

འབྲུག་གི་ལམ་སྲོལ་ས་ཁྲ།



BHUTAN  
CULTURAL  
ATLAS

Bumthang District  
Trongsa District



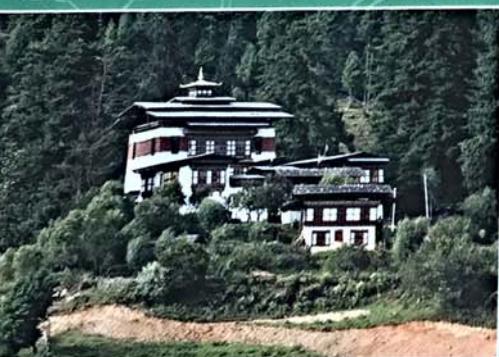
[WWW.BHUTANCULTURALATLAS.ORG](http://WWW.BHUTANCULTURALATLAS.ORG)

The Bhutan Cultural Atlas (BCA) is a project initiated and funded by UNESCO Delhi, World Heritage Centre, and the Orient Cultural Heritage Sites Protection Alliance, France. It aims at documenting the tangible and intangible heritage of the districts of Bhutan, therefore contributing to the preservation of culture. The documentation that is carried out in the field is then standardised and uploaded on a dedicated website: [www.bhutanculturalatlas.org](http://www.bhutanculturalatlas.org).

BCA also aims at providing an informed database for policy makers, the Department of Culture (MoHCA) and other cultural institutions, tourism stakeholders, CSOs, and the national and international public.

The Institute of Language and Culture Studies (ILCS Taktse), Royal University of Bhutan, is the implementing agency, and the project serves as a research opportunity for interested lecturers. The academic content of the project is supervised by Dr. Françoise Pommaret, Director of Research CRCAO/CNRS France and Adjunct Professor, ILCS.

The BCA project has currently covered two districts: Bumthang and Trongsa. Excerpts of the website are presented in this booklet.



The Institute of Language and Cultural Studies, Royal University of Bhutan  
World Heritage Centre, UNESCO & Orient Cultural Heritage Sites Protection Alliance, France



Centre  
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sur les civilisations  
de l'Asie orientale



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# BHUTAN CULTURAL ATLAS



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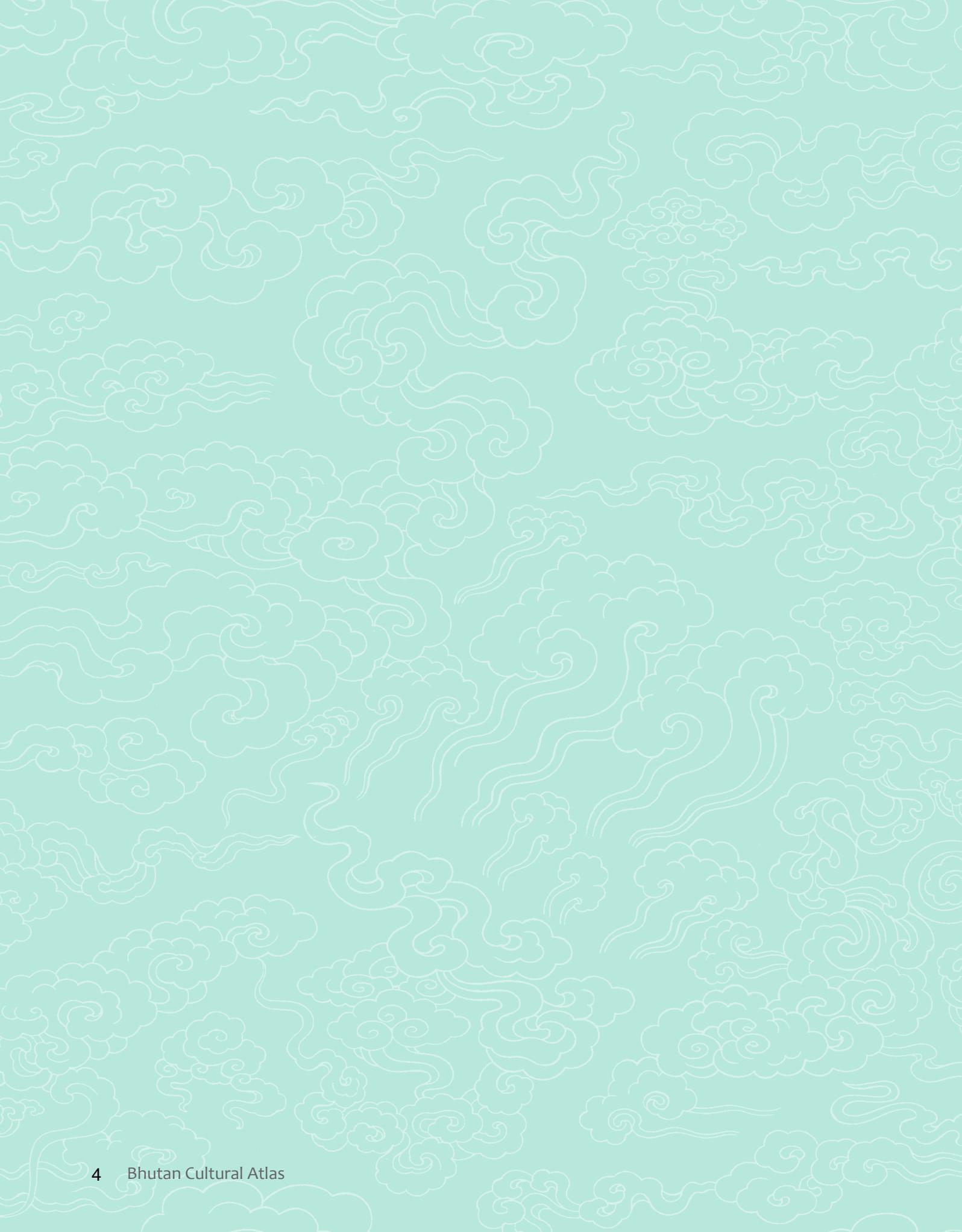
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The Institute of Language and Culture Studies (ILCS), a college of the Royal University of Bhutan, has the mandate to preserve and promote Bhutan's cultural heritage in all its diverse forms. ILCS offers formal courses on culture, but it goes further and strives to document and archive Bhutan's rich culture for posterity. The Bhutan Cultural Atlas (BCA) project is one outcome of this endeavour.

BCA contributors research, study, and document the historic, religious, cultural, and contemporary communities of Bhutan. The project was initially funded by UNESCO Delhi and the World Heritage Centre, and later on the Orient Cultural Heritage Sites Protection Alliance (OCHSPA), France, offered to help fund the project, since the aims of BCA befitted their interest and mission. ILCS has thus far documented the tangible and intangible heritage of Bumthang district and Trongsa district.

The BCA project has served as a rewarding research opportunity for select faculty members and some senior students, enabling them to upgrade their research skills under the supervision of Dr. Françoise Pommaret, Director of Research CRCAO/CNRS, France, and Adjunct Professor at ILCS. Eventually, BCA aims to provide an informed database for all interested organizations and individuals.

The project's success is the combination of many efforts from all corners of the globe. I thank UNESCO and OCHSPA for their financial support and Dr. Françoise Pommaret for her invaluable guidance and content development. I also wish to thank Ms. Yannick Jooris, Ms. Li-Ping, Mr. Matt Robinson, Ms. Jude Polsky, all the ILCS researchers, and others who have worked tirelessly behind the scene.

Once again, I would like to thank everyone involved for their contributions to this project.

Tashi delek.

# སྒྲིབ་བརྗོད།

ལས་འགུལ་འཛིན་སྐྱོང་པ།

སློབ་དག་དབང་རྒྱ་མཚོ་དང་། སློབ་བསྟན་འཛིན་ཚོ།

རིག་གཞུང་མཐོ་རིམ་སློབ་གྲྭ་ལྷན་ཚུགས་པ།

༣ རྒྱལ་ཁབ་རང་དབང་གི་དོན་རྒྱལ་གཟུགས་ཅན་གྱི་ལམ་སྲོལ་ལྷ་ཁང་དང་དགོན་སྡེ་ རྫོང་གཞི་དང་ཕོ་བྲང་ ཕྱིན་ཅན་གྱི་གནས་ལ་  
 སོགས་པ་དང་ གཟུགས་མེད་གྱི་ལམ་སྲོལ་གཡུས་སློ་སོ་སོའི་ནང་ དང་ཕུ་ལས་དར་ཡོད་པའི་འཆམ་དང་ཞབས་བྲོ་ ལྷ་གསོལ་དང་ལྷ་  
 གསོལ་ དུས་མཚན་དང་དགའ་སྟོན་བརྗོད་སྲིད་ལ་སོགས་པ་ མི་སྡེ་དང་འབྲེལ་བའི་སྲོལ་རྒྱུན་བཟང་པོ་ལེ་ཤ་ཅིག་དར་ཡོད་མི་ཚུ་ ཡ་  
 ལས་བྱ་བ་རྒྱུད་དེ་ ད་ལྟོའི་བར་ན་ཡང་མ་ཉམས་པར་ཡོད། དེ་ཚུ་མི་ཉམས་གོང་འཕེལ་གཏང་ཐབས་དང་ འབྲུག་གི་ལམ་སྲོལ་བཟང་པོ་  
 ཚུ་འཛམ་གླིང་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིའི་མི་དམངས་ལུ་གསལ་སྟོན་དང་ ཤེས་ཡོན་སྡེལ་ཐབས་ལུ་ རིག་གཞུང་མཐོ་རིམ་སློབ་གྲྭ་གིས་ རྒྱ་གར་གྱི་ལི་ལུ་  
 ཡོད་པའི་འཛམ་གླིང་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་ཡུ་ནིས་ཀོ་(UNESCO)ཡིག་ཚང་ལས་མ་དངུལ་དང་ ལམ་སྟོན་གྱི་རྒྱབ་སྐྱོར་ལེན་ཏེ་ སྤྱི་ལོ་༢༠༠༦ལས་  
 ལམ་སྲོལ་དང་སྲོལ་རྒྱུན་ཉམས་ཉེན་ཡོད་མི་ཚུ་ ཞིབ་འཚོལ་འབད་དེ་ པར་དང་སྐྱུགས་མཐོང་ཐོས་འཕྲུལ་རིག་གི་ཐོག་ལས་ ཐོ་བཀོད་  
 འབད་ནི་འགོ་བཙུགས་ཅི། ལྷན་པར་དུ་ སྤྱི་ལོ་༢༠༡༢ལོ་ལས་ རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་ཡུ་ནིས་ཀོ་ཡིག་ཚང་ལས་ འབྲུག་གི་ལམ་སྲོལ་ས་ཁྲ་བཟོ་ནིའི་  
 མ་དངུལ་གྱི་རྒྱབ་སྐྱོར་གནང་པ་ལས་བརྟེན་ཏེ་ མོ་བཏབ་གྱི་ལས་འགུལ་སྡེ་ སྤྱི་ལོ་༢༠༡༣ལོ་ལུ་ རུམ་ཐང་རྫོང་ཁག་འོག་གི་ལམ་སྲོལ་  
 བཟང་པོ་དག་པ་ཅིག་དོས་འཛིན་འབད་དེ་ རྒྱབ་ཁྲུངས་ཞིབ་འཚོལ་འབད་ཐོག་ལས་ གནས་སྤངས་དང་བཟོ་བཀོད་ཚུ་ པར་དང་སྐྱུགས་  
 ཐོ་བཀོད་འབད་ཡི། འདི་གི་འབྲུག་ལས་ སྤྱི་ལོ་༢༠༡༤དང་ ༢༠༡༥ལོ་ནང་ རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་ཡུ་ནིས་ཀོ་(UNESCO)དང་ ཨེ་ལེན་ས་(Al-  
 liance/OCHSPA)གཉིས་གྱི་མ་དངུལ་རྒྱབ་སྐྱོར་ཐོག་ལས་ རྫོང་གསལ་རྫོང་ཁག་འོག་གི་སྲོལ་རྒྱུན་བཟང་པོ་ཉམས་ཉེན་ཡོད་མི་ཚུ་  
 གཙོ་རིམ་བཟོ་སྡེ་ ཞིབ་འཚོལ་འབད་ཡི།

ལས་འགུལ་གྱི་སྐྱོར་ལས་ འབྲུག་དང་ཕྱི་མི་ཡོངས་ཀྱིས་ཤེས་ཐབས་ལུ་ ཞིབ་འཚོལ་བསྐྱུས་དོན་ཕུང་ཀྱུ་རེ་ ཡིང་སྐྱུང་ནང་འབྲི་རྩོམ་འབད་དེ་  
 པར་དང་སྐྱུགས་སློག་རིག་ཏུ་མཛོད་ཁ་བྱང་www.bhutanculturalatlas.org རང་ཕྱིན་ཏེ་ཡོད། ལས་འགུལ་འདི་ལུ་བརྟེན་ཏེ་ ཞིབ་  
 འཚོལ་ལུ་དང་འདོད་ཡོད་མི་རིག་གཞུང་མཐོ་རིམ་སློབ་གྲྭའི་ལེགས་བཤད་པ་ཚུ་ལུ་ ཞིབ་འཚོལ་འབད་ཐངས་ཀྱི་རིག་ཚུལ་དང་པར་ཆས་དང་  
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ད་རེས་ལས་འགུལ་ དེ་ཅིག་གྲུབ་འབྲས་བཏོན་ཚུགས་མི་དེ་ཡང་ གཙོ་བོ་འཛམ་གླིང་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི་ཡུ་ནིས་ཀོ་དང་ ཨེ་ལེན་ས་ཡིག་ཚང་གི་ཁ་  
 ཐུག་ལས་ མ་དངུལ་གྱིས་མ་ཚད་པར་ཞིབ་འཚོལ་དང་ ཐོ་བཀོད་ལམ་སྟོན་གྱི་རྒྱབ་སྐྱོར་གནང་པ་ལས་བརྟེན་ཨིན། ལས་སྡེ་དང་ལས་  
 ཐུང་འབྲས་མི་ཆམ་ཉམ་ལུ་ རིག་གཞུང་མཐོ་རིམ་སློབ་གྲྭའི་ཁ་ཐུག་ལས་ བཞུན་ཆེ་ཟེར་ལུ་ནི་དང་། ལྷན་པར་དུ་ད་རེས་གྲུབ་འབྲས་  
 ལྷན་ལུ་གི་གོ་བསྐྱུར་ཞབས་འཛུམས་དོན་ལུ་ མ་དངུལ་གྱི་རྒྱབ་སྐྱོར་ལོགས་སུ་གནང་མི་ལུ་ བཞུན་ཆེ་ཟེར་ལུ་ནི་ཨིན། ད་ལས་ཡར་ཡང་མ་  
 དངུལ་དང་ལྷན་རིག་གི་རྒྱབ་སྐྱོར་འཕྲོ་མཐུད་དེ་གནང་འོང་མཛོ་བའི་རེ་བ་དང་སྟོན་ལམ་ཡོད།། བཞུན་ཆེ།

## FOREWORD

*Prof./Dr./Mr. Roland LIN Chih-Hung,  
Asia and the Pacific Unit, World Heritage Centre, UNESCO ♪  
Mr. Etienne Mathieu, President, Orient Cultural Heritage Sites Protection Alliance, France*

**T**he UNESCO World Heritage Centre, in close collaboration with the UNESCO New Delhi Office, together with the Oriental Cultural Heritage Sites Protection Alliance (NGO, OCHSPA, Paris, France) and their generous financial contribution, have had the pleasure providing their technical support to the Government of Bhutan and related institutions in overseeing the implementation of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, in addition to scientific work concerning Heritage Inventory and Cultural Atlas issues. We have been pleased to see the development of this joint effort be instrumental in enabling the Govt. of Bhutan to finalise and officialize its very first World Heritage Tentative List in 2013 and launching a series of awareness-raising and capacity-building activities on cultural landscape management. This encouraging primary output is hoped to influence the overall improvement of the Bhutanese National Heritage Inventory System (with technical input from the University College, London and with the funding of UNESCO-Korean Funds-In-Trust and OCHSPA funding); to finalise their first National Heritage Laws on Heritage protection (in cooperation with financial support from Kyushu University, Japan) as well as to enable Bhutan to be an active participant in the international dialogue on the Serial Silk Roads World Heritage Nomination Process (with the UNESCO-Korean FIT funding).

The 1972 World Heritage Convention defines cultural heritage sites as monuments, groups of buildings; sites or landscapes that possess Outstanding Universal Value from the facets of art, history or ethnology and anthropology. Inspired by this definition, the expert team of Bhutan Cultural Atlas decided to map Bhutanese sites, monuments, buildings and other structures which serve as testimony to “*Reflect the cultural and artistic values of a community or the nation of Bhutan*”; “*Give a sense of identity to a community*”; “*Reflect the attachment to and a sense collective ownership by the nation or a community of Bhutan*”.

