

# A Discussion on the Singing Dialogue *Tsangmo* :

Bridging Culture Between Bhutan and Japan, from the Past to the Future

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**Abstract:** Bhutanese *tsangmo* is a unique cultural heritage that has been at the heart of folk culture in many regions of Bhutan. It was considered to be on the verge of extinction due to the trends toward globalization and modernization. However, new attempts have already been made in schools, through radio programming, teacher education, and other means to ensure its continuation. These attempts involve wisely transformed styles of traditional ways of playing. Our research group has been investigating the real-life circumstances and unique value of these songs since 2010. In this paper, we describe our findings and exchange opinions between Bhutanese and Japanese, each discussing *tsangmo* from our own viewpoints, including the cultural heritage in Bhutan, the language as it relates to *tsangmo*, new attempts to promote passing on *tsangmo*, Bhutanese creative dialogue and Japanese education, and finally, understanding the importance of *tsangmo* within the prospects for Asia from the perspective of ethnomusicology. Through our discussion we hope to shine a light on the remarkable and rich cultural heritage of Bhutan so that it may thrive in future generations.

**Key words:** Bhutan, *tsangmo*, singing, heritage

## 1. Introduction

In Bhutan, playful songs known as ‘*tsangmo*’ are thought to have been sung throughout the country in people’s daily lives, since long ago. *Tsangmo* are based in the religious backdrop of Bhutan, and have been cultivated through the local history and culture. They are meant to be enjoyed at times such as during the day’s labors, as the livestock are taken out to pasture or when the family and relatives have gathered together for a Buddhist service. Resulting from changes in society, it is considered to be on the verge of extinction due to the trends toward globalization and modernization.

Our research group<sup>1</sup> has been investigating, over the past several years, the real-life circumstances and unique worth of these songs; we visited Paro (October 2010), Chang yee in Punakha (September 2012), Tshangka and Tangsibji in Trongsa (December 2013), and Merak in Trashigang (September 2014). In 2014 we also found that *tsangmo* has been sung in new styles at schools and on

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the radio; therefore, we focused on the school education and radio programming in 2015. We have also been engaged in investigative research of the “dialogue song” that has been predominantly handed down in Bhutan and also in Japan<sup>2</sup>.

In 2016, making use of our findings, we planned to have cultural exchange activities for the purpose of passing on these traditions. The event was organised entitled: “Bhutanese treasure: bridging culture from the past to the future”, which was held in Thimphu, Bhutan. It was aimed at the promotion of traditional cultural activities and mutual widespread cultural exchange, while putting out a broad call to a variety of Bhutanese specialists, working in music, linguistics, traditional culture, and broadcasting to help pass on these folk music traditions that are at risk of being lost. In this paper, each of us will discuss on *tsangmo* from our own viewpoints in the keynote speech and the symposium held on 25 September 2016, and each chapter is constructed according to the abstracts.

## 2. Cultural heritage in Bhutan

### 2-1. Bhutan is a country enriched with cultural heritage

Bhutan is a South-East Himalayan kingdom situated between China in the north and India in the south. It covers an approximate area of 38,394 square kilometers of which about 70% of the land is covered with forests, thus making country environmentally rich. The population of the country is estimated about 7 lakhs.

In the olden days, the country was known as Monyol and people were known as Monpa. Although there is no any recorded history giving clear information about the existence of monpa, however, before the advent of Buddha Shakaya Muni in India, during the time of Choegyel Drimed Kunden (prince in exile) ethnicity of monpa were said to have existed.

In many legendary story states that Prince Drimed Kunden who originally was from Beta village, Northern India was send in exile to haunted Hashang Mountain (DuriHashang) which is said to be the hills above punakha valley in Bhutan, for twelve years as a punishment for generously giving Norbu Goede Pungjom(wish-fulfilling Gem) to his enemy. The prince being compassionate, while in exile preached dharma to barbarian Monpas, evil spirits, demons and animals in their own desired language and liberated them from cyclic existence or samsara.

