

HA: THE BON FESTIVAL OF GORTSHOM VILLAGE*

TASHI CHODEN **

INTRODUCTION

The people of Gortshom village celebrate a series of festivals of which *Prichoed*, characterized by the offering of flowers, is celebrated in the fourth month to mark the beginning of spring. As harvests begin, *langchoed* is celebrated in the ninth month. A distinctive festival, *lha* (hereafter 'Ha' as pronounced and known in Gortshom), is celebrated in the sixth month to propitiate local gods and deities. According to local belief, this is done in order to seek protection for crops and livestock against natural calamities. Unlike other festivals, Ha is not an isolated celebration. Various activities are observed at different times of the year either in anticipation of, or as follow up to the festival. The Ha celebration in Gortshom is a part of Bon tradition. This particular tradition belongs to the Bon Kar¹. The communities along the valley of Kurichhu (a

* I attended the *Ha* celebration in Gortshom village under Metsho Gewog, Lhuntse from July 18-20, 2002. I would like to acknowledge the hospitality, support and co-operation of the people of Gortshom, in particular our host Ap Tashi Dorji, and Aum Dekimo, Tshampa Rinchen Namgyal, Aum Sonamo and Gup Kezang.

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¹*Bon* practitioners are of two types: The *Bon kar* and *Bon nag*. *Kar* means white, and they are those who do not engage in animal sacrifices. *Nag* means black, and refers to those engaged in activities such as black, magic sorceries and animal sacrifices. In Bhutan, *Bon nag* was replaced by the introduction of Buddhism.

river that descends from Kulagangri and flows through Kurtoe region) observe varying versions of Ha in different months. For example, it is celebrated in Thidangbi in the fourth month, Jarey in the fifth month, Metsho in the sixth month, Zhungkhar, Nyabi and Takela in the seventh month, Jang in the eighth month, and Ney in the ninth month. It is also known by different names such as Kharphu in Thidangbi, Ha in Metsho and Jarey, and Chha in Ney. It is believed that this monthly progression of Ha celebration starts in the plains of India in the first month and concludes in the mountains of Tibet in the 12th month. An interesting aspect of the villages and communities that celebrate this festival is that they are all located on the left side of Kurichhu.

HA CALENDER

Annual Activities

Month	2	5	6
Day	18	10	10
Activity	Tsanchoed	Hagtshe	Ha

Activities in the Sixth Month

Day	Activities
1st	Prepare Machhang
6th	Prepare Gazang Chhang
9th	Preparatory works for Ha. Bring sangshing and darchoed.
10th	Ha
11th	Hai Lan or Lanchhen
12th	Dued choed
13th	Dudkilan or Lanchhung
14th	Phag chham

The days for activities are not always followed strictly. Since paddy is planted during the sixth month, the Ha celebration may be postponed to the 18th day if plantation has not been completed. The calendar of the actual celebration of Ha is no longer followed through the five days as shown in the table. While duechod is conducted on the third day, the tradition of performing Phagcham (dance of hog) has disappeared altogether.

HAI TSAWA: HOSTS OF THE HA

Some sixty years ago, Gortshom comprised of only two households from which offshoots grew into newer households over time. One of the original houses was a three-storied structure called Thogpa. The other smaller house was called Wogpa.

The first household that separated from the main Wogpa family is called Khimsar (new house). The next household that branched out is called Lagtang (arm extension). Both the Khimsar and Lagtang later expanded into more households. Similarly, the Thogpa household split into smaller households such as Ta Dzung, Frangchen and Dulibi. While the old structure of the original Wogpa house is still intact, the house of the Thogpa was demolished many years ago.

Members of these households, originating from the Thogpa and Wogpa, are the tsawa who take turns hosting the Ha celebration every year.

ROLE OF HA BON

The Ha Bon, a Bon practitioner, was traditionally the custodian of the Ha festival. Sangay, the last Ha Bon (locally known as Meme Ha Bon) was a follower of the *Bonkar*

tradition. In the absence of any successors, his death some forty years ago marked the beginning of a decline in the Ha tradition in Gortshom. While the village gomchen has taken over some minor roles, people conduct the whole proceeding of the festival guided by memory. (The term Ha Bon will continue to be used throughout the article, although it should be understood that it is now the village gomchen who actually carries out the rituals for Ha).