Today, we are pleased to see the Royal University of Bhutan producing its very first brochure on the Bhutan Cultural Atlas at the Cultural Atlas Workshop which is to be held this year in Thimphu, Bhutan on 26 April 2016. This publication and the Bhutan Cultural Atlas initiatives and Workshop have been made possible thanks in particular due to the support from the Venerable Master Shiuh-Hui, Honorable President of NGO, OCHSPA as well as hundreds of independent donors ranging from China, France, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, USA and Vietnam.

Finally, we wish to express our sincere appreciation to the experts team of the ILCS, Royal University of Bhutan and CNRS (France), as well as the Govt. of Bhutan, particularly the staff from Division for Conservation of Heritage Sites, Dept. of Culture, Ministry of Home & Cultural Affairs, for this joint endeavour and their scientific and professional collaboration. We firmly believe the good process in Bhutan for identifying and understanding local cultural assets serves as an integral and vital primary step towards linking culture and community development. In this context, cultural mapping of the present project consists of surveying; inventorying and locating cultural resources on the map thereby optimizing the existing culture background of Bhutan.

## FOREWORD

*Françoise Pommaret, PhD  
Director of Research, CRCAO/ CNRS, France  
Adjunct Professor, ILCS, RUB*

**T**he Bhutan Cultural Atlas (BCA) is a project initiated and funded by UNESCO Delhi, World Heritage Centre, and the Orient Cultural Heritage Sites Protection Alliance, France. It aims at documenting the tangible and intangible heritage of the districts of Bhutan, therefore contributing to the preservation of culture, one of the pillars of Bhutan's GNH policy.

BCA also aims at providing an informed database for policymakers, the Department of Culture (MoHCA), cultural institutions, tourism stakeholders, CSOs, and the national and international public. The documentation that is carried out in the field is subsequently standardised and uploaded on a dedicated website: [www.bhutanculturalatlas.org](http://www.bhutanculturalatlas.org)

The Institute of Language and Culture Studies (ILCS Taktse), a college of the Royal University of Bhutan, is the implementing agency. The project serves as a research opportunity for interested faculty lecturers who are trained in qualitative research methods and audiovisual techniques. It also allows ILCS's audio visual unit to record, store, and edit audiovisual content, thus creating an important archive.

The project's training sessions and academic content are supervised by Dr. Françoise Pommaret, Director of Research CRCAO/CNRS France and Adjunct Professor, ILCS. The project is managed at ILCS and in the field by the ILCS Deans of Research. The first project manager, Lopen Ngawang Jamtsho, was subsequently sent for a Masters degree at Nalenda University, with a partial scholarship from the Orient Cultural Heritage Sites Protection Alliance, and he was replaced by Lopen Tenzin Dorji, ILCS's Acting Dean of Research.

The project would not have been possible without the dedication and audiovisual technical knowledge of Yannick Jooris, who has long been associated with ILCS's audiovisual unit, and Ms. Li-Ping, our webmaster. Our two English editors, Matt Robinson and Jude Polsky, both lecturers at ILCS, also worked hard to unify the research materials and the difficult spellings to render the texts more readable in English.

ILCS's Director, Lopen Lungtaen Gyatso, has always demonstrated great enthusiasm for this project, and without his full support it could not have come to fruition.

The three components of the project: training, documentation, and dissemination of information, are equally important. They require good coordination, discipline, and long term planning among all the researchers involved, as they are also full-time lecturers. Through this project, the engaged ILCS lecturers have built team spirit and rediscovered, beyond books, the rich cultural heritage of Bhutan.

The BCA project has currently covered two districts in its first phase: Bumthang and Trongsa. Excerpts of the website - [www.bhutanculturalatlas.org](http://www.bhutanculturalatlas.org) - are presented in this booklet, with the hope that it will entice readers to use the website.

Tashi delek.

# BUMTHANG

**B**umthang is the region encompassing four valleys which are sub-districts (gewog): Chhume, Chhoekhor, Tang and Ura with altitudes from 2,600 meters (8,530 feet) to 4,000 meters (13,125 feet). Bumthang (2715 sq. km and 16,116 inhabitants) is today one of the districts of Bhutan with its capital in Jakar (also spelled Byakar).

More than 66% of the district is covered with forests. Potatoes introduced in the 1980s are now an important source of income although the main crops still remain buckwheat (sweet and bitter), barley and wheat. The introduction of rice cultivation in the 2000s in some pockets was a revolution.

Until the 1980s, Bumthang was a fairly poor and isolated region despite its status as the main residence of the first and the second Kings. However, since the construction of the east-west road in the late 1970s, the area has undergone significant economic development. Tourism and agricultural projects, in particular, have helped Bumthang attain a good level of prosperity. Its “star products” include white beer (Red Panda), honey, cheese and woollen textiles.

Bumthang means ‘the plain shaped like a bumpa’, a holy water vase. According to tradition, Bumthang was one of the valleys where the Tibetan King, Songtsen Gampo (7th c.), erected a temple, Jampa Lhakhang, one of his 108 Buddhist temples. In the 8th century, Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) is said to have left several traces of his visit such as imprints in rocks and “religious treasures”. Bumthang provided a temporary home to famous Tibetan saints of the Nyingmapa schools Longchen Rabjam (1308-1363) and Dorje Lingpa (1346-1405). However, the most famous of all the religious men is Pema Lingpa (1450-1521) regarded as the ancestor of the Wangchuck family. In the middle of 19th century, Jigme Namgyel (1825-1881) who was the de facto ruler of Bhutan and the Trongsa Penlop settled in Bumthang. His son Ugyen Wangchuck who became the 1st King was born in Bumthang. From Jigme Namgyel until the death of the 2nd King in 1952, Bhutan was governed mainly from Bumthang.



### Prakar Durchoe



- ❧ **Local name** Prakar Durchoe
- ❧ **Date** Bhutanese calendar:  
9th month 17-18th Day  
Western calendar dates to be  
verified every year
- ❧ **Category** Intangible heritage  
religious festival
- ❧ **Geographical Location** Prakar  
Manor, Chhume, Bumthang  
district

The Durchoe, religious festival of Prakhar village is sponsored by the Choeje family and the villages of Prakar and Nangar. It celebrates the death anniversary of Thugse Dawa Gyeltshen (b.1499-?), the son of the great saint Pema Lingpa (1450-1521). The festival takes place on the 17th and 18th days of the 9th month of the Bhutanese calendar (October/November) in the Prakar Manor (ngatshang) and the entire community of Chhume valley attends the festival. The dances and music are performed by the monks belonging to the Nyingmapa religious school from the nearby monastery of Nyimalung, founded by Dasho Gonpo Dorji and Doring Trulku in 1938. The descendant of Dawa Gyeltshen, Dasho Gonpo Dorji was then the Lord of Chhume and he was also responsible for the construction of Prakar Manor in the 1930s.

The dances take place in the courtyard of the manor and include amongst others, the Black Hat Dance, the Dance of the Three Gings of Pema Lingpa and the Dance of the Drummers from Drametse. The jokers (atsara) are monks, which is an unusual feature of this festival. At the end of the second day, the villagers line-up to get blessings from the statue of Thugse Dawa Gyeltshen brought out from the inner sanctum.

#### Research team

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# Tang Namkha Lhaxhang Rabney

- Local name Tang Namkha Lhaxhang Rabney
- Date Bhutanese calendar: 9th day of the 10th lunar month to 11th day of the 10th lunar month  
Western calendar: to be verified every year
- Category Intangible heritage - religious festival
- Geographical Location Namkha lhaxhang, Tang valley, Bumthang district

This three-day annual ritual commemorates the founding of Namkha Lhaxhang (Tang valley, Bumthang) by Lama Namkha Samdrup, hence the name Rabney. It is also performed for the peace and prosperity of the upper Tang villages which sponsor it.

The Tibetan Lama Namkha Sumdrup came to Tang after founding Ngang Lhaxhang in the upper Choekhor valley of Bumthang in the 16th century. While performing the consecration of this temple, he saw the Tang local deity Rinchen Goenyak, who is also the cattle deity, come as a yak and danced in the courtyard. The two other great protective deities Gonmo (Lhamo) and Gonpo join him as they accompanied the lama. Based on this, Lama Namkha Samdrup established this annual event to which all the villagers contribute to please the deities.

The lama from Thowadra monastery in Tang leads the ritual, Thowadra being the residence of the local deity. The first day is dedicated to the preparation. On the second day,

women perform folk dances in the temple after the prayers are over. In the meantime, men dressed as warriors called pazaps, climb in a long procession up to Ogyen Choling manor to invite the lord (Choeje) to the ceremony. On their way back, they are received by the women and all come back singing to the temple ground.

The highlights of the festival are the dances of Gonpo, Gonmo (Lhamo), also called 'Gadpo' and 'Gadmo' in Tang and Rinchen Goenyak. These three deities are represented by mannequins wearing huge masks and moved by people. The yak, also simply called Dawala by the villagers, is very popular and its wooden mask has articulate jaws which clap, and it is considered as a blessing.

Offering of rice cakes (tshogs) to the guests of honor is a very important part of the ritual. The guests have to reciprocate with money. Finally money is also offered to the deities in a ceremonial and public manner while dancing and drinking continue into the night. The last day is a repetition of the 2nd day, minus the procession to Ogyen Choling.

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# Tharpaling Gonpa



- 🌀 **Local name** Tharpaling Gonpa
- 🌀 **Date of establishment** 13th century
- 🌀 **Category** Heritage site - monastery
- 🌀 **Geographical location** Tharpaling, Chhume gewog, Bumthang district

### Description

Tharpaling monastery located at 3,600m is composed of a series of buildings overlooking the Chhume valley. A rough road starting from the Gyetsa village on the Trongsa-Jakar highway leads to the monastery in half an hour but it is often cut in summer.

Otherwise Tharpaling can be reached on a 3 hour walk from Gyetsa village or on a 3 hour steep walk from Lamey Gonpa in Choekhor, crossing a pass above Choedrak monastery.

### History

Tharpaling was, it seems, first established by Lorepa (1187-1250), a Drukpa Kagyupa lama from Tibet. The temple that he is said to have founded is a small building, lower than the main complex.

In the 14th century, another temple was founded by Longchen Rabjam, the great philosopher of the Dzogchen, a religious movement of the Nyingmapa school.

Longchen Rabjam (1308-1363) had to flee Tibet and lived in exile in Bumthang for almost ten years. He built several temples there, including Tharpaling built in 1352.

Tharpaling was restored several times but most notably by the First King at the beginning of the 20th century.

The monastery prospered and was always an active centre for Nyingmapa teachings. In 1985, a monastic school (Jangchub Choeling shedra) was founded above the main complex. There are about 20 cells for monks.

The Eight Chortens commemorating events of the life of the Buddha (Chorten Deyge) below the main complex are recent and were consecrated in 2001.

Higher up, a new temple, Dzambala lhakhang, has been built in the early 2000s to house the memorial chorten of the great master Nyoshul Khenpo (1932-1997) by his wife Ani Damchoe.



### **Architectural style / school and related art works**

The original small temple contains paintings of Lorepa and of Tsangpa Gyare, the founder of the Drukpa school, and the restoration dates perhaps, from the 19th century.

The Tharpaling main building houses two temples. The temple on the ground floor called the Tshogkhang, is adorned with statues of Longchen Rabjam, Guru Rinpoche, Trisong Detsen, the 8th century Tibetan king who requested Guru to subjugate the deities of Tibet, Shantarikshita (Shiwatso), the Indian monk first invited to build Samye monastery in Tibet, as well as the great 18th century master Jigme Lingpa.

The small temple on the upper floor was restored in the time of the First King, Ugyen Wangchuck. It contains very beautiful paintings of the paradise of Amitabha; also of Longchen Rabjam, Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, and Guru Dewa, a rarely-seen form of Guru Rinpoche. The principal statues are those of Samantabhadra, Guru Rinpoche and Longchen Rabjam.

The assembly hall of the monastic school with beautiful paintings of the Sixteen Arhats and the lineage of Longchen Rabjam, is well worth seeing.

### **Social cultural function**

The monastery is an important religious landmark of Bhutan, a monastic school where an ancient specific monastic tradition is taught, and holds an annual prayer, a monlam, in the first lunar month.

### **Research team**

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# Sombrang (Sumthrang) Lhakhang



**Local Name** Sombrang

🌀 **Date of Construction** ca 1230

🌀 **Category** Heritage sites - Temple

🌀 **Geographical Location** Sombrang,  
Ura gewog, Bumthang district

### Description

Sombrang is surrounded with five sacred significant spots: a cliff like a piled text at north, conch shaped landscape at the south, pure holy spring water at the west and swastika (yungdrung) shaped rock bed at the east. The temple resembles a large two storey stone house with a large window (rabsel) facing east and an enclosed stone courtyard. Nearby is the large house of the lineage holder (choeje). A prayer wall marks the way to the temple.

### History

Some of the local traditions attribute the temple to Gyelwa Lhanangpa (1164-1224) of the Nyoe clan, closely associated with the Drikung Kagyu school, and who founded the Lhapa school in Bhutan. However the Bhutanese and Tibetan texts attribute the first foundation of the temple to Demchok alias Nyoe-toen Trushig Choeje (1179-1265) who came when he was 47 from southern Tibet. He is said to be the son of Gyelwa Lhanagpa but this seems debated. One of his descendents would be the great religious figure Pema Lingpa (1450-1521), a proponent of the Nyingma lineage.

At a pass of the mountain near Ura, the lama was stopped by a demon who had a human head and a body of an animal. The lama then manifested into the form of his tutelary deity Phurpa and subdued the demon. He then, took the head, limbs and heart as an offering to his deities. The chest bone and the skull of the demon remained as a sacred possession of the monastery.

When constructing Sombrang temple, the walls that were built during the day were always dismantled at night by demons. He had a dream that he should first construct a small temple in the south east direction of





Sombrang. Thus, he built a chorten at Shinyer, and afterwards, could complete the temple construction.

A lama from Sombrang, Tashi Dorje, a contemporary of Pema Lingpa invited the famous treasure discoverer Lethro Lingpa (1488-1553) to Sombrang. Tashi Dorje was a disciple of Pema Lingpa but also close to the Shamarpa lama of the Karma Kagyu school.

The temple was restored in the late 2000 under the initiative of the lineage holder.

#### **Architectural style / school and related art works**

The stone pillars, two in the courtyard and one inside the temple are testimonies to the past of the place. They are solid megaliths without any inscription dating probably to the proto-historic period. Their usage is not known although they are found in many places in central Bhutan. They might have been erected as demarcation or used for ritual purposes. Bhutanese consider that they are “wonders” from another realm and respect them.

Other important relics from the temple include thick bamboos which resemble a dorje (vajra) and are believed to have been given to his son by Gyelwa Lhanangpa himself after his “opening” of sacred sites at the Tsari Mountain in south east Tibet; and a small drum called the roar of the thunder. From the sound of the drum falling at this place, the monastery took its name.

The main statue represents the founder Demchok alias Nyoetoen Trushig Choeje.

The temple was probably restored at least once in the early 20th century.

In the late 2000, the temple was being restored by the family, the villagers and the government.

#### **Social cultural function**

It is a private temple with a lineage holder called the Sombrang Choeje and considered one of the most important places for the Bhutanese history as descendants from this lineage include, amongst others, Pema Lingpa and therefore the Wangchuck Royal family.

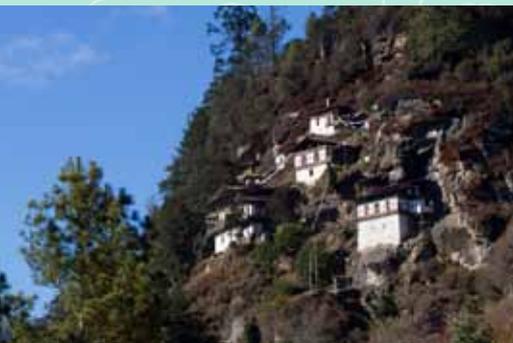
In the 10th Bhutanese month, the family of the Sombrang Choeje performs a ritual called Kangso which serves as a purification and blessing for the family and the community. Specific religious dances are performed.

#### **Research team**

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# Kunzangdra Gonpa



- 🌀 **Local Name** Kunzangdra
- 🌀 **Date of Construction** 1488
- 🌀 **Category** Heritage sites - Temple
- 🌀 **Geographical Location** Kunzangdra, Tang gewog, Bumthang district

### Description

This monastery, at 3,350 meters (10,990 feet), is located in the Tang valley about 12 kilometers on the Tang road from the Jakar-Ura-Mongar highway.

It is above the great saint Pema Lingpa's birthplace of Chel and in the hollow of a cliff which rises above the valley floor and visible from the road. A rough road reached the monastery in 2015.

