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CONTENTS

Rows of Auspicious Seats: The Role of *bzbugs gral phun sum tshogs pa'i rten 'brel* Ritual in the Founding of the First Bhutanese State in the 17th Century

DORJI PENJORE 1

Chibdral: A Traditional Bhutanese Welcome Ceremony

KARMA RIGZIN 42

The Sacred Dance of *Peling Ging Sum*

KHENPO PHUNTSOK TASHI 54

Hen Kha: A Dialect of Mangde Valley in Bhutan

JAGAR DORJI 69

Editorial Note

The Centre for Bhutan Studies is pleased to dedicate the 24th volume of the *Journal of Bhutan Studies* to papers presented at the joint Association for Asian Studies (AAS)—International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) conference held in Honolulu, Hawaii, US, from 31 March to 3 April 2011.

The Bhutanese Panel titled, 'Tradition and Evolution in Bhutanese Intangible Culture' examines several intangible cultural traditions and how they have not only established and maintained themselves over the last four centuries, but also documents how they are currently engaging modernity. The panel acknowledges the contributions of Ariana Maki, a PhD candidate, working for the National Museum of Bhutan, Paro. She also chaired the session.

Lastly, the panel would like to thank Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation for supporting the Bhutanese participation in the conference.

ROWS OF AUSPICIOUS SEATS:
The Role of *bzbugs gral phun sum tshogs pa'i rten 'brel* Ritual in
the Founding of the First Bhutanese State in the 17th
Century*

Dorji Penjore[€]

Abstract

*This paper analyses centuries-old Bhutanese ritual, *bzbugs gral phun sum tshogs pa'i rten 'brel*. Literally translated as 'auspicious seating row', its performance is believed to bring auspiciousness, and as such any significant public function in Bhutan compulsorily begins with performance of this ritual. That the ritual brings auspiciousness is ingrained in the Bhutanese psyche.*

The paper discusses the significance of the ritual in context of 'invented tradition' as posited by Hobsbawm and in light of Foucault's 'governmentality' to generate alternative understanding of the ritual, and explore its role in the founding of first Bhutanese state in the 17th century. It argues that the ritual is not a novel invention but rather a reinvented tradition with antecedent in monastic institution, which was then modified, ritualised, and institutionalised to establish and legitimise a new Bhutanese state. Further, an analysis of its concurrent religious, political, economic, socio-cultural roles is offered:

* This paper was presented at a special joint Association for Asian Studies (AAS) — International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) conference, Honolulu, US, 31 March–3 April 2011. I am thankful to Ms Ariana Maki for her comments and suggestions.

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consolidation and perpetuation of Drukpa Kagyu ('brug pa bka' brgyud) authority; securing loyalty to the dual system of governance (chos srid lugs gnyis); imposition of a pseudo-monastic discipline (sgrigs lam rnam bzhag) on the people; and the replacement of a highly decentralised social structure with hierarchal and centralised social order.

Introduction

bzbugs gral phun sum tshogs pa'i rten 'brel ritual (hereafter *zhugdral*) is compulsorily performed at the beginning of any significant public function in Bhutan. The belief that this ritual brings auspiciousness is deeply ingrained in the Bhutanese psyche. Like other Bhutanese rituals, it too has religious roots and as such is full of religious, political, and socio-cultural significance. Believed to have been 'invented' in the late 1630s by the Zhabdrung¹ Ngawang Namgyal (*zhabs drung ngag dbang rnam rgyal*, 1594-1651), the founder of the first Bhutanese state, and it is still performed more than three centuries later. In November 2008, Bhutan witnessed a large-scale and elaborate series of *zhugdral* ceremonies during the coronation of the fifth king. The ritual has even secured a hallowed place in *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan* (*'brug gi rtsa khrims chen mo*), which requires the parliament (*spyi tshogs*) to begin each session with a *zhugdral* ceremony.² In the Constitution, *zhugdral* is defined as a "traditional ceremony for the acquisition of the triple attributes of grace, glory and wealth during a formal and auspicious occasion." *bzbugs gral* translates as 'a row of seated people', from *bzbugs* – to sit or a seat, and *gral* – a

¹ Zhabdrung (*zhabs drung*) is the title, meaning 'Before Whose Feet One Submits', and all his reincarnations assumed this title.

² The National Council (*rgyal yongs tshogs sde*) and the National Assembly (*rgyal yongs tshogs 'du*).

row. *phun sum tshogs* is the “triple attributes of grace, glory and wealth”, also meaning abundance, prosperity, glory, perfection, auspiciousness, or everything that is desired, while *rten 'brel*, generally understood as auspicious, more precisely means interdependence.

The Origin of *zhugdral*

Dorji Gyaltshen (1999) writes that in the process of unifying the country, the Zhabdrung was visiting Punakha (*thed yul*) in 1637 when spiritual teachers and disciples (*bla slob*), ministers (*lhan rgyas*), representatives (*thus mi*) of the Bhutanese people, and emissaries from Nepal (*bal pa*) and other neighbouring kingdoms, said to equal in number the stars in the sky, flocked towards him for an audience and pledged their loyalty. They made immeasurable offerings (*bul ba*), which gradually accumulated into a heap (*spungs*). After witnessing this auspicious gathering of people and offerings, he named the place *spungs thang kha* (Opening to Plain of Heap). The Zhabdrung then organized them in rows according to their ranks and distributed the offerings, and recited auspicious verses and prayers dedicated to the lineage and hierarchs of the Drukpa Kagyu (*'brug pa bka' brgyud*) School, the religious tradition that would become the state religion in Bhutan. This series of events in 1637 is considered the beginning of *zhugdral*.

According to Ministry of Health and Education (1994), during the consecration (*rab gnas*) of the Punakha Dzong in 1640, representatives of different regions and valleys in Bhutan and neighbouring kingdoms attended the events. They not only paid tribute and pledged their support and loyalty to the Zhabdrung, but also presented various goods as offerings. The Zhabdrung, impressed by the gathering of people, drawn from all parts of Bhutan, and by the diversity of their gifts, concluded the occasion

to be auspicious or good *rten 'drel* (interdependence). He then asked those present to be seated in rows and distributed the offerings amongst the guests. Thus, *bzbugs gral* refers to the origin of the Bhutanese state, the “coming together and seating in rows of all the good things” or “coming together and seating in rows of all the valleys in Bhutan” (MHE, 1994). The old capital Punakha (spungs thang kha) and the dzong, Pungthang Dewa Chenpoi Phodrang (*spungs thang bde ba chen po'i pho drang*, meaning the Great Peace Palace of Plain of Heap) completed in 1639, were named after this event.

This paper refers to the *zhugdral* performed in 1637 and 1640 as the “first *zhugdral*” in order to distinguish it from the modern, more institutionalised performance seen today.

The Ritual

The *zhugdral* ritual consists of two main elements:

First, participants are seated in ‘rows of auspicious seats’ depending on their religious, political, bureaucratic, and social positions. The auspicious (*rten 'drel*) fragrance, foods, drinks, fruits, money and sacred symbols are offered first to the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, and the hosts of bodhisattvas, guardian deities, and gods and goddesses, followed by the participants who are all seated according to their statuses.

The second component is the recitation of prayers, which invoke the Zhabdrung, his lineage, and the hierarchs of Drukpa Kagyu School. Further, prayers of aspiration and auspiciousness are made.

The first brings prosperity and wealth while the second brings merit (*dge ba*) and blessings (*sbyin rlabs*). So *zhugdral* brings wealth

and prosperity (the material), and merit and blessing (the spiritual); the former for the present life and the latter for the life after death.

Zhugdral precedes the beginning of any important public or private functions, and thus by default it is performed only on auspicious days, as all important events in Bhutan are scheduled for astrologically auspicious days. The *zhugdral* ritual is therefore synonymous with auspiciousness. *Zhugdral* is performed at the time of receiving promotion, both secular and religious, during marriages, foundation laying (*sa lhang*) and consecration (*rab gnas*) of religious monuments and houses, and enthronement of lamas. It is also performed for welcoming lamas and high dignitaries (Yonten Dargye & Sorensen, 2009).³

Today, three versions of *zhugdral* – comprehensive, medium and short – are performed depending on nature and significance of events and functions, and economic means of hosts or organisers (NLAB, 1999). The list of items served in three types of *zhugdral* varies according to its level of execution. A comprehensive *zhugdral* was performed during the coronation of the fifth king in 2008.

³ The arrival of Jamgon Ngawang Gyaltshen (1647-1732) at Paro from Ladakh in 1712 was greeted by the religious dignitaries, head lama (*spyi bla*), and a crowd of people with *zhugdral* feast. Jamgon was returning after serving his tenure as the head lama (*sgang ri bla ma*) at the court of King Nyima Namgyal (*nyi ma rnam rgyal*, r.1694-1729) of Ladakh. Bhutan appointed monk-representatives to administer the monastic estates donated to the Drukpa government and to assume the position of a head lama at Takna monastery in Ladakh. The king Singye Namgyal (*seng ge rnam rgyal*, r.1616-23, 1624-1642) is said to have invited the Zhabdrung to become his court priest and sent a messenger to Bhutan. The latter sent Choje Mukzinpa as his representative. That was the beginning of a long relationship between Ladakh and Bhutan.

Participants can be broken into two groups: the host(s) and the guests. The Zhabdrung was the host of the first *zhugdral*, while the guests were the people's representatives of different valleys and emissaries of neighbouring kingdoms.

Further, there are two types of guests, human and non-human beings. Non-human beings are higher beings who received offerings first. These are: The Three Jewels (*dkon mchog gsum*) – The Buddha (*sangs rgyas*), the Dharma (*chos*) and the Sangha (*dge 'dun*); The Three Roots (*rtsa ba gsum*) – lama (*bla ma*), meditation deity (*gid dam*), and mystic consort (*mkha 'gro*); the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (*sangs rgyas, byang chub sems dpa'*), and finally, the dharma protecting deities (*chos skyong*). Thus *zhugdral* includes innumerable beings, all of which partake in the offering. The chief guest presides over the ceremony. The chief guest could be Druk Gyalpo (*'brug rgyal po*), the Je Khenpo (*rje mkhen po*, the Chief Abbot of Drukpa Kagyu School in Bhutan), or any one of a number of secular or religious individuals, such as dignitaries or lamas.

Zhugdral is generally held inside a large hall or a room inbuilt with a religious shrine (*mchod gsham*), containing statues and thangkas of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and deities. Spaces are considered sacred as an altar and monk participants form integral parts of the ritual. Different auspicious food items are offered to synchronise with chanting and recitation of prayers composed for each particular item. During the ecclesiocratic period (1651-1907), almost all participants occupying the higher seats were monks, and unlike today there was no need to have separate monk participants for reciting *zhugdral* verses.

Key components of *zhugdral*

Three things are considered important in *zhugdral*.

The first is the display of hierarchy—the seating order of participants. It is important for the host to ensure that the seating order is correct. There should be a perfect understanding of who should occupy which seats, starting from the head of state/government to common people. A small mistake has the potential to render the event inauspicious, as misplacing a person sows inauspicious seeds that will later grow into enmity, discord, and quarrel. With chief guest at the head of rows, the rest must be seated such that their rank should be apparent based on their proximity to the chief guest— the closer the seat, the higher the rank. Persons who have broken vows should not be invited, as the ritual is an exclusive space meant for like-minded people.

The second key element is the particular order of offering and serving food items. The offering items are arranged according to their auspicious nature, and must be presented in that order. However, the order served during marriage celebrations differ from those honouring a promotion. Different foods are considered invested with an auspicious nature through their association with life events of the Buddha, Bodhisattvas, the Zhabdrung and the hierarchs of the Drukpa Kagyu School lineage. Participants must bring their own wooden cup (*phor ba*) and *lto ras* (piece of cloth for receiving food, akin to today's plate).

The third crucial component is the unfailing observance of the Bhutanese code of etiquette, or *driglam namzha* (*sgrigs lam rnam*

bzhag).⁴ Participants as well as food servers must behave according to this protocol as they are under the direct gaze of the chief guest (king or lama), the Triple Jewel, protective deities, and a host of other spirits. Offerings are first made to these entities. Except for the chanting of *zhugdral* verses and sounds of movement of servers and serving, there is silence.

The Offerings

The items and order of offered in a comprehensive *zhugdral* ceremony (NLAB, 1999) are as follows:

#	Dzongkha	English (or equivalent)
1.	<i>dro ma</i>	Kaser
2.	<i>drib zang</i>	Saffron fragrance
3.	<i>drib zang gi bzhes rtsam (mdzar phyi)</i>	Snack with saffron fragrance
4.	<i>gzhung ja</i>	Official tea
5.	<i>bzhes rtsam sbon 'bras lto</i>	Snack made from local Bondey rice
6.	<i>ja nag po</i>	Tea sponsored by the public
7.	<i>bzhes rtsam dmar srob lto</i>	Snack made of refined rice
8.	<i>bsod nams mchod ja</i>	Holy tea sponsored by Zhabdrung
9.	<i>bzhes rtsam 'bras ser</i>	Snack – yellow texture rice
10.	<i>mar chang</i>	Wine
11.	<i>dar cung</i>	Flag
12.	<i>phyi mar</i>	Wheat flour and butter
13.	<i>phyag 'gyedpa</i>	Ceremonial money
14.	<i>rdoq ma pa ni</i>	Betel nuts and leaf

⁴ *sgrigs lam rnam bzhag* has been defined differently: “system of ordered and cultured behaviour” (Karma Phuntsho, 2004, 572); “the way of conscious harmony” (Karma Ura, 1997, 247); “An elaborate choreography of deference” (Aris, NA).