With contemporary to ethnicity of Monapas, the culture and tradition of monpa prevailed then, however, realizing good deeds or evil deeds remain based on the prevalence of Buddhist teachings or not. Since there is no concept and realized even the name Buddhism, people are left in absent of light of religion. The characters of people are so cruel and rude; their livelihood depends on flesh and blood of animals.

Back then, while people of monpa were ill, they seek refuge to the mountain peaks, giant trees, boulders, ponds, nagas, evil spirits and often slaughtered goat, sheep, cow and bulls to makes sacrificial offerings. Practice of bon religion has been flourished by that time.

Later in the 7th century while Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo took initiatives to built 108 temples in a day to tame the frontiers and outer frontiers, two temples namely Jampa Lhakhang in Bumthang and Keychu Lhakhang in paro are built in Bhutan. There after people of mon had an idea and realize the name of Tripple Gem. Subsequently, in 737 AD Guru Padma Sambhava visited Mon Bumthang upon the invitation made by King Sindha of Mon who was ill, Guru then miraculously performed tantric dance and subjugates Shelging Karpo, a local deity of Bumthang and was kept under strong oath to not harm anymore. Guru then restored the life force of King Sindha by granting flaming empowerment of Vajra Pani (The God of Power) thus, King Sindha became healthy again. Guru also bestowed clear Mirror text empowerment to the King and his Subjects; thus, the teachings of Tantric Buddhism in mon region began flourishing thereafter. The fact that, the King, the queens, ministers

and the all his subjects had great pleasure and very big feast of joy was arranged with many cultural programs clearly signifies the country with rich cultural aspects since that time itself.

Prior to Educational Development changes in Bhutan, cultural heritage and folksongs, Classical songs like *Zhey* and *Zhem* (Traditional songs sung by Men & women in different regions) *Lozey* & *Tsangmo* (Ballads) seems to be existed within wise and intellectual person. However, it was only from 1960s written texts manual for folk songs, *Zhey* & *Zhem*, Ballads were made available in country only after the commencement of First Five Year Plan in Bhutan during the Late Third Druk Gyapo Jigme Dorji Wangchuk's reign. One could realize that traditional ballads, Folk songs and cultural aspects in different region being prevailed during the time of Monpa if we examine through our illiterate ancestors who are well versed in reciting those.

Moreover, Bhutan being well known to advanced country as GNH based country; one of the pillars of GNH is "Preservation and promotion of culture". Culture and traditions plays an important role to be unique and independent country, it is of utmost important to preserve and promote cultural heritage.

### 2-2. General meaning of *tsangmo* and its brief description

The term '*tsangmo*' has a variation of meanings with two different Spelling. In the hymn of 6th Dalai Lama Rigzin Tshangyang Gyamtsho states "*Tsangmo* while coming from village of Tsang appears like a goddess, upon reaching to the Gampola *Tsangmo* appeared like Monkey" which clearly showing *tsangmo* means just a Lady of Tsang village in Tibet.

However, the term '*isangmo*' that refers in various parts of Bhutan is a recitation of ballads to see the faith between people or any properties. It is recited in such a way that while people of Bhutan, especially when youths get together, to seek the faith. They sit in circle and wise person among group will monitor to recite *tsangmo* at the same time pointing stick (small piece of thorn or 'Tsang') to each property resembling our loved one in turn along with the verse. When recitation of stanza of *tsangmo* completes, the particular pointed property mean to be faith with one whom has desired to seek. The tradition of reciting *tsangmo* is most popular in the Eastern and Central region of Bhutan than western Bhutan. Nevertheless, with the evolution of education status in Bhutan, tradition of reciting *tsangmo*, singing *Zhey* & *Zhem*, classical songs and folk songs became wide popular irrespective of regions.

Finally, I wish our traditional heritage and cultural aspects of Bhutan to be flourished ever.

## 3. Language and *tsangmo*

Even as I sit here right now, I hope and pray that nothing happens to Aum Chödrön of Rukha village in Wangdü Phodrang. She is already over 85 years old; and when Aum Chödrön dies, her language known as Olekha, which is a variety of Monkha, will die along with her because she is the last competent speaker of that language. When a language dies, there are so many things that will disappear with it for good. In particular, all the oral literature which are inherent in that dying language will be lost forever. *Tsangmo* is one such oral literature.

