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## Research Journal

Special Issue in commemoration of
50 years working to preserve Bhutanese Culture

Published by:
The Centre for History and Culture
Institute of Language and Culture Studies
Royal University of Bhutan

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## Examining Change in Jangbi Community

Tenzin Jamtsho and Matthew G. Robinson
Institute of Language and Culture Studies

## Introduction to the Study

The handful of Monpa communities in central Bhutan represent a fascinating cultural and linguistic isolate within Bhutan, with a unique historical and cultural background. Jangbi community, which is one of these communities, is among the many communities in the nation undergoing dramatic change at a rapid rate. Dema (2008) even reports that Monpas of Trongsa district may have now assimilated to the point that they are hardly distinct from other Bhutanese - and that these changes may even be welcomed by residents of these communities. The purpose of this study is to document the current changes and developments occuring in Jangbi community, and revisit the religious and cultural practices currently prevalent in the community in light of these changes. The perspectives of community members regarding these ongoing changes were sought, and will presented and reflected upon in this paper.

To gain insight into the current context of the village and the beliefs of villagers regarding change rapidly taking place, we visited Jangbi community and interviewed several key informants. For ethical reasons, we asked consent from the district, the local leader of the community, and each community member interviewed in advance of data collection, including permission to record the interviews. Willing interview informants included:

- Key religious leaders of the community, including the Lam and the Pawo
- A community elder, who is coordinator of the cane shoot business
- Community members, including cultural performers in the village and farmers
- A community member utilizing a traditional stretcher in front of the BHU
- The community Health Assistant at the Basic Health Unit (BHU)
- School teachers
- One informant from the neighboring Wangling community


Upon completion of interviews, we transcribed interviews and analyzed data thematically according to the kind of change the informant discussed. This article is organized according to the major themes identified from interviews with our informants. The first section of the article aims to introduce the reader to Jangbi community with basic information from the literature and some supplementary information from our data. Discussion of major themes then begins with current religious practices and beliefs, and continues with consideration of the marriage system, education, health and other customs in the community, before arriving at concluding thoughts.

## Background

Jangbi community, located in Langthil Gewog of Trongsa district, is a small, rural community situated a few hours walk from Tongtobi school, near Langthil village. While traffic to and from the community is mostly local, the village is increasingly frequented by tourists on package tours that wish to trek through the region. According to the latest statistics available at the community's Basic Health Unit, as of 2011 there were 304 people in 56 households among the 3 Monpa communities of Jangbi, Wangling and Phurzur. Despite the small size of the Monpa community in Bhutan, the community is widely believed to be historically and culturally significant. As a result, a number of studies have been done on Monpa communities, and Jangbi community in particular (see, e.g., Pommaret, 1994, 1999; van Driem, 2004; Giri, 2004; Chand, 2009).

The language spoken in the community is called Black Mountain Mönpa. The language is one of the "three gems" identified by the Dzongkha Development Commission, and is among the mostendangered languages in the country (van Driem, 2004); notably, the language has been determined to be a unique subgroup within the Tibeto-Burman language family (van Driem, 2011). The Monpa of Jangbi are remarkably multilingual, though, and most community members seem fluent in several other languages aside from Black Mountain Mönpa, including Dzongkha, Khengkha, Lhotshamkha and Tshangla, among others. During data collection, researcher Tenzin Jamtsho noted that even elderly informants from the community had an impressive command of formal Dzongkha.

The historical context of the community is equally interesting. Monpas
may be among the first groups of Bhutanese people to inhabit the territory of Bhutan, and this is a belief widely held by Bhutanese (Pommaret, 1994). Recent scientific research may corroborate the same belief; Choden (2005, as cited in Chand, 2009: 27) reports that data from Professor Peter de Kniff's genetic research in Bhutan found that Black Mountain Monpas are carriers of genes for one of the two oldest populations in Bhutan, along with the Lhokpu people of Southwestern Bhutan (the study additionally found that these two old groups are distinct from one another). Another published theory on the origin of Monpa people (Francke, 1975, as cited in Chand, 2009) claims that Monpas are immigrants that came from the Indian plains. However, Pommaret (1994) points out that it's not easy to determine whether the Monpa are indigenous, or when they migrated to Bhutan (if they did in fact migrate into Bhutan), since no mention of their migration can be found in historical texts. Regardless of what the exact history and origins of Monpa people turns out to be, van Driem (2004, p. 294) and Pommaret (1994) rightly point out that Monpas may yet provide significant information about the history and origins of the nation and region in times to come.

In addition to the academic literature on the history and origins of Jangbi and Monpas of Bhutan, a rich body of oral history and local legends still exists in Jangbi. The local history of village settlement is quite a long story that the Lam of the village knows well, but is too long to be recounted in full here. Briefly, nine historical Monpa communities of the region are believed to originate from an interesting oral legend, in which nine siblings who migrated to the area each established a distinct community. The people of Jangbi are thought to be descendents of Pangzur, one of these nine communities, and the area of Jangbi is said to have been a winter residential area for the people Pangzur. There are two stories of how the community came to be named "Jangbi". In one story, a messenger traveling from Pangzur to Jangbi went missing, causing an argument among residents - the loss of this messenger, who was never found, resulted in the term "Jangbi" (jang meaning "lost" in Dzongkha) as a name for the community site. The second story recounts that when Padmasambhava passed through the region in the 8th century, he encountered a woman who told him she was searching for a bird that was lost. The place that this is said to have occurred, at which a flat rock is present, can still be seen near the bottom of the community today. In

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this second story, the "lost" meaning carried by the village's name refers to the bird for which the woman was searching. There are accounts of oral history from Jangbi in the literature, including those of Giri (2004) and Ura (2005). These accounts will be joined by a forthcoming article written in Dzongkha, co-authored by the authors of this study and the Lam of Jangbi village.

## Religious Practices and Beliefs in the Community

People in Jangbi community have for a long time practiced Bon traditions, and before that performed certain animistic religious practices. Oral legend in the village cites the origin of Bon practices in the community to the community's own story of origins. The story says that the nine siblings, who founded the nine Monpa communities, were unable to cross a river and were assisted by Jayiwangchukma, a large local deity in the form of a snake. Afterwards, the siblings promised they would worship Jayiwangchukma as a protective deity. The rituals used today are described in the oral legend, and rituals are performed for Jayiwangchukma. In the litërature, according to Hasrat (1980: 22), Lhase Tshangma, who is believed to be a devotee of Bonism, migrated to Jamkhar, Bumthang from Tibet, sent for exile by his followers. He then found the Khoche Penchen, It is believed that his followers increased in number in the district. Later, Lhase Tshangma's family is believed to have migrated to Trongsa district, in Nubji and Korphu, and founded the Bemjee Choeje and Gaga Choje to propagate the Bon tradition in the community. According to this account, Bonism may have thus developed in the community as a result of the efforts of Lhase Tshangma and his family members in the $7^{\text {th }}$ century.