With the beginning of the Ha month on the first day of the sixth month, the Ha Bon undergoes dietary restrictions by refraining from eating meat, fish and eggs. The tsawa invites him for the celebration beginning on the 9th day.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE FESTIVAL

Preliminary Preparations

A month before the actual Ha celebration, the thogpa and wogpa households make offerings of sang (incense of fresh fir branches) and tshog (offerings of food, drinks and fruits) in anticipation of the Ha. This is called Hagtshe (early date) and the date corresponds to the 10th day of the fifth month, the day on which Ha is celebrated in Jarey Gewog. Offerings are laid out on broad green leaves on the rooftop. Farmers believe that the failure to make offerings at this time brings about destruction of crops by strong winds.

On the first day of the sixth month, the tsawa boil and ferment 10 drey² of wheat to make machhang. They also grind about five drey of wheat to make torma (ritual objects made from

² A unit of measurement (measured by a circular container with one open end).

kneaded dough) out of flour. As the wheat is put inside a cauldron of boiling water, the person must recite verses of wayo (see section 6). It is recited again when yeast is applied and mixed with boiled wheat. On the fifth day, the tsawa contribute six drey of wheat to prepare the gazang chhang, necessary for offerings during the Ha festival. At the time when the wheat is put in the cauldron to boil, and when yeast is applied, it is unacceptable for persons coming from a house of sickness, birth, death or marriage to arrive. Since these instances are considered inauspicious or sources of impurities, the tsawa immediately holds any such person responsible should the fermented grain and brewed spirit thereafter be of inferior quality. Such a situation is believed to portend inauspicious Ha, meaning that threats to crops cannot be ruled out.

Sang Collection

Early in the morning of the ninth day, the thogpa and wogpa households send a man each to the other side of Phrang Phrangla, (a mountain overlooking Gortshom and a few other villages of Metsho Gewog), to collect branches of Wangshing. They cut down two or three young fir trees, and lop the branches and leaves to be carried down to the village. It is believed that the sight of a white bird (lha) perched on a fir tree, is confirmation that the lha has descended to earth. Before they reach the village they have to stop halfway, and leaving the branches, go to another place to cut down three tall and slender bamboos to be used as flagpoles during the Ha. Once they reach the summit of the mountain carrying the fir branches and bamboos, they recite the verses of wayo aloud. This is a signal to the villagers below that they can no longer enter their fields to work for the day. This restriction against working is called lan. By then, the farmers would have

already stocked an adequate amount of vegetables. The two men descend the mountain, occasionally shouting wayo wayo. On hearing them, the people down in the village respond with wayo wayo. As they near the village, wayo wayo is recited more frequently. Upon hearing the very first wayo recited by the two men from the top of the mountain, the tsawa who have been listening open the machhang fermented on the first day. Each of the tsawa holds the lid of the pot containing fermented grain on either side. The Ha Bon holds it in the middle, and they open the container together. A depression on either of the tsawa's side forecasts their misfortune; misfortune for the whole community is indicated by a depression in the centre, while the absence of any depression is taken as a sign that there will be no misfortune at all.

Preparation of Halong - Site for Celebration

The two men go directly to a small clearing shaded by a towering cypress tree. This site located above Gortshom village is known as Halong, the traditional site for the Ha celebration. Before the arrival of the two men, the tsawa clear the area, make two or three small terraces for the following day, and install a small oak tree with three-pronged branches in the ground at the side of the central terrace. The three branches are bound with a creeper to create a resting place where offerings can be placed during Ha.

Upon arrival, the two men unload sang at the Halong, and take the three bamboos to the house of the tsawa. They walk down to the village, taking a handful of fir branches as gifts to every household. Chhang³ is offered to them in return. Each

³ Spirit distilled from grains and fermented with local yeasts.

family keeps a fir branch over the fireplace to be burnt during tsen choed in the second month. This tradition of visiting every household and drinking is popularly called chhangkor.