The preservation of our languages and their oral literature is critically important and highly time-sensitive; and I would like to express my deep appreciation to Ino and the team for undertaking this highly useful project— that of documenting *tsangmo* and *khapsho* in Bhutan.

Today, there are 7000 odd languages in the world and more than half are already endangered, many of them critically; and it has been said that, if we do not do anything now, more than 50% (even as many as 90%) of the world's languages will be dead within the next 3-4 generations.

Now, what is "language endangerment" and what is "language death"? How can a language be endangered and how can a language possibly die? To provide a general gist of what the scholars say on this topic:

- A language is considered “safe” if there is a chance that the children of the speakers of that language will probably be speaking it in 100 years.
- On the other hand, a language is considered “endangered” if the children will probably not be speaking it in 100 years.
- A language is considered “moribund” if the children are not speaking their language now. Moribund is a “dying language”.
- And a language becomes a “dead language” when all its older speakers die and their children speak another language.

Olekha of Bhutan is presently a moribund; and, with the death of Aum Chödron, it will become a dead language.

In order for a language to die, you do not have to kill all the members of a speech community so that there are no subsequent generations. It is simply a situation in which, for a variety of reasons, the speakers of a language choose to speak, or are made to speak, another language; and the level of competence that speakers possess of their language diminishes, gradually resulting in no native speakers. This will not happen overnight but, if we don't teach our native tongue to our younger generation, it will happen slowly but surely.

Now, what happens when a language dies? And why should we be bothered so much? First of all, an entire way of thinking will be lost when a language dies. The languages are not interchangeable precisely because a language represents the distillation of thoughts and feelings of its speakers for generations, in fact over their entire history. Our native language and thought process are so tied together that what we say in it influences what we think, feel, and believe.

For that reason, the meaning expressed by a word in one language can never be fully conveyed using an equivalent word in another language. For example, our *drubchu* is not the same as “holy water” in English, just as our *dikpa* is not the same as “sin”. The deeper meanings behind such equivalent words are completely different. A *drubchu* is a water source revealed and blessed by a highly accomplished Buddhist master for the benefit of sentient beings in general; whereas “holy water” is water used for cleansing prior to baptism in Judo Christian tradition.

Next, when a language is lost, all its intellectual wealth such as songs, oral poetry (under which *tsangmo* falls), folklore, jokes, riddles, and then things like proverbs, idiomatic expressions, figurative language, etc., will be lost forever.

In any language, the meaning of a phrase or a sentence is not always the sum total of the meanings of its individual words. Languages have different and fascinating ways of forming phrases and sentences and conveying meanings. In our linguistic tradition, we have what we call རྩི་ནང་གསང་གསལ་གྱི་དོན་/chi nang sang sūm gi dōn/ “three levels of meanings—outer, inner, and secret”. Just to give you a striking example, the Dzongkha phrase མི་སངས་རྒྱས་དཀར་པོ་ /mi sanggä kâp/ means “a person with a heart of gold” in English; but in the Dzongkha phrase, there is neither a word for “heart” nor for “gold”. It is the same with oral poetry, including *tsangmo*. The ways of evoking meanings, through oral poetry, can be distinctly different across languages, although they may fall under similar genres.

The main takeaway here is: “Such intellectual wealth is often language-specific and culture-specific; and they can never be fully transferred from one language to another”. For example, a joke, which is so funny in one language, will fall flat in another language and may not even sound like a joke if you attempted to translate.

Then, the next impact of a language death is that there will be a weakened social cohesion as the values and traditions of one linguistic community are replaced with new ones. A classic example is the Australian Aboriginal communities. There were about 250 distinct aboriginal languages in Australia as late as the 18th century; and now they have only a small number left and all are gradually replaced by English. They cannot pick up English like the Anglo people, but, in the process, they have lost

competence in their own native languages.

Now there is this sense of loss, frustration, inferiority complex, feelings of insecurity in one's own homeland; and then they are caught in the poverty trap, the dangers of drink and drugs, the neighborhood crimes, all culminating in a lack of social cohesion. I am mentioning this example just to drive home the message that our native languages are that important; and we must do everything we can to ensure their survival, particularly in an era when English has become a "killer language" in all parts of the world.

