

Mr. Kinga explained that it is only natural for the readers of the Bhutanese newspapers to believe that there is a level of government mediation within the print media because “we signed the Code of Ethics,” however he says that there are two main goals he has in mind when he publishes the *Bhutan Observer*, to contribute socially and to sell the paper. However, he says that there is self censorship within his paper, and it “is something we will always exercise, but not just so we won’t anger the government and ministers”. To him self censorship is a natural part of his job as editor, but he said that he will always put himself as a Bhutanese citizen before he puts himself as an editor. He said, “we recognize the fact that we’re Bhutanese...if a story infringes on core

Bhutanese values...I would think twice before publishing it...because I'm a citizen of a culture".

Mr. Kinga is leaving his position at the *Bhutan Observer* to become a politician; he said that "right now the State doesn't really understand...private media...someone like me in the government could change that...I could spark debate on the government's support of the media".

On the idea of self censorship, Chenchu Gyelmo the World and Literary Coordinator at the *Bhutan Observer* said that,

In Bhutan we're very clear about coverage...limited freedom of the press is nothing new...don't look at it as black and white...are you being informed? Are you aware of what you're doing and its implications? If you look at the Constitution...it means be aware of what you're writing.

Ms. Gyelmo continues, saying that people are afraid of what is going to come in the print media, and that people take it personally because it is such a small community. She says that the media in Bhutan is "not just media as we see it in the West and write just facts...yes we do it but we don't just have that responsibility". Due to Bhutan's size, citizens here rely on the newspapers not just for news, but for information and use it as a tool for education, because of this Ms. Gyelmo said that "it's a challenge to function on the ethics of journalism that the rest of the world does".

While the definition of sensationalism seems to differ between the newspapers, they all agree that there is a certain amount of self censorship from within the system. This self censorship is occurs for different reasons, however, one main reason Mr. Kinga said was because he puts his identity as a Bhutanese citizen before his identity as journalist, and because of this he wants to conserve certain values and principles the Bhutanese culture upholds. Ms. Gyelmo states that the idea of self censorship in

newspapers is a practice that is carried out all over the world and is not unique to Bhutan; however, the role Bhutanese papers play in the lives of its people is unique to this culture.

Journalism in the West:

The opinion of journalists and print media from other parts of the world are neither analogous nor unchanging. Brian Cathcart, a Journalism professor at Kingston University wrote, "...this is a world where ethical lines are neither defined nor observed. Yet we journalists keep telling people that there is nothing to be done about it, or that it is all innocent fun, or that the victims are asking for it, or that it is a regrettable but necessary by product of freedom of speech¹⁰".

Others argue that because there is no censorship from the government in American papers, they are full of sensationalism and embellishment, it was written, "Now whatever self-censorship is avoided is surely overcompensated by the distribution of falsehoods, exaggeration, and sensationalism. The...public in a participatory democracy is no better off for it¹¹". Competition between newspapers in the Western world is so intense that many believe that it leads to the publication of half truths¹². It can therefore be said that when there is a complete lack of censorship, and the press is free, it can be free to cover stories that are not in the best interest of the public. That can be harmful in a democracy, the type of governance Bhutan is adopting in 2008.

¹⁰ Cathcart, Brian. "Trust Us. We're Journalists." *The New Statesman* 5 Feb. 2007: 21. [Academic Search Premier](#). Aladdin. The George Washington University, Thimphu. 18 Apr. 2007.

¹¹ Ashdown, Gerald G. "Journalism Police." *The Marquette Law Review* 26 May 2006: 739-759. [Academic Search Premier](#). Aladdin. The George Washington University, Thimphu. 18 Apr. 2007. (p.753).

¹² Ashdown, Gerald G. "Journalism Police." *The Marquette Law Review* 26 May 2006: 739-759. [Academic Search Premier](#). Aladdin. The George Washington University, Thimphu. 18 Apr. 2007. (p.759).

Conclusion:

Journalists all over the world have struggled with the idea of a free press. With social pressure and pressures from advertising clients one can ask if the press is ever really free. And while the print media has been around for about four hundred years in the West, in Bhutan it is barely twenty years old, and yet the newspapers here are struggling with the same ethical issues as the rest of the world. The employees of the newspapers in Bhutan made it clear that self censorship happens; however they believe that it is in the best interests of the Country to preserve cultural ideals that have been upheld for over one hundred years. They therefore do not consider this self censorship a negative quality for their individual newspaper to possess.

Part II **Government Opinion and Participation**

Introduction:

The government of Bhutan buys more than 80% of the advertising space in all three national newspapers, and because of this, it is supplying all three newspapers with the means to survive. The idea of the government funding the media, even if it is not direct, is one that has been approached before, “The government has no obligation to fund the media, but if it does, then those who choose to accept its money may find that the price is pretty high¹³”.

Kuensel was originally a government bulletin, and because of this, there is a stigma attached to it that it is still government controlled. In fact, in a study done called,

¹³ Kirtley, Jane. "Paying the Piper." American Journalism Review Sept. 2005: 1-2. Academic Search Premier. EBSCO. The George Washington University, Thimphu. 18 Apr. 2007. (p.2)

The Role of Kuensel in Fostering Democracy in Bhutan, "...about 82% respondents believed that reporting in *Kuensel* is subject to censorship¹⁴". Analysis of the media in Bhutan from other countries has also commented on the fact that the government has an active role in the media.

The French organization, *Reporters without Borders* wrote in their annual report on Bhutan, "almost all the media, including the weekly *Kuensel* and BBS radio and television are controlled by the state...the only criticism of the monarch's policy can be found on discussion forums on the website kunselonline.com¹⁵". This being said the accuracy is questionable in that report because *Kuensel* is published bi-weekly and the other two newspapers that were created this past year were not mentioned. However, the idea that the Bhutanese government does influence the print media is prevalent in Bhutan as well as in research about Bhutan done by foreigners, whether that notion is true or not, it is common.