Zhugdral – Rows of Auspicious Seats

15. <i>khareg mo ze</i>	Water melon
16. <i>ngang lag</i>	Banana
17. <i>hum pa</i>	Lemon
18. <i>tsbul lu</i>	Orange
19. <i>sbra mze</i>	Jack fruit
20. <i>aa 'bras</i>	Persimmon
21. <i>gon</i>	Cucumber
22. <i>bal pa bse'u</i>	Guava
23. <i>gun cha</i>	Sugar cane
24. <i>gun 'brum</i>	Grapes
25. <i>sin 'bru</i>	Pomegranate
26. <i>kham</i>	Peach
27. <i>gli</i>	Pear
28. <i>aepa'al</i>	Apple
29. <i>am chug u li</i>	Mango
30. <i>skam tshogs</i>	Mixed dry fruits
29. <i>rgya gar gling skam</i>	Dried Indian pear
32. <i>sgu ram byiril</i>	Sweets
33. <i>phyur go</i>	Dried cheese
34. <i>star go</i>	Walnut

Not all the offerings made to the Zhabdrung became part of *zhugdral*; only those invested with auspiciousness through their direct association with the Buddha, bodhisattvas, saints, and the Zhabdrung himself were selected. All of the above items were offered in the *zhugdral* ceremony performed during the consecration (*rab gnas*) of Punakha in 1640 (Dorji Gyaltshen, 1999).

The items can be classified into two categories. The first category of foods is those items available in western Bhutan, particularly from Punakha. The second category is composed of imports from friendly neighbouring regions and nations, mostly from Cooch Behar, Bengal, Nepal, Sikkim, and Ladakh.

While each component offers a specific benefit and was selected for a particular reason, I will highlight only some of the most relevant.

Auspicious Grains

For example, no millet crops have been included due to their association with the degenerate age (*dus snon snyigs ma*): “Oleander and millet, which have become the best foods, will be eaten” (Douglas & Bays , 1978). Maize, a staple in eastern Bhutan is culturally regarded as an inferior food, in spite of its superior nutrition value. In contrast, three types of *zhugdral* foods are made of rice: *bzhes rtsam sbon 'bras lto*, *bzhes rtsam dmar srob lto*, and *bzhes rtsam 'bras ser*. Similarly, wheat is included as an auspicious grain: *phyi mar* made of wheat flour (*phyi*), which symbolises the essence of grain, and butter (*mar*) symbolising the essence of milk, is offered. The offering of the essence of drinking and eating brings prosperity in food, wealth, resource, long life, and freedom from disease.

The first food *kaser (dro ma)* is considered an auspicious food through its association with the Tibetan origin myth and the event in life of the Zhabdrung,⁵ and accordingly, it was served as the first offering during the *zhugdral* ceremony performed at the time of

⁵ According to the Tibetan creation myth, a monkey (*spre'u*) – the emanation of Avalokiteshvara (*spyen ras gzigs*)— and a demoness (*brag srin mo*)—the emanation of Tara (*sgrol ma*)—begot thousands of monkeys. Unable to feed their children, the monkey prayed to Avalokiteshvara, and the latter answered the prayer by providing *dro ma* seeds. The seeds multiplied and the couple were able to feed their children. This is why it is considered as auspicious food. When the Zhabdrung arrived at the Bhutan border in 1616 after fleeing Tibet at the age of 23, *dro ma* was the first food served by the people of Laya. After taking this delicious, tasty and nutritious food which could be grown without much effort, the Zhabdrung experienced a comfortable stomach.

consecrating (*rab gnas*) Punakha Dzong. The second food, saffron fragrance (*dri bzang*) was offered to the Zhabdrung by the king of Ladakh. Similarly, the offering of ceremonial money (*phyag gyedpa*) symbolises the offerings of textile and grains, gold and silver etc., during the consecration and their distribution to the devotees and people.

Auspicious fruits

Including sugar cane—considered a fruit in Bhutan—15 varieties of fruits are offered: watermelon, banana, lemon, orange, jackfruit, persimmon, cucumber, guava, grape, pomegranate, peach, pear, apple, mango, walnut, and sugarcane. Most of the fruits can be grown in the sub-tropical Punakha valley. Banana symbolises long life and is therefore the first fruit offered/distributed during coronation of king, enthronement of a Je Khenpo or a promotion. Lemon (*hum pa*) is served during the New Year (*lo gsar*). The fruits from the topmost branches have good smell, sweet taste, and white flesh, and the wishes for one year will fruition like a lemon. Orange (*tshul lu*) is served first during marriage ceremony since the fruit symbolises accumulation and sacred bond.

The basic guideline for serving fruit is thus: fruits that are found on higher branches and possess sweet taste and smell are served first, followed by those found in the middle branches. Those fruits found near the ground are served last.

Zhugdral and the Founding of the Bhutanese State

The formation of *dpal ldan 'brug gzhung* (the state of the glorious Drukpa) involved four processes: the promulgation of the founding seal known as the Sixteen I's (*nga chu drug ma*) in 1622; proclamation of the government in 1626; establishment of the capital at Punakha Dzong, which was completed in 1639; and the

recognition of the state by the neighbouring countries in 1640 (Sonam Kinga, 2009). While these may have been the main events acknowledged in national narratives, there are other factors, such as the institutionalisation and performance of *zhugdral*, which contributed to the founding of the state.

In the Himalayan Tibetan cultural regions, the relationship between the ecclesiocratic state and its subjects can be understood through *mchod yon* (priest-patron) dyad, a socio-political concept which is a part of broader *sbyin bdag* (client-patron) institution (Ruegg, 1989; Klieger, 1989). In this reciprocal relationship, common people (patron) provided material support to priests (lama) in return for spiritual support. In the conventional giver-receiver equation, the receiver is subservient to the giver. However, this relationship is inverted in the Tibetan ideological context. The lama is the dominant component, and acknowledged as such by lay patrons, even if the donor was a king or emperor.

It was Gyalwa Lhanangpa Sangay Rinchen⁶ who introduced the political institution of *bla dpon* (priest-lord) diarchy in western Bhutan. In this diarchic rule, the Lhapa lamas provided spiritual protections to local people in return for their material support and allegiance and loyalty to their school, out of many competing schools then scrambling for patronage and followings (Yonten Dargye & Sorensen, 2001). This is likely the earliest expression of Bhutanese statehood to exist at the village and regional levels, especially in western Bhutan. The Zhabdrung established the dual system (*chos srid lugs gnyis*) by expanding the scope of client-patron relationship originally introduced by Lhapa lamas and later

⁶ *rgyal bal lha nang pa sangs rgyas rin chen*, 1164-1224; Lhanangpa was the founder of Lhapa Kagyu (*lha pa bka' brgyud*), one of the first Tibetan Buddhism schools to arrive western Bhutan.

elaborated up by a Drukpa Kagyu pioneer, Phajo Drugom Zhigpo and his sons.⁷

It is within this gift-giving and gift-receiving ideological context that the offerings made to the Zhabdrung should be understood. After his arrival at Gasa in 1616, Drukpa Kagyu patrons and the local people made offerings and paid homage in return for his teachings and blessings. This pattern was continued for rest of his lifetime in western Bhutan as he moved between villages and patrons (Aris, 1979). The gift offering during his 1637 Punakha visit and the 1640 consecration of Punakha Dzong can be considered larger scales of the same. In a Maussian understanding of the gift, the gift-receiver (i.e., the Zhabdrung) should have been obligated to the gift-givers—the people. But what was unique about this gift offering was that the receiver (the Zhabdrung) returned the gifts to the givers. This is unique because in the first place, people were subservient to the Zhabdrung under *mchod yon* institution. His benevolence in distributing the offerings made the relationship more unequal, in that the people thus became doubly indebted to him.⁸

⁷ phajo 'brug sgom zhig po, 1184-1251.

⁸ Some 400 years earlier, the people of Lingzhi offered the Vulture Dzong (*bya rgod rdzong*) and all surrounding villages together with people and pasturelands to Phajo Drugom Zhigpo in return for his religious service. Phajo benevolently refused to accept the offerings and in stead requested them to carry, without interruption, personal belongings of the Drukpa Kagyu followers and pilgrims travelling via Lingzhi. Thus the people of Lingzhi began to bear the burden of fulfilling this load-carrying obligation for many years.

Alternative Interpretive Frameworks

Now I will shift to discuss the functions of *zbugdral*—both symbolic and real—by positing it in the context of alternative frameworks.

Hobsbawn (1983) introduced the term ‘invented tradition’ and defined it as “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (p.1). He argues that traditions that claim to be old are often of recent origin, and sometimes invented, and these traditions are modified, ritualized, and institutionalized to serve particular national ends. Invented traditions, according to Hobsbawn, establish continuity with a specific past through repeated performances.

Zbugdral in some ways is an ‘invented tradition’ since there are antecedents in both monastic and secular institutions. Its origin can be traced to *bkra shis sgor mo* (auspicious circle), a kind of auspicious seating arrangement, or to *rten 'brel mdzad sgo*, a secular ceremony where food is distributed to a close retinue in order to cultivate auspiciousness. The term also references rank-based seating during rituals or dance applied to the monk community. *Zbugdral* seating hierarchy is similar to those of monks during the rituals: the head lama’s seat is located at the centre facing the shrine flanked on its right and left by rows of seats, whose relative importance decreases with increased proximity to head lama. The highest seat is located opposite the entrance door, or closest to the altar. Chogyam Trungpa (1966)⁹ described his sitting room where

⁹ chos rgyam drung pa rin po che, 1939-1987.

meals were served and formal visits received: “My raised throne was beside the door and a row of seats ran lengthwise down each side of the room; those nearest the throne had thick cushions for the more important guests but their size gradually diminished until the end of the rows, when they became merely rugs on the floor” (pp. 43-44). In that sense, the ritual is not a novel invention, but an existing tradition adapted to serve the political, religious and social ends.

Hobsbawn further discusses three overlapping types of invented traditions: “a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities, b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority, and c) those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour” (Hobsbawn, 1983, p.9).

Bhutan now—as well as then—is not as homogenous as it seems. Populations were as diverse as the gifts offered to the Zhabdrung, and the participants themselves as different as the Zhabdrung—himself a Tibetan refugee—was from the rest. The first *zhugdral* provided an opportunity for him to unify diverse ethnic groups, represented in surrogate by the diversity of regionally-specific offerings. *Zhugdral* was useful in forging religious and political unity among diverse people scattered over diverse geographical zones, from subtropical foothills to alpine mountains. This unity was crucial in founding a new state. The performance of *zhugdral* ritual helped orient the consciousness of its participants towards cultivating a new state, one in which they played a part. While this might have initially indoctrinated local elites alone, winning over them was crucial to consolidate the rule in their villages, the patronage of which was highly sought after by many. In other words, through its repeated performance during high-profile events, *zhugdral* indoctrinated people to accept the new political

system and authority founded on the Drukpa Kagyu School ideology. The ritual helped establish the Drukpa Kagyu as the dominant school to the exclusion of local competitors.¹⁰

Since the ritual is performed based on *driglam namzha*, believed to have been developed and instituted by the Zhabdrung, it helped inculcate value system and impose new behavioural conventions based on the emerging ideology. The very blending of monastic and lay participants in order to follow one discipline symbolised the unification and ordering of a previously order-less society. *Zhugdral* also inculcated Buddhist values.

In a series of lectures, Foucault (Inda, 2005) presented a genealogy-based analysis of the art of modern government, in which he coined the concept of ‘governmentality’, which he defined as a ‘conduct of conduct’ – all the systematic ways of shaping, regulating, or managing the conduct of individuals or groups towards specific ends. According to him, regulating conduct is not only the governmental matter but involves many actors, organisations, and agencies, all of which are concerned with rationally and effectively exercising authority over the conduct of the human beings.

How can *zhugdral* be understood within Foucault’s governmentality framework? The performance, ritualization and institutionalization of *zhugdral* can be understood as a Foucauldian

¹⁰ Competitors are best represented by the so-called Five Groups of Lamas (*bla ma khag nga*), who were the Lhapa (*lha pa*) founded by Gyalwa Lhanangpa (*rgyal ba lha snang pa*, 1164-1221); Nay Nyingpa (*gnas rnying pa* of the Gelug school); Barawa (*ba’ ra ba*) founded by Barawa Gyaltshen Pelzang, an offshoot of the Toedruk (*stod ’brug*); Khathogpa (*ka thog pa*) of the Nyingma school founded by Sherab Sengye (*shes rab seng ge*, 1122-1192); and Chagzampa (*lcag zam pa*) founded by Thangtong Gyalpo (*thang stong rgyal po*, 1385-1464).

performative act, in that it helped indoctrinate *zhugdral* participants and observers with the state ideology, the principal among it being the dual system of governance (*chos srid lugs gnyis*). In fact, the reasons for the Zhabdrung's exile in Bhutan were political as much as it was religious. He had had a dual role as hereditary leader of Drukpa Kagyu and an incarnation of a master scholar, Kunkhyen Pema Karpo.¹¹ Yet he was considered a threat to the central Tibetan state under the Tsang Desi. The Zhabdrung best understood the danger of unmanaged or mismanaged diversity through inter-school conflicts and rivalry back in Tibet. People, if properly managed, can be a boon rather than a threat to the state. Imposing hierarchy over anarchy was one way of managing the diversity.

In a true Foucauldian understanding of power, *zhugdral* ritual served as a technology to create hierarchy and order out of a largely chaotic society— not necessarily chaotic in a negative sense, but rather as an opposite of hierarchy— by replicating the seating order of the monastic system where hierarchy was constructed based on monks' learning or seniority.

People and their representatives who had come to pay their respect, pledge loyalty and made offerings were made to sit in hierarchical seats, and blessed it as being auspicious. This rigid and hierarchical sitting arrangement orchestrated in the closed space of a *zhugdral* hall served as the prototype of what was later replicated in other 'spaces'; in houses, villages and communities. This was the beginning of a shift of the state's responsibility of protecting territory and providing security to its subjects (from Tibetan invaders) to governing them in a more efficient ways to meet a particular end.