Whether Bonism dates to the time of Lhase Tshangma or earlier, Jangbi did not practice Buddhism until the $20^{\text {th }}$ century. According to one informant, until 80 years ago community members did not practice any Buddhism at all and it was a purely Bon society. The informant explained that Buddhism probably first came to the community approximately 80 years ago, and 50 years ago the village was divided in opinion regarding Buddhist practices. To supplement his account of the village's religious history, the informant showed us a document, written in Choekye, in which two statements are made. The informant dated the document to approximately the 1960s or 1970s, and though we were permitted to see the document, permission was not granted to photograph it. One statement was written by a religious

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master from Tibet, who visited the community. The statement says that the people of Jangbi community are not allowed to make animal sacrifices when they perform Bon rituals, and that they should use other means to make offering to local deities. The statement was meant to act as a written commitment to a new rule, and this was evidenced by seals of local leaders. The second statement on the document was issued by the District Court. Apparently, some villagers were not in full agreement over the statement on animal sacrifice, and this second statement sought to resolve the issue. The court's statement expressly ordered all Jangbi villagers to adhere to the first statement made in Dochoeling monastery, and included an official court seal. Although Buddhism had crept into the village at this point of time, clearly some community members were still reticent to abandon older traditions.

In the past, Jangbi did not have any temple or resident Buddhist religious master. When ritual performances, such as funerals, were required by villagers, people used to construct a temporary hut out of bamboo and tree leaves in an open space two to three days before the performances began. However, now the community has a temple, which was constructed in the 1980s. According to informants, the temple was constructed in 1986 under the coordination of a Buddhist master from the Kheng region. This Buddhist master was invited by the community to perform for Buddhist rituals in the past. It seems the master felt it necessary to construct one temple for the community to meet the religious needs of the community, and the temple continues to be used for religious purposes by the community. Now the community also has a resident religious master to lead Buddhist activities and teachings. The religious master is from the community, and his father was also a prominent religious figure before his death. The lama was the first in his community to have in-depth, long-term Buddhist monastic training, which he received in Trongsa Dzong and in Lobesa. After his training finished, he was requested by his community to return as their religious master, a position he took with the authority of the central monastic body.

With a temple and its own religious master, the demand for Buddhist practices are on the rise in the community. According to informants, most villagers now look to Buddhist traditions when they hope for sick people to recover, pray for the deceased, or pray for the wellbeing of the
people and the community. These Buddhist practices also vary according to different Buddhist traditions and sects, showing a diversity of beliefs and practices even within Buddhism in the community. Informants also say that there are also people of the community who still adhere to Bon practices, and who retain a strong and exclusive belief in Bonism.

Shamanism still exists in Jangbi and its surrounding communities. In Jangbi, Phurzur and Wangling communities, there are total of six shamanist practitioners: one in Jangbi, two in Wangling, and three in Phurzur. Among these six practitioners, informants note that Jangbi's is senior-most and most respected, and is often invited to all three communities to practice. The practitioner (or 'Pow'), who was also one of our informants, is 86 years old and has lost his vision. When he is invited to practice, he must be carried by his hosts or sponsors. The informant explained that he never studied his practices, and believes it to be an inherited form of practice. He began his practice at the age of 30 , and has been actively practicing for 56 years. His mother was a practitioner and his uncle was also a famous practitioner in the past.

Shamanist practices have also undergone change in the community. One informant recounted that in the past the payment given for performances was the head of a slaughtered pig. If the sponsor of the practice did not have a pig, they would have to buy the pig from others or go into debt to meet the requirement. According to other informants, this custom affected development prospects for villagers. Villagers reportedly sought all of their help from these practitioners 40-50 years ago, and would make offerings whenever someone fell ill. They were poor to begin with, and additionally borrowed animals from nearby villages in order to meet requirements for offerings for their ill. Some informants estimated that one person may have sacrificed between $40-50$ animals over the course of their life at this point of time. Informants claim they were never able to prosper under these conditions, because they went into debt and could never repay the large loans taken to complete religious practices. However, the practitioner says that people no longer offer a pig's head as payment, and instead offer other forms of compensation, such as money or rice.

The expressed direction of religious changes in the community show unity amongst informants. Informants, including both the Buddhist religious
master and the shamanist practitioner, say that community members are shifting towards Buddhism from Bonism, and that the change is a positive one. The shamanist says that the number of practices requested of him is declining yearly, and that he himself is not against this development - he supports the change and wishes the betterment of his community, which he feels would come from adoption of Buddhism. The local Buddhist master is working hard to make this transition happen in his community. He says that in order to accomplish this, he organizes Buddhist discourses and teachings, organizes and performs religious rituals during auspicious days in order to accumulate virtue and to create good karma in the community, and tries to influence community members to convert to Buddhism. According to the Lama, in the past people were not able to participate in and perform Buddhist religious practices, due to the lack of a resident master to explain the importance and significance of the practices. He takes the responsibility himself to raise awareness in the community For example, he is attempting to influence change with a number of new ritual practices, which he attempts to organize collectively. For instance, he performs three kinds of rituals in each of the three communities alternatively. This year, the recitation of mantra for Avalokettesrava is organized in Wangling community; the recitation of mantra for Guru Padmasambhava is conducted in Jangbi community; and a feast offering ritual is in Phurzur community in turn. During these ritual performances, the Lama insists that the patrons be the people of the communities, and they do not accept donations from outside communities; the quantity of money given for donation is left at the donors' discretion.

The Lama is also attempting to influence practices for the annual ritual performances done in the village. People of the community reportedly follow Buddhist rituals during auspicious days, but also perform shamanistic practices for their annual ritual. The Lama of the community feels that it is not good for the community people to practice shamanism, and to tear down the practice, he has already introduced annual ritual performances according to Buddhist practices in five to six households. He plans to gradually spread this practice throughout the community. He feels that it is quite tricky to demolish existing practices within a short period of time. However, the Lama believes he receives support from community members because the present generation is against the cultural practices of their ancestors. He says these people feel that their practices
are being looked down upon by outsiders, and therefore want to bring change in the community in terms of any kind of practices that are not acknowledged or recognized by outsiders.

However, informants suggest that the people in the community still practicing non-Buddhist traditions feel unable to fully abandon these practices, because they feel that this is the culture and tradition that has come from their forefathers. People feel that if they completely abscond from this practice, they may experience negative implications on their livelihood. People believe that the deities they worship for Bon practices are the guardian deities of their parents, and in a way they feel they should never completely abandon these deities. A good example of this belief was recounted by the village Lama. He noted that even his father was both a Buddhist master and Bon practitioner of the community in the past. However, he feels his father was not able to bring much change to the community as people were more on the side of Bon practices at the time - and his father was one of the prominent Bon practitioners. His father became solely a practitioner of Buddhism and left Bon practices behind in the later part of his life. However, his father had a short life, and people say this early death might have been caused by the complete abandonment of Bon practices. The Lama expressed skepticism about this reason as a cause for his father's death, but the story represents what other villagers fear would to happen to them if they fully abandon the old ways.

## Marriage System

Jangbi community has a traditional form of marriage, which has roots in oral history of the village. According to informants, the parents of the nine brothers that established the nine Monpa communities were children of the same parents. In retribution for the killing of their father at the hand of the gods, these siblings went to the heavens and received a dog, a stone mill of two parts and a sickle. In climbing down from heaven, they needed to use a vine, but they couldn't carry the stone mill parts. They took turns rolling one part of the mill down the vine to the earth, and once they arrived, they saw with surprise that the girl's mill part was on the ground and that her brother's mill part had come to rest perfectly on top, creating a complete mill. Incidentally, this is how the stone mills commonly found throughout Bhutan is said to have come into the world. The siblings interpreted this event as a sign that they should get married, and they went on to have nine
children together. The practice of 'knee marriage' (spu mo gi gnyen), or marriage within the Monpa community, is said to have originated from this story - first as marriage within a family and later within the community.