Apart from Pema Lingpa's living quarters which are now the gonkhang, the temple of the protective deity Gonpo Maning, the monastery consists of four temples: the main temple with a wooden gallery contains images of Pema Lingpa, Guru Rinpoche and Namkhai Nyingpo, the last two attributed to Pema Lingpa himself; the Wangkhang, in which the principal statue is Avalokiteshvara with a thousand eyes and a thousand hands made by Pema Lingpa; Oezerphug, the meditation cave of Pema Lingpa's son, Thugse Dawa Gyeltsen (1499-1586) with a holy spring (grubchu) supposed to cure epilepsy and stroke.

Higher up from the main buildings is the Khandroma Lhakhang, which contains a gilded copper statue of Pema Lingpa and a copy of the prajana paramita sutra. It is built at the place where Yeshe Tshogyel, the enlightened consort of Guru has meditated. Nearby is a wooden post imbued with the life force of thousands of dakinis, and a chorten built by Thugse Dawa Gyeltsen.

Below the main temple is Pema Lingpa's meditation cave with a life like statue of himself and his gilded footprint, and besides a stone throne.

### History

It is one of the places where Guru Rinpoche meditated, as did his disciple Namkhe Nyingpo, and a little temple





is said to have been established there at the end of the 8th century. However, the present site was founded in 1488 by the saint Pema Lingpa who was born close by at Chel, and he made it one of his residences.

#### **Architectural style / school and related art works**

There are several stone buildings scattered through the mountain and on the rock face. They are small and look like houses.

Kunzangdra has a beautiful collection of woodblocks and several footprints on stones. It also contains superb images in clay and copper (see description above).

The chorten containing the remains of Pema Lingpa's mother is also near the cliff.

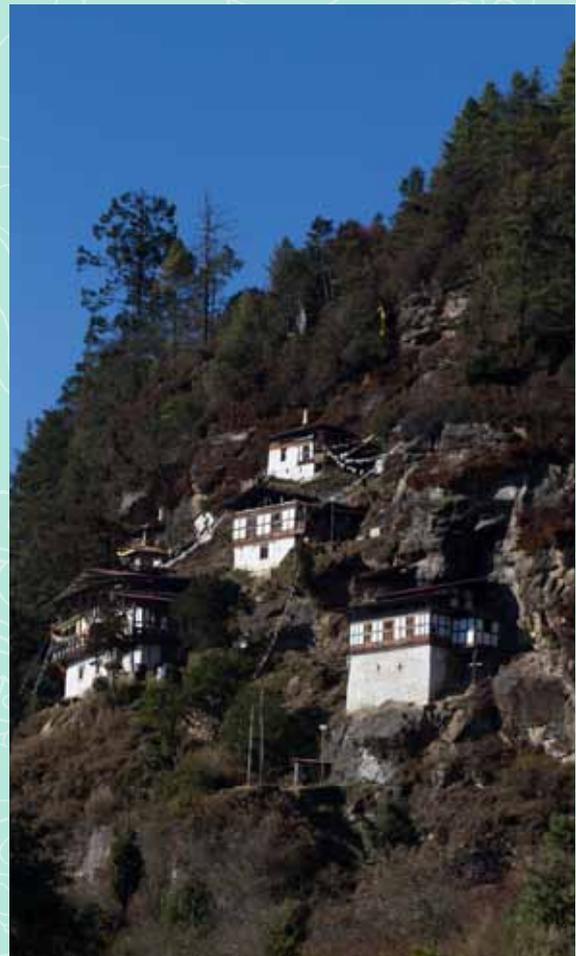
#### **Social cultural function**

The monastery is now under the care of the Gantey Tulku and has a small monastic school.

It is a revered place of pilgrimage and also houses meditation practitioners.

#### **Research team**

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# Kurje Lhakhang

- 🌀 **Local Name** Kurje Lhakhang
- 🌀 **Date of Construction** 8th century
- 🌀 **Category** Heritage sites - Temple
- 🌀 **Geographical Location** Chhoekhor, Bumthang district

### Description

5 kilometers north of the district headquarter and 1 km from Jampa Lhakhang, this majestic complex is located on the right bank of the Chamkhar river opposite Tamshing and Khonchogsum Lhakhang. The Kurje complex is made up of three buildings facing south surrounded by an enclosure made of 108 chortens.

### History

Kurje is one of the most sacred sites in Bhutan as Guru Rinpoche meditated here and left the imprint (je) of his body (ku) on a rock. In the 8th century, Bumthang was under the rule of a king named Sendhaka (alias Sintu Raja) whose home was the iron castle, Chakhar. This king was at war with his southern neighbour, King Na'oché. The latter killed the son of King Sendhaka, who became so distraught that he forgot to worship his personal deity, Shelging Karpo. The angry god withdrew the king's vital principle and as a result he fell gravely ill. As a last resort, his ministers decided to call Guru Rinpoche, whose supernatural powers were well-known throughout the Himalayas. When Guru Rinpoche arrived in Bumthang, he went to a place a short distance north of Chakhar where there was a large rock resembling a diamond-thunderbolt on the summit. Here lived the deity Shelging Karpo. Guru Rinpoche meditated there for a while, leaving the imprint of his body on the rock. Then he asked the King's daughter, whom he had taken as his consort, to go and fetch some water in a golden ewer. While she was away, he changed into his Eight Manifestations and began to dance in the meadow. So amazing was this spectacle that all the local divinities, except Shelging Karpo, came to watch. When the king's daughter came back, Guru Rinpoche transformed her into five princesses, each holding a golden ewer in her hand. The ewers reflected the sun's rays directly at Shelging Karpo's rock. Curious about this unusual flashing, Shelging Karpo decided to take the form of a white lion and come out to see what was going on. This was the moment Guru Rinpoche had been waiting for. Turning himself into a holy griffon, (garuda/jachung), he swooped down, seized Shelging Karpo and forced him to give back the King's vital principle. At the same time he made him promise not to cause any trouble for Buddhism and to become a protective deity. Guru Rinpoche planted his pilgrim staff

in the ground where it grew into a cypress tree which has a descendant said to stand to this day in front of Kurje Lhakhang. As for Shelging Karpo, he is still the deity of Kurje. King Sendhaka recovered his health and converted to Buddhism. Guru Rinpoche compelled the two kings to meet each other and make peace at a place in the Black Mountains called Nabji, where a stone pillar commemorates this meeting. This episode constitutes the first conversion to Buddhism of Bumthang.



The actual Kurje complex is made up of three buildings facing south.

The first building on the right (east) is the oldest and was built on the rock where Guru Rinpoche meditated by King Sendha of Bumthang after his conversion to Buddhism. Its structure was rebuilt by Minjur Tenpa in 1652 while he was Trongsa Penlop and before he became the 3rd Desi of Bhutan.

The second building called the Sampa lhundrup temple was built in 1900 by Ugyen Wangchuck, the First King, while he was still the Penlop of Trongsa. The temple was



built to house a monumental statue of Guru Rinpoche which was modelled after the advice of the great Nyingmapa lama, the Bakha Trulku, Rigzin Khamsum Yondrol.

A third building, the Ka Gon Phur sum lhakhang, was consecrated in June 1990 by the great master Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (d.1991). The construction of the new Lhakhang at Kurje was undertaken by Mayum Chonying Wangmo Dorji and the then Queen Mother, now the Royal Grand-mother Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck in keeping with the 4th King's wishes to build a sacred image of the deity Palchen Heruka while her mother Mayum Chonying Wangmo Dorji had also wished to construct a similar big image of Dorji Phurpa (Vajrakila) at this holy spot. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche then advised the then Queen Mother, now the Royal Grand-mother to build a temple of Ka-Gong-Phur-Sum (three esoteric teachings of Kagye, Gongdue and Phurpa) on this sacred place. Thus the construction started in 1984 in dedication to all the past Kings of Bhutan, and to Gongzim Ugyen Dorji, Gongzim Sonam Tobgye Dorji and Lyonchen Jigme Palden Dorji, and with deepest prayers for the long life and successful reign of the 4th Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck, and for the eternal happiness and well-being of the Kingdom of Bhutan in particular and all sentient beings in general. It is the biggest and most elaborate Ka-Gong-Phur-Sum Temple of the Terma Nyingma tradition. Ka-Gong-Phur-Sum literally means Three Mystic Revelations of The Eight Pronouncements (Kagye), Abhipraya Samaja (Gongdue) and Vajrakilaya (Phurpa).

The Royal Grandmother, Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck, also commissioned 108 chortens carved out of stones and placed at regular intervals on the top of the enclosure. These Chortens are known as Duduel or Jangchub Chortens and represent the Mind of all the Buddhas, and the steps towards spiritual enlightenment. They are symbols that commemorate Buddha's victory over evil forces and the absolute purity of his enlightenment. They enclose the Kurje complex, transforming it into a three-dimensional mandala along a pattern set by the Samye Monastery in Tibet.

In front of the buildings there are three large chortens, one of them made up of a heap of stones which are dedicated to the three Kings of Bhutan. A little away from the main complex but facing it and on the footpath to Jampa Lhakhang, the Royal Grandmother Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck, commissioned yet another beautiful temple which was consecrated in the Summer 2008. The temple was inspired and designed in 1988 by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche according to the Zangdopelri, Guru Rinpoche's paradise, and Mayum Choying Wangmo Dorji (d.1994) had offered to be the patron. Unfortunately both passed away and Ashi Kesang Choeden Wangchuck decided to take over the meritorious task. The temple was built in memory of Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck's grandfather, Gongzim Ugyen Dorji, of her grand aunt Ani Thukten Wangmo and her parents, Gongzim Sonam Tobgye Dorji and Mayum Choying Wangmo Dorji (d.1994). The construction was carried out under the supervision of Geylong Nyabji Thinley Gyeltshen.

### Architectural style / school and related art works

The oldest building to the east has two sanctuaries. Below the roof there is a carving of Guru Rinpoche as Garuda subduing the white lion. The upper temple is dedicated to the Past, Present and Future Buddhas, whose images stand in the sanctuary. On the wall to the right are painted the Twenty-One Taras and on the left are various deities associated with riches.

The lower temple is the holiest because this is the site of a cave containing a rock with the imprint of Guru Rinpoche's body. The cave cannot be seen as it is concealed by a large statue of Guru Rinpoche. His Eight Manifestations are displayed on the altar. Just to the left of the entrance is the figure of Shelging Karpo and an altar dedicated to him. On the right of the door, a thousand statues of Guru Rinpoche are lined up against the wall accompanied by three large statues: of the white Tara, the Goddess of Compassion; Guru Rinpoche; and either Pema Lingpa or Dorje Lingpa - the identity of this image is uncertain.

The wall opposite the door, on the right of the altar, is covered with clay, high reliefs commissioned by the senior wife of the Second King, Ashi Phuntsho Chogron, in the 1930s. They represent Guru Rinpoche and his Twenty-Five Disciples, his Eight Manifestations and various other forms accounted for in the tradition of Pema Lingpa. The ceiling is decorated with a magnificent mandala dedicated to the teaching of the esoteric text Gondu.

There are two holes in the rock to the left of the entrance. They offer a way to purify sins. The sinner is supposed to enter on one side, worm his way as best he can through the rock and come out the other side. If he gets stuck it is because he has committed too many sins and will only be able to free himself by saying prayers. (Just in front of the steps leading to the temples there is a fairly small rock with a hole which has the same purpose).

The second building was built in 1900 by Ugyen Wangchuck, the First King, while he was still the Penlop of Trongsa. The temple was built to house a monumental statue of Guru Rinpoche. It was modelled under the advice of the great Nyingmapa lama, the Bakha Trulku, Rigzin Khamsum Yondrol who said that the blessings brought about by the presence of this image would contribute to the prosperity and stability of the whole country. The image of Guru Rinpoche is about ten meters (over 32 feet) high and is surrounded by his Manifestations as they appear in the Sampa Lhundrup text. An image of the historical Buddha sits on the left side of the altar and Zangdopelri, the paradise of Guru Rinpoche, is on the right.

Facing the entrance, a second, smaller statue of Guru Rinpoche was commissioned by Tamshing Jagar, in the early 1960s. To the left of the window there is a large painting of the 4th reincarnation of Pema Lingpa, Ngawang Kunzang Dorje (1680-1723), and on the right is a painting of Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal with on his right the Umze Tenzin Drugye (First Desiof Bhutan from 1651 to 1656), and on his left Pekar Juney (the First Je Khenpo).

The porch forming the entrance to this temple contains particularly fine paintings of the Guardians of the Four Directions and various indigenous deities who were subdued by Guru Rinpoche and transformed into protectors of Buddhism: Dorje Legpa red in colour, holding a diamond-thunderbolt and riding on a goat; Ekajati, dark red, with one tooth and one eye; Yakdu Nagpo, the guardian deity of the valley, coloured black and mounted on a black yak; Kyebu Lungten, the guardian deity of the Four Valleys of Bumthang, red, wearing armour and mounted on a red horse; and of course Shelging Karpo, Kurje's deity, coloured white and riding a white horse.



The temple of Ka-Gong-Phur-Sum to the West has three storeys with the main image of Palchen Chemchog Heruka (Mahasri Parama Heruka) in wrathful form or in short form “Mahasri Heruka of Palchen Duepa”, with his mystic consort standing imposingly from the first to the third floor. Though there are different forms of Palchen Heruka in various traditions of Vajrayana Buddhism, this particular one installed in the new Temple of Kurje is the Chief of all Mahasri Heruka, and this sacred image has been made in accordance with the Longchen Nyingthig (The Heart Essence of Vast Openness) tradition. The image of Palchen Heruka has the beneficial effect of averting all undesirable elements like war, internal strife, natural calamities, misfortune, epidemics and bringing peace and happiness to the country.

On the right of Palchen Heruka stands the 17 feet image of Drangsong Throepa Lama Gondue with 3 heads, 6 hands and 4 legs while his consort has one head with two hands and two legs. On the left side of Palchen Heruka stands a 17 feet image of Sinbu Throepa Palchen Dorji Phurpa or Vajrakila with 3 heads, 6 hands and 4 legs with his consort who has one face with two hands and two legs.

Life size statues on the top floor on the right of Palchen Heruka are Khenlop Chosum or Khenchen Bodhisattava (Shantaraksita) on the right, Lopon (Guru) Rinpoche in the centre and Choegyul Thrisong Detsen on the left. Images of the lineage of Nyingmapa Lamas adorn the top portion of the altar.

On the side of Palchen Heruka on the top floor are statues of Drogoen Tsangpa Gyare Yeshe Dorji (12th c.), founder of the Drukpa Kargyu tradition with Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (17th c.) and Gyalse Tenzin Rabgye (17th c.), the fourth Desi of Bhutan on the right and left respectively. Images of the lineage of Drukpa Kargyu Lamas are beautifully placed in a row above the three statues.

Statues in the middle floor are Kagye (The Eight Pronouncements), Gongdue (Abhipraya Samaja) and Phurpa (Vajra Kilaya). They are the Chief Tutelary Deities (Yidam) of the Terma tradition of Buddhism in the Kingdom.

Statues on the ground floor are Buddha Sakyamuni which is the main image on this floor with Sariputra and Moggallana standing on his right and left, the sixteen Arhats (Neten Chudrug), Hashang, Upasaka Dhamata, and the four guardian kings of the Four Directions (Digpalas).

### **Social cultural function**

Kurje is a very important place of pilgrimage for the Bhutanese as well as the Buddhist from all over the world. The caretakers of the temples are usually from the Trongsa monastic community. Some of the monks from Trongsa dzong spend the summer at Kurje and perform numerous rituals including a Tsechu festival on the 10th day of the 5th Bhutanese month when a thanka is unfurled.

Since 1990, the Royal Grandmother Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck sponsors in the 4th Bhutanese month a ceremony (Grub) for the well-being of the Kings and the country in the Ka-Gong-Phur-Sum lhakhang.

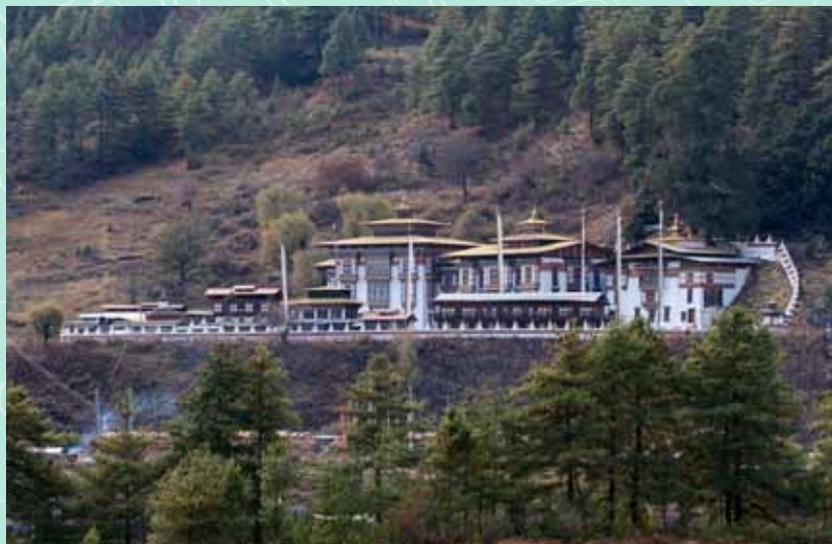
The kings and some royal family members are cremated in Kurje.