¹¹ kun mkhyen pad ma dkar po, 1527-1592.

Let me now turn to the religious, political, economic and social significance of the ritual.

Religious

At the end of a three-year retreat, the Zhabdrung chose to establish a new state in Bhutan (Sangay Dorji, 2008).¹² If a new state was to be established, it had to be an ecclesiocracy founded on Drukpa Kagyu teachings and ideology.¹³ The first, and most difficult, task he faced was to consolidate Drukpa Kagyu as the dominant school to the exclusion of other schools. The so-called a group of five lamas stood on his way, posing not only the biggest political, but ideological and doctrinal challenges as well. They not only competed for patronage and influence, but also invited and encouraged Tibetan invasions against the Zhabdrung.

Religious control was then the key to acquiring other forms of control. The very idea of offering gifts first to the primordial Buddha followed by lineage holders and hierarchs of Drukpa Kagyu School and its protecting deities made these entities more familiar to the people, bringing them closer to this tradition. It established interdependence (*rten 'drel*) between the gift-giver

¹² The founding of a state in *lho mon* was prophesised by Guru Padmasambhava, Tsangpa Gyare Yeshe Dorji (*gtsang pa rgya ras ye shes rdo rje*, 1161–1211), his father Tenpai Nyima (*bstan pa'i nyi ma*, 1567–1619) and Gonpo Chamdrelsum (*mgon po lcam dral gsum*)— Mahakala (*gnag po chen po*), Mahakali (*dpal ldan lha mo*) and Jarog Dongchan (*bya rog gdong can*).

¹³ The consolidation of Drukpa Kagyu began after the arrival of Phajo Drugom Zhigpo in western Bhutan in 1222. By then Lhapa School had established itself in western Bhutan with Chelkha (*gchal ka*) in the upper Paro Valley as the main seat. Albeit a dominant power, they were short of unifying the western Bhutan and providing a stable rule. At the time of Phajo's death in 1251, the Drukpa Kagyu had supplanted the Lhapa as the dominant force, but it too fell short of unifying the region and providing stability.

(people) and the receiver (the Zhabdrung), and also between the gift-giver and the Drukpa Kagyu masters and protective deities. *Zhugdral* rituals and their accompanying verses helped to propagate the Drukpa Kagyu teachings, its lineage and hierarchs among the people.¹⁴

Political

Western Bhutan, modern Paro, Thimphu (*wang*), Wangdi (*sha*), and Punakha (*tbed*) were largely autonomous before unification, despite being under strict religious laws of different traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, particularly that of the Lhasa. Lamas were content with people's spiritual loyalty and patronage to support and perpetuate their respective teachings, and lamas did not interfere in day-to-day secular matters. Thus, anarchy, rather than hierarchy, was the defining characteristic of the political and social milieu. In this scenario, *zhugdral* served as today's equivalent of a national anthem.

The first *zhugdral* and its subsequent repetition provided an avenue for people of different regions to unite together and experience a sense of fraternity, which cultivated a feeling of belonging to a state that was then in the making. It symbolised

¹⁴ The offerings are first made starting from primordial Buddha Vajradhara (*rdorje 'chang*); Tilopa (*ti lo pa*, 988–1069); Naropa (*naro pa*, 956-1041); Marpa Choki Lodro (*mar pa, chos kyi blo gros*, 1012-1097); Milarepa (*mi la ras pa*, 1052-1135); Gampopa (*sgom po pa, sod nams rin chen*, also known as *dwags po lha rje*, 1079-1153); Thasapa (*tha tsa pa*, also known as Phamo Drupa Dorji Gyalpo, *phag mo gru pa rdo rje rgyal po*, 1110-1170); Naphupa (*sna phug pa*, also known as Lingrepa Pema Dorji, *gling ras pa pad ma rdo rje*, 1128-1188), and all the Kagyu lamas – Tsangpa Gyare Yeshe Dorji (*gtsang pa rgya ras ye shes rdo rje*, 1161–1211), Kunga Paljor (*kun dga' dpal 'byor*, 1428-1476), Jamyang Chodra, (*'jam dbyangs chos grags*, 1478-1513) and Kunkhyen Pema Karpo (*kun mkhyen pad ma dkar po*, 1527-1592) and the Zhabdrung himself.

nascent Bhutanese nationhood and unity among different valleys, which endures to this day. According to Anderson (1983), a nation larger than the primordial face-to-face contact of a village is an imagined political community, imagined because the while the members of that nation will not know all of their fellow members they live the images of their communion. Thus, *zhugdral* helped participants imagine in an Andersonian spirit, a new nation conceived and founded on Drukpa Kagyu ideology and teachings.

Despite hierarchical nature of society and residual forms of exploitation, people were participating in a horizontal comradeship, and this fraternity made it possible for the Bhutanese to unify against the Tibetans and Mongols in numerous skirmishes between 1618 and 1780, and then additional battles with British India between 1772 and 1865.¹⁵ Performance of the *zhugdral* ritual thus helped cultivate support and offer legitimacy among the people for the *lugs gnyis* (the dual system of religious and temporal) or *chos srid zung 'brel* (“relationship between the spiritual and temporal orders”) (Cüppers, 2004).

Economic

As discussed earlier, the socio-political institution of *mchod yon* ideally served spiritual ends for the laities, and material ends for the lamas. The common people who could not pursue spiritual life accumulated positive merit by providing material base for the religious specialists who themselves could not engage in worldly activities, particularly farming, due to their involvement in spiritual pursuits. One had what the other lacked, and was thus interdependent. It was these areas of specialisation and

¹⁵ The first Anglo-Bhutanese war was fought from 1773 to 1774, and the last one, the Duar War in 1865.

interdependence that sustained society. The offerings made to the Zhabdrung were fulfilment of a *mchod yon* contract. The Zhabdrung understood the diversities of people, places, crops, and climates of his state-in-the-making by moving from one patron to another, from one valley to another teaching the people, who in turn reciprocated with offerings.

The diversity of offerings reflected the economic specialisation based on the agro-climatic and physical zones and the skills of the people.¹⁶ The list of items was a microcosm of economy or material base of Bhutan, with exclusion of some farm products considered inauspicious. As coercive power of the state increased, the offerings, initially made as a reciprocal gesture for receiving his teachings, were later converted to a tax obligation that a particular village or valley had to fulfil. The patrons (*sbyin bdag*) of the *mchod yon* slowly became taxpayers or citizenry of a new state. The actual need for *zhugdral* ritual was meagre; most offerings went in support of ecclesiocratic institutions and bureaucracy. Documents revealing the existence of a category of tax called *dbang yon* (lit. blessing offering) testify the point. *dbang yon* was initially a voluntary offering of agricultural produces made to the

¹⁶ According to government-published history textbooks, representatives from different valleys of Bhutan, including the southern Duars—a stretch of Bhutanese territories ceded to the British India after the Duar War of 1865, which Bhutan lost—offered agricultural produces cultivated in their respective valleys to the Zhabdrung. The products offered by different regions based on agro-climatic conditions and farm specialisation were: rice, other cereals and varieties of fruits came from Wangdue, Thimphu and Paro (west); woven fabrics and other products came from Lhuntse, Mongar, Trashiyangtse and Trashigang (east); cheese, butter and other animal products were from Haa, Lingzhi, Lunana, Bumthang, and Merak-Sakten (nomadic population of the north); walnut and other fruits from Dagana and Trongsa (central); betel nuts and leaf from Dungsam (Samdrup Jongkhar and Pemagatshal) and Duars (South); and sugar cane and molasses from Wamrong and Kheng regions (MHE, 1994).

Zhabdrung or to the monk body in return for spiritual services. Later, it was institutionalised into a fixed yearly tax obligation totally unrelated to its original purpose (Ardussi & Karma Ura, 2000).

Social and cultural

An act of making people sit in rows according to hierarchy during the first *zhugdral* can be said to be the beginning of a social stratification, the process continued to this day. The ritual created new as well as legitimised the old hierarchy, as the support of the local leaders was crucial in consolidating Drukpa Kagyu authority and implanting the dual system. It formally affirmed the existing hierarchy and invested the participants with new status. The Bhutanese society was more egalitarian than the ‘civilised’ Tibet.¹⁷ One reason why the Tibetans called Bhutan and other southern frontier regions by a pejorative name *monyul* (land of darkness, i.e., absence of the Buddha’s teachings), similar to the anthropological ‘other’, was the absence of hierarchy between the ruler and the subjects.

As explained earlier, all *zhugdral* participants – the servers and the served – must act and behave according to a code of conduct. As such it is a performative act of discipline. The code of conduct when imposed outside the sacred walls of the *zhugdral* hall to the common people helped in disciplining the general population who hitherto had experienced anarchy (*gong ‘og nor*, out of order). Its

¹⁷ Following the assassination of Langdarma (838-841 circa) by Lhalung Pelki Dorji, three of his six brothers who fled Tibet arrived at Bumthang. Because of their descent from Tibetan chief families, three brothers expected the local people in Bumthang to give them honour and respect, but none was given since “from previous times [in Bumthang] there had been no high and low graders between a lord and his subject” (Aris, 1986, 57).

far-reaching implications lay in institutionalising *driglam namzha* first to the participants, particularly in public spaces while interacting with rulers and high officials, and the rest of the population followed. The code of conduct originally designed for monks in monastic institutions became *driglam namzha* when applied to the common people in secular spaces.

Sitting in rows according to position during *zhugdral* is a dramatization of the rigid hierarchy created by the dual system: disciplining the individual towards the collective cause of the state; flattening the local or regional vernacular leaders to join and support the Drukpa Kagyu tradition; replacing the chaos of the many systems with the order of one system; and most importantly, binding people to the dual system of religious laws that is as firm as a soft silken knot, or *chos kbrim dar gyi bdud pa*, and civil laws that are as firm as a golden yoke, or *rgyal kbrim gser gyi gnya' shing*.

One main complaint of the chiefs of Thimphu against the Lhapa lamas was heavy taxation (Yonten Dargye & Sorensen, 2009). The benevolent rule of Phajo and later of his four sons, and much later the Zhabdrung's generosity in returning the gifts, should be understood in the light of the Lhapa ruler's excesses. The Zhabdrung's gesture of returning gifts demonstrated his generosity and benevolence, and hence a sign that the dual system in contrasted starkly with the then-current socio-political milieu. In absence of any precedence for a ruler or superior to return the offerings (mainly taxes) made by subjects or subordinates, this particular generosity won him the loyalty and support of key people in establishing a new state.¹⁸ Similarly, distributing gifts,

¹⁸ This ritual of returning the offerings is a Bhutanese equivalent of the Kwakiutl Indian potlatch in which blankets and valuables are flamboyantly destroyed.

instead of hoarding them, was effective in communicating the Zhabdrung's claims of superiority through his generosity over the rest. It was not a secularised distribution of goods, but a ritualised distribution, oriented toward religious people in religious terms.

Conclusion

This paper does not describe *zhugdral* as such, for that has been done extensively elsewhere (Dorji Gyaltshen, 1999), but rather explores its alternative meanings and the role it played in forming the Bhutanese state in the 17th century. That it is practiced today some 375 years later is not an accident, for other similar rituals are practiced with equal rigour and relevance. In Bhutan, culture has progressively become a badge of the country's national identity and therefore, of the country's sovereignty. But not all rituals have outlived the purpose, place and time for which they were invented. If there is one reason for the continued endurance and relevance of *zhugdral*, it is the universal human aspiration for auspiciousness and avoidance of inauspicious forces. Similar to what Geoffrey Samuel (1995) calls a 'pragmatic Buddhism', this ritual helps practitioners/participants fulfil pragmatic individual goals, namely to render the occasion auspicious through coming together and cultivation of auspicious forces.

The offerings, their acceptance and the consumption of auspicious offerings, and participation in the *zhugdral*, which are inextricably woven with the prayers invoking the Drukpa Kagyu lineage and dharma protectors, psychologically transform the participants. Just as *zhugdral* indoctrinated the participants with Drukpa Kagyu teachings and a dual system founded on Drukpa Kagyu doctrine, and its ultimate ritualization and institutionalisation legitimized

the state of the glorious Drukpa (*dpal ldan 'brug gzhung*)¹⁹ at a much larger systemic level, the repeated performance of the ritual perpetuates the *status quo* and creates a new hierarchy.

What originally began as the distribution of offerings made to the Zhabdrung, *zhugdral* was systematically ritualised as an auspicious ceremony which narrate the Zhabdrung's state formation story, starting from prophecies for him to leave Tibet for Bhutan (*lho mon*), his arrival at Laya, the receptions given by local Drukpa Kagyu patrons and followers, the offerings made by the local people, the consecration of the Punakha Dzong as the capital of his new government, and the institutionalisation of the dual system, all of which were laden with auspicious forces. Just as these auspicious events coalesced to form what is now the state of Bhutan, a mere dramatization of these events in the *zhugdral* ceremony is enough to render any events auspicious, and thus successful.

¹⁹ Glorious because it overcame several invasion attempts by Tibetans and Mongols.