Traditional marriage customs in the village remained complex until recently. According to informants, in the past if a couple wished to be in a relationship, they would first inform their parents for permission. Before taking this step, the
 male suitor might unofficially visit the female in her house at night. Once the relationship had come to the parents' attention, the groom would typically come to live with the bride's family. However, before this happens, the groom would normally live for three years at the residence of the bride's family, and attempt to impress them with high quality work and character. Before leaving to the bride's house, the groom's parents would have to ask permission from the bride's family, and provide a gift of eggs and a bottle of wine. Over the three years that the groom stays with the bride's family, the groom's family must give a total of nine gifts, which are meat offerings. On each of these nine occasions, the bride's parents invite people of the community as guests and host a party, with the offered meat served in the leaf of a tree and with local wine present (and, of course, informal conversation, singing and dancing).

When the couple had finished three years in the bride's family's house, there were preparations a procedures to follow in moving to the groom's house. The groom's parents have to prepare at least eight to nine large containers of local wine, and the meat of an entire cow or pig. The groom's father was to expected to meet the couple on their way to his house. From the bride's side a figure needed to carry a white flag in his right hand, leading the way to the groom's house by calling "come everybody, come, come." Others join the small procession a sing a song of glory and good fortune, and people on the bride's side of the family were expected to come prepared to eat a meal. When the bride and her group reached the groom's house, it is interesting to note that the groom's mother hid for
some time, and emerges in front of the bride and groom to welcome the bride once they are seated on the mat in her house.

After the couple's arrival, the celebration begins with a marchang ceremony, the offering of wine to local protective deities before they themselves drink. After that, tea is served to all. After the tea is served, the couple sits together on a single mat and prepares to get formally married, which is marked by the offering of scarves, first from their parents and followed by all the participants on the day of celebration. When scarves are offered, an eloquent male of the community is given the responsibility to be an orator and explain the significance and symbols of scarf and explain how the day is very auspicious. After finishing the scarf offerings, lunch is served. After the lunch, in front of all the people, whatever wealth the groom's family possesses is handed over to bride. The groom's parents do not leave even a single needie and thread in their hand. The agreement is made and signed according to the national law with some witnesses. In the agreement, whoever commits a mistake is liable to punishment, and tradition also explains that gradually people living in the same household have to move out find their own house to live and sustain their lives on their own.

At present, informants say that these customs are undergoing change. Young suitors are no longer confining themselves to the 'knee marriage' system, nor the requirements of traditional marriages. Many boys and girls reportedly look outside for partners. Some leave their home for marriage and others have brought spouses to the village. For those that get married within the community, they reportedly no longer follow past customs for their marriage. No time requirements are given to new couples and there are no restrictions given to new couples in terms of where the couple chooses to live. Some elder community members expressed the belief that drastic change, reportedly modernization, is being brought into the community with the change in marriage practices. Bringing grooms from different parts of the country to Jangbi has helped them change their behavior, mentality, and communication skills. In the past, it is believed that community members were not able to participate with the outside world. They lacked a guide to assist them in interpreting the outside world and following accordingly. However, the community is now gradually developing and increasingly participating in different programs and
activities. This change in local marriage customs, and the perceived link between marriage and exposure to the outside world, thus seem to be viewed positively by informants.

## Education and Health

There have been sweeping changes in educational beliefs and opportunities for the community. Until the recent past, the only concept of erudition present in the village seemed to be that of those who possessed traditional knowledge, which had been passed down from ancestors of the community. Familiarity with plants and their many uses, as well as traditional resource management, are but examples of the depth of traditional knowledge in the community, which has been documented in Giri (2004). However, alongside national development initiatives there are new educational values entering the mindset of the community.

According to informants, people in the village did not seem to value monastic, secular or vocational education in the past, and nobody was sent to schools. Most community members were illiterate at this time. Neither secular or Buddhist education did not yet exist in the community, until a school was constructed in the community in 1996. Around that time, people started sending their children to schools, and started a trend that has continued to the present day. According to the information elicited from various informants within the community, only one person from the village, a female, has gained a college education so far. Four are currently studying in vocational tertiary institutions in Bhutan: three in Chumey Vocational Training Institute, Bumthang, and one in Trashiyangtse Buddhist Architecture School. These four students of vocational institutes reportedly completed class ten, but did not qualify to continue under government funding and were not able to financially support further study in private schools or colleges. Informants note that, in comparison with the past, people recognize the potential value of education, and parents are eager for their children to excel in school. Some parents reportedly seek help from other people to send their children to school, and some even take a loan from the bank to give education to their children. People in the community note that the literacy rate in the community has also increased.


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Informants expressed different views on whether increased education for community members will result in lasting benefits for the community. Some people are skeptical whether their children are going to help the community after having studied; contrastingly, others expressed a positive feeling that their children are going to return or otherwise help the community. Some informants felt that educated children may not wish to return to their poor and undeveloped community. Some may feel embarrassed to say that he or she is from the community. Other informants trust that their offspring will come back to the village to help people there after having completed their education and gaining employment. Whatever new graduates may decide to do, parents and community members seem unified in advising their children to help them and the community to develop after having studied, and not to backbite and defame them when they are outside the community. Informants seem optimistic, overall, about their children and the potential of their future contributions, and only seem concerned about how these children will decide to use their potential.

In contrast to the changes taking place with education in the village, changes in health care choices appears to be moving at a much slower rate. Jangbi community has a Basic Health Unit (BHU), which is connected with the national health care system, and the BHU has one heath assistant who is resident throughout the year. The current health assistant in the village serves as the link between community members and national health care, with its hospitals, doctors and imported medicine. The health assistant resident in Jangbi is responsible for three communities: Jangbi, Wangling and Phurzur. Aside from caring for sick patients, the health assistant says he feels responsible to create awareness among community members of the benefits of national health care and the medicines available to them. He says that he often gives talks on this issue and tries to encourage community members to seek his help when they become ill.

However, the health assistant expressed that he finds it very difficult to serve community members, because villagers do not value the benefits of the services that he represents. The health assistant explained that, despite his best efforts, not many community members seem interested to seek his help. He noted that he rarely receives visits to the BHU from community members. At the current time, he says that the BHU is mostly utilized for very minor health issues, such as cuts or scrapes on the hands or feet

[^1]of patients. He reports that when community members fall seriously ill, they perform rituals, as advised by local Shaman leaders, rather than consulting the health assistant. These seriously ill patients are normally only treated with ritual performance and local remedies, and the health assistant feels he has largely failed thus far to impart any change in the mindset of community members in terms of their health care choices. Almost underscoring his point, upon leaving the BHU after a meeting with an informant, we saw villagers moving a patient who was becoming seriously ill out of the BHU on a traditional stretcher - they favored traditional ritual performances over keeping the sick family member in the BHU.