Officials from within the Bhutanese government fear that if the print media is given a free rein it will become a media that is commercially run and will not be in the best interest for the people. So, last month the Bhutan Information and Communication Authority [BICMA] published the journalism Code of Ethics¹⁶ that was signed by members of all three newspapers.

Much has also been written about the large role the newspapers are playing in informing the citizens of Bhutan about the change in the government. Most publications

¹⁴ Mehta, Sanjeev, and Tshering Dorji. "The Role of Kuensel in Fostering Democracy in Bhutan." The Journal of Bhutan Studies 14 (2007): 106-139. 15 Apr. 2007

<<http://www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/journal/vol14/14-8.pdf>>. (p.106): See Appendix E for chart.

¹⁵ Bhutan Annual Report 2007. Reporters Without Borders. 2007. 20 Apr. 2007

<http://www.rsf.org/article.php?id_article=20768>.

¹⁶ The Royal Government of Bhutan. Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority. BICMA. 2006. 12 Apr. 2007 <<http://www.bicma.gov.bt/jcc.pdf>>.

tend to say that the print media has opened up a whole new forum for discussion, and because of that has helped to give individual Bhutanese citizens more of a voice, something that is very important with the upcoming democracy.

Bhutanese Government Officials:

Tshering Yonten, from the Ministry of Information and Communication in the Royal Government of Bhutan explained that Bhutan is a small country and therefore when a story comes out, the papers should ask themselves, “What is the value of that article for the reader?” Yonten himself prefers the way that *Kuensel* writes, saying it “writes in very safe language, it states facts, it doesn’t make personal attacks, the *Bhutan Times* tends to attack personally”. He continues that while it is important to change with the times, one must know “the limit and not make personal attacks”.

Tandin Dorji is taking a sabbatical from the Department of Education and is working at the *Bhutan Times*. He explains that “the news from the government is already censored, government officers don’t want to share everything” it is therefore not necessary for newspapers to censor themselves. He continues that it is alright that the government created the Code of Ethics¹⁷ and that the journalists must answer to the



government if they break that Code, because “most organizations are very young so there isn’t the capacity to have an NGO that looks out for the ethics of

¹⁷ The Royal Government of Bhutan. Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority. BICMA. 2006. 12 Apr. 2007 <<http://www.bicma.gov.bt/jcc.pdf>>.

journalists or to keep an eye on the media...maybe in the future that will be able to happen, but as of now, it's ok that the government does it".

Mr. Dorji does acknowledge the existence of sensationalism in some writing in the newspapers, he says that, "people are getting used to sensational stories more and more as they come out...but the reactions depend on the interpretation". He continues that in order to understand the idea of sensationalism and for the newspapers to have a full impact on the people of Bhutan, there must be better media literacy. The Department of Education is therefore starting a media literacy program in schools in the country where students must read articles on the same topic in the three newspapers and come up with their own interpretation of the story. Mr. Dorji said this is an important program because "today people are influenced by the papers...they believe whatever is written in the newspapers as fact, including the interpretation and analysis...that can be dangerous and damaging".

Publications:

The Media Impact Study¹⁷, a study that questioned people in Bhutan about their experiences with media found that, "*Kuensel's* increasingly open editorial policy is appreciated by the readers although many believe that *Kuensel* is government – controlled¹⁸". This stigma of government control has been addressed however, in an article, Media in Bhutan: Then and Now, for the Journal for Bhutan Studies¹⁸, Dasho Kinley Dorji the Editor-in-Chief at *Kuensel* wrote about how the print media plays a role in the upcoming democracy and with that role comes certain responsibilities. He wrote,

¹⁸ Sian Pek, Siok. The Royal Government of Bhutan. The Ministry of Information and Communications. The Media Impact Study. 2003. 10 Apr. 2007 <<http://www.dit.gov.bt/publications/mediaImpactStudy.pdf>>. (p.18)

“The role of the media in a democratic governance has always been to provide the public space for the people’s view and to initiate public discussions. As a developing country, of course, we keep in mind our own priorities, like our relations with other countries¹⁹”. Mr. Kinley Dorji is therefore putting priorities such as international relations before the idea of a completely free and open press, due to the fact that Bhutan is a developing country.

The newly published Code of Ethics for Journalists²⁰ explains that while journalists in Bhutan have “a duty to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards. They shall provide independent and accurate news and information with integrity, remaining accountable for their actions, neutral in their positions and keeping the national interest foremost in their minds at all times²¹”. It therefore seems as though a journalist in Bhutan is meant to uphold ethical standards and report accurate news, as long as it is in the best interest for the developing country.

Print media seems to be on a slippery slope in many areas to do with the government, in an article titled The Role of Kuensel in Fostering Democracy in Bhutan²² the authors Mehta and Tshering wrote,

The media has a crucial role in governance...The media can become a major force in improving the quality of governance. Tight government controls and censorship makes media ineffective...On the other hand too little control may lead to domination of commercial media ruled by advertising which is detrimental to the interest of those without purchasing power (p.109)¹⁸.

¹⁹ Kinley Dorji, Dasho. "Media in Bhutan: Then and Now." The Journal of Bhutan Studies 14 (2007): 4-11. Digital Himalaya. Thimphu. 12 Apr. 2007 <<http://www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/journal/vol14/14-2.pdf>>. (p. 5)

²⁰ The Royal Government of Bhutan. Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority. BICMA. 2006. 12 Apr. 2007 <<http://www.bicma.gov.bt/jcc.pdf>>.