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### **Research team**

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# Wangdu Choling Palace



- Local Name Wangdu Choling dzong
- Date of construction Second half of the 19th century
- Category Heritage site - Dzong / Palace
- Geographical Location Wangdu Choling, Choekhor gewog, Bumthang district

### Description

At the altitude of 2600 meters, Wangdu Choling is located 1 km to the north-east of Jakar dzong slightly above the Chamkhar chu (river) and on its right bank, at a place formerly known as Samkhar. It is composed of a main complex, a temple outside and prayer-wheels.

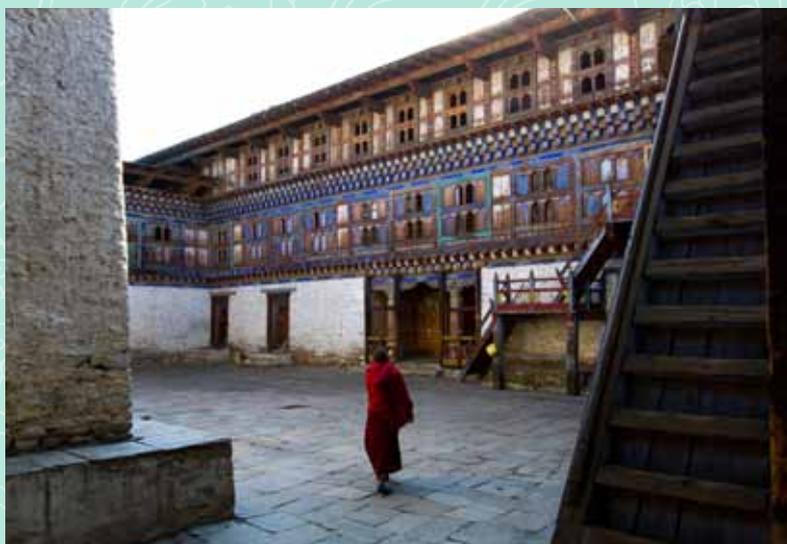
Although the lay-out of the main complex is inspired by the Dzong (fortress), the structure is less imposing and the number of large windows make the palace a more pleasant place to live

A stone paved courtyard is enclosed on all sides by two-storey high buildings forming a rectangle (shagkhor). In the middle of the courtyard stands the main tower (Utse) - four storey high. The windows, although very narrow at the bottom of the buildings, encompass the whole upper floors, forming wall-like windows called rabsel. There were three entrance gates: one in the west, one in the north, and one in the south.

The main tower housed temples on the upper floors and apartment on the middle floors while the bottom floors were used for storing grains and armoury. Important guests, especially lamas, could also be hosted in one of the rooms of the main tower.

In the shagkhor, the ground floor was used as storage rooms, brewery, weaving rooms, and close servants' rooms while the upper floor with its large windows had reception areas and living quarters.

One of the features of the palace is the landings or waiting-rooms which could accommodate servants and entourage. The royal family always had helpers in attendance whom they could call and who also acted as ushers for visitors. Each apartment in the Shagkhor had a bedroom, a sitting room, a small waiting room, a small



store, a bathroom, and a toilet. The 2nd King's apartment was on the southeastern corner.

**The Lingkana temple is part of the Wangdu Choling palace complex.**

It is a beautiful building looking like a large house 100 meters away on the North side of the palace. The temple's foundation date is not clear. Maybe at the time of Jigme Namgyel but most probably at the time of Ugyen Wangchuck.



**The Water prayer-wheels (Chukhor Mani)**

There are five Chukhor Mani to the east of the Lingkhana temple. Though the first one, closest to the palace is said to be as old as the palace, the four others were built by Ashi Choki and Dasho Ugyen Wangdi in 1964-1965.

**The Lingapang Archery Range (Bajo)**

On the west of the palace, the great fair of Wangdu Choling used to be held during the time of the 2nd King but the space was meant for the archery, that the 2nd king used to relish for days.

**History**

Wangdu Choling means the “religious place where the power is gathered”. It is a fitting name to commemorate a victory (Wangdu) and the religious part of the name (Choling) was given to Jigme Namgyel by his lama Changchub Tsöngru (1817-1856) when he taught a religious discourse there.

To celebrate his victory in 1857-1858 against Tshondru Gyeltshen for the post of governor of Trongsa, Jigme Namgyel built the Wangdu Choling dzong in 1858 in the plain of Samkhar below Jakar Dzong, where he had settled camp.

In 1862, Jigme Namgyel's wife, Pema Choki, gave birth to their second child who was called Ugyen Wangchuck who would become the 1st King. When the Duar War concluded, Jigme Namgyel retired in 1866, passing on the seat of Trongsa Penlop to Dungkar Gyaltsen, his elder brother. During his brief retirement until 1869, he spent his life at Wangdu Choling with his family. The central tower (utse) is the work of Jigme Namgyel but extensions were added by his son Ugyen Wangchuck, the first king of Bhutan (1862-1926).

When Jigme Namgyel's son Ugyen Wangchuck, succeeded him as the Penlop (governor) of Trongsa, he entrusted the family estate of Wangdu Choling and all its wealth to his sister Yeshe Chodron.

Although it had stood as private residence of the Trongsa Penlop Jigme Namgyel, it became Royal Palace when Ugyen Wangchuck was proclaimed the first monarch of Bhutan in 1907. Since then, both first and 2nd King used Wangdu Choling Palace as their residence.

After the death of his mother in 1884, Ugyen Wangchuck gave the Wangdu Choling dzong and its other valuable assets to his sister Yeshe Chodron and her husband. An oral story in Bumthang says that the shagkhor (enclosure of living quarters) of Wangdu Choling was built by Ashi Yeshe Chodron and not by Jigme Namgyel. Rather than residing at Wangdu Choling Ugyen Wangchuck preferred to live at Kunzang Choling Gonpa above Lamey Gonpa, and Thinlay Rabten just above Jampa Lhakhang.

Wangdu Choling in fact belonged to the king's sister Yeshe Chodron but it came to be a royal palace at the time of the 2nd King via his 2nd marriage by a twist of history.

Ashi Yeshe Chodron suggested that her nephew King Jigme Wangchuck also marry her other grand daughter Ashi Pema Dechen, the younger sister of Queen Phuntsho Chodron, and offered them the Wangdu



Choling Dzong, the family estate which Ashi Pema Dechen was to inherit from Ashi Yeshe Chodron. In 1932, the King married Ashi Pema Dechen, and took over the Wangdu Choling Dzong and established his royal court there.

The 2nd King Jigme Wangchuck planned to reconstruct Wangdu Choling Dzong in 1950-1951 but somehow only the large windows were reconstructed.

After the funeral rite of his father at Kurje in 1952, the 3rd King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck moved his base from Bumthang Wangdu Choling to Paro Ugyen Pelri palace and then to Thimphu Dechencholing.

Ashi Pema Dechen the Younger Queen Mother decided to stay back on her property and lived there with her son prince Namgyal Wangchuk and three princesses Ashi Choki, Ashi Deki and Ashi Pema, who were the subsequent and ultimate dwellers and estate holder of the Dzong.

Restoration projects are now slated with a first phase concerning the whole structure.

#### **Architectural style / school and related art works**

The stone work and the wood work on the palace are magnificent. The contrast between the white-washed walls and the intricate and painted woodwork of the upper floors demonstrates a great sense of aesthetic. The pitched roofs give to the structure an impression of lightness which is a hallmark of Bhutanese architecture. In the central tower of the main complex, there are the temple of local and protective deities (gonkhang) and the fortune temple (yangkhang).

- The Gonkhang has beautiful images of the Buddha, the Zhabdrung and Guru Rinpoche. The main local deity is Dralha Pungu (“Nine warrior brothers”). The paintings are blackened but represent the Eight manifestations of Guru Rinpoche and Pema Lingpa (1450-1521), the ancestor of the royal family.
- The Yangkhang has images of Tsheringma (deities of Long Life) and Namsey (deity of Wealth).
- The Shagkhor’s apartments are painted and decorated with exquisite religious or lucky motives. Most of the paintings date from the second half of the 20th century.
- The inner northern and western gates are decorated with fine paintings of the Four Guardians, the Old Man of Long Life and mythical animals.
- The Lingkhana temple is surrounded by a row of prayer-wheels and behind them, there are beautiful engraved slates. Downstairs, occupying a room, stands a large prayer-wheel.

The images in the Guru Lhakhang upstairs comprise Khenlop Chosum (Guru Rinpoche, King Trisong Detsen, and Khenpo Boddhisattva). The other statues include the deities of Long Life (Tshe-lha Namsum). It also houses a Kanjur, the words of the Buddha in 108 volumes. On the east wall, there is a Zandopelri (Guru's paradise) with lamas of the Nyingma school: Lonchen Rabjam, Pema Lingpa, Dorje Lingpa, Jigme Lingpa. On the west wall are paintings of the Drukpa Kagyu lineage with the Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in the middle.



### **Social cultural function**

The palace complex, besides being the summer seat of the 2nd King and therefore the centre of administration, had many more functions. There was a weaving centre for the royal family, stores for prized possessions, stables, a trade market in summer when a fair was held on the flat archery range, and a place for rituals for the neighbouring Samkhar community.

In 2001, a monk was appointed as superior (kangjup) in Wangdu Choling from Trongsa monastic body as people living near by expressed their interest in having monks for the benefit of their community and there was none since the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGOB) had taken over the palace. Therefore, under the initiative of Kangjup Jampel Dorji, a school with 15 novice monks were established on 13th April 2004 and is under the Trongsa monastic community. First headed by Lam Jampel Dorji until 2012, the head is now Lam Sonam Wangchuk.

The monastic school was upgraded with 30 monks and has 4th standard, after which they have to continue their education at Trongsa dzong monastic institution.

However, even before the establishment of the school and appointment of the superior, there was a resident caretaker looked after by the royal family for daily offerings and conduct rituals in Wangdu Choling temples and the Lingkhana temples. He used to come from the monasteries of Tharpaling or Nyimalung in the Chhume valley of Bumthang.

Besides religious ceremonies performed for the nearby community of Samkhar up on request and the daily rituals, the Lingkhana temple hosts yearly a seven day ritual called Sindog Khorlo from the 21st day of the 9th month and lasting a month for the protection of the king and the country. The monks perform daily rituals in the temple but the temple does not have a temple for protective deities (gonkhang). The gonkhang is in Wangdu Choling central tower.

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### **Researcher**

Dr. Françoise Pommaret, Adjunct Professor, ILCS, RUB, 2011

# Ogyen Choling Museum



- 🌀 **Local Name** Ogyen Choling Dzong - Ngatshang
- 🌀 **Date of establishment** 2001
- 🌀 **Category** Cultural Facilities - Museum
- 🌀 **Geographical Location** Ogyen Choling, Tang gewog, Bumthang district

### Description

Ogyen Choling museum is located in the manor of Ogyen Choling, one hour drive from Jakar.

### History

The site was occupied in the middle of the 14th century by the Nyingmapa master, Longchen Rabjam, who built a little retreat there. At the end of the 14th century, the saint Dorje Lingpa decided to follow suit and settled there. The original monastery seems to have been preserved up until the middle of the 19th century when Tshokye Dorje, the Trongsa Penlop and the 15th blood-descendant of Dorje Lingpa to be born at Ogyen Choling, built the manor which is seen today. The structure was very badly damaged in the earthquake of 1897 and Tshokye Dorje's grandson, the Jakar Dzongpon Ugyen Dorje, had to rebuild a large part of it at the beginning of the 20th century. Ogyen Choling is still a private property owned by the same family. The large building on the right is the Tsuglhakhang, which contains two temples with spectacular statues and exceptional paintings dating from the beginning of the 20th century. The temple on the ground floor is dedicated to Drolma, the Goddess of Compassion, and the one on the first floor to Jowo, the Buddha as a young prince. The central tower, utse, houses since May 2001, a Museum of the History and Life of Ogyen Choling.

The museum was financed by the owners themselves and established with artifacts found in the manor. It was set-up with the hope of sharing this heritage with as many people as possible and preserving the structure as a religious and social centre. It is a labour of love and a testimony to a





life which has disappeared, a unique opportunity to get a glimpse of the life in a lord's mansion before 1950.

The artifacts depicting the way of life are recreated in the original rooms of the central tower. Granaries, agricultural implements, kitchen, room for making alcohol, reception rooms, bedroom, caravan and trade room, textiles, bamboo and ratan rooms, religious dances costumes and masks room, library and printing-room are recreated in a didactic and authentic way, enriched by comprehensive captions. The whole visit gives the intimate feeling of stepping into a by gone way of life and touching the social, religious, and economic facets of a manor.

The museum also has a catalogue sold on the premises. Allow one to two hours to visit this museum and a guided tour is most of the time available. Entrance fee: free for Bhutanese, 200 Nu for foreigners. Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/Ogyen-Choling-Museum](http://www.facebook.com/Ogyen-Choling-Museum)

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### Researcher

Dr. Françoise Pommaret, Adjunct Professor, ILCS, RUB, 2011



## Buckwheat Dishes

Buckwheat which was the staple diet of the cold and elevated valleys of Bumthang, is cultivated as two species: bitter (*Fagopyrum tartaricum*: bjo) or sweet (*Fagopyrum esculentum*: jarey).

They form the main ingredient for several dishes, the most famous being khule and puta.

### KHULE

Khule, pancakes, are the most common way of eating both species of buckwheat but the bitter buck wheat flour requires prior soaking to take away the bitterness.

The flour is mixed thoroughly with water to form a lump less batter. Then the batter is poured evenly on a stone or iron greased griddle. When the batter dries and air bubbles burst, it is time to turn over the pancake. When the pancake is cooked both sides it is placed in a loosely woven bamboo basket and eaten with any dish, but traditionally with a chilli and cheese dish. Sichuan pepper (thingye) and butter can be added, especially when left-over pancakes are toasted in a stove.

**Ingredients:** 250g of buckwheat flour, 1/2 liter of water. An egg is optional.



### PUTA

Putas are buckwheat noodles made at home and they require a puta wooden press or nowadays a pasta press. The flour is kneaded with water to make a dough which is then placed in the press to produce noodles. A little quantity of noodle at a time is cooked in boiling water, then rinsed in cold water and set aside.

The sauce is made by heating oil (if possible mustard oil) and frying crushed garlic and chillis. The sauce is then poured over the noodles. The noodles are then tossed with onion leaves and Sichuan pepper as well as with the fried eggs cut into small pieces. Sometimes whey is poured over the puta. Puta can be eaten cold.

**Ingredients :** 300g buckwheat flour, oil, powdered or fresh chillis, garlic, salt, 2 eggs, fresh onion leaves, 1/2 tb spoon of Sichuan pepper (thingye).



**Reference:** Kunzang Choden. Chilli and cheese. Food and society in Bhutan. Bangkok: White Lotus. 2008.

**Researcher:** Dr. Françoise Pommaret, Adjunct Professor, ILCS, RUB, 2011

# Alcoholic Drinks

Any kind of grain is used to make alcohol: wheat, barley, millet, rice, maize or buckwheat depending on the region. Banchang and sinchang are made of grains fermented with home made yeast (phab).

## SINCHANG

Sinchang is a light cool drink and is the liquid which seeps out of the fermented grain.

## BANCHANG

Banchang is a hot drink obtained by adding hot water to the fermented grain and heating the mixture without boiling. It is then served from the pot with a strainer holding the liquid. Hot water can be added again and again to the fermented grains but of course the drink gets weaker.

## ARA

Ara is the strongest drink as it goes through a home distillation process of a fermented mass of grains. It is drunk cold and can be stored for several weeks. Usually colourless, ara can have a reddish tint if red cypress bark is added.

On special occasions and when it is cold, ara can be heated and mixed with butter and eggs, thus becoming a hearty drink called arakoekoe.

## CHANGKOE

Changkoe is also served on special occasions, especially to celebrate births. It is an alcoholic soup made of fermented rice or wheat and amaranthus seeds. It is cooked quickly by taking a portion of grain, which has been left fermenting for two weeks, and cooking it with water without boiling. Eggs are fried in butter, cut into pieces, then mixed into the alcoholic soup.

