Lo Gsar celebration: The significance of food in the noble and religious family of O Rgyan Chos Gling (Central Bhutan),

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Bhutanese New Year or losar (Lo gsar)1", according to the lunar calendar falls sometime in February-March and it is by far the single most important semi-religious festival for the entire country. For my family, losar did not merely consist of the feasting and the revelry but it was the celebration of the time honored family tradition which entailed a certain set of observances to be carried out meticulously. My parents were up holding their duties as the lama choeje (bla ma chos rje) of Ogyen choling (O rgyan chos gling), and they aspired, like the generations before them to make losar as grand as the previous ones if not better.

The village of Ogyen choling is located in the upper part of Tang valley in the Bumthang district in the central part of Bhutan. My ancestral home is a relatively large complex built in the style and the scale of a dzong or a palace/ fortress. Although it was sometimes referred to as a dzong (rdzong), it was more often known as a gompa (dgon pa) or a monastery because of its origin and history. My father's ancestors traced their religious lineage to the 14th century Tibetan master Longchen Rabjampa (1308-63)3 and their genealogical lineage to the saint and tantric treasure discover Dorji Lingpa (1365-1405)4. Throughout history, my father's ancestors seemed to have yielded considerable power and influence in the region. Even as late as the mid 1950's, my parents considered the celebration of losar to be a fulfillment of their duty. They saw it as a matter of their prestige and pride to ensure that this duty was carried out to the best of their ability.

My mother, an uncle and one or two trusted senior servants worked in our private altar room and the fairly large adjoining room, carefully piling all sorts of eatables on to plates. These special occasion plates, called 'thokay' (mtho bkal) were made of silver, brass, copper or even wood. They had a round base which rose up elegantly in an elongated cylindrical extension to form a shallow plate. It was a challenging, artistic and a loving endeavor to balance all the food on top of each other to heights of about 30cm off the plate. The end result was a conical structure of food that looked like a free floating lotus bud. The mandarins were placed on top of each other in the center, they made up the central piece. The golden sugar cane, cut into about 20cm lengths were positioned symmetrically around the plate as were the bananas which were still green and not edible, but it the auspiciousness of the variety that mattered. All sorts of intricately crafted and fried biscuits (tshog) were then arranged carefully within the skeletal fruit framework. Every kind of fruit, dried and fresh, nuts, candies and biscuits were added to the structure in an intricate and delicate balance.

The size and the elaborateness of each plate was different, indicating the status of each recipient. Father, as the patriarch and the genealogical lineage holder (gdung brgyud)4 upholder of the religious tradition (chos brgyud)5 and the ruling feudal lord of the region was served the biggest and the most elaborate plate. If there was a high lama or a special guest, he too would receive an equally big and elaborate plate. My older brother, the logical heir and my mother, mistress of the house, were served the second largest ones. The other children and the rest of relatives were given the same sized plates while the other invitees were offered plates according to their status and position. The plates were finally lined up against the wall, given one last critical scrutiny and the final touches were made, a biscuit was adjusted here, a nut tapped into position there and these handiwork was not to touched until the early hours of the next morning when they would

be served to each individual at the Shudrel Phunsum Tshogpa (bZhugs gral phun sum tshogs pa) ceremony. By observing this ceremony our family was following a three hundred years old tradition.

This ceremony, performed all over Bhutan, originated in 1637. When the construction of Punakha dzong was completed, the great Shabdrung Ngwang Namgyel (Zhabs drung Ngag dbang rnam rgyal 1594-1651), the unifier of Bhutan, conducted an inaugural ceremony. People from all over the country came for the celebration bringing with them the produce from their regions; "Rice and other cereals as well as different varieties of fruits and vegetables came from the nearby valleys of Shar (Shar), Wang (Wang) and Paro (Spa gro). Woven fabrics and other products came from the eastern regions of Kurtoe (Skur stod), Mongar (Mon sgar), Trashi Yangtse (bKra shis yang rtse) and Trashigang (Bkra shis sgang). Pastoral people from Haa (Ha), Lingshi (Gling bzhi), Laya (La yag), Lunana (Lung nag nang), Bumthang (Bum thang) and Merak Sakteng (Me rag Sag gteng) brought cheese, butter and other animal products while those from Mangde (Mang sde) and Darkar (Dar dkar) brought walnut and other fruits. Doma and pani (betel leaves and areca nut) came from Dungsum (gDung bsam) and the Duar region while sugar cane and molasses came from Wamrong (Wam rong) and Kheng (Kheng) regions". The Shabdrung considered this gesture of people coming from all over the country with their regional produce as highly auspicious and asked the people to be seated in rows and every food item was served to all. This momentous event, known as Shudrel Phuensum Tshogpa, which literally means "coming together and seating in rows for all good things" has become a standard ceremony for important occasions like the new year, weddings and house inaugurations. This ceremony instituted over three hundred years ago was observed in painstaking splendor for the new year in Ogyen choling in 1959.