²¹ The Royal Government of Bhutan. Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority. BICMA. 2006. 12 Apr. 2007 <<http://www.bicma.gov.bt/jcc.pdf>>. (p. 1)

²² Mehta, Sanjeev, and Tshering Dorji. "The Role of Kuensel in Fostering Democracy in Bhutan." The Journal of Bhutan Studies 14 (2007): 106-139. 15 Apr. 2007

Accordingly, the Government's role in the print media is a delicate role that gently steers the young Bhutanese media in the right direction as well as ensuring the quality of information the readers are receiving and making sure that the print media is not producing a commercially ruled product. The Government is doing this by creating a Code of Ethics that all journalists in Bhutan have to follow, and if this Code is broken, the journalist and/or the newspaper must answer to the Royal Government of Bhutan.

Conclusion:

The Bhutanese government seems to want to create a happy medium between a tightly controlled print media and one that is ruled by commercialism. Additionally, it seems as though the government does not want stories that are overly sensational because it is feared that those types of stories will send out bad messages to the readers.

Therefore in order to help the newspapers keep this balance they must keep in line with the licensing contract as well as the regulations in the Media Act²³ and the Journalism Code of Ethics²⁴. This management of the media will ensure that the editors will not publish stories that may harm the culture or foreign relations of Bhutan, and is therefore considered in the best interest of the country.

²³ The Royal Government of Bhutan. BICMA. Bhutan Information, Communication and Media Act. 2006. <<http://www.bicma.gov.bt/final%20ICM%20as%20of%2025th%20OCT06.pdf>>.

²⁴ The Royal Government of Bhutan. Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority. BICMA. 2006. 12 Apr. 2007 <<http://www.bicma.gov.bt/jcc.pdf>>.

Part III

The Readers and the Thinkers

Introduction:

In Bhutan, the traditional way of spreading information is through stories and conversation. The strong oral tradition makes it difficult for the newspapers to have a large readership. However, in Thimphu, many people do read at least one of the three papers, but it seems as though there are favorite papers for some age groups and areas in Bhutan. Many readers who were interviewed also seemed to believe that the government still had a strong hand in controlling what went into the print media. This assumed government mediation in the newspapers did not seem to be considered a bad thing; it was assumed that it was in the reader's best interest.

Additionally, some non-Bhutanese readers who have spent time in the country have opinions about the coverage of the print media, as well as the idea of a free press in Bhutan.

Readers:

Karma Wangdi²⁵ a store owner in Thimphu and avid newspaper reader, reads all three Bhutanese newspapers, however he has a definite favorite, he said, "I prefer the *Kuensel*, because *Kuensel* gets all the news...you get nearly all you need from *Kuensel*...it's well known by everyone...I try to avoid the *Bhutan Observer* because it gives you a lot of rural news...that's not what I want". Mr. Wangdi was convinced that the government had a hand in the role of the print media. However, that did not bother

²⁵ Interviewee asked for name to be changed

him; in fact, he was pleased with the concept of a government censored print media. He said that it made him feel safe, “if the government has a good part of the shares you are safer...the newspaper is more guided...I like the fact that the newspapers are censored”.

When asked what he gains from reading the newspapers, Mr. Wangdi said, “we learn a lot...about the election commission... and the ACC [Anti-Corruption Commission]”. The main reason he had for reading the newspaper was to educate himself on current events and the upcoming change to a Constitutional Monarchy in 2008, he however warned that the “private papers are leading the population astray in a way, but they are still governed by the government...they need permission to write stories about government officials...that may change after 2008”.

While Mr. Wangdi seemed certain about the government involvement and the need for government permission, it is contrary to how the journalists at the papers say they get information from the government.

Tshewang Dendup, a Bhutan Broadcasting Service [BBS] employee also spoke about his experiences and thoughts on the print media in Bhutan. He reads all three newspapers as well and said that he likes “the fact that with the coming of private newspapers...as a reader we have more options and can get newspapers on different days”. Of the three papers, he said that, “*Kuensel* is very consistent...it doesn’t go for the sensational...there’s a subtle competition between the papers...not cut throat...but in the end it’s the reader that’s benefiting (from the competition)”. Of the *Bhutan Observer* and *Times* Mr. Dendup said they’re, “run by the youth...the majority of the population are young people and they consist of the majority of the market”.

Similar to Mr. Dendup who works in the media business, Dorji Wangchuk is a Television producer and editorial contributor to the *Bhutan Times*; he is also starting his own radio channel. However, Mr. Wangchuk's opinions of the papers differ to Mr. Dendup's. He said, "*Kuensel* is very pro-government, too much self censorship and was too used to operating in a monopoly" he also says that there is not much self censorship within the *Bhutan Times*, and "the *Bhutan Times* and *Observer* try to balance social culture and freedom of the press".

Mr. Wangchuk helped to draft the Code of Ethics and he says they are "preventative measures" and that there should be a certain amount of government control within the media because, "it could be quite dangerous if the press had a free for all". It is due to this danger Mr. Wangchuk said, that newspapers have not carried out much political analysis but rather they've opened up a forum for communication.

Lisa Napoli, an American employee of National Public Radio (NPR) who lived in Thimphu while working for the newly formed Kuzoo Radio Station, commented that,

I think people like all papers --I was impressed by how many people seemed to be standing on the streets reading [newspapers] when they came out. They are eager for news and information. They just do not want to talk about the King in any way that may seem to be disrespectful or challenging.

While Ms. Napoli is impressed with the number of readers and their enthusiasm



A young
Bhutanese
man reading
Kuensel

for information, she also questions the level of investigative journalism that goes on in Bhutan. She said, "no one

will criticize the King...Even the most hard-bitten journalist doesn't even like to acknowledge that question". Just as Mr. Wangdi hinted when he said he felt safer with a government controlled print media, Ms. Napoli explained, "you can tell people they have press freedom, just like you can tell them they have a democracy now, but that doesn't mean they necessarily want it or know what to do about it".

Therefore, while the freedom of the press was given to the Bhutanese people in the new Constitution, whether they want it or whether they have the ability to create a free media is an entirely different matter.