(In the past, the Ha Bon would go to the Halong to perform a ritual. If it rained the ritual would be performed in front of the tsawa house, facing the Halong. The Ha Bon would then return to the tsawa's house. His return was a symbolic gesture of receiving the lha home. The major ceremonies for the Ha were performed in either the thogpa or wogpa household depending on their convenience and mutual agreement).

For the ritual ceremony in the evening, a drey of paddy with a dadar⁴ in it is placed over a bakur⁵, also filled with paddy. Then a thro⁶ belonging to the thogpa and filled with singchhang⁷ filtered from the gazang chhang, is decorated with butter yaden⁸. No other ritual objects such as torma are made.

The Ha Bon starts reciting the Sangrab, a Bon scripture. This continues until midnight. The two men, who went to collect fir branches earlier, are seated next to him. The young men and women of the village also join them. At certain points in Sangrab recitation, the Ha Bon stops for the two men and others to recite wayo. Among others, the Sangrab narrates the

⁴ A ceremonial arrow adorned with a scarf.

⁵ A container made from woven cane.

⁶ A small pot made either of copper or clay.

⁷ An alcoholic beverage filtered directly from fermented grain.

⁸ Butter decorations shaped like horns and usually placed on the edges of pots or cauldron filled with alcoholic beverages used for ceremonial occasion.

story of the theft of fire from the realm of demons in order to light sang that has been collected for the Ha celebration.

THE HA

The following morning, the Ha Bon goes around the village visiting each house. In every household he is served chhang and a bangchung⁹ full of keptang¹⁰. This is known as dromzar. After breakfast at the tsawa's house, he makes two ritual torma, one each for the thogpa and wogpa. The torma is made from wheat flour contributed by the tsawa. Unlike ordinary ritual torma, there is no butter decoration. They are adorned with flowers, known as Halong Metog.



The ritual torma made by the Ha Bon is adorned with flowers

⁹ Dish made of bamboo and used particularly for eating and packing meals.

¹⁰ Circular and flattened kneaded dough sautéed in oil. Every family makes *keptang* for the festival.

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The Ha Bon makes small effigies of goat and sheep. Another ritual object is drangzhey, a small circular dough with a depression filled with milk, grounded garlic and sliced chilies. (In the past, the Ha Bon would make a tsengi torma for himself - this is not made anymore). Another prayer ceremony is performed, and at noon everything is taken to the Halong in a procession formed by the people in the village.



Procession to Halong, the site for Ha celebration

The first person carries sang, followed by three people carrying three bamboo flags put together from pieces of plain cloth in colours of blue, red and white attached to each bamboo. Next in line are those carrying various ritual objects made earlier in the day. The Ha Bon follows the procession while making offerings of grains and drutor. He wears a bundle of white yarn around his head; others wear wreaths made of ferns or artemesia. As the procession moves, the Ha

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Bon recites prayers. When he stops, the procession also stops, and all others recite wayo. This goes on until they reach the Halong. There, the persons carrying the flags run around thrice as fast as they can. They then stand above the Halong, flag in hand and repeatedly recite wayo. Sometimes they compose verses on the spot, making fun of the tsawa for not remembering to offer them chhang (even after continued and repeated recitations).



Persons carrying the flags and tshog recite verses of wayo above the Halong

The Ha Bon makes offerings called Hai Wannyer, propitiating all the spirits and deities of cliffs, valleys, streams and mountains in the vicinity of Gortshom and neighbouring villages. First, the Ha Bon's photsen such as Lhatsen Karpo of

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Phrang Phrangla, Yonten Dorshe and Gonpo Dorshe of Pelphug, and Thratsen Marpo of Tirphub are propitiated. They are followed by deities of local places such as Sherab Zangpo of Kempaphu (the cliff adjacent to Gortshom), Ludi Lubtsen of Samburung (the small valley below Kempaphu in which a rivulet flows), Thekar Gyelpo of Trashigang (a steep cliff located at the end of Gortshom), Latsa Karpo of Lawa, Terda Dra of Charcharmey, Thongdang Kara of Rodpagang, Lawa Dragpa of Tsangpho, Kingkhar Zangmo of Rulibi, Rangthang Gormo of Milabambo, Drongkher Gupa of Dung, Drangpo Janzan of Nor, Dzamling Wangmo of Tashobra, and Jamo Gormo of Shokang.