At about the same time as the thokay were being appraised for the final time, the servants in the adjoining room would call my mother to show her what they had been doing. There were various baskets with different eatables (preferably 21 items) in rows, ready to be handed out to the other invitees the next morning. It was the tradition that one member from each household from all the villages in the Tang valley were to be served Losar in Ogyen choling. More it than being simply a gesture of noblesse oblige it was time for sharing the auspiciousness of the new year, renewing loyalties and fostering goodwill. There would be about 180 - 200 people 6 all together, which included the family members and relatives, special guests, the servants, weavers, cooks, the servers, the water carriers, cow herders, yak herders, those who fed the pigs, those who carried the firewood, and all sorts of people whose services were required to make the feudal system viable. So while my parents and their ancestors before them had meticulously planned and precisely arranged the celebration of new year, for those who would partake of the feast it was the age-old of tradition of "eating losar" that had brought them to assemble on the cold stone slaps in the courtyard of our home.

Preparations for the grand event were not confined to the eve of losar. Over the entire year, goods were collected and set aside for the big occasion. Vegetables, mainly radish and turnip were preserved in buckwheat straw and husks. Others had been shredded or cut and sun dried. Pears from two particular trees which had been harvested in November, only after it had a good douse of frost were preserved in an earthen jars and kept fresh for the losar. Peaches and pears were sun dried and stored. As early as the 7th month of the Bhutanese calendar, our family's merchants would go to the seven days annual trade fair at Talung Tshongdu (lHo rTa lung), close to the lake Yamdrok (Yar 'brog) in Tibet. Fine brick tea, rock salt, borax, and sheep pelts were

imported and set aside for Losar. The sheep pelts were an important food item in the old days. The wool was pulled off from the pelts and processed into thread. The hides could be made into different recipes and eaten as delicacies. Whole legs of mutton, wind dried and preserved in the frigid Tibetan temperatures, had been traded against rice, chili, brown sugar, madder, hand woven fabrics and hand made Bhutanese paper. These goods were fastidiously carried over the high ice and snow bound passes, a journey of several days into the Tibetan trading centers. Although some rice was taken as far as Lhasa to be exchanged for special items most of the rice was actually exchanged at Tsampa (mTshams pa), a small settlement at the northernmost part of the Chos 'khor valley of Bumthang. The merchandise from Tibet was carried back to Ogyen choling by porters, mules and yaks. Candies and biscuits from India (nearest border towns were Khorasar in West Bengal and Godama in Assam) added variety to the displays. Weeks before the losar the family's yaks and pack mules had carried many measures of rice, pulses and cereals from our estates in sub-tropical Kurtoe (sKur stod), east of Bumthang in today's Lhuentse (Lhun rtse) District. Depending upon the harvest, from year to year, as many twenty or as few as five to six porters would be required to carry the more fragile and perishable goods like fruits and vegetables on their backs and trek through treacherous terrain for two to three days to reach Ogyen choling.

When all the preparations for the new year were complete, the small wooden box with the special cups and bowls would be brought out and father would unwrap the fine Chinese porcelain bowls from their covers of silks and brocades. There were some jade bowls too, white and green ones. The rest were ivory and wooden bowls. The finely turned and delicately lacquered wooden bowls were highly valued for they were made of the coveted but rare tree carbuncles called 'za'*.(Bum.Dz.) Some of these bowls were lined with silver and gilded in gold. Some of them looked fairly new because of their occasional restricted use, helped them to maintain their newness. Others were old and worn out with the lacquer nearly worn off. These cups and bowls were seldom used and only on special occasions for the rest of the time they were locked away. The auspicious occasion of losar called for the use of these utensils for they were not only precious in value but loaded with sentiment. These cups and bowls were used by many generations. Our parents knew each bowl and its history. The large worn out one belonged to our famous ancestor, Kushu Tsokey Dorji 7, Governor of Trongsa (in the first half of the 19th century).These bowls and cups formed a tangible link to our ancestors and by using them on this special occasion, we not only invoked their memory but we would be sharing some of the merits of our ancestors.