## Dress, Food and Economy

Informants noted sharp changes in the dress, food and economic activities of the community. In the past, Monpa communities had traditional customs in regards to dress and food. Informants were able to show us the traditional dress for men and women, but admitted that nobody in the village wears it at present, though most people still walk barefoot. Some were even skeptical whether anyone in the village still knew how to create the traditional costume. Similarly, food habits seem to have changed, as well. People of the community used to fully depend on the forest for food in the past. According to Giri (2004), community members use more than eighty varieties of plants in the locality for food. Informants say that there is not a single person in the community who solely depends upon such foods today. Villagers now rely on cultivated foods, such as maize, rice, chilies and millet, for their livelihood, and no longer practice shifting cultivation as they did in the past. In Giri (2004) noted nearly ten years ago that villagers relied on wild tubers mainly during the food-scarce season, and also ate some during the abundant season. It appears that consumption of tubers has deceased further since then, and that villagers rely even more on harvested crops than previously.

Economically, Jangbi is experiencing a number of changes. With road access, villagers are able to participate in business with other communities and new markets. A trekking trail runs through the village, as well, giving the community exposure to tourists. Currently, the main business prevalent in the community is a cane shoot business. The business relies on a large amount of forest that is being cared for and preserved for growing cane
shoots. The money earned from selling cane shoots is saved in a bank account, which is in the name of the community. The coordinator of this project is a community elder, who remains actively engaged in related activities, which he states are aimed to promote the wellbeing of people in the community.

While the traditional bamboos crafts of the past represent the traditional income-generating activity for community members, one competing source of income is to produce cash crops such as oranges and, to a lesser extent, mangos. However, it now seems unlikely that traditional crafts will disappear altogether from the community. The Tarayana Foundation, an organization founded in 2003 by Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuk to assist poor Bhutanese, has been actively engaged with economic projects in Jangbi community. For instance, Tarayana has helped Jangbi community members build new houses by distributing sheet metal, and petrol and diesel fuel to cut the trees and boulders needed as housing material. Tarayana has also sponsored Jangbi children to attend schools. Recently, the foundation also provided training to people in the area to assist basket and pot manufacturing skills, so that villagers can earn income from these activities. In light of this economic attention being placed on the community, villagers will likely develop a variety of income-generating activities rather than replace older activities with newer ones.

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that Jangbi
 community members, along with their Monpa relatives in central Bhutan, comprise an important and unique aspect of national culture and history - and their age old customs, language and religious practices are undergoing rapid change. In terms of religious practices, indigenous and Bon beliefs seem to be giving way to Buddhism. However, though the gradual adoption of Buddhism may be inevitable, our data suggested that this adoption will occur on the communities own terms, especially as concerns non-Buddhist ritual performances. Health care preferences have changed little, despite the presence of a

BHU and a resident health assistant in the village. Marriage customs in the community have changed from marriage within families to within communities, and now to marriage with few restrictions. Villagers noted that marriage is one source of change in the community. Beliefs regarding education appear to have changed drastically over the past twenty years. Villagers now want their children to avail educational opportunities, and are now seeing for the first time members of the community to graduate from various institutions, from tertiary to monastic. Villagers expressed uncertainty about the nature of the impact these new graduates will have on the community. Dress, food and economic activities in the village have largely homogenized with national trends, save for the results of some conservation activities underway in the community.

In some ways, as Dema (2008) has claimed, the Monpa communities of the region have largely homogenized into the national culture. Outside visitors cannot see many differences between this community and others in the region, save some minor differences in beliefs and practices that lie under the surface. Informants believe that changes taking place are due to development activities in the country. People of the community are not very isolated anymore, and are now connected to the outside world with roads and other technology. People of the community desire changes at the personal and community levels.

Some changes occurring in the village have been rapid and, in some cases, alarming in nature. For example, informants shared an instance in which their community was asked to perform an item during the coronation of the His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuk. Villagers were reportedly nervous about the performance, because they did not feel confident that they had a suitably traditional song and dance, nor were they confident that they could wear their traditional dress properly. In the end, informants say that they had to compose the melody and lyrics for the performance as nobody knew their original songs any longer. The loss of some knowledge and customs in the community, such as that of the above example, caused some informants to say they lament that the community has totally lost the culture and traditions inherited from their ancestors.

However, this study reveals that changes occurring in the village are not wholesale changes. While some aspects of village life continue to overhaul
traditional beliefs and practices at a rapid rate, other beliefs and practices in the village are shown to be resistant to change. Despite fervid efforts of the health assistant and the Lama in the village, villagers do not seem to be adopting major changes to their time-honored ritual practices. This is not to say that changes to health care and religious practices will never happen, but rather that Jangbi villagers are likely to develop a unique version of Buddhist practices that somehow incorporates older traditions. Similarly, despite some cultural casualties of rapid change occurring in the community, perhaps Jangbi will remain unique in its particular adaptation to changes underway, as community members strive to balance preservation of identity with modernization.

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## Healing of Fractures and Joint Disorders by a Local Healer

 Chencho Tshering, LecturerInstitute of Language and Culture Studies
My interest in local healing began last year when I fractured my leg playing football. I was admitted to the hospital for treatment, but while I was in the hospital I met a teacher from Sherubling High Secondary School, who suggested that rather than be treated in the hospital I should go to a local healer. Impressed by the results of the treatment I received, I decided to investigate this unique approach to healing, which is at risk of being lost. Training done in the practices of traditional medicine taking place in Bhutan is now general and standardized, and that some local healers with unique specialties may be under-represented or at risk of having their particular crafts lost over time. This study, a case study of one local healer in Trongsa, is one attempt to try to capture this unique local knowledge.

After providing background of local healing and my informant, a local traditional healer living in Trongsa district, I will share findings from data collected through interviews. I will generally discuss his approach to diagnosis, use of herbal substances in treatment and then the typical duration of his remedies.

## Background of Traditional Medicine and the Informant

In the past, Bhutanese had to face many difficulties crossing high passes on long treks to attend medical schools in Lhasa. Once they complete their training and came back to their respective places, these healers started to treat their patients, keeping in mind the holistic view of the body, treatments with plants and acupuncture, and also performing different rituals to diagnose and remove sicknesses. In our country traditional healers have different names: Pawo, Pamo, Terdag, Nyeljom, Lhapa, Jankhri, Bonpo, rKangTshigs Lag TshigsbZo Mi. Despite their different titles, their duties are similar to that of present day doctors.

Although these practices have been present in Bhutan for a long time, according to the Institute of Traditional Medicine Services (n.d.) these practices were officially recognized for the first time in Bhutan when His Majesty the third King, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, established a traditional medicine section of the health care system in 1967. The Dechencholing

Dispensary was started not long after, in 1968. The institute also began general training of future traditional doctors, who diagnose their patient's diseases by checking a patient's pulse, urine, eyes and tongue, and interviewing them. The treatment they provide patients is done with the help of acupuncture and acupressure therapy that includes using the golden needle, herbal combinations, metal rods for applications of heat, and minor surgical interventions during Buddhist rituals. Other traditional ways to treat patient in Bhutan include nasal irrigation, bloodletting, massage and stone-heated baths. This medical institute of Bhutan is similar to the Mentsekhang, or the Medical Institute at Lhasa.