Then we run the risk of losing ethnicity status because ethnicity is often defined in terms of language. A Chalip is a Chalip because of his/her language Chalipakat. Otherwise, a Chalip would look like any one of us. And, it goes without saying that loss of a language will result in the loss of identity, firstly for the community that speaks that language and ultimately for the nation-state as a whole.

Language is the only clear proof of our identity. A Korean tourist lady who arrives in Bhutan today can wear a kira from any handicraft shop in Thimphu tomorrow; and look as gorgeous as any Bhutanese girl. But a language cannot be learned easily in the first place; and, even if someone achieves a certain level of competency in a foreign language, you can always make out a foreign speaker from a native speaker.

There could be several other devastating effects of a language death. For all these reasons and much more, nothing would be sadder than witnessing a language slowly dying and not being able to do anything.

Bhutan has over 19 languages. Some put the number of languages spoken in Bhutan at 23 or 25 and even English is counted as one of our languages; but, based on an official survey conducted in 1991, only 19 languages have been reported in Bhutan. Based on a common sense approach, to consider a particular language as a native language of a country, there has to be a living community speaking that language within the geographical boundary of that country. English is a necessary foreign language for us, but it is not, and it should not be, our native language. So too is the case with the immigrant languages and the languages of the tourists at a particular point of time.

Dzongkha and all other indigenous languages of Bhutan belong to the same genetic group, or the same language family; and, therefore, they are related in terms of phonology, grammar, and vocabulary. Because of that, Bhutanese languages also have similar oral literature; and Bhutanese languages are particularly rich in them. Although Bhutanese oral literature, such as *tsangmo*, were composed and transmitted without the aid of writing, the complex relationship between the spoken and the written traditions in our country makes it rather difficult to maintain this definition.

However, a spoken language is not to be confused with its literary form. Spoken languages have originated ever since the origin of human species; and they have existed and evolved as long as the humans have existed and evolved; but a writing system is invented by scholars based on a spoken language only later at a particular point of time.

So to say that Dzongkha, and other Bhutanese languages, originated from Chöke, or Classical Tibetan, is a popular misconception; because Chöke is a literary language invented only in the early seventh century. But Dzongkha and Bhutanese languages have existed for millennia, originating as early as our Bhutanese races have originated. They may not have had the same language names as today, but certainly their roots, their earlier forms, have existed long long before the invention of Chöke.

This same idea applies to *tsangmo* also. To believe that *tsangmo* came into the Bhutanese languages from another linguistic culture; or is derived from a particular writing system would be grossly misleading if not completely bogus. In my opinion, *tsangmo* is part of the linguistic tradition of the Bhutanese languages and, in particular, it is one genre of the Bhutanese oral poetry. It is something passed down from generation to generation through our spoken languages; and some literate people

have only attempted to write them down later on. *Tsangmo* is such a beautiful oral poetry of Bhutan and it is an aesthetic means of Bhutanese expression. It is a fundamental component of our identity and culture and it is the part and parcel of our languages.

Therefore, it is not only crucially important but also highly time-sensitive to carry out preservation works of our languages to counteract all the disastrous effects that I pointed out earlier; in particular, preserving our oral literature. Our oral literature can only be preserved by preserving our languages; and, at the same time, carrying out the preservation works of such oral literature will equally contribute towards preserving our languages. These two activities are mutually-beneficial and mutually-reinforcing; and we must strongly encourage and wholeheartedly support both.

Just like the economic policy and planning, we need to have a proper language policy and planning in place to support this dual complementary linguistic works by relevant agencies and individual scholars.

I would like to conclude with our popular Dzongkha phrase: མི་ཉམས་གོང་འབེལ་དང་ཉམས་པ་སོར་རྒྱུ། /mi nyam gongphê dang nyampa sochü/ This is an incredibly powerful phrase. མི་ཉམས་གོང་འབེལ་ /mi nyam gongphê/ means “developing what has not degenerated” and ཉམས་པ་སོར་རྒྱུ། /nyampa sochü/ means “restoring what has degenerated”.