It was customary and highly desirable for each individual to put on a new set of clothes on losar. For many this was the only time when they actually got a new set of clothes. All the retainers were given an annual set of clothes (lo gos) at this time. Mother made sure that all the children also got a new set of clothes for the new year.

We looked eagerly to the eastern mountain for the position of the sun as a indicator of time. As the peak of the eastern mountain of Kanyai* glowed with the light of rising sun we would be sitting in a big semi circle with father at the head. Fortunately, this room was one of the few rooms in the house that had glass window panes, and was not too cold. But there was always an atmosphere of restraint and formality as we sat in our places and waited for the ceremonies to begin. Formal meals were normally eaten in silence. The altar was decked up with all sorts of ritual offerings; it was so full and laden that an extra long narrow table was placed in front of it to accommodate all the other offerings that were yet to come. The ritual cakes (gtor ma) coated

with a layer of butter and red color gleamed in the light of the butter lamp. The ceremony would unfold when Father ceremoniously rose from his seat, walked to the altar and took up the porcelain bowl in which holy relics had been soaking over night. He would spoon out a precious drop in the center of our cupped palms which we licked off reverently.

Each person had to have various bowls to receive all the varieties of foods that would be served. The first item of the day was 'shaythu' (Phye thug), a rice gruel cooked to a fine pouring consistency. Rice was cooked already the night before until it became soft. The next morning the seasonings were added; salt, butter, some ginger, a dash of chili powder dried cheese (fresh cheese mashed and squeezed into thin noodle like strands and sun dried) and a dash of finely ground Sichuan peppers. 'Changkoi' (chang 'khol), a thick soup of fermented rice prepared with butter, eggs and seeds of amaranths followed the rice soup. This slightly alcoholic soup warmed us on the shivery February - March early mornings and we were ready to sit for another hour or two until the end of the ceremonies.

As the sun glided past the mountain top, promising a warm day, the elaborately ornate silver tea pot would appear from behind the screen protecting the door, balanced on the raised left palm of the tea server. The freshly polished silver caught the first rays of the sun and gleamed and sparkled. There was much ritual in the way the tea was served. The retainer, who was to serve tea had to be quite nimble and deft with handling the large tea pot. Bearing the tea pot raised up to his shoulders he had to walk half way up the room then pour tea into an offering cup on the altar come back to the center of the room, lower the tea pot and raise his right leg slightly. Supporting the tea pot on his right thigh he would pour a drop into his left palm and lick it. Only after that he would serve tea to father and all the others in the line. After everybody's cups were filled, the senior most Lopon (slob dpon) or gomchen (sgom chen), (a Buddhist teacher or a lay monk) who ever happened to be present, would drone the lengthy litany of tea offering while others joined in and the children waited impatiently. 'Dresi' ('bras sil), a preparation of white rice cooked from the prestigious 'bondril' (sbon'bras), similar to the Indian Basmati was then served. While the more important people were given a bowl filled with the rice others had to hold out their bowls to be served. The fine long grains with an endearingly aromatic flavor, mixed with saffron (dri bzang), fresh butter and brown sugar, was served heaped in bowls

'Droma' (gro ma) (Potentilla arbuscula) tiny, sweet-potato-like-tubers collected from the high mountains, cooked with a little sugar, fresh cheese cubes and butter to a pulpy consistency was served immediately after the tea and rice. The sweet, soft starchy taste would just be lingering in the mouth when it had to be washed down with saffron tea, for 'droma' and 'drisang' (dri bzang) were to be taken together.

Then one after another four different teas were served; first 'Ja karpo' (Ja dkar po) or a white tea which was just butter and water cooked with salt was served in one of the smaller bowls. Accompanying this tea was a spoonful of roasted rice 'Zao' (Dzongkha: 'dzarba) or puffed rice (sB ma). 'Ja nakpo' (ja nag po), black tea which is just the tea leaves cooked in water without any butter or salt which was not churned followed as soon as the rice cereal was spooned out to everybody. A spoonful of 'kaphye' (dkar phye) (roasted barley flour) was served after the black tea. Finally 'sona choija '(bsod nams mchod ja) a mild tea made from the tender leaves and young flower buds of the Hypericum bush which grows widely in the environs was served. These teas were drunk not for taste or nourishment but simply for the auspiciousness of variety, so only small helpings in tiny cups were served. While all the dried cereals were spooned out to

everybody, Father could take a helping of each by himself from the baskets, but he also just took a pinch of each as was the etiquette.