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Appendix One: Offerings made in all three types of *zhugdral*

Comprehensive	Medium	Brief
1. <i>dro ma</i> (kaser)	1. Kaser	1. Kaser
2. <i>dri bzang</i> (saffron fragrance)	2. Saffron fragrance	2. Saffron fragrance
3. <i>dri bzang gi bzhes rtsam (mdzar phyi)</i> (snack with saffron fragrance):		
4. <i>gzhung ja</i> (official tea)	3. Official tea	3. Official tea
5. <i>bzhes rtsam sbon 'bras lto</i> (snack made from Bondey rice)		
6. <i>ja nag po</i> (tea sponsored by the public)		
7. <i>bzhes rtsam dmar srob lto</i> (snack made of refined rice)	4. <i>bzhes rtsam lto dkar dmar gang rung</i> (snack made of red and white rice whichever is available)	4. <i>bzhes rtsam lto dkar</i> (snack made of white rice)
8. <i>bsod nams mchod ja</i> (holy tea sponsored by Zhabdrung)		
9. <i>bzhes rtsam 'bras ser</i> (snack – yellow texture rice)		
10. <i>mar chang</i> (wine)	5. Ceremonial wine	5. Ceremonial wine
11. <i>dar cung</i> (flag)	6. Ceremonial flag	6. Ceremonial flag
12. <i>phyi mar</i> (wheat flour and butter)	7. Ceremonial wheat flour and butter	7. Ceremonial wheat flour and butter
13. <i>phyag 'gyedpa</i> (money)	8. Ceremonial money	8. Ceremonial money

14. <i>rdog ma pa ni</i> (betel nuts and leaf)	9. betel nuts and leaf	9. betel nuts and leaf
15. <i>kha reg mo ze</i> (water melon)		
16. <i>ngang lag</i> (banana)	10. Banana	10. Banana
17. <i>hum pa</i> (lemon)	11. Lemon	
18. <i>tshul lu</i> (orange)	12. Orange	11. Orange
19. <i>sbram ze</i> (jack fruit)	13. Jack fruit	
20. <i>aa 'bras</i> (persimmon)	14. Persimmon or pomegranate	
21. <i>gon</i> (cucumber)	15. Cucumber	12. Cucumber
22. <i>bal pa bse'u</i> (guava)	17. Guava/mango	13. Guava
23. <i>gun cha</i> (sugar cane)	16. Sugar cane	14. Sugar cane
24. <i>rgun 'brum</i> (grapes)	18. Grapes	
25. <i>sin 'bru</i> (pomegranate)		
26. <i>kham</i> (peach)	19. Peach/pear	15. Peach/pear
27. <i>gli</i> (pear)		
28. <i>ae pa'al</i> (apple)		16. Apple
29. <i>am chug u li</i> (mango)		
30. <i>skam tshogs</i> (mixed dry fruits)	21. <i>hing 'bras skam</i> (dry fruits)	
31. <i>rgya gar gling skam</i> (dried Indian pear)		
32. <i>sgu ram byi ril</i> (sweets)	20. Sweets	17. Sweets
33. <i>phyur go</i> (dried cheese)	23. <i>phyur go / star go</i> (dried cheese/walnut)	19. Dried cheese/walnut
34. <i>star go</i> (walnut)		
	22. <i>rgya zas bod zas</i> (Indian and Tibetan snacks)	18. <i>rgya zas kha zas</i> - Indian snacks

Appendix Two: The *Zhugdral* Verses*

The Verses of Kaser offering

The chief saviour of the world, Amitayus
The glory that has destroyed all untimely deaths without
exception
The refuge for those who are helplessly suffering
I make offering to the Buddha Amitayus.

The glorious goddess with an autumn moon complexion
Extremely beautiful and calm with three faces and eight hands
The bestower of ultimate attainments of immeasurable
wisdom and long life
I make offering to the Goddess Vijaya.

The goddess that I have been practicing throughout my
successive rebirths
The executioner of enlightened activity of the Buddhas of the
three times
Who has a blue-green face, two hands, and brings swift
calmness
I make offering to the Mother Tara and all her forms.

This food possessing hundreds of captivating tastes
Carefully prepared for the Buddhas, including their sons,
As they are offered with deep faith

* The verses were translated by Thinley Jamtsho, researcher of the Centre for Bhutan Studies. See *Verses of Zhugdral Phunsum Tshogpa, Tea and Food Offering* (forthcoming, 2011).

May it cause sentient beings to sustain with the yogic
sustenance of concentration!

The Verses of Saffron Fragrance Offering

To Vajradhara I offer; to Tilopa, Naropa, and
Marpa Lotsawa, Milarepa, Gampopa, Thatsapa;
Naphupa and other hierarchs of Palden Drukpa
I make offering to all gurus of the Kagyu lineage.

Being skilful in method and compassion, you took rebirth
among the Shakya clan
Being undefeatable, you subdued forces of devils
Your body is as magnificent like a mountain of gold
I make offering to you, the king of Shakyas.

The actual embodiment of Buddhas of the three times and the
lord of the hundred families
The spinner of wheel of the four enlightened activities;
Powerful conqueror of the appearance and existence;
I make offering to Padma Jungney.

[Arisen] from the grasping-and-grasper-free state of
Dharmakya
[Their] rainbow-like Sambhogakaya forms;
Are adorned with the major and minor marks of excellence
and the five-fold gestures;
I make offering to all tutelary deities.

The Verses of tea offering

In the centre of the Avalokiteshvara's continuing waves of
compassion is
The fully developed lotus of knowledge and affection of the
Buddhas
You are the sun that causes to emit all sorts of fragrances of
peace and happiness,
I make offering to Ngawang Namgyal.

In the past, before the presence of the Buddha
Those persons who practiced according to the Dharma
You promised to rear them like a mother to her son;
I make offering to all the Dharma protectors and guardians.

The powerful guardians of the residences including your
retinues
As I offer you all, this delightful Chinese tea
May you accomplish our aspirations of teachers and students,
And execute the enlightened activity of spreading the Buddha
Dharma!

By the blessing of making offerings to the glorious Gurus
In the places wherever we live
May there be no diseases, evil spirits, poverty and disputes;
And the Dharma and good fortunes ever increase.

The Verses for Alcohol Offering

Om Ah Hung! (Three times)

To the Lord who has sovereignty over partaking the first
portion of offering—

The king of all enlightened families

The chief of all Mandalas

[the one] the wisdom essence that is indivisible from the
enlightened body, speech and minds of the Buddhas of the
three times—

To the most venerable and glorious Gurus, without
exception;

I make offering! *pan tsa am ri ta pu za kha hi!*

To the assembly of tutelary deities of the Mandalas of the
Kriya Tantra, Charya, Tantra, Yoga Tantra and
Aunutarayoga Tantras, without exception,

I make offering of *pan tsa am ri ta pu za kha hi!*

To the male and female sky-farers of the three places

To the female sky-farers residing at the eight great charnel
grounds guarding the directions and regions, without
exception

I make offering of *pan tsa am ri ta pu za kha hi!*

The glorious Mahakala, the king of Herukas

The warrior-god of Yogis

The physician of the three poisons

The mighty guardian of monasteries and Mandalas

The bearer of the name raven, including his entourage of
servants, and so forth

To all the sublime Dharma protectors, without exception, I
make offering of *pan tsa am ri ta pu za kha hi!*
Furthermore, to those who are stationed in this region such as
the eight classes of gods and demons
The beings of the six states of rebirths
And all sentient beings that are bound through the four
mediums of rebirths
I offer! *pan tsa am ri ta pu za kha hi!*

The Verses of Zhugdral Phunsum Tshogpa Ceremony

All the motherly sentient beings as immeasurable as the space
Go for refuge in the Guru Buddha's Dharmakaya
Go for refuge in the Guru's Sambhogakaya
Go for refuge in the Guru's Nirmanakaya
Go for refuge in the Guru, the precious Buddha (*recite three
times*)

At the centre of the Avalokiteshvara's continuing waves of
compassion
Is the fully developed lotus of knowledge and affection of the
Buddhas
You are the sun that causes to emit all sorts of fragrances of
peace and happiness
To Ngawang Namgyal I offer!

Conquered the darkness of ignorance by omniscience
Never discarded the purposes of others through compassion
And subjugated evil forces by power, the god of gods
To Ngawang Namgyal, I supplicate.

To free the sentient beings from the three realms of Samsara
You achieved the sublime body of the immortal Vajra

And as long you perform the migrators' purposes through the
four enlightened activities
May you too live long!
I pray for the sound health of my Guru!
I pray him to live supremely long!
I pray his four enlightened activities to flourish!
And may I be blessed never to be separate from the Guru!

To the Buddha, Dharma and the most supreme of the
assemblies
Until the enlightenment, I go for refuge
By the merits of my generosity and so forth
May I attain the Buddhahood to benefit sentient beings!

May all the sentient beings be endowed with happiness and
the causes of happiness!
May all the sentient beings be liberated from suffering and the
causes of suffering!
May all the sentient beings never be separated from the
supreme bliss which is free from afflictions!
And may all sentient beings abide in the great equanimity
which is free from passion to the close ones and hatred
towards the distant persons (enemies)! (*three times*)

You who have become the protector of all sentient beings;
You, the deity who destroy intolerable evils and their armies
And you who know all things as they are;
O the Buddha including your retinues, I entreat you to come
here!

It is so nice that the lord has come here
We are virtuously fortunate
Having accepted our offering
I pray that you may stay here only!

Om guru sar wa ta tha ga ta tra bar sed ka ra ma ha sed ka ra!
Ma ha ar gham tis tsha sowa ha!

Just so when [the Budha Sakyamuni] was born;
All gods offered him a shower
With the pure water of the gods
I too, bathe your enlightened body!

Om guru sar wa ta tha ga ta tra bar sed ka ra ma ha sed ka ra!
Ma ha ar gham tis tsha sowa ha!

As you are compassionate to me and sentient beings
By your miraculous power
As long as I make offering; I pray you, the Buddha too, to
stay long!

Om guru sar wa ta tha ga ta tra bar sed ka ra ma ha sed ka ra!
Ma ha ar gham tis tsha sowa ha!

With oceans of completely perfect manifestations
You the boon-giver of peace and happiness to all sentient
beings
You, the chief son of the Buddha Amitayus
O Avalokiteshvara, to you, I supplicate!

On the lion-throne in the country of Shambhala
As the extensive commentator of the glorious Kalachakra
Tantra
You beheld the white lotus-like prophecy of the king
Suddhodhana's son (Buddha Sakyamuni)
To you, the second Rigden King, I supplicate!

Out of love towards the subjects of Tibet
The tradition of the Mahamuni worshiped by gods and
humans
Was initiated [in Tibet] for the first time, for which we owe
immeasurable gratitude

To the miraculous Dharma king [Trisong Deutsen], I
supplicate!

With the profound view, you arose as the sea of calmness
And [from this sea] flowed millions of rivers of the vast and
profound Dharma heaps

Which made you a terminator of the inner sufferings of the
red faced [Tibetans]

To the Shantarakshita, I supplicate!

The entire inner and outer knowables, without exception

As you perfectly spun them with the wheel of your non-
forgetting memory

You achieved complete victory from all opposing groups

O the great Pandit Narotapa, I supplicate!

As an executioner of the Buddhas's enlightened activities of
the three times

To whom the Buddha himself presaged

O The pure hermit of the mountain ranges of Shanti,

To the Jetsun Da-od Zhonu, I supplicate!

Setting a Vajra mat on the slope of a mountain

You, an emanation of a thousand Buddhas, practiced,

And uplifted the fortunes of all body-bearers

To the Drowai Gonpo Drukpa [Rinpoche], I supplicate!

In the eastern paradise of the Manifest Joy

On the apex of the boundless visions of Mayajvala Vajra;

The displayer of ocean of enlightened conducts;

To the Bodhisattva, whose vision is free from afflictions, I
supplicate!

The concealed cycles of the eighty-four thousand Dharma
Heaps
To the fortunate beings to be tamed, you Kunga Peljor
According to their preferences, unfolded [the meanings of the
84,000 Dharma Heaps]
O you, the matchless translator, the faculty of all
Conquerors, I supplicate!

Flawlessly got renowned as the treasurer, and in this time of
the degenerate age
You stood as the only sublime guide of the noble path
To you, the former
Lord of Accomplishment, I supplicate!

The Jamgon's pair of legs, the sun, its nectar (rays)
Having drunk a hundred times, evolved into the garland of
white lotus
And became the crown ornament of all haughty scholars
To the matchless and supreme Guru, I supplicate!

The basis of emanation for the bygone Buddhas; The source
of the Buddhas yet to appear
And indivisible one from the present saviors
May the Dharma King's lotus-feet remain firm!

At the centre of the Avalokiteshvara's continuing waves of
compassion
Is the fully developed lotus of knowledge and affection of the
Buddhas
You are the sun that causes to emit all sorts of fragrances of
peace and happiness
To Ngawang Namgyal I offer!

Conquered the darkness of ignorance by omniscience
Never discarded the purposes of others through compassion
And subjugated evil forces by power, the god of gods
To Ngawang Namgyal, I supplicate.
To free the sentient beings from the three realms of Samsara
You achieved the sublime body of the immortal Vajra
And as long you perform the migrators' purposes through the
four enlightened activities
May you too live long!

May by the strength of having supplicated in these verses,
I and all the infinite migrators, without exception;
Please you, O the Protector!
And by your tradition
May we swiftly obtain the complete enlightenment!

I pray for the sound health of my Guru!
I pray him to live supremely long!
I pray his four enlightened activities to flourish!
And may I be blessed never to be separate from the Guru!

May the only source of peace and happiness
The Buddha Dharma last forever!
And may the upholders of the Buddha Dharma
Have their victory banner of life hoisted forever!

May the sound of the great Dharma drum
Liberate all the suffering-stricken sentient beings!
And for countless millions of eons
May you live preaching the Dharma!

The Verses of Aspiration

Homage to the Bhagavan who is the King Accomplisher of
aspirations!

May those karmic or adventitiously conditioned occurrences
Such as demons, harms of the elemental spirits, and so forth
And all ailments that discomfort the minds of being
Never occur in this sphere of world!

Like a victim dragged by a murderer
Whose body and mind are split within an instant
As many soul snatching sickness and sufferings as are there
May none of them occur in this sphere of world!