However, the general training received by students of the National Institute of Traditional Medicine is not the only knowledge of this kind that exists in Bhutan. For instance, there is Palden's (April 30, 2013) informant, Jagirman, 70, who lives in Choekhorling village under Sarpang dzongkhag. He is well-known for fixing broken and dislocated limbs of both humans and animals, and also treats ulcers, rabid dog bites and skin diseases among other conditions; he has been practicing for more than 55 years. Some Bhutanese also have unique knowledge of medicinal plants. For example, in central Bhutan, Monpa communities can recognize approximately 270 species of plants in their locality, and use more than thirty of these plant species medicinally (Giri, 2004).

My informant is also one of the rare practitioners still practicing today. Ap Sangay is from Haa, but is currently settled at Taktse under Trongsa dzongkhag with his family. He joined the army in the year 1971, when he was just 20 years old. After serving in the army for a period of 32 years, he resigned in 2003. He is at present 64 years old and well-known in Trongsa for his healing practices. He started learning this unique culture from 1967-1969, when he was only 18 years old, in Tibet. He was trained by rGyal-bShad Rin-Chen, who he met when he accompanied his father on a business trip to Tibet. He studied with this master for a year in Tibet, and was later trained under the same teacher for a year and a half in Haa. His teacher was a well-known Tibetan healer during those days. He was trained on healing of fractures and joint disorders using traditional methods (rKang-Tshigs Lag-Tshigs bZo-Ni).

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Right after the completion of his training, he started healing some of the people in his neighborhood. Unfortunately, he could not continue his work because he was forced to join the army by his parents. While he was staying at Dechencholing army camp, he met Dungtsho Ladak Amchi, who was also a well-known healers during those days. From Dungtsho he learnt about the nerve positions in the body for a year, which gave him the chance to learn more about the subject. To date, he has treated almost 1500 patients with fractures and joint disorders, and almost 50 paralyzed patients. He is still actively practicing his craft, and is one of only a few traditional healers remaining in the district. He is well-known locally for his skill in this craft, and patients from other districts occasionally seek his services.

## Nerves

The informant reports that whenever a patient comes to him, he always starts his treatment by diagnosing the condition. For diagnosis, he reports that he must see the position of the patient's nerves. He mainly does this in order to identify the problem or the illness, because he says he can can know what the actual problem is by seeing the position of the nerves. Then only he starts his treatment according to his diagnosis.

He general divides nerves in four categories: Khrag-rTsa, rLung-rTsa, Shed-rTsa and Srog-rTsa. The Khrag-rTsa nerve generally deals with blood function in our body. If something goes wrong with this nerve there is a possible of dying even while standing. The rLungrTsa nerve is responsible for swelling: if something happens wrong with this nerve then our body starts swelling. The Shed-rTsa nerve generally deals with strength. If something
 happens wrong with this nerve then the person won't be able to catch a very light object also. He will not be able to walk and also he might get paralyzed. The Srog-rTsa nerve is the most important nerve of the four

If any damage is done in this nerve then the person can die within a short period of time.

## Use of Medicinal Herbs

While doing his treatment, the informant uses many locally found herbal plants which are of medicinal value, and also some local products. For example, the plant known as bTson-'Grus Shing is used both for fractures and joint disorders. He says it usually helps in joining fractured bones back together. Bam-Cha is also a plant used for both fractures and joint disorder. The informant explains that when we get fractures and joint disorders, water accumulates in-between bones, whereby our affected parts become swollen. Bam-Cha helps in decreasing swelling by drying the water in between the bones. gNya'-Shing mThudp is also used for fractures and joint disorders. It is considered as the optimal herbal medicine for joining the fractured bones. $\mathrm{mKhan}-\mathrm{Pa}$ is used both for fractures and joint disorders to helps decreasing fever in a patient.

Tshad is also considered to be one of the best medicines to fix fractured bones, whether it is in a human or in an animal. For example, the informant explained that animals could walk again after a few days when treated with Tshad, and was able to see the rapid effects of the medicine when examining a deceased animal that had been treated with Tshad. dPyidZho is usually used for fractures, but there is also reportedly a side effect while using this medicine - the plant affects the vision of patients. To immobilize the affected body part, cotton, bamboo and De-Shog are used to make Tshab-Shing. Tshab-Shing has a similar function to that of plaster in modern medicine. The use of Tshab-Shing is considered compulsory if the fracture is on the thigh. Another practice of the informant is to prepare a hot herbal bath for patients, with a mixture of bTson-'Grus Shing, BamCha and mKhan-Pa. He notes that this bath will keep the patient's body healthy and feeling very light.

He also uses ordinary household items in his practice. For instance, he considers salt as a universal material for his treatment. Salt is added to patient's herbal baths in order to reduce swelling and reduce build-up of fluid in joints. The informant also uses Pad-Kar Mar-Khu (Mustard Oil), and applies it on the patient before starting any kind of physical treatment. It is reportedly used to heat the affected parts of the body, so that
the patient will not experience much pain while he completes physical rectifications.

## Treatment Duration

Regarding the treatment duration, the informant says his recommendations mainly depend on age. Between 1-8 years of age, it's easy to repair fractures and joint problems, and patients will also recover within a short period of time. Between 9-35 years of age, it's more difficult to repair these problems, and it will take a longer time to heal afterwards. However, if it is the case of total fracture he says it will take a minimum of 4 months from beginning to end. He notes that in some cases if the patient eats healthy food, does the treatment immediately, and has a good caretaker, then the patient may be cured before the given time. However, if the patient fails to do the treatment on time, and lacks healthy food and a caretaker then it might take longer than four months to recover. For those aged between 36-70 years of age, even if the treatment is done quickly and every step is taken to aid the recovery process, it will surely take a minimum of 8 months to be cured due to the maturity of the patient's bones and flesh.
Regarding joint disorders, the informants says there is more variation in recovery timing. He say it mainly depends on the patient's physical appearance. If the patient is overweight, then their injury will rapidly accumulate more Tshe-Cu ' Bab , or flesh that emerges from fluid in-between the portions of a joint-this will make recovery
 take a longer time. In this case, there is also increased risk of future dislocation. However, if the patient is in good health and not overweight, then it recovery can finalize within a week.

## Conclusion

The informant's treatment strategy is entirely based upon the concept of traditional healing. He starts his treatment by seeing the position of nerves and the age of the patient, and then proceeds in accordance with the diagnosis. During his treatment he uses local herbal plants as well as
commonly available materials and household items. Many examples of happily recovered patients can be found in and around the informant's village in Trongsa, who gladly testify to the efficacy of his skills, which have an uncertain future.

A message of optimism comes through the narrative of this interviewee, who believes that there is still a future for this traditional practice. A recent trend seems to be emerging that is also encouraging. According to a Dzongkha Kuensel article (February 15, 2012), traditional treatment has increased as compare to that of modern treatment. Today many of the people in remote villages are entirely dependent on traditional treatment. However, though the informant communicates the values and benefits of his approach to healing, he also expresses his concerns regarding the lack of interest in people, especially youth, to preserve these practices. This concern was also noted in Palden's (April 30, 2013) Kuensel article, in which the informant laments that "no one else has expressed their interest, and I am afraid it would end with me."