The Ha Bon is received at a small shack, built for the day, below the cypress tree. Torma and other ritual objects are displayed on the make shift altar or the terraces made the previous day. This is followed by offerings of tshog on the terraces. Once the tsawa have made their offerings, the rest of the people from the village also make offerings of food and drink. After this, the tsawa prostrate before the altar.

While some people start to sing and dance, others remove leaves from the fir branches, and bend twigs in the shape of horns dyed in different colours. They then approach the Ha Bon requesting names for their cattle. The horns are put into a small container filled with rice in which an incense stick is burnt. The Ha Bon then gives out names for the cattle. If the cattle has Ha as part its name, it is believed to be a gift of lha (for example Hajan and Hachimo). The names with tsen are believed to be gifts of tsen (for example, Tsenjan), and names with yang are believed to be gifts of goddess Tsheringma (for example, Tshering Yangjan). The latter and other such names are given for those farmers whose cattle usually do not live

long. Meanwhile, some of the fir branches are burnt, and the remaining distributed to every member of the Gortshom households. Those who do not get any try to snatch some from others, as it is considered important to get at least a small twig, for these are required during tsen choed in the second month.



Some of the fir branches that were collected before the Ha are burnt at the Halong; the rest are distributed amongst all households of Gortshom.

The tshog, filled up in two baskets on either side of the halong, is then distributed amongst the people assembled there. The Ha Bon takes the tshog on the right while the tsawa take the tshog on the left. Late in the afternoon, the people walk up to the Halong where the Ha Bon stretches out a white kabney on the ground, while others uproot the flagpoles. Then everyone starts singing nyojang, a farewell song, as they face the mountain above the village.



Men uproot the flagpoles late in the afternoon before bidding farewell to the lha

This is a symbolic gesture of bidding farewell to the lha. After this, people return to the village. Some carry flagpoles and other small tress uprooted from around the Halong. They then go for chhangkor in every home, where, if they are not served chhang, they make a total mess inside. Chhangkor carries on throughout the night accompanied by brief bouts of singing and dancing wherever they are offered chhang.

LANCHHEN, LANGCHHUNG AND DUECHOED

The following day is observed as lanchhen (the greater lan). No one is permitted to work in the fields. It is believed that hai lan (restrictions of god) affects crops for twelve years if the restriction is violated. The day after lanchhen is lanchhung (the smaller lan) or dudkilan (restrictions of evil spirits); restrictions are still in force. Once again two persons, usually women, from thogpa and wogpa households go early in the

morning to villages above Gortshom such as Tigchung, Singyebee, Tshobrang and Changshing Pogpa to make collections (dulang) of maize, chhang, cheese, butter and small amounts of money, all of which are to be offered during the duechoed that evening¹¹.

Duechoed is characterized by rituals and ritual objects that are a combination of Bon and Buddhist practices. These objects are elaborately decorated with thread-crosses¹². Tshog is offered and then distributed among people witnessing the event. An interesting aspect of this ritual is the divination of good or evil fortune for the tsawa for the year. There are two parts of the ritual that are both intended as divinations. The first involves keeping two cups of chhang in front of the gomchhen performing rituals. After the tsawa make prostrations, and a brief prayer ceremony, the gomchhen throws a few grains of rice in the air. Some of the grains fall into the two cups. At the end, the number of rice is counted to determine the fortune of the tsawa. In the second part of the ritual, a phuta¹³ is filled with singchhang, and a chogtse¹⁴ is placed on the floor. A standing person releases the phuta from

¹¹ Unlike the *Ha*, *duedchoed* is observed by other villages located below Gortshom. However, performance of rituals in Gortshom are separate from those of other villages.