Just like one has fallen into the mouth of the Lord of Death
Those ailments, which bring terror just upon hearing their
names
The epidemics that last for a short time and other chronic
ailments, and so forth
May they never harm the sentient beings!

May the class of 80,000 harm-inflicting obstacles
The 360 adventitious obstacle makers
The 404 ailments and so forth
Never harm all body bearers (sentient beings)!

The peace snatcher of body and mind without exception
As many sufferings from the disruption of the four elements
as are there
Having pacified all of them without exception and being
possessed of glowering might
May all live a disease-free long life, have peace and happiness!

The compassion of the Guru and the Three Jewels
The power of the Dakinis and the Dharma protectors
And by the power of the undeceiving law of cause and effect
Whatever dedications or aspirations are made, may all be
accomplished!

The Auspicious Verses of Conclusion

May the Sugata teacher's sea of supreme teaching
With its cloud heap-like fame of resounding dragon's roar
Increasingly rain the rain of study and practice, with each
passing day
And fill up every nook and corner of the country!

Always accompanying the sun rays of the three vows;
The quintessential upholder of the aroma of hearing,
contemplation and practice
May the chief lotus-like Dharma upholders, whosoever may
be
Fill up every nook and corner of the country!

May [the place] where the rivers of gain and esteem flow;
Where gems of peace and happiness are available
With the ocean of fresh glory of the fresh Dharma Wheel;
Fill up every nook and corner of the country!

The teacher has appeared on this Earth surface
His teachings, where upon, became as bright as the sun rays.
And with upholders of the teachings living harmoniously like
a teacher and a student
May there be an auspicious durability of the Dharma!

CHIBDRAL:
A Traditional Bhutanese Welcome Ceremony[€]

Karma Rigzin^{*}

Introduction

As an overwhelmingly Buddhist country, religion pervades many aspects of Bhutanese life. It is believed that when an event or celebration is well executed, it will be more effective and bring about the most benefit to all beings. The idea of ‘tendrel’, or auspiciousness, is a strong motivator for Bhutanese, as it is thought that if something—whether it be a promotion, marriage, or the like—has an auspicious beginning, it will bring forth positive results until its end. Of all ceremonial programs, *chibdral* is the performed first, and its proper execution is critical, as is the correct performance of the *marchang* and *zhugdral* ceremonies that follow. Together, the three ceremonies of *chibdral*, *marchang*, and *zhugdral* are an integral part of Bhutanese tradition, performed before any important event.

Chibdral, the focus of this paper, is a ceremonial procession of men and horses. ‘Chib’ refers to the horse that leads the procession and ‘Dral’ means “uniform line”. With a history believed to stretch back to the time of the Buddha, *chibdral* continues to be

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one of the most important and most frequently performed ceremonies in modern Bhutan. Performed in honour of special guests, to celebrate promotions or to formally open a programme, *chibdral* is ubiquitous within the kingdom, yet little known or understood outside of it.

Origins and development of *chibdral*

According to Bhutanese belief, an early form of the ceremony dates to the time of the Buddha, around the fifth century BCE. The earliest form of welcoming procession that is attested in the teachings is after the Buddha descended from the Trayastrimsa heaven. The Buddha had gone there post-Enlightenment in order to teach his mother Mahamaya. After a stay of a few months, his disciples begged him to return to earth and teach for their benefit. The Lord Buddha relented and returned to earth by descending a triple ladder. It is believed that both gods and humans celebrated this event with a grand reception of the Lord Buddha through the various forms of procession.

Bhutanese consider the second event that led to *chibdral* as a series of gift exchanges between two Indian kings. King Bimbisara of Magadha and King Udrayana of Vasta were very close friends and would often exchange gifts. Once, King Udrayana sent a priceless gift to his friend, King Bimbisara wanted to give a picture of the Buddha in exchange. But no artist could draw the Buddha, because of his splendour and the light emitting from his body. Legend believes the Buddha then advised the artists to trace his shadow. This is supposed to have been the first painted figure of the Buddha, and thus an even more special gift. Bimbisara sent this gift with a letter stating that, "I am sending you the gift which is far more precious than three realms. You should decorate your city from the distance of 15 miles and receive in parade with respect and offerings for which you will accumulate immense merits." So,

King Udrayana cleaned his city and decorated with so many banners and received with grand ceremony that included four branches of an army: 1. cavalry, 2. elephantry, 3. chariots, and 4. infantry.

Bhutanese trace the third origin of *chibdral* to the ninth century, when Chandrakirti was Abbot of Nalanda University. While he was teaching, he saw a person standing nearby in which he asked who he was. Chandrakirti thought that he could be someone who was interested in debate. However, during the course of their communication Chandrakirti realized this was Chandragomin, a great scholar from the south.

Chandrakirti immediately said that a great scholar like him cannot make an entry that way, and offered to arrange a welcome ceremony. Chandragomin responded saying it is not appropriate to be welcomed by fully ordained monks as he himself was a lay practitioner. Chandrakirti responded that if that was the case, a statue of Manjushri would be invited, and Chandragomin would fan it as part of the procession. When the sculpture arrives, the monks will welcome the statue.

***Chibdral* in Bhutan**

In 1616, a religious master named Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal left Tibet and came south. He was the reincarnation of the scholar Pema Karpo, and held a high position in the Drukpa Kagyu Buddhist tradition. At the invitation of his patrons in the south, he journeyed to Bhutan, which was then a series of local kingdoms. For the next three decades, the Zhabdrung would unify the western and central areas, forming the core of the Bhutanese nation and establishing governmental and religious authority through the chos srid system. The Zhabdrung is responsible for introducing and systematizing a number of prominent rituals,

including *chibdral*, which encouraged loyalty to the state and offered a chance to display its power. By showing the wealth and resources available in the system, people were reluctant to challenge it, and at the same time, they identified with the different parts—religious items, local dances—which helped them to feel a sense of unity.

Types of *chibdral*

In Bhutan, there are three levels of *chibdral* processions. The most extensive form is performed for the highest-ranking guests, and there are also intermediate and abbreviated levels. The most elaborate form of the ceremony includes more than forty-five individual components, with religious items carried by monks and additional, more mundane items carried by both lay people and monks.

Ideally, however, the most intricate *chibdral* processions will include a number of additional lines. This is because, like in most ceremonies, it is best to have the most components possible according to the person's rank.

The most extensive form of *chibdral* is reserved for His Majesty the King, Head of States and others of this status. Events such as a coronation or royal marriage receptions receive the most extensive form of *chibdral*, as do state guests. The intermediate form of *chibdral* will be performed for those within the ranks of cabinet ministers and equivalent. The abbreviated form of *chibdral* is presented to district controllers, and anyone in lower ranks; common people also use this form of the ceremony. In short, the performance of *chibdral* varies from occasion to occasion, depending on the importance of the event and the rank of the honouree.

In the past, the *chibdral* procession would begin at the house of the person being honoured, and continued to the final destination. However, these days the honouree travels in a car to the venue entrance and the procession begins from there.

Components of *Chibdral*

Like most special occasions, such as weddings, religious rituals or high-profile promotions, the *chibdral* procession occurs on an auspicious day. This day is determined by consulting an astrologer. One person is selected to lead the procession based on their astrological details and who possesses a clean mind, body, soul, luck, intelligence and strength of life. All of these qualities must be present to maintain integrity of the ceremony.

This person carries a white scarf with the symbols of Nyimo Delek (auspicious day) and the Tashi Tagye (eight auspicious signs). Following him is a rider-less white stallion, its forehead decorated and on its back laid a white scarf also displaying the Nyimo Delek and Tashi Tagye. On the scarf are placed the three jewels. Stallions are believed to have powers to resist evil and offer long life, and its position at the head of the procession signifies good omens to come. In its earliest forms, there were white, red and mixed coloured horses used in the procession. However, in modern times such horses are rarely, if ever, used. Instead, a surrogate in the form of a white fabric or other white object is displayed in place of the actual animal.

Men dressed in red *ghos* beating drums and ringing bells walk behind the stallion, while two men in green *ghos* blow small horns. Next are a series of flag bearers: Chogdar (directional flag), Tsendar (a series in which each flag is associated with a particular deity), Rudar (coy flag), darneynga (five coloured flags) and Gyaldar (victory banner). Armoured marchers and Pa Chham

dancers will follow the flag bearers, and behind them walk high profile officers. Next come a group of people carrying various religious items like shrine covers, mandala (geometric meditation diagram), Zegyed (eight lucky articles), Gyalsid Naduen (the seven precious emblems), statues, stupas and incense. Also in the group are individuals bearing earthly objects, such as the Thrikheb (throne cover), Soelchu Jandum (water container), Chagsil Pangkhep (hand wash lap cover), Chitala (spit pot), Doma Bathra (Domapani container).

Following these individuals is the Kudrung (monk prefect), who claps his hands in order to alert the entourage of arriving chief guest the ground, signifying control over the area. Next is the chief guest, along with his bodyguards and attendants, if present. During the course of the procession, Pawo dancers line either side of the *chibdral* as it moves along. The dancers hold small drums in their hands and call attention to the chief guest and create a pleasing environment around him.

As the procession enters the ceremony venue, those persons carrying the Chogdar, Tsendar, Rudar and Darna Nga flags stand behind the official who is being promoted or honoured. To the right is a line of dancers and singers, office people and divisional heads. On the left side are the team of escorts and people carrying the official's belongings. The official who is promoted stands between the two lines and in front of the bearers, where he remains while until the conclusion of the *marchang* ceremony. *Marchang* is a ceremony following *chibdral*, and is an offering of alcohol to deities and teachers to secure blessings for the removal of obstacles, and for successful outcomes.

Now to detail the components and what each element signifies.

The first twenty-one participants are laypersons:

Chibdral: A Traditional Bhutanese Welcome Ceremony

1. White, red and mixed coloured stallions for flourishing fortune.
2. Drum signifies its command over judicial affairs of the nation
3. Bell enhances musical sound created by drum.
4. Trumpet for inviting through melodious tone.
5. Directional flags for protecting from harm by humans and non-humans.
6. Banner of deity for abiding with one's own deities.
7. Ancient military banner for the abidance of dharma protectors.
8. Eleven different coloured flags for pacifying, enriching, magnetizing, destroying and constitute enlightened activities.
9. Police flag signifies the maintaining of law and order in the country.
10. Military flag signifies the subduing of country's enemies.
11. Royal Body Guard flag for guarding His Majesty's life from the external harm.
12. National flag signifying the greatness of a country.
13. Pawo dancers signify best of the ancient dances.
14. Military band signifying modernity.

15. A pair of drinking water containers for containing drinking water in the ancient times for the VIP
16. Traditional bag such as those used in the distant past.
17. Traditional dancers from Trongsa (Nubzhey of central Bhutan)
18. Traditional dancers from Paro (Wuchupaizhey of western Bhutan)
19. Traditional dancers from Thimphu (Wangzhey of western Bhutan)
20. Royal dancers signifying the perseverance of Bhutanese traditional dances and songs.
21. Dance of religious song signifies the root of Drukpa Kagyud tradition.
22. Heroic dancers called Pa Chham, as described in vision by the 15th century master Pema Lingpa, from an experience in Guru Rinpoche's Copper Mountain Paradise.

Thus, these lay performances celebrate the establishment and flourishing of the modern Bhutanese state, drawing on religious history and encompassing the dawn of the modern age. Including military elements encourages viewers to remain steadfast as unified. By including dances native to different parts of Bhutan, the diversity of Bhutan is celebrated. At the same time, by referencing the many sources of Bhutanese culture—religious, traditional and historical—these elements help to reinforce Bhutanese national identity.

The following are carried and displayed by the religious body:

1. Religious gong signifying monastic discipline.
2. Fan for bringing comfort to others.
3. Small bell for offering of invitation.
4. Offering articles signify the victory over discordant opponents.
5. Upper cover of alter signifies invitation with the seat.
6. Mandala signifies the offering of the religious universe.
7. Shrine objects of body, speech and mind to prolong life.
8. Eight auspicious signs bring about good luck.
9. Eight auspicious substances/articles blessed by Buddha that enhance physical health of all beings.
10. Seven precious substances representing seven royal treasures of a universal monarch.
11. A conch, the sound of which is thought to precipitate mindful religious governance.
12. Religious trumpet signifies the offering of melodious sounds.
13. Large trumpet signifies invitation.
14. Large drum is melodious offering.
15. Cymbal (thinner one) is an additional melodious offering.

16. Sixteen goddesses known as dakinis signify invitation.
17. Perfuming pan/bowl to purify the surrounding environment.
18. Government officials also appear here, signify the highest representatives of the government and the unity of the governing and religious communities.

Just before the guest of honour are persons carrying a number of items for his protection and comfort:

1. A person carries a statue of the war god/protector in case of our Royal monarchs.
2. A person carrying seat cover.
3. A person bearing a traditional flask for containing water and tea.
4. A person with a 'Bathra', a traditional betel nut container. Betel nut is a mild stimulant often chewed within a leaf with lime paste.

These are followed by the final members of the procession:

1. The discipline master of monk body
2. Chamberlain signifying the government and internal management.
3. Chief Guest

4. The four *lopens*, or teachers, drawn from the monastic body, who protect the honouree from inner and secret obstacles.
5. A general and bodyguards who protect from outer obstacles.

Benefits of *chibdral*

Chibdral contributes to the vitality of those assembled. This welcoming process can be adapted to any population, enabling the people to bridge differences between genders, age, class, race and abilities as well. From its inception, *chibdral* was meant to unify and bond members of the community. Based on the chos srid system instituted by the Zhabdrung, the unity between governmental and religious authority was emphasized during his state building initiatives, and this theme remains an obvious component of the *chibdral* ceremony. By encouraging—and almost requiring—the ceremony to be performed so frequently, the Bhutanese state and its religion remains at the forefront of society, and outlines the ways in which the different peoples of the nation are bound together.