In my own opinion, today people rely more on modern treatment to that of traditional treatment due to fear of acute and severe diseases. Because of increasing levels of education, the public prefers modern treatment as it is systematic, and may worry that traditional treatment can sometimes complicates their condition rather than resolve it. However, these theories of public preferences would need to be borne out through further study. Although the present study provides some interesting data, the topic is under-researched and under-represented in the literature, and merits further research to learn about unique practices still surviving throughout the country.

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## Re-evaluating the History of Gyelwa Lhanangpa

 Sonam NyendaInstitute of Language and Culture Studies'

## Introduction

In this article, I am trying to bring to light contradictions that exist between what is written in the Phajo Drugom's biography and other historical accounts of Lhanangpa. I also refer to the Nyoerab seiwe melong ${ }^{2}$ as it gives information about the genealogy of Lhanangpa's lineage and some brief accounts of his life. Additionally, The History of Drikung will be considered, as Lhanangpa is considered one of the heart sons of the Drikung founder, Jigten Gonpo, and held an important position in the Drikung sect of the Kagyu lineage.

The history of the Kagyu sect (Kagyu Serthreng), when discussing Tsangpa Gyarey (1161-1211) (who prophecised the coming of Phajo Drugom Shigpo to Bhutan) and Onrey Darma Sengye (his master or root teacher), does not give any information about Phajo Drugom Shigpo. Someone by the name of Phajo is mentioned briefly in Tsangpa Gyarey's biography, but this refers to his pet dog, who did not eat for three days prior to his master's demise !

Finally, I also use other secondary sources and interviews conducted with a few scholars, who were familiar with relevant oral history. In investigating and comparing these sources, I will discuss briefly the following topics: the history of the Kagyu lineage, the history of Lhanangpa, and contradictions and clarifications.

## Background

Gyelwa Lhanangpa Zijed Pel (1164-1224), also known as Nyoe Gyelwa Lhanangpa Sangay Rechen, was a disciple of Jigten Gonpo, who founded the Drikung sect. He was one of the earliest Tibetan saints to visit Bhutan and bless the region. When he came to Bhutan in the $12^{\mathrm{th}}$ century, he gained control over portions of the western region of the country. Later
$\begin{array}{ll}1 & \text { For the readers' convenience, we use here only transcription and not the Wylie transliteration. } \\ 2 & \text { Sanga, Lam. (2000). 'Brug gi smyos rabs yang gsal me long (Clear Mirror of the Nyo Lineage } \\ \text { of Bhutan), Thimphu: KMT. }\end{array}$

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his nephew Rinchen Gyalpo settled in Bhutan and his followers were known as the Lhapas.

Though Gyelwa Lhanangpa is famous, most Bhutanese still base their understanding of his history on Phajo Drugom Shigpo's biography. Yet a closer look at the literature and other sources reveal that misunderstandings about this figure persist. For example, when Phajo Drugom Shigpo (1184-1251) came to Bhutan in 1224 AD, the Lhapas had a conflict with him. As Aris (1974: 168-169) describes, "no account of their own view of their position has survived for the reason that they were proscribed during the time of the $1^{\text {st }}$ Zhabsdrung, ${ }^{,{ }^{33}}$ and the history of the Lhapas from this point in time onwards is thus only known from Phajo's own biography. For these reasons, clarifications on Lhanangpa history during this period of time are needed and will be sought in this article.

In the eight century when the king Sendarka (also known as Sindu Raja) of Bumthang lost his son Taglha Mebar in a fight against his rival Naoche, he mistreated his local deities, causing him to fall seriously sick. Guru Padmasambhava, who was then meditating in the cave called Halase/Maratika in Nepal, was invited to come cure his sickness. Tantric Buddhism then began to flourish in Bhutan after Padmasambava's arrival. After that, and before the Drukpas arrived in Bhutan in the early 13th century, there where other Buddhist figures who spread Buddhism in the area, then called Southern Monyul.

Gyelwa Lhanangpa was among these early figures. He came to Bhutan in 1194 and was believed to have gained a broad measure of control over Western Bhutan. He was a disciple of Jigten Gonpo (1143-1217), the founder of the important Drikung Kagyu School. However, after staying eleven years in Bhutan, he went back to Tibet and left his nephew Rinchen Gyalpo in his place. In the meantime, Phajo Drukgom arrived in Bhutan and started to spread the Drukpa Kagyu.

It is also important to know the origin of the Kagyu lineage in this discussion, as it will then become clear that both Lhanangpa and Drukpa lineages have common origins; both traditions germinate from the same

[^2]seed, the Phagmodru Kagyu sect. If we understand the contexts ofboth, we can see how the misunderstandings and disputes arose between Gyelwa Lhanangpa and Phajo Drugom, or, as we will see is more likely, their followers. Nearly every Bhutanese historical text narrates the conflicts between these two sects or figures. Most historians seem to derive Gyelwa Lhanangpa's history from Phajo's biography. As Aris said, "The official view is totally coloured by the role given to the lHa-pa in the biography of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom Zhig-po, a somewhat doubtful authority if we consider the story of its compilation". ${ }^{4}$

Regardless of how the dispute began, the rest of history after the conflict is fairly clear. The Lhapas suffered at the hands of Drukpas, and were totally uprooted in Zhabdrung's time in the 17th century. The Drukpa Kagyus went on to flourish.

## Origin of Kagyu Lineage

The Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism traces its origin from Choeku Dorji Chang, the Buddha Vajradhara who transmitted the teachings to the great Indian yogi Tilopa, one of the 84-maha siddhas of India, who lived in Northern India sometime around the 10th century A.D. His disciple Naropa then received his oral transmission. Naropa systematized the transmissions into the Six Yogas, which are considered central teachings of the Kagyu Lineage.

Naropa transmitted his knowledge to Marpa, the Tibetan translator who journeyed from Tibet to India in order to receive instructions and returned to Tibet and spread the teachings of the Dharma. Nyo Lotsawa Yonten Dragpa, the grandfather of Gyelwa Lhanangpa (who will be discussed in more detail below), was the travel companion of Marpa to India. He is known as the great translator of Nyo. Marpa's biography states that Yonten Drakpa, an old and rich man, took advantage of poor young Marpa; however, Khenpo Kencho Gyeltshen, in his Drikung history, disputes this, pointing out that these accounts are written by Marpa's faithful disciples to make their teacher seem superior to others ${ }^{5}$.