Conclusion:

Freedom of the press in Bhutan was written in the Constitution, however the people of Bhutan were handed the idea of a Constitutional Monarchy by their Fourth King, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck. It was not something that was voted on, and many are fearful of Bhutan's democratic future. It seems as though the word Democracy in Bhutan goes hand in hand with corruption, and this is not what the citizens of the country want. For the past one hundred years, Bhutan has lived under a monarchy, and while the Kings were never voted into office, they have been popular with the citizens of the country.

The newspaper readers who were interviewed seem to be fearful of uncontrollable change; of a print media that does not write stories to inform, but rather that writes stories to thrill an uneducated and unaware audience. It seems as though newspapers controlled by a government that the Bhutanese people trust is one they would prefer in order to keep the culture of Bhutan in tact. They therefore seem to think that a censored newspaper is

preferable to a commercially driven newspaper and that Bhutan's foreign policy and culture is too delicate to trust a free press.

Conclusion The Newspapers of Bhutan

Alexander Hamilton...wrote of the Press: '...it's security, whatever fine declarations may be inserted in any Constitution respecting it, must altogether depend on public opinion and on the general spirit of the people and of the government'.²⁶

Many people interviewed, both in and out of the Bhutanese community believe that in Bhutan, the government has some control in the content of the print media. However, it seems as though in their mind this governmental management of the media is not considered a bad thing, but rather, it is considered a precaution to keep the print media 'safe'. Also, the journalists and editors in Bhutan face the challenge of writing news in a very small country. As Phuntsho Wangdi explained, there are outside pressures from people within the community to cover or not to cover certain stories.

Chencho Gyelmo from the *Bhutan Observer* feels that in Bhutan, the media is very clear about what they do and do not cover. She says that as long as the reporter is aware of the consequences of his or her story, and he or she is aware of the implications



Phuntsho Wangdi
News editor at
Kuensel

eral Spirit of the People." Washington

that story may have on the community at large, it is, for the most part, alright to publish it. But she does stress a fear of what the print media will become in the future, and that fear helps journalists remember the repercussions of what they write about.

Those who work at all three papers say that there is self-censorship within them with regards to the government and issues they consider ‘sensitive’ such as foreign policy and racial situations within the country. However, these sensitivities do not necessarily stop the newspapers from covering the topics; they simply force the newspapers to report on them with caution and to be very aware of the language they use when stories are written.

The Bhutanese government licenses the newspapers in Bhutan, and has a Code of Ethics²⁷ that ensures the journalists do not write unethically or about anything to do with foreign relations or the sovereignty. However, Tandin Dorji, who worked in the Department of Education, said that it was alright that the government in Bhutan created guidelines for journalists because they needed guidelines, and the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) within Bhutan are not strong enough to properly ensure that the guidelines are followed. The only organization with enough power to do that in Bhutan right now is the Government.

There have also been publications and studies done both within Bhutan and outside the country that explore Bhutanese media, as well as relationships between governments and the media. In the article Media in Bhutan: Then and Now²⁸ Kinley Dorji explained that because Bhutan is still developing, the main concerns of the country

²⁷ The Royal Government of Bhutan. Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority. BICMA. 2006. 12 Apr. 2007 <<http://www.bicma.gov.bt/jcc.pdf>>.

²⁸ Kinley Dorji, Dashi. "Media in Bhutan: Then and Now." The Journal of Bhutan Studies 14 (2007): 4-11. Digital Himalaya. Thimphu. 12 Apr. 2007 <<http://www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/journal/vol14/14-2.pdf>>. (p. 5)

had to be put first, before the idea of a completely free press. In the article The Role of Kuensel in Fostering Democracy in Bhutan²⁹ Mehta and Tshering talked about how the media plays an important role in the governance of a nation and that it can help the government develop, or it can lead to a culture that is focused on commercialism. They argue that a commercial dominated media is not in the best interest of the people.

The government does not consider the idea of gate-keeping within the newspapers a negative aspect of the print media, neither do those who work within the print media, or the people who read the newspapers. It is considered a precautionary measure to keep the Bhutanese culture in tact and to prevent the influx of globalization before the country of Bhutan is ready to embrace the changes that are coming in from the outside world.

Sonam Kinga from the *Bhutan Observer* made it clear that he put his identity as a Bhutanese citizen before his job as a journalist. He therefore upholds certain Bhutanese values and principles, and would uphold them, even if that means not publishing, or editing a story for his newspaper. He made it clear that Bhutan comes first, the *Bhutan Observer* comes second.

Karma Wangdi said that the government plays a role in what goes into all print media. However he felt safer because of that belief, saying that the private papers were leading the population of Bhutan astray, even though he says they are still managed by the government, and that *Kuensel* was his favorite because it just said the news and that the government owns a majority of the shares.

²⁹ Mehta, Sanjeev, and Tshering Dorji. "The Role of Kuensel in Fostering Democracy in Bhutan." The Journal of Bhutan Studies 14 (2007): 106-139. 15 Apr. 2007

The people of Bhutan must be ready for a completely free and open press before it is given one, and as of now, they are not prepared for the responsibility that a free press requires.

Part IV **Methodology**

My Research Approach:

My main form of research was done by interviews, as well as reading the *Journal for Bhutan Studies* and other research done on print media. When I arrived in Thimphu for the first time with the entire SIT group, we toured *Kuensel* and I got the card of the News Editor, Phuntsho Wangdi. Therefore, when I returned to Thimphu to begin my research he was the first person I contacted. Through Mr. Wangdi, I was introduced to Gopilal Acharya at *Bhutan Times*, and he further introduced me to Tashi Dorji at the *Bhutan Observer*.

At the same time however, my advisor Francoise Pommaret gave me the name and number of some interesting sources from outside the newspaper business but whom were still involved with the media, I contacted them via both email and phone.