¹² Thread-cross: two sticks whose ends are connected with coloured thread to form, after many windings, a sort of diamond-shaped cobweb. This ritual is to deal with curses, calamities and malignant spirits. The use of thread-cross dates back to pre-Buddhist times, when the original function is to act as demon trap. The evil spirit are supposed to get caught in the thread like tike in the ancient Bon funeral rituals.

¹³ Another unit of measurement. Approximately, four average *phuta* of rice would measure one *drey*.

¹⁴ A small wooden table on which are usually kept scriptures and other religious items.

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his or her forehead after saying prayers. If the phuta lands on the chogtse without falling upside down, good fortune is indicated.

The last day of the Ha celebration is held on the 15th day of the sixth month. The last ceremony involves a performance of Phagchham. The tsawa make a torma purely out of butter. This takes place at a mani (stupa) located a short distance away from Khinyel Lhakhang. Once the torma is prepared, the Phagchham dance begins with the dancers moving towards the lhakhang, as the torma is carried under maple boughs. This dance, unique to the community, is followed by the Pholey Moley dance, which marks the conclusion of the Ha celebration.



Khinyel Lhakhang, one of the oldest lhakhangs in the country

Khinyel Lhakhang is located on the traditional route or *jalam* between Bumthang and Lhuentse. Referred to as Mon Tamnyen Lhakhang in scriptures, this lhakhang is believed to have been built soon after the construction of Paro Kyichu Lhaknag and Bumthang Jampa Lhakhang in the 8th century. This lhakhang is located about ten minutes walk from Gortshom and caters to the religious and spiritual need of the people of Gortshom and other neighbouring villages.

However, the tsawa must observe tsen choed on the 18th day of the second month. While other households offer tshog and burn incenses (the fir branches saved from the Ha celebration) in their houses, the tsawa invite one or two gomchen and go to a specific location up the mountain above the village. There, they offer tshog and serkem¹⁵. Several small branches of trees are cut and their leaves lopped. They are then implanted in the soil criss-crossed into one row. This fence is a symbolic restriction against entry into higher reaches of the mountains. This restriction called ridam (closure of mountain) is enforced in order to prevent trees from being cut, hunting, and other forms of human encroachment on the mountains. It is believed that such activities provoke the mountain spirit into releasing wind, rain and hailstorm. This is dangerous to farmers at that time of the year, especially in the third month when land tilling and seed sowing commence. With this ritual, the next two tsawa of thogpa and wogpa take over as the host for the following year's Ha celebration.

THE WAYO COUPLETS

The singing of wayo verses is an integral part of the Ha celebration. Its different versions are sung in communities

¹⁵ Offerings of grain and alcohol.

along the Kurichhu valley where Ha is celebrated. The exact meaning of the word wayo could not be explained by anyone in Gortshom. The proper reference to wayo recitation in Kurtep is 'wayo bo' meaning 'call wayo'. The expression wayo wayo bjing is the refrain recited after recitation of wayo couplets. All the couplets have specific metres and rhythm, and each couplet is a self-contained unit.

Earlier, there may have been many couplets, but now people are able to recite only a few of them. Owing to the oral nature of its record and recitation, most have been forgotten. Although people are able to recite the wayo phrases, there is no chronological order of recitation. After the refrain wayo wayo bjing, people recite any couplet that first comes to their mind. This, however, may not necessarily mean that there was a lack of order in the recitation earlier.

Most of the couplets contain lewd and ribald phrases and expressions. The symbols and images used are mainly of male and female genitals. These expressions echo the spirit of Ha celebration, which is the absence or shedding of inhibition of sexual behaviour. The expression *zhag sum Ha bang ngo me tsha* ཞག་སུམ་ཧ་བང་ངོ་མེ་ཚ། echoes this spirit. This is repeatedly emphasized in other phrases and couplets.

The following couplets, written in Dzongkha, are a transcription of the Kurtep original. Hence both the spelling and grammar are inaccurate.