We were now ready to receive the shudrel (gzhugs grel) something that all the children were waiting for. The carefully decorated plates were finally brought out and placed in front of each individual. When the sun had reached a distance of a meter or so beyond mountain and was shining brightly into the room bathing us in auspicious warmth everybody would have received all the auspicious food items. The adults would discreetly take a small item or two and taste them, but the children dug into their plates searching for our favorites. We would be so engrossed in examining our spoils that we hardly noticed the 'ara' (a rag) heated with butter and eggs that was served to the controlled delight of many adults who relished the preparation. The hot 'ara' was then followed by the ritual of sharing the 'phemar' (phye mar) for long life and good fortune. Phemar consisted of roasted and ground barley flour heaped up in a special plate. The heaped flour was decorated with strands, circles and tiny balls of fresh butter. A pinch of flour and a bit of butter was given to each person and while we ate it, fistfuls of flour were sprinkled on our heads and around our shoulders in a circular motion from right to left for men and from left to right for women. We were told that the white flour in one's hair was symbolic of old age and the gesture was, therefore, an invocation of long life.

While the family and the special invitees were thus engaged the people in the courtyard who were seated in two long lines were being served too. All the eatables in the baskets were being served out to the people. The first item served was a quartered betel nut on a betel leaf and the last item was a boiled potato.

As the children plucked away at our losar specialties, the shouts of the village archers who had gathered in the center of the village would pierce the thin morning air, a sharp sound of banality cutting through the serene air of religious formality. Then we would follow our father and his team of archers as they headed for the archery around. Traditionally, a friendly game was played between the male servants led by Father and the "bull herders" of the village. The bull herders were actually the male heads of the households of the village.

Mother made special snacks for father as he walked between the two targets, she had a constant supply of 'doma pani' (rdo ma pa ni) areca nut and betel leaf. She had a silver container whose insides had been lined with fresh green banana leaf cut to size. She had segments of plump mandarins cleaned off all the strings, on one side of the container and bite-size sugar cane which have cut and cleaned on the other side. Mother made quids of betel and areca and handed out to the archers as they passed her. The manager of the alcohol making unit of our household, stood at a strategic place, mid way between the two targets with a few containers of ara to give congratulatory cupfuls to those who hit the target, a few lucky ones she personally favored and the bold ones who bullied her for a cup or two and to the remaining ones who she could not deny a cup or two on grounds of compassion, so nobody was missed out.

While the archery was going on, frenzied preparations for lunch were underway. The workers in the kitchens had to be content with only hearing the yells of instructions and cries of triumph of the archers in the distance. Lunch has to be served before midday.

Before the sun had reached the midday position we were once again assembled in the large living room. Nobody was really hungry and the taste of the goodies would still be in my mouth. Yet, we all assembled in the "big room" once again. All of us had heaped circular bamboo baskets (bang chung) of red rice topped with huge pieces of meat; pork, beef, tripe, sausages, whole

dried red chilies and large radishes cut into fine circular pieces. Father was served his share of meat in a special covered wooden bowl. Each one of us was surrounded by an array of cups and bowls. Each time a different dish was served we have to put out our bowls and get them filled, whether we can eat all of it or not was irrelevant, the cups and bowls had to be filled.