## Reference

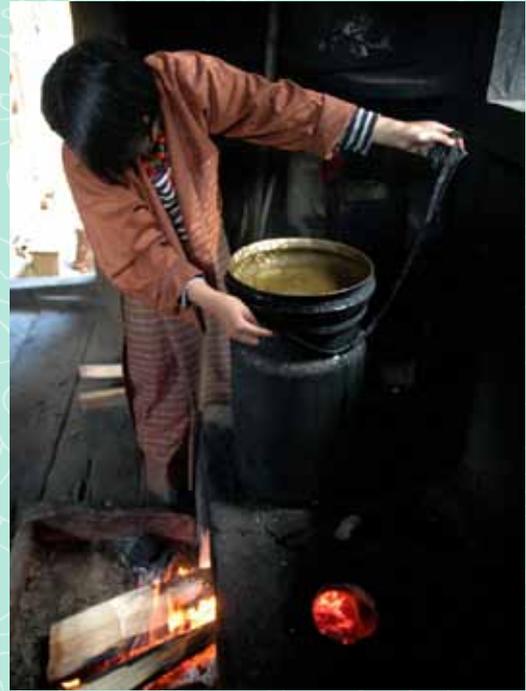
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## Researcher

Dr. Françoise Pommaret, Adjunct Professor, ILCS, RUB, 2011

## Photographer

Yannick Jooris



# Weaving



The most representative and typical craft of Bumthang are the woollen textiles.

## YATHRA

The Yathra are made of sheep wool or yak hair and consist of bands, several meters long which are woven today on the pedal loom but until the mid 1950s on a backstrap loom.

Their weave is twill ground with discontinuous weft patterning. They have a dark background and are often decorated with brightly colored geometric patterns which represented stylised flowers, signs of good luck or diamond.

Many women in Bumthang weave at home but there are now workshops in Chhume valley, especially in Zugne village. Cut and stitched, yathra were traditionally used as blankets, rain coats but today are also made into jackets, sofa covers and coats. The taste for colours has also changed and if the yathra in bold colours and patterns are still available, many are produced in more mute colours such as grey, white or beige. The warp -faced plain weave twill ground textile is also making a come back.

## MATHRA

This is another woollen speciality of Bumthang and is very popular to make both men and women winter clothes. The mathra are woven on a pedal loom and come into two rolls of twilled weave checkered cloth in darkish colours. The rolls are then cut by a tailor to make the clothes.

Originally the dyeing of the textiles was made at home with vegetal or mineral dyes. Then synthetic dyes became popular but there is a revival of traditional dyeing as although the process is tedious, the colours have richer hues.



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## Researcher

Dr. Francoise Pommaret, Adjunct Professor, ILCS, RUB, 2013



# TRONGSA

**T**rongsa is a district (dzongkhag) centered along the Mangdechu river and composed of four sub-districts (gewog): Drakteng, Langthel, KorphuNubi, and Tansibji. Located in the heart of the country with a rugged terrain, it covers an area of 1807 km<sup>2</sup>, with elevation ranging from 800 meters to 4,800 meters and a population of 16,000. It shares boundaries with Bumthang Dzongkhag to the northeast, Wangdiphodrang to the west and Zhemgang to the south. The climate is generally humid, and even tropical in the south. Agriculture farming and livestock rearing are the main source of income for majority of the people. Farmers grow almost all kinds of crops, including rice, and in some areas potatoes are the main source of cash income.

The Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park, established in 2000, covers an area of 1723 km<sup>2</sup> and has many endangered flora and fauna species. It is a habitat for one of the most globally endangered species, the Golden Langur monkey, and is home to protected species such as the tiger. Therefore, 87.15% from the total of area of Trongsa Dzongkhag is under forest cover ranging from mixed conifers in the north to chir pines and broadleaf forest in the south. Today, the landscape of the deep valley of the Mangdechu is altered because of the Mangdechu Hydroelectric project (720 MW) and smaller projects like the Tansibji Hydel.

The small trading town of Trongsa is located on slopes overlooking the Trongsa dzong which is the most impressive and symbolic structure of the district built in the 17th century. The dzong was in the 19th century the centre of power in Bhutan as central and eastern Bhutan were administered by the governor of Trongsa.

Jigme Namgyel who was the governor in the second half of the 19th century reunified the country and became the de facto strong man of Bhutan. His son Ugyen Wangchuck became the first King in 1907. A beautiful museum was established in the watchtower (Ta dzong) in 2008. Trongsa was since then associated with the Royal family who used to come down from Bumthang to Trongsa during winters. Several palaces were built south of Trongsa dzong and the socio-economic links between the two districts were strong, reinforced by language affinity.

The jungle of the south-west is home to a small distinct community called the Monpas who speak Olekha, an endangered language. The district is dotted with small remote temples and is known for its nettle weaving and pottery.



## Reference

[www.trongsa.gov.bt](http://www.trongsa.gov.bt)

## Janggola Dralha Solkha གུང་གོ་ལའི་དབྱ་ལྷ་གསོལ་ཁ།



- 🌀 **Local Name** Janggola Dralha Solkha
- 🌀 **Date Bhutanese** 3rd day of the 3rd month, but varies yearly
- 🌀 **Date Western** Early summer, but varies yearly
- 🌀 **Category** Intangible Heritage - Religious festival
- 🌀 **Geographical Location** Janggola and Ato Phai, Taktse village, Dragteng gewog, Trongsa dzongkhag

Festivals that resemble Janggola Dralha Solkha are celebrated all over central and eastern Bhutan, in various forms and under different names. Janggola Dralha Solkha, however, is unique to Taktse village in Dragteng gewog, Trongsa dzongkhag. The name “Janggola” comes from an ancient place located approximately 3 kilometers above Taktse village, where the ritual was previously celebrated. Villagers were obliged to shift the ritual to its present location - Ato Phai - however, when the water source at Janggola dried up.

There seem to be no texts regarding the origin of Mangde Ashang Solkha festival, which is celebrated every year in the third month of the Bhutanese calendar. It is a festival of the offering of prayers (གསོལ་ཁ།) derived from the Bon tradition, in which

villagers offer feast substances (ཚོགས་) to the local deity Dramze Yoezer Dorji. Dramze Yoezer Dorji is the deity of birth (Kyelha ལྷེ་ལྷ་), who is honored by Taktse, Yuesa, and Tashi Dingkha villagers. This ritual to the local deity falls in the white offering (དཀར་མཚན་) category, which suggests that he is a friendly, protective deity.

The local priest, called the phajo, performs the ritual for one day. Local villagers believe that by conducting this ritual the local deity will grace them by ensuring that no disasters or epidemics will befall them, and there will be no frost or hail on the wheat or buckwheat fields. Moreover, they will be blessed with many domestic animals, bountiful crops, and abundant wealth.

Janggola Dralha Solkha is held at Ato Phai,



located in a forested plateau 3 kilometers above Taktse village. This is not Dramze's abode, which is a big rock called Phola Dzong located 6 kilometers above Taktse village, but the ritual is held there.

### **Description of Activities**

Earlier, Taktse and Yuesa collaboratively sponsored this solkha, but when they divided into two different communities in 2008, Taktse villagers unanimously agreed to sponsor their own festival; neighbouring Yuesa sponsors a different solkha in their village.



In the morning on festival day, the head of Taktse community (chipon རྩི་དཔོན་) collects the necessary provisions (གཉེན་ཚང་): 2 phuel of rice, (phuel ཕུལ་ -1 measure is around 200 gm); half liter of milk and beverages; 1 kg of meat (this can be replaced with 1 piece of local cheese (རྩ་ཚོལ་) or 2 eggs); a small amount of butter or oil, sugar, salt, tea leaves, and chili; 1 phuel of wheat flour; 1 bje of unhulled rice; plus 20 Nu from each Taktse household. (A bje is a bre in Tibetan. The quantity is not standardized, but varies according to the area, valley etc. Usually 1 bje is equal to roughly 1.5 kilogrammes) The chipon and participating villagers bring these provisions on foot to Ato Phai.

At about 11 am, the villagers gather at Ato Phai and arrange the food for the feast for Dramze Yoezer Dorji, as well as a meal for the phajo; they prepare their own meal while the phajo is busy readying the required ritual items.

At about 12:30 pm, the phajo, wearing a large white scarf with red stripes, starts the service by first reciting a prayer, after which he reads the text of the Dramtse prayer, which is 29 pages long. This is followed by a tea break at around 1:30 pm, during which the phajo prepares the feast substances in three vessels filled with rice, meat, and eggs. The ritual resumes at 2:30 pm and ends around 3:30 pm. The phajo is then paid a stipend, and he and the villagers are served a meal. With this meal, Janggola Dralha Solkha comes to an end.

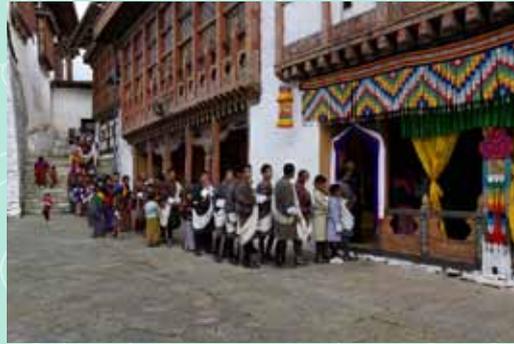
### **Informants**

Phajo Pema Gyaltzen, Tashi Dingkha  
Agye Konchok Tashi, 92, Taktse  
Aum Kelzang, Taktse

### **Researcher and Photographer**

Lopen Tenzin Dorji, Lecturer, Institute of Language and Culture Studies, Royal University of Bhutan, 2015

## Tshepamey Wang



- 🌀 **Local Name** Tshepamey Wang (Tshe dpag med dbang)
- 🌀 **Date** Bhutanese: 15th day of the 8th month  
Date Western: Dates to be verified, usually in early Autumn
- 🌀 **Category** Intangible Heritage - Religious Festival
- 🌀 **Geographical Location** Trongsa Dzong, Nubi Gewog, Trongsa district

### Description

There are many different kinds of blessings in Bhutan, and the one which is very popular in Trongsa is called the Tshepamey Wang (Tshe dpag med dbang). Tshepamey literally means Long Life (Tshe means Life, dBang means Blessing, and dpag med means boundless). This generally means Blessing of Long Life. However, Tshepamey (in Sanskrit Amitayus), is also the Buddha of Long Life.

### History

In 1541, Lam Ngagi Wangchuk from the Drukpa Kagyupa religious school came to Trongsa from Ralung (Tibet) and built a small mediation room in the place called Yuling in 1543, and then following a light built his meditation place where Trongsa dzong now stands.

According to Lopen Jambay, while meditating Lam Ngagi Wangchuk got ill several times and became worried that illness might disturb his meditation. So, in order to recovery from illness, obstacles and to increase his life span Lam Ngagi Wangchuk meditated and practised the yoga of Buddha Tshepamey/Amitayus for one month. One day when Lam was meditating, Tshepamey/Amitayus suddenly appeared in front of him and said, “don’t worry one day you will be cured of your sickness.” He ordered him to engage in his practice sincerely. If he did this practice effectively, the Buddha Tshepamey/Amitayus assured to him that his illness would be naturally cured and that the practice would also increase his life span, thereby he would ultimately attain enlightenment. After practicing the Buddha of



Long Life yoga for one month, Lam Ngagi Wangchuk was cured. That year the people of Trongsa requested Lam Ngagi Wangchuk to give the same blessing (Tshe dpag med dbang) to all the people in and around the region. He was 49 years old when he started the Blessing of Long Life (Tshe dpag med dbang) for the people of Trongsa.

### **The Blessing**

Before they give the blessing to the public, the monks headed by the Lam Neten performs the ritual and the basic mantras related to the blessing which starts from the 8th month of the Bhutanese calendar dated between 8th to 14th, which is exactly for a week long. The last day, on the 15th day of the same month, they offer the blessing to the public.



### **Social and Cultural Functions**

The blessing has a huge importance for people of many districts of Bhutan, and is also a great social occasion. After the death of Lam Ngagi Wangchuk, the blessing (Tshe dpag med dbang) continued as a yearly blessing on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month. At present the main relic during the blessing is the Walking Stick (Par khar tshig gsum) of Lam Ngagi Wangchuk. People across the country come for the blessing. Although the same blessing is also performed in Lhuntse and Jakar (Bumthang), the blessing in Trongsa is considered more valuable than the blessing given in the two other districts, because the Trongsa blessing was introduced by Lam Ngagi Wangchuk himself.

### **Informants**

Lam Neten Wangchuk, Trongsa Dzong  
Jampel, Library In-charge, Tshangkha village

### **Researcher**

Lopen Sangay Phuntsho, Lecturer, Institute of Language and Culture Studies, Royal University of Bhutan, 2009

# Drangla Lhakhang Nyingpa



- 🌀 **Local Name** Drangla Lhakhang Nyingpa (Drangla Gonpa)
- 🌀 **Date of Construction** Unknown
- 🌀 **Category** Tangible Heritage - Temple
- 🌀 **Geographical Location** Drangla village, Tangsibji gewog, Trongsa district

### Description

Drangla Lhakhang Nyingpa, locally known as Drangla Gonpa, is a privately owned temple approximately 45 kilometers from Trongsa town. The feeder road leading up to the Gonpa breaks off the Trongsa-Wangdue Highway 38 kilometers from Trongsa town. The road leading toward the temple is a farm road that climbs up to an elevation of 3000 meters (9836').

About a hundred meters from Drangla Lhakhang Nyingpa sits another temple called Drangla

Samtencholing Gonpa. Thick forest and scattered pastures surround the temples.

### History

The date of the temple's establishment is unknown. The current caretakers are the 5th generation of the same family to be looking after the temple. According to our source, the history of the temple was lost with the death of the current caretakers' parents, who were the previous caretakers, and there are no written documents regarding the temple's establishment. However, since the temple follows the Dorling Nyingmapa tradition, it is possible that the temple was established during the time of Tertön Dorji Lingpa (1346-1405) or during that of his spiritual son, Chogden Gonpo, also a disciple of Tertön Pema Lingpa (1450-1521), both of whom were active in the region.

The temple had been a one-storey house until 2001, when a renovation took place and a two-storey building was constructed.

In the past there were about 13 households in the area, but these families since moved near the national highway, leaving behind their land near the gonpa. People living in the area are solely dependent on cattle for livelihood



and there are only two families left near the gonpa.

### Architecture and Artwork

The gonpa is a two-storey square Bhutanese house, with a small courtyard in front and two meter high stone walls surrounding the temple. The temple itself is located on the top floor of the house. The ground floor and the room adjacent to the temple are used by the family taking care of the temple, and they also have a small kitchen attached to the west of the temple. The temple occupies a fairly small space in the house. The main altar houses statues of the Buddha Shakyamuni, Phurpa (Palchen Dorji Shonu, a tantric deity representing one of Guru Rinpoche's teachings), and Guru Rinpoche. A gonkhang (temple of protective deities) sits to the right of the altar.

The old painted murals were removed during the renovation in 2001 and then put back upon completion of the building work. Wall paintings of Guru Rinpoche, Dorji Chang (Vajradhara), Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, Tshering Namdruk, Menlha (Buddha of Medicine) and Phurpa (Palchen Dorji Shonu) can be seen today. Near the entrance of the temple stands a new prayer wheel.

### Social and Cultural Functions

The temple follows the Dorji Lingpa Nyingmapa tradition of Buddhism and performs three important rituals per year:

- 10th day of the 1st month of the Bhutanese calendar: Tshokhor (ritual feast)
- 10th-15th days of the 6th month: Summer ritual (Jachoe)
- 10th-11th days of the 12th month: Winter ritual (Lochoe)

### Informant

Aum Tshering Choden, caretaker, Drangla Lhakhang Nyingpa

### Researcher

Lopen Jigme Wangdi, Asst. Lecturer, Institute of Language and Culture Studies, Royal University of Bhutan, 2014



# Nabji Lhakhang

- 🌀 **Local Name** Nabod Lhakhang or Nabji Lhakhang
- 🌀 **Date of Construction** 8th Century
- 🌀 **Category** Tangible Heritage - Temple
- 🌀 **Geographical Location** Nabji, Korphu gewog, Trongsa district

### Description

Nabji Lhakhang's name comes from náboed (མཁོ་འདོད་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་), which means "taking an oath." Long ago in this location King Sindha and King Nawoche took an oath of non-violence against each other in the presence of the great Indian guru, Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche). Beside the entrance of the temple, there is a huge cypress tree believed to be the walking stick of Guru Padmasambhava.

The temple is located at 2156 meters in Nabji village, Korphu gewog, 110-115 kilometers by road

from Trongsa town, and another half hour walk up from Nabji Primary School. The temple is in the middle of a field, surrounded by a wall.

### History

According to traditional history, in the mid-8th century lived an Indian king named Sindha, alias Kunjom, who was exiled by his father, King Singgala, and subsequently became the king of Bumthang. There was another King from India named Nawoche who hated king Sindha and vice versa. During a battle King Sindha's son, Taglha Mebar, was killed by King Nawoche.

After his son's death, King Sindha stopped all sacrificial offerings to the protective deities and ordered all holy places to be covered with excrement. There upon, Shelging Karpo, the mightiest of gods and demons, stole the "life power" of King Sindha. Padmasambhava was then invited to cure the king, and he helped the king to regain his life power.