In traditional Bhutanese hierarchy, superiors are required to act with affection and compassion towards their subordinates, while lower levels are obliged to respect their superiors, ideally cultivating balance social harmony. Thus, these ceremonies serve as visual tool to remind each of their obligations to the system. It further enriches Bhutanese cultural values by strengthening the social bonds among one another.

Ultimately, making offerings through *chibdral* ceremonies are believed to accumulate Buddhist merit and reduce suffering for

oneself and all sentient beings, one of the main goals of the state religion.

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The Sacred Dance of Peling Ging Sum

*Khenpo Phuntsok Tashi**

Abstract

Local festivals of Bhutan are one of the core mechanisms by which a community identifies itself, and one of the key instruments for the communication of societal and cultural values. Sacred dances, called cham, constitute a major part of the events.

This paper explores the Peling Ging Sum, established in the 15th century by one of the most significant treasure revealers (terton) in the Vajrayana Buddhist history, Pema Lingpa (1450-1521). Meaning The Three Wrathful Deities of Pema Lingpa and also known as Peling Tercham, it consists of three parts: first, the stick dance (juging) which locates and points out the adversary; second, the sword dance (driging) to conquer and destroy it; and third, the drum dance (ngaging) celebrates victory over the adversary.

Often invoking frightening or wrathful imagery, the Peling Ging Sum employs vivid visual descriptions of action undertaken to cultivate a peaceful atmosphere; elements of which that each serve as metaphor for the removal of obstacles to personal Buddhist practice. Now performed throughout the country, the dance was originally revealed as a divine vision imparted to Pema Lingpa and limited to his home region, the Bumthang district of Bhutan. Through an analysis of its components and their deeper meaning, this research sheds light on the importance of this all-pervasive, yet markedly understudied dance. Further, it

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identifies the effects of its pervasiveness, most notably in changes the Peling Ging Sum has undergone as its performance spreads throughout the country and beyond changes which threaten the integrity of the dance itself.

Significance of sacred dance

Mask dance performances in the Vajrayana world which includes Bhutan, Tibet, Nepal, India, and Mongolia are usually known as *garcham* or the sacred movement of the body. The term also refers to three more specific meanings or manifestations; that of the outer, the inner and the secret realms. The outer significance relates to transformation of ordinary body movement into physical mindfulness through the bodily gestures used within the dance which serves as a body yoga which cleanses the negative channels and helps to purify other forms of physical illness. The performance of sacred dance also helps to keep one's body fit for spiritual practice. The inner significance is associated with efforts that transmute the ordinary body of the performer into a deity form through the wearing of specific deity-faced masks and costumes. Through this action both dance performers and spectators become joined together within the mandala and this results in the subduing of malevolent spirits and the removal of obstacles. The secret significance aims to transform ordinary expression of the three doors - that of the body, speech and mind - into the ultimate mandala of Self-Arising Awareness. The sacred dance is considered one of the most powerful and skilful means to liberate all spectators, even including the smallest of insects who also happen to be present at the dance ground, because sacred dances have been developed and revealed from the mind of fully enlightened ones as opposed to just ordinary artists. There are many sacred dances performed in the Vajrayana world during special events or at highly auspicious times.

As for Bhutan, sacred dances are usually performed during the major *tshochu* festivals, at ground breaking and consecration ceremonies for newly built temples and houses. The practice and origin of performing these sacred dances was introduced in the 8th century AD by Guru Padmasambhava and the Abbot Shanti Rakshita during the time of the first Buddhist temple's construction at Samye in the Tibetan desert. Those dances were performed by Guru Rinpoche at that time in order to subjugate and expel malevolent spirit in vicinity where the temple's location was planned.

Later his followers, especially treasure revealers and enlightened masters, discovered instructions for such sacred dances made available both within their own minds as well as hidden in various physical locations such as rocks, lakes, trees, and buried within soil and taking shape as a yellow scroll. Those instructions are said to have been written by Guru Padmasambhava in the 8th century and concealed in many different places and areas across the Himalayan world for the sake of all sentient beings. It is also said that he made prayers for these to be discovered in the future by enlightened masters such as Terton Pema Lingpa. He was able to reveal many treasures during his life time and especially the instructions for a particular dance known as the Peling Gingsum, which was revealed from a mirror-like rock of Lhodrak Mindo in Tibet. This text instruction is found in the volume of Lama Norbu Gyamtsho, a collective work of Terton Pema Lingpa.

This dance also has three significant meanings as described earlier, the outer, inner and secret dimensions but for this particular dance, there are three different segments also contained within. These include the Stick Dance, the Sword Dance and the Drum Dance and each segment features its own different steps and movements. The masks used also have different wrathful forms related to different meanings and purposes. For example, the first

segment locally known as *Juging* or 'Stick Dance', all dance performers wear peaceful masks with animal faces led by the snow lion and carry two-foot long sticks. These sticks are used to indicate and point the location of malevolent spirits that the dancers strive to eliminate. Each stick is painted with three different bright colors of red, blue and white stripes which are intended to represent the delusive thoughts of greediness, hatred and ignorance.

An especially malevolent spirit known as *Damsi Nyulema*, is said to cause harmful thoughts and delusions within every sentient being. This is the spirit that the dancers are searching for with their sticks pointing in all directions and trying to locate where the *Damsi Nyulema* spirit may be hiding. There are sixteen dancers in the group and this dance is usually performed in the major Dzongs and temples of Bhutan. However, some of the smaller temples have only eight to ten dancers for this dance. There is always a dance leader known as *champoem* who leads the entire dance and the rest follow according to his movement. There is also an assistant dance leader known as *chamjug*, who always stays at the end of the line and is responsible for assisting the dance leader in guiding the other dancers and ensuring that they follow the steps and body movements in a uniform fashion.

Stick Dance (*Juging*)

As highlighted earlier, while dancing the dancers explore and point in all directions with their sticks and use leaping gestures to rise up in the air. At the end all dancers then kneel down to the ground and pointed their sticks to the earth, but the *chamjug* indicates with his stick that the evil spirit is actually located inside the body and points to the heart three times. This is meant to demonstrate that it is our own delusions which are the real evil spirits that need to be subdued and transformed by following the truth of dharma.

The stick dance also includes three main sections: the first section is a type of divination dance from where the malevolent spirit can be found, the middle section represents the search for evil spirits, and the final one is the pointing and locating of the malevolent spirit and finding of this within the mind.

During this dance when the dance leader asks his assistant where is the evil spirit's location is through indication of the stick while dancing, the *chamjug* replies with hand gestures that there is no spirit in all directions by using an empty hand gesture. They hold their sticks under their arms and clap their hands in order to symbolize destruction of the evil spirit and to awaken it, and then later all the dances will throw their sticks to the ground.

After completion of these three section dance, the performances enter the changing room where they change their masks and hand emblems. It is during the stick dance that they are able to discover the evil spirits through realization and performing of this sacred dance.

Sword Dance (*Driging*)

The second segment of the dance is also known as *Driging* or the 'Sword Dance' and dancers emerge from the changing room wearing red wrathful masks and carrying a sword in their right hand. They all dance with very wrathful emotions and body movements. This dance also contains three sections: cutting, subduing and liberating the spirit. The red wrathful mask represents discriminating wisdom and transforming the great compassionate mind into a wrathful form in order to subdue the evil spirit which could not be tamed by the power of peaceful deities. These masks have three eyes which represent the enlightened ones' eyes which have the ability to see clearly all three realms at the same the time.

During the cutting section of the dance, all sixteen dancers gather again using wrathful steps and leaping towards the centre where an effigy is kept in a small triangular box and which represents the malevolent spirit. The sword symbolizes the self-arising wisdom which cuts through all delusions in a single stroke. The five skull crowns on the top of the mask symbolize the Buddha family of Five Kayas. The second section of subduing is the dance in which the true nature of phenomena is dissolved into one true perfect nature and purity. Following this, the dances once again enter the changing room to prepare for their next performance.

Drum Dance (*Ngaging*)

A few minutes later they again appear but this time wearing a blue wrathful mask and carrying hand drums in order to celebrate the victory over evil spirit through their subjugation. The blue mask represents the true nature of our pure mind which is stainless and spaciousness like the space beyond ordinary thought of cloud. The drum represents the celebration of victory over evil spirit and brings peace and happiness. Each beat brings liberation to all who are present in the dance courtyard and helps to remove suffering and its cause. In Mahayana Buddhist tradition, drum is known as the drum of dharma which liberates all from suffering just through the action of hearing its sound.

When this particular dance is being performed, the dancers meditate on the power of compassion which is the altruistic mind that wishes for others' happiness and cause of happiness. The drum also symbolizes the interdependent phenomenon that everything has cause and condition which influence and bind all events and actions. The drum stick used to sound the drum is viewed as skillful means of compassion and the drum itself is wisdom. The two unite, victory emerges from self-arising

awareness. The blue mask also represents the Dharma Kaya which is the source of all qualities of enlightenment.

Therefore, these sacred dances are not to be seen as rituals to exorcise evil spirits, even though the origins of the tradition as a genre may lie in so-called shamanistic practices. To be effective and meaningful, the dance must be seen as a mandala. The dance ground is considered sacred space, symbolizing the forces present within our psyches through physical form. Mandalas of many types exist, each representing particular deities and their associated psychic forces. To precipitate awareness in the observers and participants, the dance resonates on a physical or body level as well as invoking speech through its verbal liturgies, and those are in turn analogous to meditation practices, which cultivate the mind. Thus, the function of dance - both for dancers and viewers - is one of concentrating the mind and subsequently releasing it from the obscurations of the senses. However, the dance will have no effect unless those involved initiate and propagate those processes that result in transformation within them.

There are three types of masks: wrathful, peaceful and semi-wrathful. Those masks having three eyes are generally wrathful, and also bear five skulls on the crown. The triple eye symbolizes the power of seeing the three times: past, present and future, and discerning them as clearly as seeing an object held in the hand. Five skulls represent the five Buddha families and their associated wisdoms, omnipresent for the benefit of all sentient beings. Two eyes represent the two kinds of knowledge: that of all conventional phenomena and the knowledge of all ultimate phenomena. Peaceful masks embody the limitless compassion of Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Photographs



Pema Lingpa, the founder of the dances

1. *Juging*





2. *Driging*



3. Ngaging







Hen Kha: A Dialect of Mangde Valley in Bhutan[€]

Jagar Dorji*

Abstract

Language is the main mechanism by which we humans understand each other. Binding a community, region or nation, language provides a major cohesive force that serves to identify and distinguish amongst societies and cultures.

In Bhutan, a Himalayan nation of about 650,000 people, nineteen unique dialects can be found within its borders, with a marked diversion in the eastern half of the country. With a comparatively small geographic area of some 37,000 square kilometers, this is testimony to the country's vast cultural wealth. However, challenges brought along with the processes of modernisation which had begun only fifty years ago, are placing these languages in jeopardy as there is a growing shift towards other, more international languages.

This paper presents research on Hen Kha, a dialect of the Mangde region found in the central district of Trongsa. As dialects around the world are perishing at an alarming rate, there is a deep concern about the future of Hen Kha and the other dialects of Bhutan whose presence helps reveal the cultural diversity of the country. The present analysis

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explores the effects of modernisation and urban migration on local vernacular, as well as the grass root efforts to conserve such languages, such as communities that are actively cultivating programming in the local dialect. Fortunately, there is still time for Bhutan to actively preserve such dialects so that they do not disappear into oblivion.

Introduction

Language is more than a means of communication. It is through language that we identify and distinguish ourselves from others (RGoB, 1999).

We also establish our connections with others through language. In Bhutan, Dzongkha has been the national language since 1968, though its usage dates to the mid-17th century.

The geographical area of Bhutan is approximately 37000 square kilometers, and is home to about 650,000 people. For its size and population there are nineteen recognized dialects spoken in the country, which have been categorised into eight groups. In practice, however, if one were to travel cross-country, a different dialect can be found in almost every valley. Dzongkha, the national language, is predominant in the western part of the country, although with varying accents and tones, whilst in eastern Bhutan there is a greater diversity of distinct dialects.

The dialects of Bhutan

The dialects of Bhutan can be roughly categorised as follows, almost all of which fall into the Tibeto-Burman family of languages:

The *Dzongkha Group* includes the Chhochha Ngacha, Drogpa Kha and Ngalong Kha. Ngalong Kha, which is the same as Dzongkha,

is spoken in the seven districts of western Bhutan. Chhochha Ngacha is spoken in small pockets of Mongar, Lhuentse and Trashigang districts in the east while Droghpa Kha is spoken by the semi-nomadic dwellers of high altitude settlements. Though a shared language, the particular accent of each group is a telltale sign of their homeland.

- *Bumthang kha* Group is named after the dialect spoken in the north central district of Bumthang. This dialect, with some variation in accent and intonation, is spoken in Khen districts to the south, and areas in Lhuentse and Trongsa districts. Though Chali Kha, spoken by the Chali community in Mongar, and the Zala Kha spoken in Trashi Yangtse district are distinct from Bumthang Kha, they have been classified in this group.
- *Tshangla* group includes dialects spoken in the districts of Mongar, Trashigang, Pema Gatshel and Samdrup Jongkhar. Though it covers a wide geographic area, there is almost no variation in the vocabulary used. The next three dialects are linguistically isolated and found in small pockets of the country.
- *Lhobi Kha* is spoken only in the south western part of the country by a small ethnic community.
- *Gongdue Kha* is heard only in the lower part of Mongar district.
- *Mon Kha* is spoken in smaller communities spread through the rugged terrain of south central Trongsa district as well as a small community to the west of the Black Mountain range in Wangdue Phodrang district.

- *Indo Aryan* languages are spoken by immigrant Bhutanese who arrived via Nepal and northern India. This group includes a number of regional/kinship group dialects such as Lepcha, Rai, Limboo, Tamang, Sherpa, Gurung and Newar.