Because the idea of media and a written culture versus an oral culture is so new in Bhutan, it seemed as though for every question I had about the print media that could be viewed even in the slightest way as negative, had the same response, it was that way because the media in Bhutan is so new. This was frustrating because *Kuensel* has been around since 1986 and that may not be very seasoned, but it certainly is not an infant in the media world. I read many articles published on media in *The Journal for Bhutan*

Studies, and realized that while the new Constitution granted Freedom of the Press, not everybody in this country necessarily wanted it.

I continued to contact people who read and have an opinion about the newspapers, and found that the best way to contact a person here is by phone, not by email as many people rarely check their email. I also found that people oftentimes leave town for long periods and do not tell you, or inform you at the last minute. It is therefore important to make appointments for the same or next day to ensure the person will still be around when you go to meet him or her.

Finally, I had a hard time convincing people that their opinion would be important for my paper. I would sometimes contact a person and they would tell me that they do not know why I would want to talk to them because they don't know if they will be able to answer my questions sufficiently. It would take some convincing for the person to finally set up an appointment with me, as they believed that it would be a waste of my time. Luckily, I can be persuasive when necessary.

Like Bhutanese tradition, my methods for collecting information were mainly oral. I do have some written sources, however, mainly the ideas about print media came from the people that produce it and that read it.

Appendix A

Bibliography of Françoise Pommaret, PhD³⁰

Françoise Pommaret, PhD, is an ethno-historian, Director of Research at the CNRS (National Centre for Scientific Research, Ministry of Research and Higher education), Paris and lecturer at the National Institute of Oriental and African Studies (INALCO),

³⁰ Acquired from Françoise Pommaret

Paris.

She has been associated with Bhutan in different capacities since 1979 and has published numerous scholarly articles and books. She is now advisor for History and Anthropology at the Institute of Language and Culture (ILCS, Royal University of Bhutan). She was the co-editor and co-author of *Bhutan: mountain fortress of the gods*, Serindia, London, 1997 and the editor of *Lhasa in the seventeenth century*, Brill, 2003.

Her wide audience books are *Bhutan*, a cultural guidebook, *Odyssey Guidebook*, Hong-Kong (1990, reprint 2003, 2006), *Tibet, turning the wheel of life*, Thames and Hudson, 2003 & in the US *Tibet, an enduring civilization*, Abrams Discovery series, NY, 2003.

Besides she has lectured intensively in numerous academic institutions around the world and has been guest-curator for several exhibitions on Bhutan.

Appendix B

The Media Act

Chapter Six: Printing Presses, Books and Newspapers

(p. 107-116)

Licence to Keep or Use Printing Press

93.

- (1) No person shall keep or use any printing press without a valid licence procured from the Authority. For the removal of doubts, it is clarified that the expression “press” shall not include any facility established or equipment installed by any person for the sole purpose of printing documents for personal, private or internal organizational purposes.
- (2) The Authority may, on application, grant to any citizen of Bhutan, a licence, known as a “printing licence”, to keep or use a press for the printing of documents. This licence may be revoked if the licensee fails, at any time, to comply with any of the provisions of Sections 93 to 100 of this chapter, or relevant Regulations or Rules.
- (3) The licence referred to in Sub-section (1) shall be in such form, and such duration, as prescribed in Rules by the Authority
- (4) Failure to comply with this Section shall be an offence, which shall be a petty misdemeanour. In addition to the penalties prescribed by the Penal Code for this offence, a Court may impose an additional fine of up to one thousand days of the daily minimum national wage rate.

- (5) Where a licensee under this Section has breached any of the provisions of Sections 93 to 100 of this chapter, or relevant Regulations or Rules except Sub-section (1), or has been convicted of any offence carrying a punishment of up to one-year imprisonment or a fine of up to one thousand days of the daily minimum national wage rate, or where the Authority is of the opinion, for reasons to be recorded in writing, that the continued holding of a licence by him is not conducive to the public interest, the Authority may revoke the licence in accordance with the relevant provisions of Section 51 above.

Obligations of Printers and Publishers of Documents

94.

- (1) Without prejudice to the generality of the provisions of Section 45 above, no person shall print, publish or distribute, or assist in printing, publishing or distributing, any document which does not comply with the requirements of this Section and which is not in accordance with the pertinent provisions of this Act, specifically the Guiding Regulatory Principles for the Authority as specified under Section 22 above.
- (2) Every document printed within Bhutan shall have printed legibly on its first or last printed leaf the name and address of its printer, and if the document is published, the name and address of the publisher.
- (3) Every person who prints any document shall, for six months from the date of its printing, keep one copy of the document and produce the document to a police officer or any person authorized by the Authority, when required to do so.

Registration of books and Newspapers

95.

- (1) Every book or newspaper to be made available for sale or distribution to the public in Bhutan, whether published within Bhutan or otherwise, shall be first registered with the Authority which shall maintain Register of Books and Newspapers listing the names and other details of all books and newspapers so registered.
- (2) Upon registration, each book or newspaper published in Bhutan shall be assigned a distinct registration number, which number shall be carried on every copy of such book or newspaper before being released for sale or distribution to the general public in Bhutan.
- (3) The form and manner of registration of books and newspaper shall be such as may be prescribed by the Authority in Rules.

Requirements of a Licence to Publish Books and Newspapers

96.

- (1) No person shall print or publish, or assist in the printing or publishing of, any newspaper in Bhutan except in accordance with a valid licence, hereinafter called a “publishing licence”, obtained from the Authority authorizing the publication thereof.
- (2) An application for a publishing licence shall be made by such person who is a citizen of Bhutan and who shall assume responsibility as the publisher of the book or newspaper in relation to which the licence is being sought. The form and manner of the application, the fees payable thereon, and duration of licence, shall be as specified in Rules made by the Authority in this regard.
- (3) Any person who publishes or assists in the publication of a book or newspaper without first obtaining a licence under this Section shall be guilty of an offence, which shall be a misdemeanour. In accordance with the gravity of crime, a Court may impose an additional fine of up to one thousand days of the daily minimum national wage rate.