Let’s all join hands in developing what has not degenerated and restoring what has already degenerated concerning our native languages and our oral literature including *tsangmo*.

## 4. New attempts to promote passing on *tsangmo*

### 4-1. *Tsangmo* in school teacher education

Paro College of Education is a training teacher college where all the students must learn *tsangmo*, and according to the lessons of the school curriculum they learn the ideas and techniques of how to teach it in the future. So *tsangmo* is one of the main areas that all students must be educated about among their compulsory subjects:

- In the course of Bachelor of Education (Dzongkha)

In Dzongkha Literature and creative writing, they must know the meaning of *tsangmo* and know how to play *tsangmo*.

- In the course of Bachelor of Education (primary) and BEd. (secondary)

In Dzongkha lessons *tsangmo* is used as the teaching material.

- In the course of Post Graduate Diploma in Education (Dzongkha)

In poetry lesson *tsangmo* is referred to and taught to all the students.

*Tsangmo* is one of the very important aspects of Bhutanese culture, so we must protect this culture from being lost. Therefore, our college offers so many different lessons about *tsangmo*. The students can share their knowledge of *tsangmo*.

We also have a *tsangmo* competition between boys and girls which is very interesting. So in the future when they become teachers they can teach their students about how our parents used to play *tsangmo* so that our all generations will know about it as it is very important to preserve our culture. The point of teaching *tsangmo* in college is to make our future teachers know about *tsangmo*. If they know about it then they can teach their students, which is one of the important ways of keeping and preserving the culture.

### 4-2. *Tsangmo* in radio programming

Tshering Dema, a radio personality, shared the following ideas for the project: I have been working at Kuzoo FM as a radio jockey. I have hosted many different types of shows. Among these, I host a show on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. which is a *lozay* and *tsangmo* singing show. The most important reason for hosting this show is to preserve and promote our cultural heritage and to let the

younger generation participate and bear interest in *lozay* and *tsangmo*. Our show is on for two hours so we have kept one hour for *lozay* and the other for *tsangmo*. To maintain interest of the listeners of the programme, we have different timing for *lozay* and *tsangmo*. Some people have interest in *lozay* and others in *tsangmo*. On air, a participant calls in and sings his *tsangmo*, while the men support their male participants and sing to the female participants, and also the women callers likewise sing and support other female calls and responds to the male ones. Throughout the programme, participants are able to sing *tsangmo* and respond to their opponents. During the programme, participants sing *Dra* or *Nyen* and if they can counter the other they can continue on the next week's show.

This show can bring peace to the participants and improve our knowledge as a whole. With this programme we can bring all the people who know *lozay* and *tsangmo* together on the show. And also people can exchange their knowledge and skills singing *lozay* and *tsangmo*.

As she suggested, all the listeners could participate in the *tsangmo* exchange on the radio at any time they like.

#### 4-3. *Tsangmo* in school education

Ngawang Namgyel, the culture teacher of Kelki higher secondary school said as follows: Bhutan is a small country enriched with culture and tradition. Furthermore, there are so many measures and strategies applied by the government and the people to preserve that culture. One such method is reviving the recitation of "*tsangmo*", a ballad which is sung to show the fate between people and bring happiness. Therefore, in 2015, Kelki Higher Secondary School, with full support from the Principal and with my deep enthusiasm organized a *tsangmo* competition among the students in the school. Although we are deeply passionate about preserving an important culture of this sort, it is obstructed by the issue of a small country with small budget hindering the success of such a project. Finally I feel very deeply with gratitude for all the support rendered.

## 5. Creative dialogue through songs: *tsangmo* and Japanese music education

### 5-1. Historical problems in Japanese music education

After the Meiji Era in Japan (1868-1912), Japanese local culture was abandoned in favor of westernization to accomplish the modernizing of our civilization. Many westernized songs were created for teaching materials and children were obliged to sing these songs. As a result, oral transmission and improvisational performances in traditional music were given much less priority; prescriptive pieces of music became the norm in classrooms in Japan. However, due to a recent trend in music education which emphasizes traditional culture over national identity, music teachers are striving to find a new way to bridge culture from the past to the culture of the richer future. The dialogue in the singing of Bhutanese *tsangmo* is full of implications for us.