ལ་ཡ་ལ་ཡ་བྱེད་།།

ཐུའི་དཀར་ཆག་མ་གནང་ལྟོག་།།

མདའི་ནག་ཆག་མ་གནང་ཤིག།
ས་གཞི་ཐམས་ཅད་ལོ་ལེགས་ཤིག།
ཡུལ་མི་ཐམས་ཅད་ཕྱི་ཆགས་ཤིག།
ང་ཀྱིས་སྐབས་རྟེན་མཐོ་འོ།
ལྷ་རྒྱུ་ཕྱི་དབང་སོ་གསུངས་དེ་ལོ།
ཞག་གསུམ་ཨ་མའི་སྐོ་བ་བསྐྱམ།
ཞག་གསུམ་བྱ་མའི་སྐོ་བ་བསྐྱམ།
ཨ་མ་གང་སོ་འཆར་ཆར།
བྱ་མོ་གང་སོ་འཆར་ཆར།
ཡུལ་ཨ་བོ་མ་བརྟོ་ཤོར་དེ་ལོ།
ཟོང་བྱ་མ་བྱུང་གཏིང་ཤིང་ལོ།
མཛེ་ཀྱིས་རྒྱ་མ་བབབ་བདེ་བཏོ།
རྒྱ་བོ་ལེ་མཛེ་ལོ་ཤིང་གི་མཛེ།
ཤིང་གི་མཛེ་ལོ་ཆག་རྒྱ་ལེད།
རྒྱ་བོ་ལེ་རྒྱ་ལོ་ཐུགས་བའི་རྒྱ།
ཐུགས་བའི་རྒྱ་ལོ་སྐྱེ་ག་རྒྱ་ལེད།
རྒྱ་བོ་ལེ་ལྱོད་རང་ཐུགས་མ་ཡེངས།
རྒྱ་བོ་ལེ་ལྷ་གུ་ལྱེད་དེ་ལོ།

English Translation

Wayo Wayo Bjing
May not the hills raise white obstructions,
May not the valleys raise dark obstructions.
May all the lands enjoy good year,
May all the village people receive blessings.
I am not speaking these words,
They are said by lha Jajin.
For three nights, the mother does not close the door,
For three nights, the daughter does not close the thigh.
Mothers are spattered with pus,
Daughters are spattered with blood.
Do not dig waterways, cleft lipped lady,
Do not pull the drill, deep holed lady.
The phallus is implanting a target in the vagina,
The target is not implanted, the penis is.
The Bonpo's phallus is a wooden phallus,
The wooden phallus never breaks.
The Bonmo's vagina is a leather vagina,
The leather vagina never wears.
Oh Bonpo, do not let your mind go astray,
Others are taking your Bonmo away.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HA

While Ha celebration is definitely an occasion for festivity, the people of Gortshom believe that its larger purpose is to ensure the well-being of their crops and livestock. For them, well-being is associated with soil fertility, timely rainfall, healthy crops and cattle, and bumper harvests. This well-being in turn depends upon the harmonious relationship between farmers and natural forces personified as spirits and deities inhabiting different places in the locality. The people believe that they sustain this relationship by propitiating these spirits and deities on time all the year round, particularly by making

offerings to the lha (gods) through Ha celebration, tsen through tsenchoed in the second month, and due through the duechoed consecutive to the Ha.

Heavy winds, hailstorm and rainfall, locally interpreted as expression of anger of these gods have reportedly affected crops in the village. The people are convinced that the failure to propitiate these spirits, either on time or by observing purity, provokes the wrath of the local spirits. Thus, if the Hai tsawa for a particular year fail to host the Ha celebration or delay it, the villagers hold them responsible for any damage to crops in the village. While this has served as a social mechanism of ensuring the continuity of the tradition, it is increasingly losing ground. For example, people no longer adhere to restrictions against working on lanchhen and lanchhung.