Padmasambhava also had a good relation with King Nawoche, so he was able to call both kings to the border of India and Mon where the present temple lies. A monolith was erected there with the handprints of both kings and the Guru. There are some marks on the edges of the monolith that are said to be from swords used for witness marking by the kings' retainues.

Later, the dakinis Khando Tashi Kheyuden, alias Machig Bumdan or Lhacham Bumden Tshomo;

Lhacham Oden Tshomo; Lhacham Tredan Tshomo; and Lhacham Gyaldan Tshomo decided to build a temple in this location, as it was a sacred place of Guru Padmasambhava. They would build the temple in the daytime, and in the evening demons and spirit foes would destroy it. This happened many times, frustrating the dakinis, so they prayed for Guru Padmasambhava to help them. Though the Guru was not present at that moment, they visualized him by facing toward the cliff, which was said to contain many sacred treasures. Guru helped by performing a sacred dance (Ter cham) in which he displayed many different forms, such as half human and



half animal. While the demons and spirits were distracted by the displays, the dakinis completed the temple.

A detailed story of this colourful history can be found in the book *Life of King Sindha and The Clear Mirror of Predictions*, compiled and edited by Yonten Dargye, National Library and Archives of Bhutan.

In the 13th century Terton Dorje Lingpa (1346-1405) consecrated the temple. In the 19th century a man named Tashi Wangdi from Bumthang came to Nabji as a guest, and later he extended the temple to what we see today. No major damage has happened to this day.

### Architecture and Artwork

Nabji Lhakhang is a one-storey temple built in the traditional Bhutanese style and surrounded by a wall. Upon entry, there is a corridor with a few prayer wheels and a room separate from the temple chapels, which is used as a storeroom during festivals and at times for the preparation of ritual cakes.

On the front wall of the temple are wall paintings of Dorje Lingpa, Pema Lingpa, and their lineage holders, as well as Thangtong Gyalpo (Chagzampa 1385-1464) and Green Tara, painted by a man named Lhalung Choki Wangchuk from Tibet.

On the right side of the entrance stand statues of the Four Guardian Kings attached to the outer wall of the inner chapel: two kings on each wall, with the entrance to the inner chapel situated in the middle.

On the left-side wall of the chapel are wall paintings of the Eight Manifestations of Guru Rinpoche; Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel; the great Kagyu saints Marpa and Milarepa; and the Three Long Life Deities, which were painted by a man named Tawdola, from Padamsambhava temple, which is half a km away from Tamshing Lhakhang in Bumthang. The paintings are said to be 60-70 years old. On the right side corner lies the main relic of the temple, the monolith, with the handprints of King Sindha, King Nawoche, and Guru Rinpoche.

In the inner chapel, there is a statue of Guru Rinpoche, said to have been made by Trulku Chogden Gonpo (1497-1557). On Guru Rinpoche's left side stand statues of Chenrezig (Avalokiteshvara); Chagtong Chentong (Avalokiteshvara with one thousands eyes and arms); Chana Dorje (Vajrapani); Future Buddha Jowo Jampa; and a statue of Terton Dorje Lingpa, which is said to have been made by Trulku Chogden Gonpo himself.

On right side of Guru Rinpoche, there are statues of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal; the god of wealth Zambalha; and Buddha Sakyamuni. On the right side corner of the inner chapel stands a statue of Menmo, the local water deity. On the left side corner of this chapel is a box containing the "souls" of the local protective deities, and beside this are statues of these deities: Pekar Gyalpo, the main protective deity of the community; the Black Mountains deity Jowo Durshing; the protective deity of Kurtoe Terdag Zorarakye; and Muktsen, protective deity of the Mangde region.

Near the entrance is a tree that is believed to be the walking stick of Guru Rinpoche. Toward the right edge of the temple near the windows sits a plain rock with the footprints of Dorje Lingpa and his horse. Beside the temple on the right side there is a stone attached to the wall that bears the fingerprints of Khandro Tashi Kheyuden.

The field that surrounds the temple is kept as a choezhi (field offered for religious people). The villagers of Upper and Lower Nabji cultivate the paddies annually in rotation. Beside the temple are two rocks:



the upper represents the sacred Body of the Dakinis, and the lower represents the sacred Speech of the Dakinis. The monolith inside the temple represents the sacred Mind of the Dakinis. The speech sacred rock has some graffiti on it, believed to be the Khandro Dayig (symbolic script of Dakini).

### **Social and Cultural Functions**

Currently, the community takes care of the temple. The Chakhar Lama from Bumthang and his descendants have been performing the annual drup, or grand religious ceremony, at the temple in the same manner as it is performed at Jampa Lhakhang in Bumthang. Lam Chimi Rigzin is the current abbot taking care of the temple. The community practices the Drukpa Kagyu and Dor Ling traditions and performs the following ceremonies:



- 13th-15th days of the 1st month of the Bhutanese calendar: Nyungne (fasting and prayers), sponsored by the community; if there are many sponsors, they will read the Kanjur (Buddhist canon)
- 8th-10th days of the 2nd month, coinciding with the day on which Guru Rinpoche first visited the place: young boys and girls go around the village collecting alms, and on the 10th the temple abbot performs the ritual Baza Guru.
- 10th day of the 5th month: Trender tsechu, a prayer of supplication sponsored by the villagers
- 4th day of the 6th month, coinciding with the 1st Sermon of Lord Buddha: Ritual sponsored by 8 households
- 10th day of the 6th month: Lhaphud, a Bon ritual performed to clear away obstacles and please the local deities
- 10th day of the 7th month: Soeldep Lensum, sponsored by the villagers
- 22nd day of the 9th month: Ritual coinciding with Descending Day of Lord Buddha, sponsored by the villagers
- 22nd day of the 9th month: ritual sponsored by 8 households
- 15th-20th days of the 11th month: Annual Drup, grand religious ceremony, sponsored by the villagers in rotation
- 10th day of the 12th month: community ritual
- 8th, 10th, 15th, 25th and 30th days of every month (auspicious days): rituals performed in a small group, sponsored by the villagers

### **Informant**

Lam Chimi Rigzin, 43 years old, current abbot of the temple

### **Reference**

Yonten Dargye. (1990). *Life of King Sindha (Chakhar Gyalpo) and The Clear Mirror of Predictions*. Thimphu: National Library and Archives of Bhutan.

### **Researcher**

Lopen Singye Wangchuk, Asst. Lecturer, Institute of Language and Culture Studies, Royal University of Bhutan, 2015

# Bonbji/Bemji Choeje Ngatshang

- 🌀 **Local Name** Bonbji Choeje Ngatshang, also called Bemji Ngatshang
- 🌀 **Date of Construction** 16th century
- 🌀 **Category** Tangible Heritage - Ngatshang
- 🌀 **Geographical Location** Bemji village, Nubi gewog, Trongsa dzongkhag

### Description

The three-storey Bonbji Choeje Ngatshang (a building traditionally belonging to rulers or religious leaders and their lineage) is located approximately 16 kilometers (a 1½ hour drive) up a feeder road from Gezam bridge on the Trongsa-Wangdue highway. The Ngatshang stands at an elevation of 2300 meters, close to Bemji Community Primary School on a hilltop overlooking eleven villages: Pang, Jonthang, Kamshaing, Gagar, Dranishing, Trem, Simphu, Gonpa, Threhel, Dabai, and Kabu.

### History

There are different oral and written traditions that conflict and overlap about the origin of the Bonbji Choeje lineage, which traces back to the Yarlung Dynasty in Central Tibet during the reign of King Trisong Deutsen in the 8th century.

One tradition says that Bonbji got its name, “the place of Bon,” because it was where one of the illegitimate children of the great Tibetan dharma king Trisong Deutsen settled after being exiled from Tibet in the 8th century. He was a Bon religion follower, hence the name.

Another tradition says that the family lineage descends from King Trisong Deutsen’s illegitimate son named Dechung Dhondup, who ruled the Lhodrak Yawa region in Southern Tibet. Dechung Dhondup had three sons who migrated toward Bhutan and one of them, Khyeu Dorji, settled at Ngang in the north of Bumthang.

Centuries later it was Khyeu Dorji’s descendant, Dung Lhadar, a disciple of Thukse Dawa Gyaltshen, who went to settle in Bonbji Choeje in Trongsa, following the prophecy of his religious master. Therefore, according to this tradition, the Bonbji Choeje Ngatshang was built by Dung Lhadar in the 16th century as per the prophecy of Thukse Dawa Gyaltshen (1499-1587), the son of Terton Pema Lingpa.

Bonbji Choeje’s lineage produced some eminent Buddhist masters, such as the 2nd Ganteng Trulku, Tenzin Legpai Dondup (1645-1727), who was born to Bonbji Choeje Thinley Wangchen and Buthri Lhamo (who was herself a descendant of the 13th century Drukpa Kagyu master Phajo Drugom Zhigpo). The lineage also produced the 6th Gangteng Tulku, Tenpai Nyima (1838-1874); and the 9th Gangteng Tulku, Kunzang Rigdzin Pema Namgyal (b. 1955).

Other great personalities from the Bonbji Choeje lineage who held important positions and ruled Bhutan were:

- 10th Druk Desi Mipham Wangpo (1709-1738): 1st incarnation of Gyaltse Tenzin Rabgye, who became Desi in 1729 at the age of 21
- 11th Desi Khuwo Paljor (1736-1739)



- Lama Nyentsen Tshering Wangchuck (1729-1740): representative of Bhutan to Tibet during the reign of the 10th Desi
- 18th Desi Jigme Singye (1742-1788): 2nd incarnation of Gyaltsen Tenzin Rabgye; Desi from 1776-1788
- 26th Desi Tsultrim Drakpa (1790-1810)
- 50th Desi Kishelpa Dorji Namgyal (1873-1879)



A few meters below the Ngatshang, there are two holy springs (drubchu): Khandu Drupchu (Dakinis' spring) and Thukse Dawa's spring. It is believed that Terton Pema Lingpa's son, Thukse Dawa Gyaltsen, discovered the spring, as there was no water for the Ngatshang.

The local deity associated with Bonbji Ngatshang is Ap Mugtsen, worshipped as the protecting deity of the entire region of Mangdue. It is said that he had many illegitimate children, and his sons were fearsome, oppressive, and difficult to control. In the 18th century, Lama Nyentsen Tshering Wangchuk made a proposal to solve the problems caused by these wayward sons. He proposed to the deity Ap Mugtsen that he take as his wife Aum Tashi Wangzom, a local deity from Kheng Dakpai south of Trongsa.

Lama Nyentsen also promised Ap Mugtsen that he would erect a phodrang (palace for deities) for him in the Ngatshang. Ap Mugtsen accepted, and it is said that he himself provided the measurements for the statue of his likeness that would be erected within the protective deities' temple (gonkhang). Thereafter, Ap Mugtsen was appeased as the locality's protecting deity, and he did not have any more sons with local women. Peace and harmony were restored.

Inside the Ngatshang stand golden statues of Chenrezig (Avalokitesvara); the Sixteen Great Arhats; Tsepame (Amitayus/Buddha of Long Life); Drolma (Tara); Guru Rinpoche with his consorts; Dorji Lingpa; and Pema Lingpa Phurpa.

Clay statues represent the Buddha; the Future Buddha (Jampa /Maitreya); the Long Life Buddha; Zhabdrung Rinpoche; Chana Dorji (Vajrapani); Mugtsen (local deity of Mangdue region); Marpa; Milarepa; Naropa; Lama Nyentsen Tshering; the 2nd Gangtey Tulku Tenzin Lekpai Dondup; and the 10th Desi Mipham Wangpo.

Thangkas represent Jangchub Sempai Tungshag (Confession Buddhas); Phurpa (Vajrakilaya); Palden Lhamo (female protective deity); Leygen (protecting deity); and Shing Chung Wangmo (female deity, form of Palden Lhamo).

There are many texts also present, such as the Domang (collection of religious works); Gyatongpa (abridged sutra of transcendental wisdom in 8000 stanzas); and Dorji chopu (diamond sutra). There is also a sandalwood stupa of the Enlightenment type and a Kadam stupa, as well as many other objects.

Beautiful wall paintings in the main temple were also offered to the Ngatshang in the 1990s by the 9th Gangteng Tulku and Namgay Lhendup. These paintings represent Guru Padmasambhava; Phurpa Lhatshog; Terton Pema Lingpa; Marpa Lotsawa (the lineage holder of the Kagyu tradition); and the Druk Desis that were born of the Bonbji Choeje lineage.

### Architectural Style

The Bonbji Ngatshang is, architecturally, one of the most exemplary examples of a traditional Bhutanese Ngatshang. Major renovations were done in 1994-1995, although no changes were made to the architectural structure; the building was reconsecrated in 1996.

The three-storey building is constructed of stone, wood, and mud, with added cement pillars. In the past, the ground floor housed cattle, but now it is used both as a living room and a storeroom for grain. The second floor includes a kitchen and sleeping quarters. The third floor now serves partly as a guest house and partly as a private chapel with a beautiful, traditional Bhutanese altar.

### Social and Cultural Activities

In the past, the Bonbji Choeje received grain and provisions from nine households of Bonbji village and was under the administration of the Trongsa Ponlop. This changed with the 3rd king Jigme Dorji Wangchuck's abolition of the serf system in Bhutan, however, and today the Ngatshang, a private property, generates its own revenue.

Major annual religious rituals and festivals are performed in the Ngatshang, such as Denchog (Drolma/Tara Prayer); Gonpo Bangrim (prayer for Gonpo); Phurpa (Vajrakilaya); Chagkhu Yangkhu (good fortune prayer); and Chosung (prayer for the protecting deity).

Although there are no set dates, these rituals normally occur twice a year as winter and summer events. The Ngatshang also makes regular offerings and conducts rituals on all auspicious days of the Bhutanese calendar: 8th, 10th, 15th, 25th, and 30th.

Bonbji Choeje Ngatshang receives many visitors on these days.

### Informants

Aum Tadinmo, 84, wife of the Bonbji Choeje's late son, Phuntsho

Ap Thuba, 48, current Mangmi (local leader) of Nubi gewog, Trongsa dzongkhag

Ap Tashi Paljor, 45, former member of Bhutan's army and husband of the Bonbji Choeje's daughter

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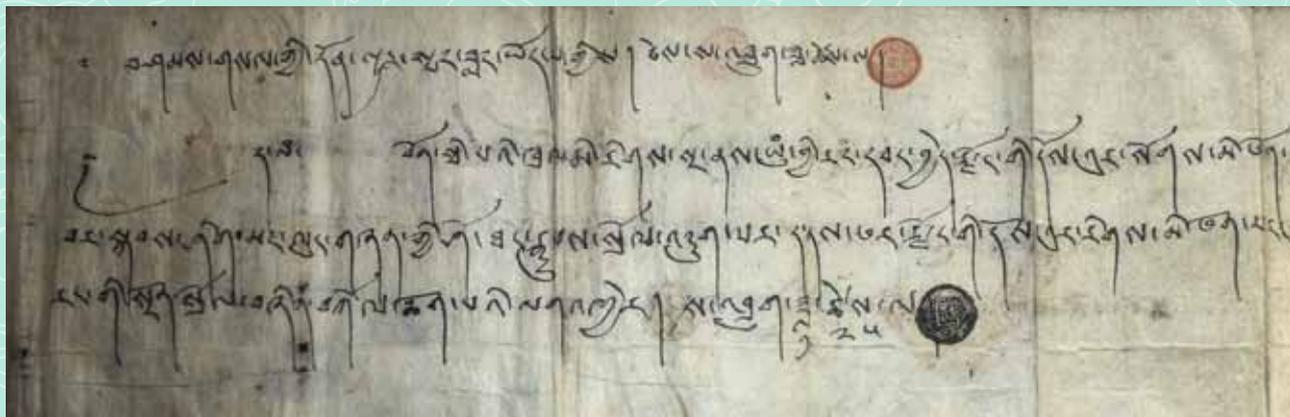
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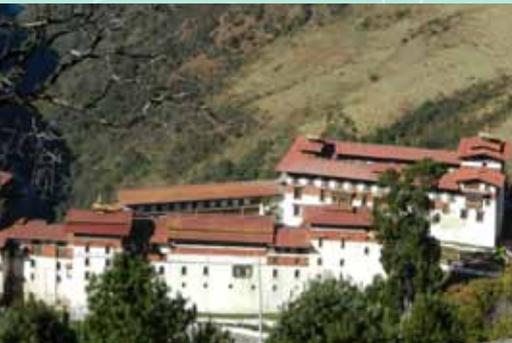
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### Researcher

Lopen Sangay Phuntsho (K), Asst. Lecturer, Institute of Language and Culture Studies, Royal University of Bhutan, 2014



# Trongsa Dzong



- 🌀 **Name** Trongsa Dzong
- 🌀 **Date of Construction** 1647;  
Founded: 1543
- 🌀 **Category** Heritage site - Dzong
- 🌀 **Geographical location** Nubi gewog,  
Trongsa district.