- (4) For the removal of doubts, it is hereby clarified that the licence under this Section shall be in addition to the licence required for the keeping or using of printing presses under Section 93 above.

Consideration of Applications for Licence

97.

- (1) Every application for a licence under Section 96 above shall be considered by the Authority in accordance with the relevant provisions of Section 39 above.
- (2) The Authority shall, when considering applications for publishing licences, have due regard to the importance of free speech, a diverse and vibrant media, convergence of information and communications technology and business, and healthy competition among publishers in Bhutan. Any such application may be refused only on grounds of threat to the sovereignty, security, unity and integrity of Bhutan, or threat to the interests of peace, stability and well-being of the nation.
- (3) The Authority may before granting the licence require the applicant to execute a bond with or without sureties to secure the payment of any penalties which may be imposed upon the publishing enterprise, its proprietor or editor under Sections 93 to 100 of this chapter or under any other law for the time-being in force.
- (4) Without prejudice to Sub-section (2), no licence shall be granted to any applicant who has, at the time of making the application, been found guilty of an offence which carries a fine not less than two thousand days of the daily minimum national wage rate or an equivalent imprisonment term under this Act, or an offence under any other law and which carries a fine not less than two thousand days of the daily minimum national wage rate or an equivalent imprisonment term.

Obligation to Print Certain Particulars

98.

- (1) Every book or newspaper published in Bhutan shall carry in legible type in each of its editions:
- (a) The names of its editor (and/or author, where applicable) and publisher;
 - (b) The name of its printer and place of printing;
 - (c) The address of its registered office.
- (2) Every newspaper published from, and registered in, Bhutan shall also carry, once every year at such time as may be specified in Rules to be made by the Authority, the names, nationalities and addresses of the directors of the publishing enterprise, and of those persons who own more than ten percent of the shareholding in the said enterprise.
- (3) Any person who fails to comply with the requirements of Sub-sections (1) and (2) above shall be guilty of an offence for each instance, which shall be a violation.

Revocation of Licences

99.

If a Licensee fails to comply with any of the conditions stated in the licence, or if its editor, publisher or printer, is found in breach of any of the provisions under Section 93 to 100 of this chapter, the Authority may revoke his licence in accordance with the relevant provisions of Section 51 above.

Power to Declare a Book or Newspaper Detrimental to Bhutan

100.

- (1) The Minister may, if he is satisfied, declare a book or newspaper published outside of Bhutan to be detrimental to the interests of the sovereignty, security, unity and integrity of Bhutan, or detrimental to the interests of peace, stability and well-being of the nation. Any such declaration shall be made in writing and shall only take effect after it is duly published.
- (2) Where a declaration has been made under Sub-section (1), any person who imports, sells or distributes, or possesses for sale, within Bhutan a copy or copies of the said book or newspaper shall be guilty of the offence of smuggling. The Minister may also seize and destroy copies of any such book or newspaper found being imported, sold or distributed to the general public, or kept for the purposes of such sale or distribution, anywhere within Bhutan.
- (3) No person shall be convicted of any offence under this Section if he proves to the satisfaction of a Court that the book or newspaper in respect of which he is charged was published, imported, sold, offered for sale or distributed, as the case may be, without his authority, consent or knowledge and without any want of due care on his part.
- (4) In any proceedings under this Section, it shall be presumed, unless the contrary is proved, that any person found in possession of more than five copies of the relevant book or issue or issues of the newspaper in respect of which a declaration has been made was in possession of them for sale or distribution.

Accreditation of Journalists

101.

- (1) The Authority shall operate a scheme of accreditation under which journalists who wish to be recognized as 'accredited journalists' shall apply for such status in the prescribed form. The procedure for application and the criteria for the grant of accreditation shall be specified in Regulations made by the Minister.
- (2) Those recognized as accredited journalists shall enjoy certain privileges, including (but not limited to) access to press conferences and media briefings organized by, or under the auspices of, the Government and other public sector organizations, access to press releases, briefing notes, backgrounders and other material produced by the Government and other public sector organizations for public dissemination, and inclusion in official visits by the State and Government officials.
- (3) Applications for accreditation shall be dealt with expeditiously by the Authority. Where an application for accreditation is refused, the Authority shall state the reasons for refusal in writing and communicate the reasons to the applicant as soon as possible.
- (4) Any journalist aggrieved by a decision of the Authority to refuse accreditation may appeal the decision to the Appellate Tribunal within thirty days from the date of the receipt of information relating to the refusal.

AD HOC Accreditation for Foreign Journalists

102.

- (1) Where a foreign journalist desires to be accredited by the Authority, he may apply for, and the Authority may grant, 'ad hoc accreditation' with or without any condition, in accordance with the procedure prescribed for this purpose in Regulations made by the Minister.
- (2) Unless otherwise specified, any ad hoc accreditation granted to a foreign journalist shall be valid for a maximum period of one year from the date of grant of such accreditation. A journalist to whom ad hoc accreditation has been granted may, before the expiry of

such accreditation, apply for an extension of the same for a further period of one year at a time, and the Authority may grant such extension at its discretion.

- (3) Where a journalist to whom ad hoc accreditation has been granted breaches any of the conditions attached to such accreditation, or where it appears to the satisfaction of the Authority that the continued holding by him of such accreditation is against the public interest, the Authority may, by an order in writing, revoke the accreditation. Any such revocation shall be effective as soon as the order mentioned above is served upon the journalist, or where it is not possible or practicable to effect such service, as soon as a copy of it is delivered to, or affixed upon, the premises stated in the application for accreditation under Sub-section (1) above as the official address of the journalist.
- (4) Any journalist aggrieved by a decision of the Authority to refuse ad hoc accreditation may appeal the decision to the Appellate Tribunal within thirty days from the date of the receipt of information relating to the refusal.