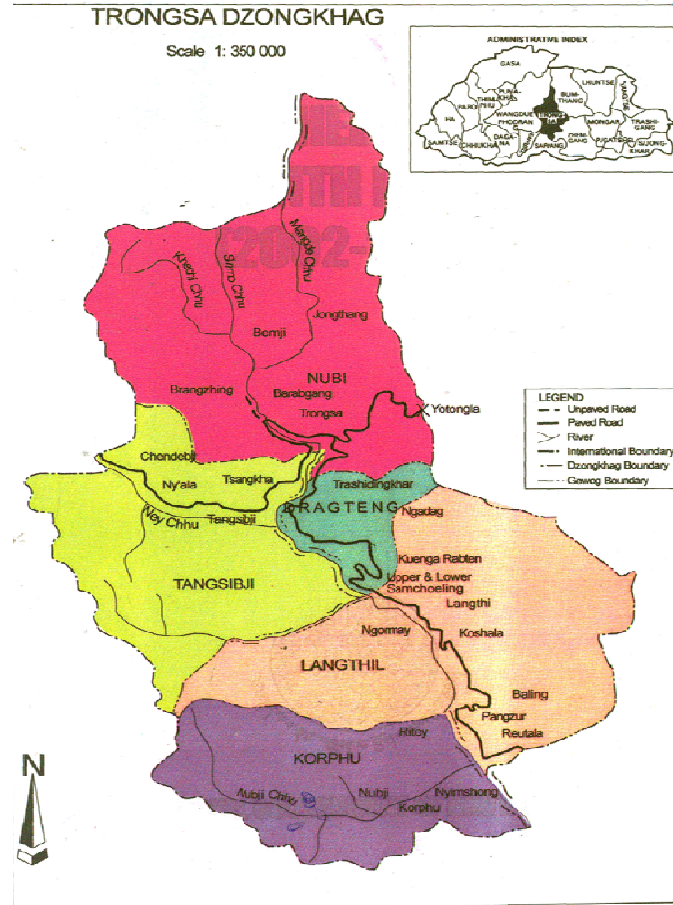
Hen Kha, the focus of this paper, is spoken in parts of Trongsa and Wangdue Phodrang districts. While the linguist G. van Driem (1990), inserted this dialect into the Bumthang kha family, in fact, these dialects are not mutually understandable and deserve their own category.

Hen Kha in the Mangde District

The name Hen Kha, or ‘early language’, suggests that it may have preceded other languages. Today’s speakers of Hen Kha are found confined to the eastern, northern and western buttresses of the Black Mountain ranges. Hen Kha is also known as Nyn Kha or Nga Ked. Van Driem and the School of International Languages (SIL) classify Hen Kha as Tibeto-Chinese, Himalayan, Tibeto-Burman and Tibeto-Kinauri.

Around the 11th century AD the western regions of Bhutan came in contact with visitors and traders from Tibet and India, bringing economic, religious and social gains. This contact and its subsequent benefits gave the population the name of ‘Nga Long’, or early riser. It is thought that the people “rose from the darkness of primordial circumstances”, and incorporated significant amounts of Buddhist Dharma language into the dialect, which eventually came to be known as Nga-long-kha, the language of early riser. Hence, ‘Nga Long’ refers to the comparatively early development and advancement of a part of the country, a term that differs from ‘Ngoen Lung’, referring to settlements that pre-existed that rising from the darkness.

Map of Trongsa (Mande) district



In Mangde, each dialect is usually referred to by the name of the village in which it is spoken. For example, in the Tangsibi Gewog it is known as Tangsibjee Kha or Tshangkhapai Kha, in Chendebji as Chendebjipai Kha and so on. This pattern has led to the almost total abandonment of the general term Hen Kha. Apart from a few older people and the 1991 study conducted by the Dzongkha

Development Commission of the Royal Government, the term Hen Kha might have become obsolete. Many adults that I spoke to in the course of my research had never encountered the term Hen Kha.

The Geography of Hen Kha

Hen Kha is delineated on the map by a liver shaped area in the centre. It is a dialect of few settlements in Wangdue Phodrang, formerly known as Shar region.



Source: George van Driem, Languages of the Greater Himalayan Region, Vol. 1: Dzongkha. Please note: the northern boundary today is different from what appears in this map.

The map reveals that settlements using Hen Kha are essentially bounded on the east and west by the Dang Chu (river) and the Mangde Chu in Mangde district (Map 2). Its northern boundary abuts the Himalayas, while its southern reaches stop along the foothills, which border a humid and malarial region.

In Mangde district the Mangde Chu (river) creates the boundary between Hen Kha and non Hen Kha speakers. Bumthang Kha speakers live on the east side of the river while Hen Kha speakers live on the west, with the exception of four small communities that will be described in due course.

The settlements to the west of Mangde Chu, where Hen Kha is spoken are Pang, Bemji, Kaba, Daba, Sinphu, Chela and Drengzhi in the Nubi County; in Chendebji, Nyala, Drangla, Tshangkha, Tangsibji and Kela in Tangsibji County; in Changra, Tang-je¹, Eusa and Trashi Dingkha in Dragten County.

Some elder people in Eusa say that in the earliest years of the 20th century, prior to the reign of the first King of Bhutan, the community consisted of about thirty households called *khrelpa* (thraep), or tax payers. Later, people from elsewhere came to serve the King and settled there, creating a multi-lingual community. These later settlers now outnumber Hen Kha speakers.

To the west of Mangde and in high altitude valleys of the Black Mountains, there are isolated settlements that speak Hen Kha. They are Rukubji, Bumpailo and Phobjikha, all of Wangdue Phodrang district. Although these villages speak the same dialect, there are variations in certain vocabularies, tones and diction among the different settlements. Through the particularities of speaking, it is possible to identify the village of the speaker (*sample conversation from two different regions on video*).

The linguist George Van Driem maintains that Chutoebi Kha and Labi kha spoken in Sephu Gewog, to the east of Black Mountain range, are the same. This is arguable. In the past, the people of Sephu Gewog were traders, carrying their merchandise far and wide. This was how they learnt to be able to understand and even speak in many dialects. However, Labi Kha is not easily

comprehensible to a Hen Kha speaker. According to SIL, in order to belong to the same dialect or the same dialect group, two languages must share at least 85 percent of their vocabularies. The average Hen Kha speaker would certainly comprehend much less than 15 percent of the conversations with the native of Sephu village.

What can be established from Van Driem's statement is that Labi Kha may also be one of the earliest dialects spoken in the country. Hence, the term Hen Kha is not limited to one dialect and therefore must include Labi Kha. It is assumed that since as traders they made contacts with Tibet in the north and Nga-long region of Bhutan to the west, Labi Kha has dzongkha and Tibetan influence, since many vocabularies used in the Labi Kha are similar to Dzongkha and Tibetan.

There is however, a closer social and economic association between the speakers of Labi Kha and Hen Kha until about twenty years ago. Generally, Hen Kha speakers raised sheep, providing them with wool, meat and organic manure for their farms. Between April and September, natives of high altitude settlements (the speakers of Labi Kha) herded sheep for a fee, exchanging their services for low altitude cereals. This business relationship encouraged frequent interaction between the two groups. Also, until recently, Bonpo orators from the Labi Kha speaking areas were annually invited to Hen Kha speaking villages. Religious ties such as this might have further encouraged understanding between these groups.

Again, according to Van Driem, Hen Kha has the following lexical similarities with other languages of Bhutan. 75 to 77 percent of its words are lexically similar to Bumthang Kha, 69 percent similar to the language of Kurtoe, 65 to 78 percent similar to Khen Kha and 60 percent with Dzongkha. If two languages with less than 85

percent words common to each other belong to the same group, then these languages fall within the Dzongkha group, but the classification shown in the beginning of this article indicates differently.

Comparison of words between languages of Bhutan

The table below shows a comparison of vocabularies between two dialects of Hen Kha and Zhag Ked with Dzongkha. A rough English translation is also provided.

Day-to-day conversation and vocabularies

Hen kha	Zhagked	Dzongkha	English
Ngai bren	Ngai bran	Nga gi shed	I know
Neyi bren	Ngei bran	Ngache gi shed	We know
Yeyi bren (singlur)	Weri bran	Choera gi shed	You know
Yidi bren (plural)	Yinji bran	Chaed ki shed	You know
Khi bren	Khiji bran	Kho /Mo gi shed	He/she knows
Boeyi bren	Boji bran	Khong gi shed	They know
Tsoenda sho/shey	Tshor shai	Tshur shog	Come here
Thamda shoo/shi	Thur galae	Phar song	Go there
Uda yi-dze-lo/ uda-chu-dze-lo	Ao gaimila	Gatey Joney-mo	Going where?
Aewae ra-dze-lo ? Aewae tshangdze lo	Arba ra-mi-la?	Nam 'Ong-ni-mo?	Coming when?
Mi-yi-ga/michuga	Megaila	Mi-jo-ga	Not going?
Laeshi/laachugshi	Gaiba /Chongba	Yar-soyi	Gone
A-dzo nee/bongee	Otshor nilae	Ana doed	Sit here
Yoen-da-lang/langee	Khag Yangae	Yar long	Stand up

Doe/doegyí	Dodlai	Nyaeda	Sleep
Shae-ma-chae	Tshor-mabu-ye	Daebe mabey	I beg you
Dangnee	Thenla	Kha-nyim	Day-before
Dawl	Dangla	Khatsa	Yesterday
Dasu	Dasum/dusum	Dari	Today
Naembae	Yamba	Naba	Tomorrow
Naemu	Nasmung	Naatshe	Day after

Food and grains

Roo	Ruk	Tshoem	Curry
Zoo/zayee	Zooye	Za	Eat
Khu	Khurba	Khule	Pan cake
Sehm	Iba	Rae	Paddy
chhung	Thrung	Chhum	Rice
pChhi	Phi	pChhi	Flour
Nes	Nad	Naa	Barley
Zeng	Kar	Kaa	Wheat
Bangal	Bangala	Ema	Chilli
Gaerae	Chara	Gerey	Sweet Buckwheat
Braem	Branma	Bjo	Buckwheat
kyaduhm	Ashom	Ashom/gaeza	Maize
Kheh	Khoe	Chhu	Water
Kapch	kebtang	Kebta	Bread

Animals

Khawm	Khaga	bJam	Hen
Khag	Khari	Bjapoe	Rooster
Khuechu	bJaoya	bJichu	Chicken
Bah	Bah	Bah	Cow
Bar	Bari/Buri	Lang	Ox/bull
Idza	Bouya	Bouchung	Calf
Pra	Pra	pCha	Monkey
Sabar	Sawar	Phao	Wild dog
Wom	Wam	Dom	Bear

Hen Kha Grammar

In Hen Kha, a pronoun is gender neutral while there are verbs for singular and plural nouns. For example, *khi ra do de* (he/she is coming); *boe tsangdo de* (they are coming); *'nga yigdo* (I am going); *ney lachbugdo* (we are going); *ye sho lo wae?* (you (singular) please come ok!); *yid sheylo wae?* (you (plural), please come ok!).

In Dzongkha the plural form of the verb is identified by the nouns, however, in Hen kha both nouns and verbs can be singular or plural. When the subject changes from singular to plural, the verbs in object also change as shown in Table 2 below. In most dialects of Bhutan, the plural form of the verb is understood through changes in nouns/subjects. The verbs remain same irrespective of whether the subjects are singular or plural.

Table 2: the use of plural and singular nouns and verbs

Nouns	Verbs		Singular/ Plural
ཁོ/མོ/ He/she	འདྲེན་པོ/ is coming	དྲི་འདྲེན་པོ	གཞིག་ཚེག/Singular
མོས་འདྲེན་/They	ཚང་དོ་འདྲེན་པོ/are coming	དྲི་འདྲེན་པོ	མང་ཚེག/Plural
ང་/I	ཞེག་དོ་འཇུག་དོ/ am going	ལྷོ་ལྷོ་འཇུག་དོ	གཞིག་ཚེག/Singular
ཞེ་འཇུག་དོ/We	ལྷོ་ལྷོ་འཇུག་དོ/are going	ལྷོ་ལྷོ་འཇུག་དོ	མང་ཚེག/plural
གཤམ་འཇུག་དོ/you	ཤོག་ལོ་འཇུག་དོ/come	ཤམ་ལྷོ་འཇུག་དོ/ok!	གཞིག་ཚེག/singular
ཡིང་འཇུག་དོ/you	ཤོག་ལོ་འཇུག་དོ/come	ཤམ་ལྷོ་འཇུག་དོ/ok!	མང་ཚེག/plural
ཁོ/མོ/ he/she	ལས་ཤི་ཡིང་མོ་ཡི་ཤོད་པོ/has gone	ཤམ་ལྷོ་འཇུག་དོ	གཞིག་ཚེག/singular
མོས་འདྲེན་/They	ལྷོ་ལྷོ་འཇུག་དོ་ཡིང་མོ་ཡི་ཤོད་པོ/have gone	ཤམ་ལྷོ་འཇུག་དོ	མང་ཚེག/plural

Note: Words in the bracket ་ལོ are Dzongkha.

How important is Hen Kha?

Hen Kha is the dialect of a very few communities. Its modern speakers conform to a distinct geographic area around the Black Mountains. Located in the centre of the country, they could have migrated elsewhere, yet remained in this harsh environment, infested with wild animals and pests. The resourcefulness that Hen Kha speaking culture has demonstrated over the centuries shows a unique approach to deriving necessities from the surrounding environment, be it clothing, food or shelter. Hen Kha, as do all dialects of Bhutan, adds to cultural diversity. Bhutan's uniqueness is partly characterized by its cultural divergence despite its small size and population. Frequently, accumulated knowledge is encoded in written language (Barth, 2000), but this is not the case in dialects, which must ensure survival of the tradition through effective oral transmission. According to the DDC survey (1991), research into language (for that matter the dialects) can expand the understanding of Bhutan's rich cultural heritage and linguistic history. Unfortunately, as the number of speakers declines, the

impetus to learn Hen Kha similarly decreases, further endangering the dialect.