[^3]be the reincarnation of a great yogi, who was of higher status than his father. Lama Zhang was thus the religious figure who identified him as a reincarnation of the great Indian siddha known as Nagpo Chodpa. ${ }^{8}$

From early childhood, Lhanangpa is known for his leadership abilities and wisdom. It is said that during his childhood games,
"Lhanangpa was the one to decide who would play elephant and who would play horse, who would play the minister of exterior, the minister of interior and the general. The other children could not play as they wished, but had to ask his permission first. He made up the rules of the games, and anyone who violated them would no longer be welcomed as his playmate. Clearly, this story is meant to display his born leadership abilities, but it equally conveys the sense of entitlement that often comes with privileged birth. ${ }^{19}$

Even though his father was one of the most powerful and wealthy men in U-Tsang (Central Tibet) in those times, he never intended to inherit his father's wealth or got attached to it. His father, Drakpa Pel, was not only wealthy but a religious person as well; he had the transmission of the special Guhyasamaja tantra lineage from his father (Lhanangpa's grandfather). As mentioned above, Nyo Lotsawa Yonten Drakpa (was the traveling companion of Marpa Lotsawa in India.
From the age of five he started receiving the initiations of the teachings related to his family lineage from his father. Gradually, he received different kinds of teachings from yeshe(I suppose Geshe) Purangpa, Denbagpa, Onpo Sherab Jungney, Rongka Jobum, La Toed Minkharpa and others as well. Later he heard about the famous Jigten Gonpo and he decided to detach himself from worldly attachments and commit his life to religion.

He sent back his wife, Lhachig Dechogma, who was at that time pregnant with his child to her family. He explained to her that the reason he was doing that was to sacrifice all he had in order to commit his life to

8 Nagpo Chodpa was one of the 108 Siddhas of India during the Buddha's time.
9 See Martin, D. (2008). Nyo Gyelwa Lhanangpa Sanggye Rinchen. Accessed $15^{\text {hh }}$ October, 2013 from http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Nyo-Gyelwa-Lhanangpa-Sanggye-Rinchen/2789. The same information can also be seen in the brief history of Lhanangpa written in Tibetan, by the author Janya Bazra.
religious activities. Dechogma agreed and returned back to her parents. When he informed his father about his intention to leave for the Drikung monastery, his father granted permission. At the age of nineteen he met Drikung Jigten Gonpo who was nothing less than the Buddha for him.
After arriving at Drikung, it was said that Jigten Gonpo ordered him to go to another place to receive complete monk ordination, which he did in 1190. According to the Nyo Rab Yangsel Melong (NRYM), Gyelwa Lhanangpa received his complete monk ordination from Boelti Josey and Thagma Dorzhoen of Thagma Kachen.

Until the age of thirty-seven, he spent years in retreat at Mount Kailash (Ti se). It was also around this time that he performed several miracles. One miracle took place over the Lake Mapham (mtsho ma pham) - it was said that he went to visit the underwater palace of the naga king. His followers and the people around there saw him sitting cross-legged on the surface of the lake and walking to and fro over it. At that time he was offered a small stupa made from three different precious stones by the Naga king. This stupa was later handed over to his son when he prophesied him to go to the south. According to oral history, the lineage holder in Bumthang owned this stupa, until the first king Ugyen Wangchuk sent a letter to the family when the king was building the Kurje Lhakang, asking to offer the stupa as the mind support for the Guru statue. The Kasho (royal decree) is still with the family. Gyelwa Lhanangpa spent many more years in other secluded retreats. It was in Mount Kailash, where he earned his title "Lhanangpa".

After his retreats in Mount Kailash, he left to the south in 1194 AD . There is also evidence to suggest that he visited Bhutan for reasons other than to fulfill the prophecy. In the biography of Phajo Drugom Shigpo, called the current of Compassion ${ }^{10}$, in a footnote, it says at the early stage, according to the Kharag Nyo source, large domains of present-day Bhutan (1Ho Kha zhi) were offered to the translator of Nyo Yonten Drakpa in the $10^{\text {h }}$ century by the Indian teacher Aryadeva.

Accounts seem to disagree regarding how long he spent in Bhutan. In the same footnote mentioned above, it is said that he visited Drakar Dzumpa of Chelkha (Spyal-kha) in Paro arriving via Tsari where he initially
10 Dargye and Sorensen (2001). The biography of Pha 'brug sgom zhig po. Thimphu: NLB, p. Il.

sojourned for three years. He went to Tsari at the age of $27 .{ }^{\text {" }}$ Some other sources say eight or eleven years.

However he visited Bhutan in his thirties, and by the age of forty-nine he went to Dagla Gampo, the place/monastery of Gampopa in Southern Tibet, with his master Jigten Gonpo. Then Nyo Gyelwa Lhanangpa, Gar Dampa Choding and Palchen Choye (Nyo Gar Choe Sum), the three main disciples of Drikung Jigten Gonpo, went to Tsari Mountain and "opened" the hidden sacred place of Tsari by following the advice of their root teacher. So it seems most likely that he might have stayed in Bhutan between eight to eleven years. He started the Drikung school there and attracted many students.

Later his religious lineage, the Lhapa, remained influential for several centuries in Bhutan, forming a number of monasteries and gaining some control over the western region of the country. During Gyelwa Lhanangpa's lifetime, he was well known for his great brown sugar feasts (bur ston chen mo). He made several lavish sugar feasts in Drikung but the offerings also included much more than the sugar feast. He made such offerings seven times, six times before and once soon after the demise of Jigten Gonpo. In the last gathering it was said that around 55,525 followers of the Drikungpas were present for the feast. ${ }^{12}$ In his History of Bhutan, Lam Pemala says that Lhanangpa imposed so much tax on people for these grand offerings, that the people of south suffered as a result. ${ }^{13}$ But in those days, dark brown cane sugar had to be imported from India.

There is no account that people at Lhanangpa's time went to India to import these goods.

He belonged to wealthy family. As his father's dying wish he even offered a skull cup, which belonged to Naropa and was considered as the most treasured possession of his family, to his teacher Jigten Gonpo. Moreover, soon after his father passed away, two of his half brothers and a number of other important members of his clan died. So most of his family's wealth

[^4]were offered to Drikung and Phagmodru ${ }^{14}$. This information could explain that all these grand offerings may not have come from Bhutan.

In Chelkha he had many disciples and sponsors who requested him to stay back as their teacher, but instead he returned to Tibet after spending a total of about 11 years, leaving his nephew Lhapa Rinchen Gyalpo as his representative. His nephew soon came into conflict with Phajo Drugom Shigpo. Therefore, towards the end of Lhanangpa's life, Rinchen Gyalpo wrote a letter expressing his concern to Lhanangpa, saying that he was challenged in spreading his teaching in Lhomon (Bhutan) by Phajo Drugom. Lhanangpa replied by saying not to worry much, and even though his teachings may not flourish in Lhomon, the rulers of the country would be from his lineage. ${ }^{15}$ Corresponding to his date of birth in the $3^{\text {rd }}$ Rabjung's wood monkey year of the Buddhist calendar, Gyelwa Lhanangpa also passed away in the wood monkey year of the $4^{\text {th }}$ Rabjung, in the year $1224 .{ }^{16}$

## Contradiction between Phajo and Lhanangpa

Most historians continue to misunderstand the dispute that arose between the Lhapas and Phajo Drugom, and falsely attribute the dispute to have begun with Gyelwa Lhanangpa: We would like to attempt to clarify the subject here.

The school or the tradition that Lhanangpa started in Paro was the Drikung Kaygyu, but after his name Lhanangpa his followers are known as Lhapas. In the biography of Phajo it is written that the Lhapa who resisted Phajo was Gyelwa Lhanangpa. Gyelwa Lhanangpa and Phajo could not have had a conflict with one another, as their dates simply don't match.