Appendix C

The Abridged version of the Code of Ethics for Journalists

ABRIDGED VERSION ON CODE OF ETHICS FOR JOURNALISTS

Bhutan Infocomm and Media Authority

Royal Government of Bhutan

Thimphu: Bhutan

ABRIDGED VERSION ON CODE OF ETHICS FOR JOURNALISTS

1. Ethics of Journalists

Journalists in Bhutan, as elsewhere, have a duty to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards. They shall provide independent and accurate news and information with integrity, remaining accountable for their actions, neutral in their position and keeping the national interest foremost in their minds at all times. They shall, accordingly, conduct themselves in consonance with the following principles and observe these principles both in letter and in spirit.

2. Professional Integrity

A Journalist shall:

- a. present the news with integrity and decency, avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interest, and respect the dignity and intelligence of the audience as well as the subjects of news.

3. Social Responsibility

A Journalist shall:

- a. recognize their obligation to the public and to the country;
- b. not publish any matter which offends against good taste and decency.

4. The Right to Truth

A Journalist shall:

- a. pursue the truth at all times and not publish false, inaccurate, misleading or distorted material. He shall ensure that, as far as possible, every story he writes is thoroughly researched. In particular, he shall clearly distinguish between fact, comment and conjecture. Where, despite due diligence in researching a story, he publishes an inaccurate fact, he shall ensure that a correction, and a suitable apology, is published as soon as possible after the inaccuracy has been brought to his attention.

5. Non - Discrimination

A Journalist shall:

- a. defend the independence of all journalists from those seeking influence or control over news content and gather and report news without fear or favor, and vigorously resist undue influence from any outside forces, including advertisers, sources, story subjects, powerful individuals, special interest groups and also political groups;
- b. determine news contents solely through editorial judgment and not as a result of outside influence;
- c. resist any self-interest or peer pressure that might erode journalistic duty and service to the public and to the country.

6. Sensationalism

A Journalist shall avoid sensationalism in the reporting of events and take all possible precautions to ensure that anything published by him does not have the effect of inciting people into violence or other illegal acts.

7. Protection of Sources

A journalist shall ordinarily protect the confidentiality of his sources. He may, however, reveal the identity of a source where he has obtained the consent of the source or where the law requires him to do so.

8. Respect for Privacy and Human Dignity

A journalist shall:

- a. not publish anything that is defamatory of any person or organization or invade the privacy of any person without his consent and shall respect his private and family life, home, health and correspondence.

9. Recordings of Conversations

A journalist shall not harass, intimidate or trick any person to obtain, or attempt to obtain, information or pictures. In particular, he shall not install listening devices on anyone's property or tape-record conversations with anyone without their consent, or enter anyone's property surreptitiously or using a subterfuge, except in circumstances where it can clearly and objectively be demonstrated that there is an overriding public interest in doing so. The onus of demonstrating the overriding public interest shall be on the journalist.

10. Competition and Fairness

A Journalist shall:

- a. adhere to the spirit of free competition in the Bhutanese media and shall not, at any time, monopolize or attempt to monopolize the market by using power, influence, authority, money or by any others means.

11. National Interest

A Journalist shall place the national interest and security above everything

Appendix D **Glossary of Terms**

- **Censorship:** The act of censoring. To disallow or prohibit a story from being published.
- **Corruption:** Lack of integrity or honesty (especially susceptibility to bribery); use of a position of trust for dishonest gain³¹
- **Ethics:** The study of the general nature of morals and of the specific moral choices to be made by a person; moral philosophy³².
- **Freedom of Press:** Interpreted differently around the world and even in Bhutan. However defined at dictionary.com as: "a press not restricted

³¹ "corruption." *WordNet@ 3.0*. Princeton University. 08 May. 2007. <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/corruption>>.

³² "ethics." *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. 08 May. 2007. <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/ethics>>.

or controlled by government censorship regarding politics or ideology”.

- Freedom of Speech: A right listed in the new Bhutanese Constitution under, Fundamental Rights. Defined at dictionary.com as: “the right of people to express their opinions publicly without governmental interference, subject to the laws against libel, incitement to violence or rebellion, etc”.
- Government Mediation: When the government acts as an intermediary between the newspapers and the readers.
- Non-Governmental Organization [NGO]: An organization that is not part of the local or state or federal government³³.
- Oral Tradition: A community's cultural and historical traditions passed down by word of mouth or example from one generation to another without written instruction³⁴.
- Priming: To inform or instruct beforehand; coach³⁵.
- Self Censorship: When the newspaper editors or journalists choose not to report on a story or on a specific issue for reasons of his or her own deciding.
- Sensationalism: The idea of writing a story for shock value instead of informing the public. Defined at dictionary.com as: a “subject matter, language, or style producing or designed to produce startling or thrilling impressions or to excite and please vulgar taste”.

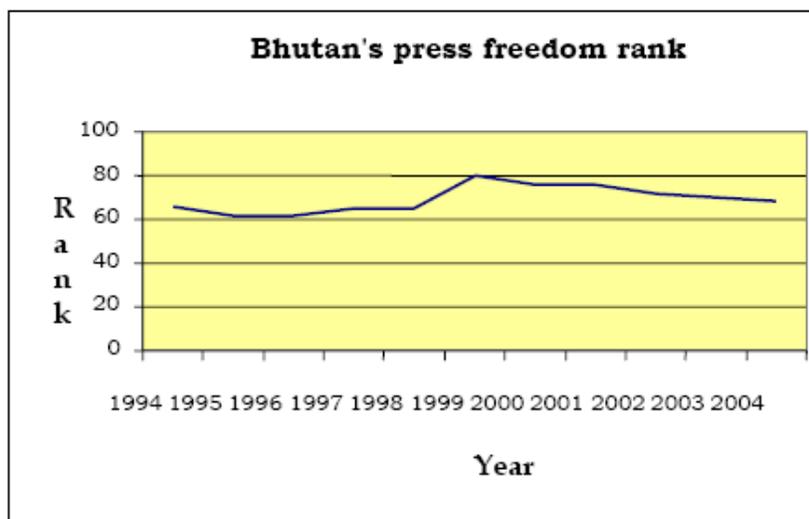
³³ "NGO." *WordNet® 3.0*. Princeton University. 08 May. 2007. <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/NGO>>.