CONCLUSION

The proceedings of the Ha celebration no longer take place as described above. In the absence of a Ha Bon, all his earlier roles are left out. Some of the roles have been taken over by the village gomchhen. For example, the gomchhen makes the tormas of the thogpa and wogpa. However, the tsengi tormas made by the Ha Bon for himself is no longer made. Since there are no ritual or prayer ceremonies either at the halong or tsawa's house, the gomchhen performs a serkem at the halong during the Ha celebration. In contrast to the observation of lan for two and half days, only half a day is observed.

The Ha celebration in Gortshom is a declining tradition, which began with the death of the last Ha Bon. While older generations have been able to sustain the tradition, observing celebrations through their experiences and memory, the

younger generation can only experience and understand a limited part of the tradition that has given Gortshom community and neighbouring villages a sense of purpose, unity and festivity.

Appendix: Guru Rinpoche and the Bonpo

The version of the legend as narrated in Gortshom by Tshampa Rinchen Namgyal

One day, a disciple of Guru Rinpoche happened to witness a Bon funeral service. Everyone attending the funeral heard the corpse talking about his family and relatives. This alarmed the disciple who immediately went to inform the Guru. The Guru gave him his gold dorje (vajra) and instructed him to point it at the corpse. If the corpse still spoke, then it would be the shinpo (soul) of the deceased. If not, it would have been a Jungpo (an evil spirit) that spoke earlier.

The disciple went back to the cremation ground, and pointed the dorje at the corpse; it was silent. This upset the people at the ground who went after him. They were angered by the fact that his presence and action prevented the corpse from speaking. From afar, he again heard the corpse speak. Once again, he pointed the dorje, and again the corpse fell silent.

The disciple described the incident to the Guru, who then had a Bonpo in audience. Since it was known by then that rather than the corpse, it was a jungpo who spoke, the Guru said to the Bonpo, "This person should have a sang ming (sacred name). Address the corpse by his sang ming. If you have given him one, he will respond."

The Bonpo went to the corpse and said, "I have given you a sang ming, tell me what it is!"

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The corpse replied, "I don't have a sang ming, you did not give me one. In fact, I am not even here at this moment. I am out there by the edge of the lake."

This proved that it was not a corpse but a jungpo who spoke earlier at the cremation ground. The Guru miraculously moved the soul of the dead person into a worm that was inside the cow dung lying on a hillock behind where the Guru lived. Taking the worm on his lap, Guru liberated the entrapped soul.

Guru Rimpoche then said to the Bonpo, "Things cannot be left as they are, you and I must take up a challenge against each other to decide whether Bon or Buddhism should flourish hereafter. Whoever arrives first on the peak of Gangkar Tse (Mt. Kailash) at the first rays of the sun shall be the victor, and his religion flourish." The Bonpo gladly accepted the challenge.

As Guru Rimpoche went to sleep that night, the Bonpo set off. He carried a drum. Every time he hit the drum, he traveled at the speed of the sound of the drum, and to the extent where it could be heard. Meanwhile, Guru Rimpoche continued to sleep. This worried his disciples. They appealed to him to make a start, but he said, "Wake me up when it is dawn." His disciples were becoming increasingly apprehensive and implored Guru to hasten when it was dawn. But Guru instructed them to wake him up when the first rays of the sun made their appearance. They woke him exactly at that time. In an instant, he was on the peak of Gangkar Tse, having ridden on the very rays of the sun that first hit the peak. The Bonpo had actually arrived earlier, and was about to seat himself on the flat stone when Guru, through his miracle, made him lose his balance and toppled him. When he stood up, Guru was already seated on the throne.

Guru said, "Now that you have lost, let me know whether you will put up the pillars or the roof." The Bonpo chose the latter. Again, Guru miraculously erected four stone pillars, and the Bonpo followed by putting the roof on the foundation.

Ha: the Bon Festival of Gortshom Village

"Although you have lost the contest and Buddhism is to flourish hereafter, your achievements are nevertheless remarkable. Therefore, Bon will at least be entitled to a month in a year in different communities", Guru declared.

Thus the tradition of celebrating Bon festivals once a year in different communities began thereafter.