Numerous scholars claim different dates in Phajo's history. According to his biography, Phajo was born in 1208 (Male Earth Dragon) and passed away at the age of 68 , which means 1275 AD . According to the 69th Je Khenpo Gedun Rinchen's history the Lho Druk Choejung, he was born in 1184 AD (Wood Snake) and passed away in 1251 AD. When Dr.

[^5]Yonten Dargye and P.K. Sorensen wrote the biography of Phajo Drugom, they relied on this latter date because there are also dates given by other scholars. The two authors said "It is more likely in or around 1184 A.D., as already suggested by a number of scholars".

If this is the case, it is 20 years after the birth of Gyelwa Lhanangpa, who was born in 1164. In 1191 Phajo was seven and started his study under Nyingma tradition, and at the age of 12 (in 1196), he met the Nyingma master Tharpalingpa from whom he got the name Dhondup Gyeltshen (some oral accounts say Tharpa Gyeltshen was the name given by Tharpalingpa). By that time, Lhanangpa was already at the age of 32 . It was recorded that he had arrived in Bhutan in 1194 at the age of 30 .

If Lhanangpa stayed in Bhutan for 11 years, he had already spent 2 years in Bhutan, while Phajo was still with his Nyingma master. Lhanangpa returned back to Tibet after 1205 and he didn't stay 11 years at one stretch in Bhutan. We have also seen that he accompanied his master Jigten Gonpo to Daglha Gampo monastery in his forties.

Phajo was 33 years old when he met Sangay Onrey. He stayed $31 / 2$ years at Jekar and Longdol after his master's instructions. After receiving the Demchog (Samvara) Transmission of the Rechung tradition, he stayed 1 year in Gomo Terkhung. He then stayed for 3 years in Gargoe of Nyingro receiving the complete cycle of Zhi Je from Lama Nyangtoe Chenpo. In total he stayed 7 years, and finally Phajo was ordered by Sangay Onrey to go to the south. ${ }^{17}$ By that time Phajo turns 40, and it would be in 1224 that he heads towards Bhutan. At this point in time, Gyelwa Lhanangpa turns 61 years of age - the age at which he died.Even if we put Phajo's arrival in 1222 or 1219, Gyelwa Lhanangpa's time in Bhutan does not match up. If Phajo arrived Bhutan in 1222, Gyelwa Lhanangpa was 58, and if it was in 1219, he was 55 . Either way, he was elderly and already back to Tibet, where he spent his final years until his death in 1224. We know that when Gyelwa Lhanangpa's root guru, Jigten Gonpo, died in 1217, Gyelwa Lhanangpa was in Tibet, and there is no evidence so far to support any return trips to Bhutan after 1217 .

17 see Dargye and Sorensen (2001), biography of Pha 'brug sgom zhig po. pp. 11, 14 and 15.


## Conclusion

According to the documents and historical inquiry of this study it would appear that Aris, while right about the reasons for tensions between Lhapas and Phajo, was wrong about Gyeiwa Lhanangpa's involvement in the start of the conflict. Aris concluded:

In Bhutanese tradition the 1 Ha pa are depicted as the bane of the 'Brug-pa school which ultimately triumphed. The official view is totally coloured by the role given to the lHa-pa in the biography of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom Zhig-po, a somewhat doubtful authority if we consider the story of it's compilation. It purports to have been written by Pha-jo's son Dam-pa (in the $12^{\text {th }}$ century) and later rediscovered by Ngag-dbang bsTan-'dzin (son of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, 1455-1529) when he was fifty years old, i.e. in about 1580 . The enemy is referred to as gNyoe or 1 Ha -pa but he can probably be identified with rGyal-ba lHa-nang-pa himself, as dates seem to fit. ${ }^{18}$

However after a closer look into the documents and histories of the individual figures, the dates don't seem to fit. Gyelwa Lhanangpa had already left Bhutan by the time Phajo arrived.

Looking at this contradiction, the dispute between Phajo and the Lhapas does not seem likely to have originated with Gyelwa Lhanangpa himself. Some scholars think it could have been the Lhapa Rinchen Gyalpo, Lhanangpa's nephew, or possibly other lamas after Rinchen Gyalpo.

This conclusion may be accurate if we consider the information derived from Kharag gNyoe kyi gdung rabs khyad par 'phags pa: p42-51, which is given in the footnote of The Phajo's Biography: The authors discussed that if we date Phajo tentatively to 1184-1251 A.D., and his arrival in Lhomon to the mid- 1220, the skirmishes between Phajo and the Lhapas may date to approximately 1235-1245. The footnote also says that shortly after Lhanangpa passed away, Rinchen Gyalpo came to the Lhapa seat of Lhathel in 1227 and his abbacy lasted until 1231. ${ }^{19}$ There is thus some provision for further studies to identify the appropriate figure who disputed with Phajo.
18 Aris, M. (1974). Bhutan: The early history of a Himalayan kingdom. Wamminster: Aris \& Phillips, pp. 168-169.
19 see Dargye and Sorensen (2001), biography of Pha 'brug sgom zhig po. p. III (footnote)

|  | $[272]$ |  |
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Furthermore, many Bhutanese historians seem to have mistaken the Lhapa for Gyelwa Lhanangpa. Lhapa is a term given either to his followers or the sub-sect of Drikung established under his teaching named after him. In Polity of Kingship and Democracy, the author writes: "Lhapa (abbreviation of Lhanangpa) ${ }^{n 20}$. Lhapa is not an abbreviation but a name of the Drikung sub-sect established by Gyelwa Lhanangpa that came to be known after his name, since he was its founder. At times his followers are known as Lhapa for being the follower of Lhanangpa or the practioners of Lhapa Kagyue teaching. Lhapa is an abbreviation of Lhanangpa, but many take it as a reference to Gyelwa Lhanangpa himself, which is incorrect in our view. It might be necessary to reassess this part of the history of Bhutan.

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[^2]:    3 Aris, M. (1974). Bhutan: The early history of a Himalayan kingdom. Warminster: Aris \& Phillips.

[^3]:    4 Aris, M. (1974). Bhutan: The early history of a Himalayan kingdom. Warminster: Aris \& Phillips.
    5 Jamtsho, Kencho. (2004). 'Bri gung chos 'byung, Mirig dpe truen Khang, China, p. 320.

[^4]:    11 See Tshewang, Padma. (1994). 'Brug gi rgyal rabs gsal ba'i sgron. Thimphu: NLB
    12 See Martin, D. (2008). Nyo Gyelwa Lhanangpa Sanggye Rinchen. Accessed $15^{\text {th }}$ October, 2013 from hitp://treasuryofives.org/biographies/view/Nyo-Gyelwa-Lhanangpa-Sanggye-Rinchen/2789 13 See Tshewang, Padma. (1994). 'Brug gi rgyal rabs gsal ba'i sgnon. Thimphu: NLB.

[^5]:    14 Janya Bazra. (....).Lhanangpa's Namthar. Drikung Kagyu school: Sambotha Research Center.
     lished manuscript.
    16 Lobzang, Dungkhar. (2004). Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo. Delhi: Sherig Parkhang, p. 937. However this information is same in all the references.

[^6]:    20 Kinga, Sonam (2009). Polity, Kingship and Democracy. A biography of the Bhutanese state. Thimphu: MoE, p. 47.