³⁴ "oral tradition." *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Random House, Inc. 08 May. 2007. <Dictionary.com [http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/oral tradition](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/oral%20tradition)>.

³⁵ "priming." *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. 08 May. 2007. <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/priming>>.

Appendix E
Graphs from: The Role of Kuensel in Fostering Democracy in
Bhutan
By: Sanjeev Mehta and Tshering Dorji³⁶

Graph no.1: Changes in press freedom rank of Bhutan



Source: Freedom House, "Freedom of the press"
 Freedom House Surveys, 2004

Table 3: Does Kuensel reporting affect readers' judgment?

	Male	Female	Total
Yes, very often	17 (17.3%)	3 (7%)	20 (14.2)
Only sometimes	34 (34.7%)	13 (30.2%)	47 (33.3)
Never/do not remember	47 (48%)	27 (62.8%)	74 (52.5%)
Total	98	43	141

³⁶ Mehta, Sanjeev, and Tshering Dorji. "The Role of Kuensel in Fostering Democracy in Bhutan." The Journal of Bhutan Studies 14 (2007): 106-139. 15 Apr. 2007

Table 4 (a): Does Kuensel influence political decisions and debate?

	No. of respondents	%
Yes	79	56
No	62	44
Total	141	100

Table no. 5: Whether Kuensel is subjected to censorship?

	No. of respondents	%
Yes	116	82.3
No	25	17.7
Total	141	100

Table 6: Points scored by Kuensel on different issues pertaining to its role in fostering democracy

Issues	Average score (given by males)	Average score (given by females)	Average score
Rate the role of Kuensel in fostering democracy	3.01	2.91	2.99
Rate the quality of reports in Kuensel	3.11	3.16	3.13
Rate the ability of editorials to provide critical understanding of the significant issues	2.85	2.95	2.89
Rate the extent to which Kuensel is able to generate discussions	2.63	2.56	2.60
Reporting in Kuensel provides alternative solutions and points out trade-offs involved in community problems	2.84	2.86	2.84
Kuensel develops enterprising stories to focus attention towards community problems	2.92	2.93	2.92
Kuensel conducts town meetings to discover issues in the community and follows up	2.57	2.74	2.64
Ability of Kuensel to raise issues relating to corruption in the government	2.65	2.64	2.65
Aggregate score	22.57	22.77	22.66

Appendix F

Information on Interviewees

- Chenchu Gyalmo Dorjee –
 - World and Literary Coordinator at *Bhutan Observer*
 - Interviewed on: May 2, 2007
- Chenchu Tshering –
 - Layout Designer/ Webmaster at *Kuensel*
 - Interviewed on: April 11, 2007; April 18, 2007
- Dorji Wangchuk –
 - TV Producer
 - Editorial writer for *Bhutan Times*
 - Interviewed on: April 20, 2007
- Gopilal Acharya –
 - News Editor at *Bhutan Times*
 - Interviewed on: April 11, 2007; April 16, 2007
- Karma Wangdi (name has been changed) –
 - Store owner in Thimphu
 - Avid newspaper reader
 - Interviewed on: April 19, 2007
- Lisa Napoli –
 - Kuzoo Radio, Bhutan
 - National Public Radio, The United States
 - Interviewed over email through months of April and beginning of May

- Mitra Raj –
 - Assistant Editor *Bhutan Times*
 - Interviewed on: April 16, 2007
- Phuntsho Wangdi –
 - News editor at *Kuensel*
 - Interviewed on: April 11, 2007, April 18, 2007
- Pushpa Chhetri –
 - Advertising General Manager at *Kuensel*
 - Interviewed on: April 11, 2007
- Samten Wangchuk –
 - Reporter for *Kuensel*
 - Interviewed on: April 18, 2007
- Sonam Kinga –
 - Executive Editor at *Bhutan Observer*
 - Interviewed on: May 2, 2007
- Tandin Dorji –
 - Previously employed by the Department of Education
 - Now, works for *Bhutan Times*
 - Interviewed on: April 24, 2007
- Tashi Dorji –
 - News Editor *Bhutan Observer*
 - Interviewed on: April 20, 2007
- Tshering Chuki –

- Reporter for *Bhutan Times*
- Interviewed on: April 16, 2007
- Tshering Yonten –
 - Department of Information, The Royal Government of Bhutan
 - Interviewed on: April 13, 2007
- Tshewang Dendup –
 - Bhutan Broadcasting Service
 - Interviewed on: April 14, 2007

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Suggestions for Further Research

Further research on this topic is a must. Each of the three newspapers is growing in a unique and organic way. Each newspaper wants to better inform the people of Bhutan; however, they believe they can use different methods to do that. Because both the *Bhutan Observer* and the *Bhutan Times* are just about a year old, as the news team grows and matures, so will the final products. Additionally, *Kuensel* will continue to change as the competition changes in order to maintain readership.

Further research could easily be done by tracking how each paper grows, and try to understand the social and cultural environment that shaped those changes. Also, with the incoming of a new government, the newspapers will continue to play an integral role in educating the public about the Constitutional Monarchy. It would be very interesting to research how the papers influence the public during this transition, as well as how the public responds to the information given to them by the media.

Print media in Bhutan is still very young, and it is therefore prime for growth and expansion. I found in my research that the public may not be ready for a completely free media, but they may be soon, so it could be interesting to see how the public view of the free media changes as the government changes in the upcoming years.

Simply by walking down the street and seeing who's reading which paper can open up new perspectives on the idea of the print media that were not covered in this paper.