



Estate and rituals in central Bhutan: the example of O rgyan chos gling

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The O rgyan chos gling estate in the sTang valley of Bumthang (Central Bhutan) is associated with the great Tibetan masters Klong chen rab byams (1308–1363) and rDo rje gling pa (1346–1405).

In the 19th century, the estate became powerful and prosperous because of one of the family members, mTsho skyes rdo rje. He was governor (*dPon slob*) of Trongsa dzong (Krong gsar *rdzong*) and the de facto leader of Bhutan. Moreover, marriages between this lineage coming from rDo rje glingpa and the lineage of Padma gling pa (1450–1521), also from Bumthang, enhanced the religious prestige of the family.

Today O rgyan chos gling is still privately owned by the same family. This family belongs to what is known in Bhutan as *chos rgyud gdung rgyud*, which means they are holders of both a religious and a noble lineage.

This position in traditional Bhutanese society carries with it a certain number of duties as well as rights, which represent in fact the two sides of an exchange process. This is brought to light during the annual *bskang gso* festival held in the manor.

This paper examines the social and ritual significance of the festival, focusing on what it reveals in the context of a traditional society where social class – although diluted by modernization – is still an operating concept, especially when it is involved in a religious event.