Hot, strong beer made of barley or wheat (bang chang) was followed by the first item called 'shaychen kangma' (bzhes can gangm) also called zurkay (zur skyes) or dish on the side. This was usually of the fried variety and was extremely rich. This could be minced or cubed meat that was fried, fried eggs or fried cheese. We had been taught that 'zurkay' was served into the smallest bowl and there will be no re-fills. 'Geygeywa'(skyes skyes ba) which was a mixture of meat with a vegetable (either radish or potato) with some soup was followed by 'kanjung maru' (Dz. rkang rgyu mar rus). This bone dish was highly esteemed, perhaps because it takes so long to cook it. It was simply the shin bones of cattle which have been chopped into bite size cubes and cooked for many hours or sometimes for a whole day. Tenderizers such as soda or areca nut were sometimes used to lessen the hours of cooking. The dish was cooked until the flesh around the bones becomes tender and soft. This white (some milk was used) soupy dish had a rich sooth flavor which was enhanced by ginger and a dash of chili powder. The soup was drunk while the bones were sucked discreetly and kept aside to be discarded later. 'Phagsha maru' (Dz. phag sha mar rus) was cubed pork cooked in a rich gravy. Similarly 'nosha maru' (Dz. nor sha mar rus) was beef, sometimes with vegetables as was 'lugsha maru' (Dz./Bumth lug sha mar rus) or mutton cooked dry or with a thick gravy. 'Gondo maru' (Dz. sgong rdog mar rus) was boiled eggs cut into pieces served with a rich thick gravy. Sometimes 'phagu maru' (Dz. phag mgo mar rus) was prepared. This was the pig head which was cooked for a long time until the flesh and skin separate from the bones. The meat was then cut into bite sizes and either fried with some spices or cooked with some gravy.The 'maru' variety can be made with meat alone or some bones vegetables could be added. 'Ngatsoy' (sngo tshod) was a vegetable dish with fresh cheese. This was a refreshingly welcome dish with a difference where a meal was so overwhelmingly meat centered. The 'jachu' (bya rgyu) was also a vegetable, usually a fresh plant from the subtropics called 'dambaru', made into a soup. 'Phatsa' or 'dambaru' (Calamus spp.) was a must on special occasions such as this. The dish made of the tender shoots of rattan and the green wild vegetable was often too bitter for many. It was an elitist dish where the taste was acquired with repeated useage! 'Kogai' (Dz. Ko rgyas) was a specialty that the old people talk of nostalgically for today mutton 'kogai' is no longer available. 'Kogai' literally means skin mixed with spices. The skins were the pelts imported from Tibet basically for wool. The pelts were soaked in water until the wool could be easily plucked off. The pelt was then roasted to get rid of any remaining wool. Only the thick fat pelts were used for eating. The roasted pelts were washed and scrapped until clean and then cut in slender stripes which were later cut into small squares and cooked for long hours until it was easily chewable. The squares were cooked until all the liquid had dried up and the now juicy, crunchy and yet tender skin was fried with salt chili, Sichuan peppers and garnished with some onion leaves. 'Hogai' (Dz. Ho rgyas) or a fresh salad of radish slices flavored with Perilla frutescence seeds, chili powder, Sichuan peppers and salt was served. A side dish of a zesty sliced liver with lots of Sichuan peppers. We knew the long list of dishes were finally finished when hot milk seasoned with a little chili powder, salt and tiny green onion leaves was served. Before we could taste all of the items the servants would be streaming into the room for refills.

After lunch the archery match resumed and my brothers were not only allowed to carry my father's bow and his quiver with the arrows but even allowed to play a few rounds of the game.

Even as a little girl I knew that I was not supposed to touch a man's archery paraphernalia least I undermine his luck with my femininity. I sometimes joined in the young girls' dancing group but I mostly liked to sit with my mother, helping her to prepare betel nut quids and handing them to the archers and the visitors.

At about three o'clock, 'soen zar' (gsol zar) was served. This was usually white rice cooked in a sauce of pork pieces with slices of boiled eggs and potato. This preparation called 'Shamdrey' (sha 'bras) was a rich nourishing meal in itself. The sauce had been spiced with ginger, chili powder with some onion leaves and our cook liked to add a dash of cinnamon to give it a special flavor. This meal was served on very special occasions like losar or when we had important guests. On ordinary days we just had butter tea with some maize or rice cereal at about four o'clock in the afternoon which was called 'gung ja' (dgung ja) which best translates into "timely tea".

The lunch ritual was repeated for dinner and the same items with a few changes were served. Tired, often over eaten and completely satiated we could barely keep awake for the long ritual of dinner. The only other time when we would again eat so much would be later in the year, on the "day of the nine evils". On this day children were told to eat to as much as we possibly could because the demons would come and weigh us in the night. If we did not weigh a certain amount they would carry us off. So we used to stuff ourselves silly on that day. On losar we had tasted and feasted on all the choicest food and we could fall off to sleep without the fear of the demons. Instead, we slept in bliss, content with the good fortune of abundance, assured by the good wishes for the perpetuity of foods and long life.

For my parents it was probably a different kind of satisfaction, they had done their duties in up holding the tradition, had renewed their allegiances to the rulers of the country, had reaffirmed their goodwill and friendship with their friends and equals and were assured of the loyalty of the people of the valley and the celebrations had taken place in the best way they knew how. The losar celebrations had been possible because of the blessings of the konchogsum (dKon chog gsum: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) and their personal deities, who allowed them to be sustained by their merits and the essence of the earth.