### Description

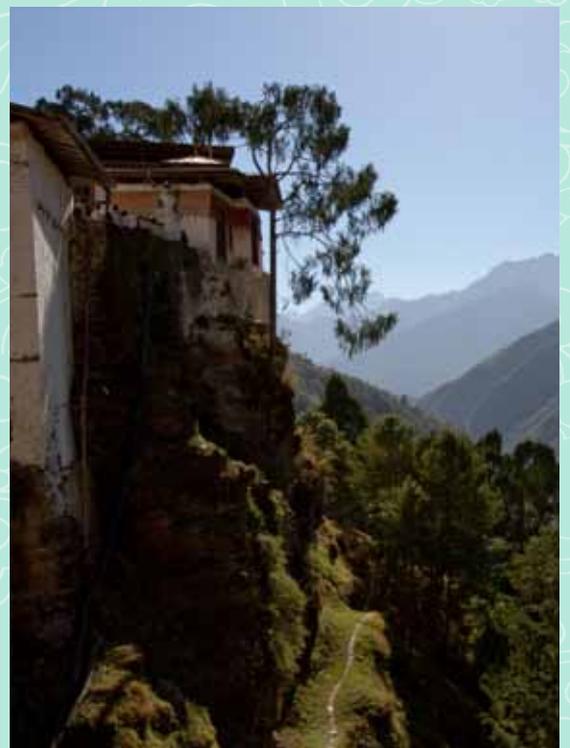
Trongsa is one of the dzongkhags (districts) in central Bhutan located along the Thimphu-Tashigang highway. It is about eight hour drive by car, eastward from Thimphu. Trongsa proper is patterned with shops sprouting above and below the highway. The tiny town functions as a juncture to divide the highway, directing travelers north and east towards Bumthang and Trashigang, and south towards Zhemgang and Gelephu. Right below the township, on a spur, is a massive, spectacular structure, the Trongsa Dzong.

The dzong sits on the slopes of the spur attracting all attention to itself. The structure can be seen from as far as Tshangkha, a village right across the ravine below, before reaching Trongsa.

### History

Lama Ngagi Wangchuk (1517-1554), a Tibetan Drukpa lama, who was the great-grandfather of the Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel (1594-1651), is believed to have travelled through the region in 1541, and while meditating in some area here, spotted a light flickering at the tip of a spur and heard sounds made by horses belonging to Palden Lhamo, the female protective deity. This point is where the dzong stands today. It is also believed that when the lama, out of curiosity, went to check out the place saw Palden Lhamo's "soul-lake" (la tsho) and footprints of the horses. Considering this to be an auspicious sign, the lama built a small temple here, after two years, in 1543. Some say that a Tsamkhang, a "meditation place" was built. According to the informant, this temple today serves as the Gonkhang (temple of the protective deities) in the dzong.

After the arrival of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to Bhutan in 1616 and the start of his process of unification of the country soon after, the Zhabdrung felt the need for an administrative centre. The strategic location of the temple



resulted in selection of the place for the construction of the dzong. Hence, in 1647, Minjur Tenpa, then the Trongsa Penlop and the future 3rd Desi, constructed the dzong in the same spot where the temple was erected by lama Ngagi Wangchuk following instructions from the Zhabdrung; however, Pommaret claims that the dzong was first established by the Zhabdrung himself, followed by an expansion of it in 1652 by Minjur Tenpa (1990). The dzong was then called Choekhor Rabtentse dzong. The dzong was again expanded by the 4th Desi



Tenzin Rabgye towards the end of the 17th century and an additional temple of Chenrezig (Avalokiteshvara) was constructed in 1715 by the Penlop Druk Dendrup. Considerable repair works and renovations have been carried out since then - these are detailed in the following sections.

Today the dzong serves both as the administrative and monastic centre for the district. The Dzongda is the head of the district administration while the Lam Neten is the head of the monk-body (dratshang), which has 450 registered monks; however only about 200 monks actually reside in the dzong, the rest are scattered in affiliate monastic schools, temples and monasteries. The Trongsa monastic community was established by Trongsa Penlop Zhidar in 1765.

### Architecture and Artwork

The dzong is a massive, overpowering five-storey structure sitting on the slopes of the spur that dips into the Mangde river. Its enormous size, traditional design and location make it distinctive from the other houses, as is the case with any other dzongs. The entire structure can be divided into four units or parts, each having numerous temples and offices. Above the dzong and the town stands the Ta dzong, which served as a watch tower in the past, but today it functions as a museum that stores the history and artifacts of the country and its leaders.

The topmost floor, generally, houses the various temples (lhakhangs); the fourth is used as lhakhangs for the lamas (abbots); and the third storey, which was earlier used as store, is now vacant. In the second storey, one will find the two Gonkhangs - one each for the male protective deity, Yeshe Gonpo and the female protective deity, Palden Lhamo; and the ground floor is also vacant. In one of the units is located the offices used for administrative purposes.

There are 25 temples (lhakhangs) in the dzong; and the most important ones, according to the informant, are the Demchog (Cakrasamvara) lhakhang, the Chenrezig (Avalokiteshvara) lhakhang and the Mithruk (Akshobya) lhakhang.

Demchog Lhakhang (Cakrasamvara) was built in memory of Lama Changchub Tsonдру (1817-1856), the lama who predicted to Trongsa Penlop Jigme Namgyel - the First King Ugyen Wangchuck's father - the benefits of constructing a temple having the statues of 60 deities facing east. The paintings of Sangdue lhatshog (all the deities of the Guyasamaja cycle) adorn its walls. The temple of Chenrezig (Avalokiteshvara) bears its importance because, it is believed that, during auspicious days such as the 10th and 15th day of the months, the sky above it used to be filled with rainbow. The temple has the paintings of Chenrezig. The Mithruk (Akshobya) Lhakhang, associated with the dead, is the temple that was first built by lama Ngagi Wangchuk before the dzong came into existence. It is believed that the soul of the dead comes to this temple, and that some strange signs are shown in this temple the night before hearing of the death of a person.



Paintings of 1000 Mithruk can be found in this temple.

Other temples such as Tshepame Lhakhang, Jambay Lhakhang and Gaypa Lhakhang can be found among many others. Each temple has statues and paintings corresponding to the lama or deity. Statues of Guru Tsengye (Eight manifestations of Guru Padmasambhava) and Neyden Chugdru (16 Arhats) made of rhino horns are some important relics of the dzong.

Since its foundation, the dzong had undergone numerous repair and expansion works. The Chenrezig lhakhang was

an additional temple constructed in 1715 by Penlop Druk Dendup, which was followed by a complete revamping of the entire structure, including the construction of another additional temple, the Jampa (Maitreya) lhakhang in 1771. Repair works, especially after the earthquake of 1897, have been done repeatedly during the reign of the 1st King Ugyen Wangchuck. The Chenrezig lhakhang was renovated under the reign of the 2nd King Jigme Wangchuck in 1927. Extensive restoration work took place in 1999 with financial and technical assistance from Austria, and was re-consecrated in 2004.

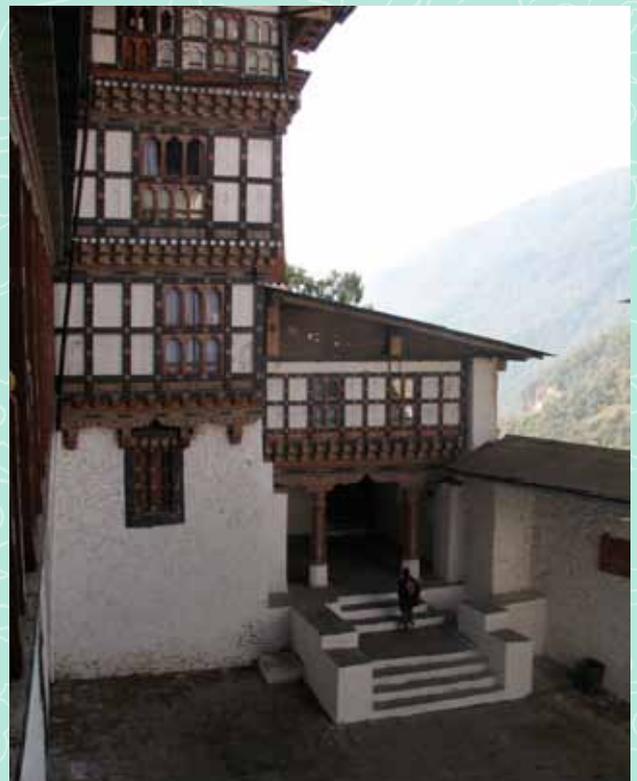
### Social and Cultural functions

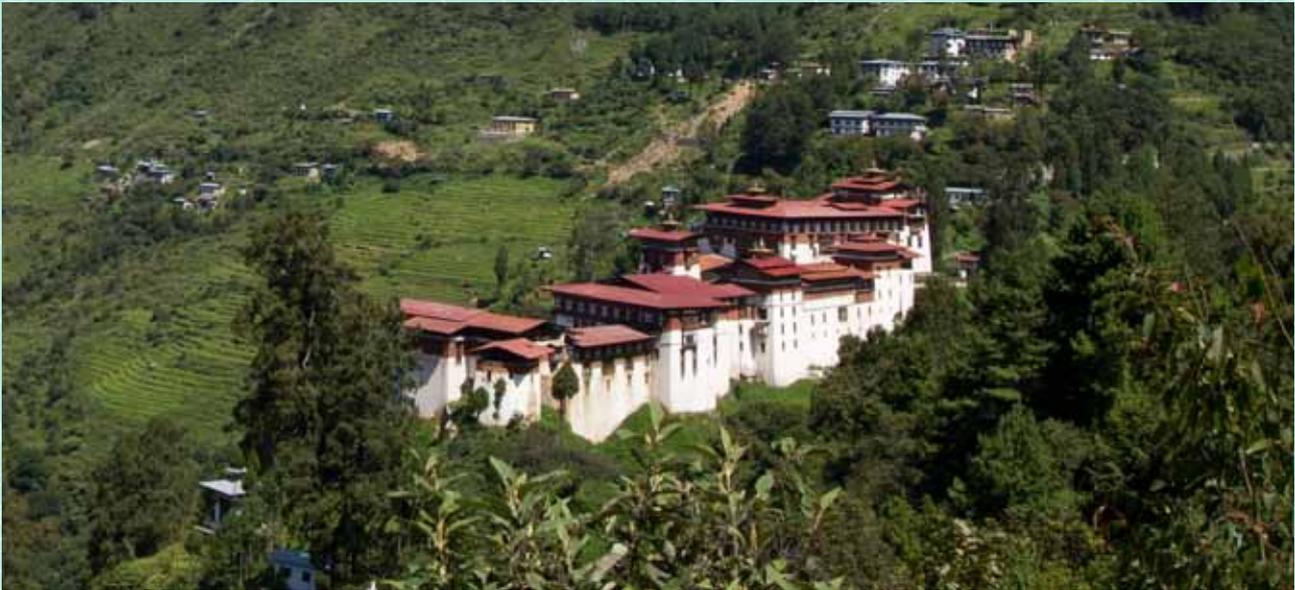
The dzong presently is the seat of religious and administrative functions for the district. Numerous religious rituals are conducted in the dzong throughout the year in accordance to the Bhutanese calendar, out of which some important ones are highlighted here.

The Sangdrup Tshepame Bumde, a 7-day ritual offering prayers to Amitayus, is conducted from the 9th till the 15th day of the 8th month of the Bhutanese calendar. Wang (blessing) on the 15th is also given to the devotees. This ritual is performed for the longevity of the people and the leaders of the country.

A ritual called Gonpo Jatshargi Sungchoe is performed in the Gonkhang from the 4th till the 10th of the 9th month. This ritual is conducted for peace in the country and long life of its leaders. From the 13th to the 15th, Gonpoi Wangchuk gi Sachok is performed, which is followed by Bumpa Tashi on the 23rd. Finally from 24th of the 9th month to the 4th of the 10th month, Gonpoi Wangchoe, a ritual to appease the manifestation of the male protective deity, Yeshe Gonpo is also performed.

After appeasing the deities, a Domchoe consisting of mask dances about the manifestations of Yeshe Gonpo with about 5 performers happens in the 10th month during the 5th, 6th and 7th day. This is followed by Zor Cham on the 8th; here the mask dances performed during the Domchoe are exhibited more elaborately with additional performers (about 21 performers). On the 9th day, the closing ritual, Duetsen shani - in which tormas (ritual cakes made mostly of flour and butter as offerings) are thrown in the river - is carried out.





A 3-day ritual, Drolma Mandrel Zhipai Sungchok, to offer prayers to Drolma (Tara) is performed on the 12th, 13th and 14th day of the 10th month. Right after this, on the 15th, Lhadak Sungchoe, a ritual to offer prayers to the local deities can be witnessed - people come and offer prayer flags to the deities.

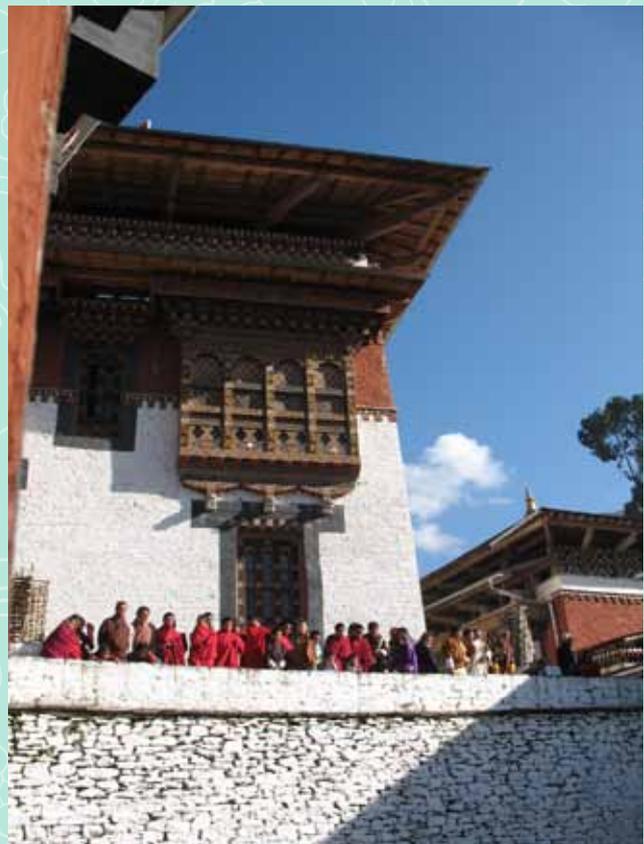
Gonpo Torjab, a ritual of offering of tormas to the male protective deity is conducted from the 23rd to 29th day of the 10th month. Prayers are offered, again, for the wellbeing of the country, its people and leaders. The tormas are offered on the last day of the ritual.

The Trongsa tsechu is then observed in the 11th month, from the 9th till the 11th of the month with numerous mask dances.

A ritual of offering to the Thirteen Gods, Dechok Lhachu Sumgi Sungchoe, happens from the 4th till the 10th of the 12th month. In the same month, a ritual similar to Gonpoi Wangchoe that happens in the 10th month called the Lhamo Domchoe is performed during the 13th, 14th and 15th day. This ritual is performed to appease the female deity, Palden Lhamo, and is followed by rituals similar to the ones that follow Gonpoi Wangchoe until the end. The long series of rituals stretches till the 9th of the 1st month.

In the 1st month, from the 10th to the 14th day, the dratshang (monk body) is engaged Kanjur Daktsar - recitation of the Kanjur. On the 15th, the Neten Chudruk ritual is conducted in the morning, which is followed by Sorjong in the afternoon. This is a ritual in which monks who have broken their vows are given the opportunity to repent.

A ritual, Mikthruk Bumde, dedicated to the deity which presides over death, is performed at the Mithruk lhakhang from the 12th to 19th of the 2nd month. This is followed, once again, by a ritual called Gonpoi Toendoe, to appease the male





protective deity, Yeshe Gonpo, from the 24th till 29th day.

The Zhabdrung Kuchoe is observed on the 10th day of the 3rd month. Prayers and offerings are made to mark the death of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal.

In the 4th month from the 8th to 14th day, Lhamo Bumdoe, a ritual to appease the female protective deity, Palden Lhamo, is conducted, which is presided by the Lam Neten. Simultaneously, Jigje doe is conducted at Jigje lhakhang, which is presided by the Umze, the choir master.

The dratshang funds all the rituals conducted in the dzong throughout the year. However, if people wish the

dratshang to perform any ritual, the individuals have to bear the expenses for the ritual. The monks who bear certain responsibilities in the dratshang move to Kurje, Bumthang from the 1st of the 5th month and stay there until the end of the 7th month. Earlier the entire monk body used to move to Jakar dzong in summer and stay there as Jakar dzong did not have its own monastic body.