Table 3: Speakers of Hen Kha in different parts of the region

District	County/villages	Number of speakers	
		1991	2010
Mangde/ Trongsa	Tangsibi Gewog:	1848	1198
	Dragteng Gewog:	697	1280
	Nubi Gewog:	3500	1522
Shar/Wangue Phodrang	Athang Gewog:	208	505
	Dangchu Gewog:	1299	885
	Phobji Gewog:	1929	1930
	Sephu Gewog:	n.a	530
	Gangtey Gewog:	n.a	814
	Rubisa Gewog:	n.a	30
	Bjena Gewog:	n.a	4
	Total		11472

Source: Population and Census, 2005 and personal collection 2010.

Hen Kha Today

The 1991 census indicated there are 11,472 speakers of Hen Kha. My personal research has revealed that as of October 2010, this number has dropped to 8,692. Rural-urban migration and shifting of landless families to new settlement areas are two driving factors for this drop in population.

Modernisation and Hen Kha

Recent research reveals that despite rigorous efforts by the Dzongkha Development Commission, Dzongkha seems to receive

lukewarm interest², and there is even less interest in local dialects. Not surprisingly, this study suggests English has less of a problem attracting learners, primarily due to its international nature and the wholesale importation of English terms for new technology.

There are a number of trends that threaten regional dialects, as systematized by Ethnologue³, which can be applied to the present state of Hen Kha in Bhutan:

Modernisation trends

Many dialects in Bhutan have become essentially non-functional in relation to governance and development. Local speakers must adopt the lingua franca in order to understand and communicate scientific and technical terms. As Bhutan began modernizing at a comparatively late date, the jump has been primarily to English for trade transactions as well as economic, political and social relations. If this has not resulted in abandoning local dialects, it has definitely diluted the vocabularies making it sound like a different dialect.

Internal migration and movement

Historically, the population of Mangde, as in most of Bhutan, lived on subsistence farming. Slash and burn and crop rotation methods were most frequently used in an effort to coax the most output from the harsh landscape. In an attempt to discourage this environmentally unsound practice, many families were granted more fertile lands, albeit in other parts of the country. Families who left their villages essentially abandoned Hen Kha once they arrived in their new communities as minority migrants. Migration due to other types of employment has had the same effect on Hen Kha speakers once they shift to a new region.

Youth and Hen Kha

It is up to the youth to carry on local dialects; however, given the voracious appetite of Bhutanese youth for foreign cultures, many are less open and proud of their dialect and culture. Rather, it is a sign of status to concentrate on English over local language, and often over Dzongkha, much to the detriment of the dialect. However, there is cause for some hope.

In my conversations with students from Hen Kha speaking villages studying in three different schools, it was revealed that an overwhelming majority currently speaks the dialect fluently and believes the dialect will not disappear, though in school it is used only about half of any given day. As these students are required to study two main languages—Dzongkha and English—most are pre-occupied with those classes.

Further, in some cases parents prefer to speak Dzongkha or English with their children. Sometimes this can be attributed to modernisation in Bhutan. By creating a greater network of roads and transportation, couples from different linguistic groups have started families; families whose children tend to live with whatever language is more strongly emphasized. In this way, intergenerational transmission of a dialect like Hen Kha is subject to reduced use or loss. One 2003 study revealed that many people tend to initially become bilingual and later shift to mono-lingual, preferring to use the acquired language (generally Dzongkha or English) and leaving out the dialect of their youth.⁴

Consequences of Losing Hen Kha

First, as dialect is closely linked to culture, its loss may lead to disruption in the social and cultural grounding of that speaker. Secondly, it is a loss of linguistic diversity for the linguistic and

social environments. Thirdly, for the scholarly community, it represents the loss of the oral history and traditions of an entire subculture. Each language or a dialect, along with its associated folklore, contains history; tales and language that reveals how people lived, toiled the soils and tended their animals, who and what they worshiped and how they organized their social affairs.

Suggestions to Preserve the Dialect

The first avenue of preservation lies in education. There are several reasons for introducing students to dialect diversity as a systematic part of the language arts curriculum. First, there is a need to challenge popular myths about dialects. In Bhutanese culture, there seems to be a marked misunderstanding of the role of dialects in society, with many subcultures viewing local languages with embarrassment and shyness. To many modern Bhutanese, to suggest that local dialects should be a source of pride is met with the same skepticism as would a modern geophysicist claiming the earth is flat.

In order to understand the true dynamics of language and its role in society and education, students need a basic understanding of the nature and development of dialect differences. Students have a right to obtain accurate information about dialects, which provides them with the opportunity to confront current dialect stereotypes and prejudices.

The study of dialects also offers a unique, fascinating window through which the nature of language may be viewed. Dialect diversity seems to pique practically everyone's natural curiosity, and this inherent interest can be seized upon to help language come alive for students. Language comes alive when students actively examine how language varies over time and space, including regional, social, ethnic, gender, and other types of social

and physical 'space'. For example, the fact that the Hen Kha counting systems stops at the number twenty and thereafter the counts are in the repeated scores such as two scores, three scores, ten scores, fifteen scores and 20 scores imply the humble and minimum needs of earlier times.

The active study of dialect structure further offers an approach for developing critical thinking skills in students. Dialect differences provide a natural laboratory, allowing students to hypothesize about certain dialect forms and then pursue first-hand research. This type of scientific inquiry can help develop higher order thinking skills in students.

Radio is an effective medium for communication, and most valleys provide an opportunity to broadcast on local radio stations in the dialect of that valley. For example, as people approach Shar valley, the local radio station reveals characteristic Shar cadence and tones, yet while heading over Pelela towards the east, the local radio switches to Hen Kha, followed soon after by other Mangde dialects, Bumthang kha and Tshang La as one proceeds eastward.

Conclusion

The Kings and leaders of Bhutan have brought in unprecedented and rapid progress in terms of economic development. At the same time, there has been a concerted effort to preserve long-standing traditions in the face of such change. It was less than four years ago that our beloved Monarch handed the country over to the people, establishing democracy and being granted the opportunity to directly participate in our future.

Bhutanese dialects, Hen Kha or otherwise, are part of the backbone of our culture. In Mangde valley alone the four major dialects, with their variations in diction and style, and the richness

of the associated folklore in each provide sources to better understand how these peoples have negotiated the past and see the future. Each dialect offers a notable opportunity for proper academic research regarding its history and development. However, the available pool of dialects is deteriorating year by year. For example, there is a dialect in Bhutan which has only one speaker remaining, an elderly woman. It seems likely that the rate of loss will outpace our efforts to preserving them unless additional initiatives are put into place.

On the other hand, this Association of Asian Studies Conference has given me the opportunity to present, superficial as it may be, a recent study on this unique dialect of Mangde Valley. As a speaker of Hen Kha, I will feel the impact of losing this dialect more acutely than others. I conclude here with an aspiration that the concerns expressed in this paper will be heeded by fellow academics, and that this study will encourage additional work towards the preservation of local languages.

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CONTENTS

Restructuring 19th Century Trade Route Between Bhutan and Assam: Evidences from British Political Missions

INDRAJIT RAY AND RATNA SARKAR

The Historical Anecdote of Kheng Nobilities

LHAM DORJI

Oral Construction of Exile Life and Times of Kunkhyen Longchen Rabjam in Bumthang

DORJI PENJORE

Religious Life and History of the Emanated Heart-son Thukse Dawa Gyeltshen

LHAM DORJI

Cattle Management Systems in Humid Sub-tropical Areas of Western Bhutan

N.B. TAMANG AND J.M. PERKINS

CONTENTS

Keynote Address

SUDHIR VYAS

Media in Bhutan: Now and Then

KINLEY DORJI

Stone Inscriptions: An Early Written Medium in Bhutan and its
Public Uses

JOHN ARDUSSI

Dances in Bhutan: A Traditional Medium of Information

FRANÇOISE POMMARET

Roar of the Thunder Dragon: The Bhutanese Audio-visual
Industry and the Shaping and Representation of Contemporary
Culture

TSHEWANG DENDUP

Selling Desire and Dissatisfaction: Why Advertising Should be
Banned from Bhutanese Television

ROSS MCDONALD

Media, Markets and Meaning: Placing Sustainable Development
and Environmental Conservation and Enrichment at Risk

PETER D. HERSHOCK

Role of Kuensel in Fostering Democracy in Bhutan

SANJEEV MEHTA

CONTENTS

Post-Zhabdrung Era Migration of Kurmedkha Speaking People in Eastern Bhutan

TSSHERING GYELTSSEN

A Cheerless Change: Bhutan Dooars to British Dooars

DR. SONAM B. WANGYAL

Two Nineteenth Century Trade Routes in the Eastern Himalayas: The Bhutanese Trade with Tibet and Bengal

RATNA SARKAR AND INDRAJIT RAY

An Analysis of "Meme Haylay Haylay and His Turquoise" using Joseph Campbell's model of the Hero's Journey

A. STEVEN EVANS

Echoes of Folksongs in Bhutanese Literature in English

CHANDRA SHEKHAR SHARMA

Preserving the Consciousness of a Nation: Promoting "Gross National Happiness" in Bhutan Through Her Rich Oral Traditions

A. STEVEN EVANS

CONTENTS

The Making of a Bhutanese Buddha: Preliminary Remarks on
the Biography of Tenzin Gyatso, a Bhutanese Scholar- Yogi
AMY HOLMES

Inter-Regional Variations in the Inequality and Poverty in
Bhutan
SANJEEV MEHTA

Reflections on Conservation Education and Practice in
Bhutan
STEPHEN F. SIEBERT & JILL M. BELSKY

Historical Roots, Spiritual Significance and the Health
Benefits of mKhempa-lJong gNyes Tshachu (hot spring) in
Lhuntshe
PHURPA WANGCHUK & YESHI DORJI

Effect of TRIPS on Pricing, Affordability and Access to
Essential Medicines in Bhutan
DR. TANDI DORJI

CONTENTS

Political Scenario in Bhutan during 1774-1906: An Impact Analysis
on Trade and Commerce

RATNA SARKAR & INDRAJIT RAY

Democracy from Above: Regime Transition in the Kingdom of
Bhutan

AIM SINPENG

A Unique Parallel

DR. SONAM B. WANGYAL

Khar: The Oral Tradition of Game of Riddles in Tshanglakha
Speaking Community of Eastern Bhutan

TSHERING DORJI

Bhutanese Folktales: Common Man's Media with Missions for
Society

CHANDRA SHEKHAR SHARMA

A Pre-budget Exercise as a Pro-poor Development Tool

PHUB W. DORJI

CONTENTS

Multidimensional Poverty in Bhutan: Estimates and Policy Implications

MARIA EMMA SANTOS AND KARMA URA

Socio-economic and Environmental Impact Analysis of Khothagpa Gypsum Mine

KARMA GALAY

Defamation Law in Bhutan: Some Reflections

VENKAT IYER

Bhutan National Values Assessment

STEVE EVANS

Health Impacts of Traditional Medicines and Bio-prospecting: A World Scenario Accentuating Bhutan's Perspective

PHURPA WANGCHUK

A Study on Knowledge, Attitude and Practice about Malaria Awareness and Bed Net Use

KADO ZANGPO, DR. NADO ZANGPO, DR. KJELD POULSEN

CONTENTS

Introduction

JOURNAL EDITORS

Keynote Address

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS ASHI SONAM DECHAN
WANGCHUCK

The Impact of Cultural Folklore on National Values: A
Preliminary Study with a Focus on Bhutan
STEVE EVANS

Oral Traditions as Alternative Literature: Voices of Dissents in
Bhutanese Folktales
DORJI PENJORE

The Role of Folk Consciousness in the Modern State: Its
Efficacy, Use and Abuse
JIM BROWN

Ritualizing Story: A Way to Heal Malady
TANDIN DORJI

Preserving Tradition and Enhancing Learning Through Youth
Storytelling
ANN M. SCROGGIE

Preserving our Folktales, Myths and Legends in the Digital
Era
TSHERING CIGAY DORJI

Oracy in the New Millennium: Storytelling Revival in America
and Bhutan
JOSEPH SOBOL

CONTENTS

A Brief Account of Namkhai Nyingpo

SANGAY WANGDI

Dangphu... Dingphu... The Origin of the Bhutanese
Folktales

DORJI PENJORE

Intellectual Property, Access to Medicines and Public
Health Issues in Bhutan

KENCHO PALDEN

CONTENTS

Stock Market Finance and Gross National Happiness: An Institutional Fit? Evidence from Bhutan

BRUCE HEARN & MICHAEL GIVEL

Coinage in Bhutan During the 19th and 20th Centuries

RATNA SARKAR & INDRAJIT RAY

Attitude of Nurses Towards Mental Illness in Bhutan

RINCHEN PELZANG

Religious Practice of the Patients and Families During Illness and Hospitalization in Bhutan

RINCHEN PELZANG

CONTENTS

Sounds of *Sokshing*: Revisiting the Contested Provisions of
the Land Act 2007

SONAM KINGA 1

The Use of Qualitative and Ethnographic Research to
Enhance the Measurement and Operationalisation of Gross
National Happiness

NICOLE I.J. HOELLERER 26

To Join or Not to Join: A Study on Negative Impacts of
World Trade Organisation Membership on Bhutan

KARMA WANGDI 55

In with the Bad: Ambient Air Quality and Tranboundary
Pollution in Bhutan

LINDA PANNOZZO 118