At a different level of the hierarchy, it was the tradition too, that my parents offered losar to the king and some members of the royal family. Special couriers would be had been dispatched bearing with them losar gifts consisting of whole carcasses of pigs, the distilled alcohol 'ara', flour and sometimes specially made biscuits and textiles. Royal reciprocation came in the form of parcels of fruits, textiles, silver coins, and sometimes garments or even swords and guns. The traditions of losar not only fostered our relationships with our patrons downwards and laterally but also upwards as it was an opportunity pledge our own loyalty and alliances to the rulers of the country.

As I recall now, perhaps with certain hindsight, even as young as I was, I felt that there was an undercurrent of competition among the landed families to out do each other in trying to gain closer relationships with the rulers and, thus, secure royal indulgences. Within our family there was the resigned understanding that our poor performance in the competition was not our lacking in loyalty but our strong inclination towards religion and scholastics rather than advancing our political and materialistic ambitions

Today losar for most people tends to be a prosaic event, minus all its significance and its charm. It is just a marker in time, the beginning of another year. It is a government holiday and most

people think of it just like any other holiday. This is surely because of the drastic changes in the socioeconomic realities in the country. The food items and the other specialties that were cultivated or gathered, bartered and traded over an entire year to have something special on the new year are now available throughout the year. The monetized economy allows most people, even the remotest populations to enjoy varying degrees of consumerism.

One young government servant was wandering around the partially closed town on losar. I asked him if he was enjoying losar and this is what he said, that these days losar is not different from any other day. Our parents looked forward to this day for the entire year. This was the day that they ate their best foods. Ate rare and special things, meats and exotic candies etc. This was the day everybody got a new set of clothes. Times have changed and the ways have changed too. All sorts of food is available all the time and you can buy new cloths every day too. Losar is fun for those who play archery or those who enjoy gambling.

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1. To make the main text easier to read, I have chosen to use transcription of Tibetan/Dzongka names and terms. However, the transliteration of each of these words is given in brackets at its first occurrence. Dz. means Dzongkha. In the notes, only transliteration is given. For terms that are in the Bumthangkha, Bum.language or for which I do not know the transliteration, I use the transcription followed by an asterix

2. Bla ma chos rje: From the 9th century onwards in western and central Bhutan, the descendants of well known and respected religious personalities constituted a religious nobility known as chos rje . In the case of O rgyan chos gling the term bla ma was added suggesting that members of the household at various times in history also functioned as religious masters.

3. Kun mkhyen Klong chen rab 'byams pa was the most celebrated writer and accomplished master of the rnying ma pa school of Buddhism. He sought refuge in Bhutan for 10 years after a misunderstanding with Tai Situ Byang chub rgyal mtshan who became the ruler of Tibet in 1349. He founded eight religious centres in Bhutan known as the "Eight gling" and O rgyan chos gling is included as one of them. Return

4. rDor rje gling pa is one of the most pre-eminent religious figures in the rnying ma pa tradition. He is among the "five great gter ston" or religious treasure revealers. The O rgyan chos gling

gdung brgyud is traced to rDo rje gling pa whose reincarnation or son, this is not clear, Trulku mChog ldan mgon po, is held to be the originator of the lineage.

5. Chos brgyud: O rgyan chos gling has tried to maintain the religious tradition of rDo rje gling pa. Even today the ritual of bla ma bka' 'dus is performed during the annual prayers in the 9th month of the lunar calendar. Cf. Pommaret's communication.

6. Prior to the emancipation of serfs by His Majesty Jigme Dorji,(1928-1972), feudal households, such as O rgyan chos gling were maintained by the employment of serfs 'zap' (bza' pa)and 'drap' (grva pa).The former worked for their masters on a daily basis and were given food and clothing. They owned no land of their own. The latter were tenant farmers, they also worked on a daily basis but were given land for their labors. On New year one member of each household plus all the individuals who performed specific services were invited to the feast.

7. sKu zhabs mTsho skyes rdo rje also known as Dbang chen rdo rje was fifteenth descendant of rDo rje gling pa and he played a significant role in the political history of Bhutan. He handed over his post of Krong sar dPon slob to 'Jigs med rNam rgyal (1825-1865), the father of O rgyan dbang phyug (1862-1926) who became the first king of Bhutan in 1907. The title sKu zhabs is rarely used in Bhutan where it is pronounced 'Kusho', but in our family we always added the prefix Kusho to mTsho skyes rdo rje.