The functioning of the dratshang is looked over by the Lam Neten; however, responsibilities are delegated among the monks with different ranks. The making of tormas is taken care of by the Choepon (master of offerings), the gathering of people and associated tasks are handled by Kudrung (master of discipline), and the Umze is responsible for the timely conduct of the rituals. The Lam Neten, Choepon, Kudrung, and Umze are paid some amount every month by the dratshang for their services. The tenure of the Lam Neten, the Umze, and the Choepon is 3 years, except for Kudrung which is vacated annually.

#### Informant

Kuenlay Penjor, Acting/Officiating (Lamtshab) Lam Neten, Trongsa Dzong

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#### Researcher

Lopen Choney Dorji, Asst. Lecturer, ILCS, Royal University of Bhutan. 2015.



# Yungdrung Choling Palace

- 🌀 **Local Name** Yungdrung Choling Palace (gYung drung chos gling), sometimes pronounced Encholing
- 🌀 **Date of Construction** 1839
- 🌀 **Category** Tangible Heritage - Palace
- 🌀 **Geographical Location** Yungdrung Choling, Langthel Gewog, Trongsa Dzongkhag

### Description

Yungdrung Choling is located in Langthel Gewog in Trongsa Dzongkhag on the highway to Zhemgang. It is approximately 27 kilometers away from Trongsa town. The palace is about a fifteen-minute walk from the road point, and there is now a feeder road that connects the highway to the palace.

### History

The palace was built by the Trongsa Penlop (governor) Ugyen Phuntsho, who was a descendent of the great saint Tertön (gter ston) Pema Lingpa (1450-1521) and the

Tamzhing Choeje, in around 1839. The kudung (sku gdung), or bodily remains, of Tertön Pema Lingpa was brought to the site from Kheng Tama, where it had been located after being taken from Tamzhing in Bumthang. The place for the kudung was chosen in accordance to a prophecy by the seventh incarnation of Pema Lingpa (Sungrul), Ngawang Choki Lodre (1819-1842), which states: “if the body is surrendered to the central government, the independence of the central region will be lost.” It was also prophesized that if the kudung, which is refuge to all, was stored in a place in the south facing the great Black Mountains, to the right of the place that resembles a sleeping elephant and a skull, the wellbeing of the Palden Drukpa and the secular and spiritual rule would be maintained.

The palace was damaged by the 1897 earthquake and was restored after that by Gongsa Ugyen Wangchuck, the future first King.

In 2009, under the Royal Command of the Fifth King, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, a small monastic institution was established and two monks, Machen Zimpoen (ma chen gzim dpon) and Soelpoen (gsol dpon), look after the kudung. The kudung is offered the three meals daily.



### Architectural style/School and related work

Yungdrung Choling presents the typical features of a palace in Bhutan. The main building in the centre is enclosed by a paved courtyard, two-storey buildings on two sides and walls on the other two sides, forming a rectangle. On one side of the courtyard stands the utse (dbu rtse), the main building in which the kudung is preserved.

In the same building there is a separate apartment for the Royal Family. This apartment has a beautiful altar room typical of those in traditional Bhutanese houses.

The three-storey building is constructed out of stones and wood. On the ground floor, long narrow windows reach the second floor. There stands a heavy wooden door as the entrance to the main building. The wall paintings on the walls of the palace show the real essence of traditional Bhutanese artistic work. On the right side of the entrance is a brief biography of Pema Lingpa written by Thukse Tenpai Gyeltshen, the reincarnation of Pema Lingpa's son.



### **Social Function**

The palace is a private property and belongs to the family descending from King Ugyen Wangchuck's daughter, also from the Pema Lingpa lineage.

An annual Tshechu (tshes bcu) is performed in the palace on the eleventh month in the Lunar Calendar, with the exact date varying. Previously only lay-practitioners used to perform the Tshechu, but with the establishment of the monastic institution, the Tshechu is now performed in a collaborative manner by monks and laymen. The dances performed during the Tshechu are similar to other religious dances in the country, but are believed to retain the unique tradition of Pema Lingpa dances.

### **Informant**

Pema Sherub, Yungdrung Choling village, 2012

### **Researcher**

Lopen Dechen Choney, Lecturer, Institute of Language and Culture Studies, Royal University of Bhutan, 2012

### **Photographer**

Yannick Jooris



# Ta Dzong Museum



- 🌀 **Local Name** Ta dzong Museum
- 🌀 **Date of establishment** 2008
- 🌀 **Category** Cultural facilities - Museum
- 🌀 **Geographical Location** Trongsa Town, Nubi gewog, Trongsa district

### Description

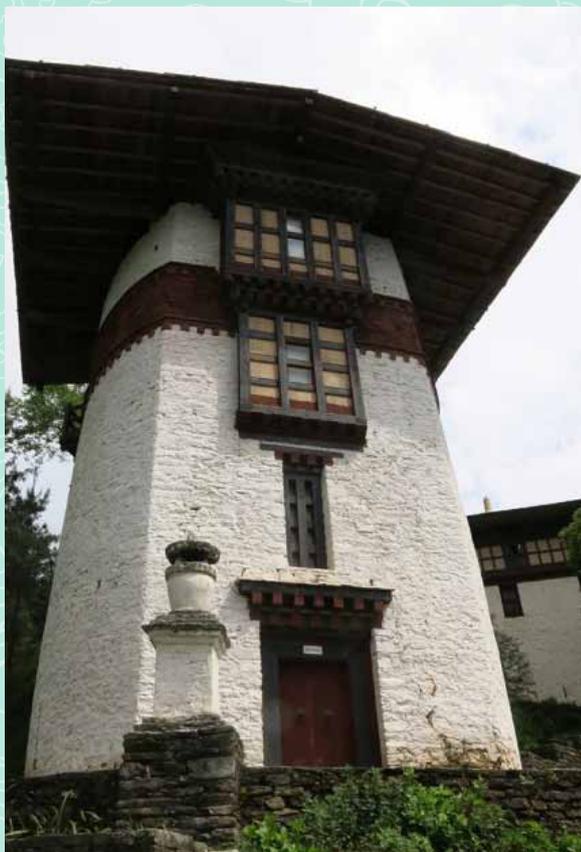
Ta Dzong is located strategically above the Trongsa Dzong on the left bank of the Mangde river. It is a short, steep walk from the main Trongsa town. A road now also makes Ta Dzong accessible from behind. The building is a massive circular five-storey tower flanked by two lower towers. Two smaller, free-standing towers are below the main building.

### History

Ta Dzong, which means “watchtower”, was built by Choeje Minjur Tenpa, the first governor of Trongsa, in the year 1652. The tower stood guard over the Trongsa Dzong to protect the main stronghold of the town from any external threats. Since peace came to Bhutan, the tower has lost its military function.

The temple located at the top of Ta Dzong is dedicated to the culture hero and protector King Gesar, and probably dates to the end of the 19th century. Changchub Tsondru, the Tibetan lama of Jigme Namgyel, the Governor of Trongsa and father of the first King, lived and died in Ta Dzong in 1856. From 2005 to 2008 the watchtower underwent extensive structural and interior designing work in order to become a museum. The funds were granted by the Austrian Government and work was done by the Royal Government of Bhutan.

The museum was opened in 2008, in celebration of three auspicious occasions: enthronement of the fifth King, recognition of 100 years of Monarchy and introduction of democracy in the country. The museum showcases some of the rare and priceless artifacts belonging to the monarchy.



### Architecture and Art

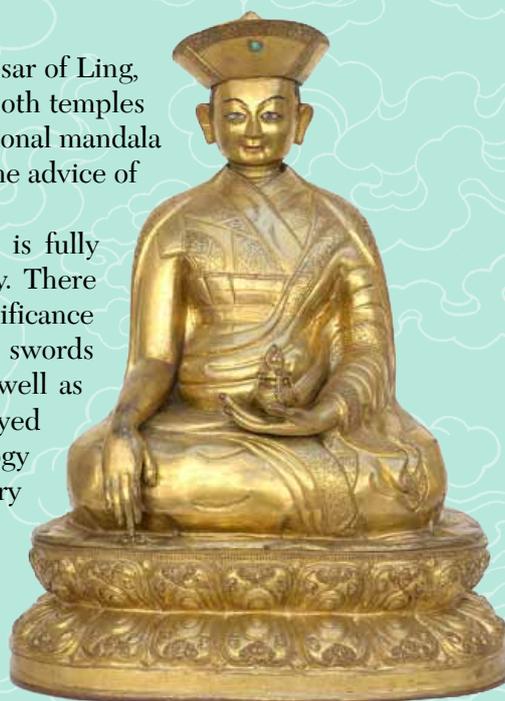
Ta Dzong has two temples. One is dedicated to the legendary Gesar of Ling, and the other to Maitreya (Jampa), the Buddha of the next age. Both temples also contain chambers for the tutelary gods. The great tri-dimensional mandala dedicated to Gesar in the Gesar Lhakhang was built in 1975 on the advice of the great master Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.

The museum itself has a total of eleven galleries. One gallery is fully dedicated to the history of the kings of the Wangchuck dynasty. There is also a gallery which explains the history and the religious significance of Trongsa Dzong. The First King's robes, the Raven Crown, the swords of the Trongsa Penlop Jigme Namgyel and the Third King, as well as statues telling the story of Bhutan are amongst the artifacts displayed in the museum. The museum is equipped with state of art technology and includes a media room where visitors can watch a documentary programme on the history of the Bhutanese monarchy.

### Social and Cultural Functions

Ta Dzong plays an important role in preserving and displaying valuable artifacts for the public, and holds the tradition of organising a Nyungne, or meditation practice, for the well being of all the sentient beings during first month of every year. A hermit also resides in a cell on site.

The caretaker and the curator are appointed from the monastic body and Ministry of Home and Culture Affairs, respectively. Ta Dzong plays an important role in the propagation of the history of Bhutan as it is a major attraction for Trongsa and regularly receives many visitors.



### Informant

Ugyen Tashi, Caretaker of Ta Dzong (Appointed by Monastic Body), 2013

### References

A document housed on-site at Ta Dzong recounting the history of Ta Dzong (date of publication unknown, written by an unknown previous caretaker of Ta Dzong).

Schicklgruber, Christian. (2009) *The Tower of Trongsa*, Ghent: Snoek.

### Photographers

Lopen Chencho Tshering, Yannick Jooris, Stefan Zeilser

### Researcher

Lopen Chencho Tshering, Asst. Lecturer, Institute of Language and Culture Studies, Royal University of Bhutan, 2013

# Karma Drubdey Palmo Chos Kyi Dingkhang Nunnery



🌀 **Local Name** Karma Drubdey, as given by the 16th Gyalwang Karmapa (1924-1981)

🌀 **Date of Construction** 1968

🌀 **Category** Heritage site - Nunnery

🌀 **Geographical Location** Kuenga Rabten, Drakteng Gewog, Trongsa District

### Description

The nunnery is located 24 kilometers away from Trongsa Dzong, on the road going to Zhemgang and Gelephu. It was established on the middle of a hill above Kuenga Rabten Palace. The nunnery is about 30-minutes by foot from Kuenga Rabten, and there is now a feeder road that connects the main highway to the nunnery. The nunnery serves as a monastic school (shedra), retreat centre (drupde) and monastic institution (dratshang).

### History

Karma Drubdey Pelmo Chos Kyi Dingkhang Nunnery was founded by the Venerable Khenpo Tshultrim Jamtsho in 1968. Venerable Khenpo Tshultrim Jamtsho came from Tibet and was granted refugee status in Bhutan by Her Majesty Queen Ashi Phuntsho Choden Wangchuck. Khenpo, along with 13 nuns who escaped with him from Tibet, stayed in Kuenga Rabten palace and Buli Lhakhang in Bumthang. Today Khenpo lives in Nepal.

During Khenpo's stay in Kuenga Rabten Palace, it was said that he once went for a walk with elderly nuns and local people. On their way, he was suddenly nowhere to be found. After many hours of searching, finally they saw a yellow spot in the middle of the rocky mountain above Kuenga Rabten Palace. When the search group reached the spot, they saw Khenpo meditating inside a small cave in the location where the present nunnery's main temple is located. Khenpo declared this place as his abode, and later erected a small temple (Lhakhang). After the completion of the main temple, Rinpoche, along with a few nuns, shifted from Kuenga Rabten palace to the present nunnery



location. In 1998, other buildings were constructed which now serve as a retreat centre.

### **Architectural Style/School and Related Art Work**

The temple, retreat hall, kitchen, hostels and other social gathering houses were built in traditional Bhutanese architectural forms with extensive woodwork and stones. Some shrines and retreat halls were constructed in modern Bungalow style. A cement gate near the highway marks the entrance of the nunnery.



Inside the main temple, there is a Guru Rinpoche statue brought from Rumtek in Sikkim, the residence of the Karmapas, and this statue is considered an important relic. Most walls of the temple are painted with wrathful deities and Bodhisattva images.

### **Social and Cultural Functions**

The nunnery serves as a Buddhist institution (shedra), a three year retreat centre (drupde) and a general monastic school (dratshang) under the supervision of present 17th Gyalwang Karmapa and the founding Khenpo. These figures also provide the nunnery with food and clothes for more than 120 nuns.

Every year, eight nuns undergo a retreat for three years, and eight nuns undergo a one year retreat. In total, 18 nuns participate in a retreat, including two assistants.

Each day of the week is divided into different activities at the nunnery. On Monday and Tuesday evenings, all nuns circumambulate the temple. On Wednesday evening, the nuns form groups and do meditation inside the temple for an hour. On Friday, nuns perform yogi songs, or gurmo, and practice expressions and codified body movements, according to the song. On Saturday, all nuns engage in social work, which focuses on maintaining environmental awareness through eco-friendly activities.

Every three years they conduct a monlam chenmo (smon lam chenmo), a long ceremony of well wishes, and on the fourth month of the Bhutanese calendar they perform a nyungne (snyunggnas), which includes fasting and prayers for the world's well-being. They also recite the Buddha's words between December and January. After the recitation of the text, for one month the nuns do rituals and recite texts and prayers all around the nearby communities. Other than these given days, the nuns are not permitted to go anywhere to perform rituals. The nuns regularly receive well-wishers, donors and spiritual masters at the nunnery.

### **Informants**

Ven. Yeshe Choden, Principal of the Nunnery  
Jamyang, Nunnery Supervisor; Khechok Pelmo, Nun

### **Researcher**

Lopen Sangay Thinley, Asst. Lecturer, Institute of Language and Culture Studies, Royal University of Bhutan, 2013

### **Photographer**

Yannick Jooris

### Pottery



Pottery is a prehistoric craft, found among archaeological artifacts of pre-literate cultures, with the oldest known examples dating back earlier than 20,000 BCE. The main types of pottery include earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain, but the earliest forms of pottery were made from clay.

By around 3000 BCE, potters began using the slow potter's wheel, a small platform made of wood that spins. This helped them avoid having to walk around the pot; instead, the pot sat on the platform and spun for them. By 2000 BCE, a fast wheel had replaced the slow one, so a good potter could make a pot in one minute. These pots, however, were hand-formed and undecorated. The addition of decorative touches, such as painting and curving, emerged throughout the years not only in China, but also in Greece, Egypt, Africa, Japan, Iran, Turkey, and India.

It is difficult to trace the date and site of the first pottery made in Bhutan, but it is thought to have come from Gonsar in Punakha. In 2005, when the legacy of pottery was almost vanishing due to lack of interest among the community, Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck founded the Centre of Pottery in Langthel, Trongsa, in order to preserve this ancient craft. This centre exists to help the local Monpa community, and indeed many Monpas are making their livelihoods by making and selling pots.

38-year-old Karma Dorji, who is funded by the Tarayana Foundation, is the head potter at the Centre and has been working there almost 10 years. He was trained at the Folk Heritage Museum in Kawa Jangsa, Thimphu.

#### The process of pottery

The following process of creating a clay pot comes from observation and an interview conducted while Karma Dorji was turning a pot. First off, dry red earth is transported in huge quantities by truck from Tana, Punakha; both the purchase of the earth and the transportation are paid for by the Tarayana Foundation.

- Crush the earth into powder with a small hammer, and remove any small stones.
- Mix the earth with water, and knead it on a round board until it becomes a soft cake.
- By hand, mould and shape the mixture into a pot, with the pot remaining stationary and the potter moving around it.
- Polish the pot with a wet cloth.



- Dry the pot in the sun at least for two hours.
- Shape the inside and round the bottom using locally made wooden tools.
- Dry the pot again for another two days.
- Fire the bulk of 50 to 60 pieces together in a fire pit for four hours. Only after firing the object will it be called pottery.
- Apply a sealing wax made of hot stick lac (jatsoe) on both the inside and outside of the pot.

#### **Informants**

Aum Phuentso Wangmo, supervisor of the centre

Lopen Karma Dorji, head potter

Aum Ugyen Drolma, potter

#### **References**

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#### **Researcher**

Lopen Tenzin Dorji, Lecturer, Institute of Language and Culture Studies, Royal University of Bhutan, 2015

#### **Photographer**

Yannick Jooris