### 5-2. Characteristics in *tsangmo*

Kajimaru Gaku (2005, p.81) reported that many groups living in the East and Southeast Asia have the unique custom of antiphonal singing. In some of them, there is only one or a limited variety of simple melodies and improvised diverse words (coined from old words). Bhutanese *tsangmo* is one of these antiphonal singing styles and has some typical melody types. Sonam Kinga (2001, p.135) wrote that *tsangmo* is very well structured, and it consists of four lines or a quatrain with two couplets. In addition, *tsangmo* cannot be recited or sung alone; an opponent will respond and a debate will continue until a winner or a draw is declared, and messages are conveyed through articulate usage of metaphors and symbols. In other words, *tsangmo* is basically a dialogue, a kind of communication. Therefore, limited types of simple melodies help the singers to convey their feeling or ideas easily, and they can improvise or modify the melodies among their verses as the situation requires.

### 5-3. Possibilities to learn from *tsangmo* in Japan

The opponent style of *tsangmo* demands certain rules for the process of call and response. Essentially, it is a kind of game where the verses and dialogue are limited only by the singers' imagination. However, participants must know a large amount of orally transmitted traditional verses and manipulate one of them to adjust the situation of the singing dialogue. A proficient participant admirably compounds various elements of metaphors and symbols in verses, words and melody types on the spot, and expresses his or her feeling and thought in the improvisation. Here they show profound possibilities for future education; that is, in *tsangmo*, students make the most of the knowledge and skills which they have already learned, exercise their creativity, and express their inner world in their performance. In this process, students must activate their creative sense in poetry, try to communicate with the opponent's implication, and brush up their musicality within improvisation. Perhaps the rules and structures of *tsangmo* can likewise be applied to the classroom with Japanese practices of singing dialogue to create a vibrant hybrid that encourages these skills.

## 6. Understanding the importance of *tsangmo* within the prospects for Asia from the perspective of ethnomusicology

Ino and Kuroda have asserted the following concerning the cultural and social importance of *tsangmo* in their research report. First, they state that *tsangmo* is a dialog in song which reflects not only the mindset of Bhutanese people but also their history, religion, and culture. Another point they make concerns the large scale movement in Bhutan which "is trying to incorporate the lived culture of *tsangmo* into modern living and develop this cultural heritage." Here I would like to come to an understanding of the cultural and social importance of *tsangmo* within the prospects for Asia from the perspective of ethnomusicology.

### 6-1. Lyrics in sung dialogs

When one looks broadly across Asia (for instance at Japan, Laos, the minorities of China, and Mongolia), one can find many commonalities in the area of sung dialogs (for instance, one finds constant melodies and fixed forms of verse). I believe that the following classifications can be formed for the different types of improvisation being performed in these sung dialogs: 1) Improvising in the creation of new melodies or new lyrics; 2) improvising in the selection of existing melodies or existing lyrics; and 3) improvising by adapting existing melodies or existing lyrics.

In the case of *tsangmo*, the singer selects melodies in an improvised manner from three or four kinds of existing melodies and then must choose lyrics instantaneously while interpreting the meaning hidden in symbols or metaphors in the rich ballad lyrics which possess this meaning. When compared to examples of various sung dialogs found in the Asian region, such as *kakeuta* in Japan or *derilcha holboo* of China's Inner Mongolia, the differences in what is being improvised become clear. In *kakeuta* and *derilcha holboo*, the ability of the singer to instantaneously create appropriate lyrics is especially valued. In contrast, *tsangmo* poses the question of to what degree hidden meaning expressed through metaphors and symbols in the ballad lyrics can be interpreted. In *tsangmo* the singer needs to have the ability to converse in a sung ballad that holds this sort of hidden meaning. Similar examples can be seen in *Yi* and *Dong* minorities of China (Hoshino1996).

### 6-2. The context in which *tsangmo* culture survives within modern society

The number of *tsangmo* fans is currently increasing throughout Bhutan, with the fans participating in *tsangmo* radio programme and enjoying conversations through *tsangmo*. I believe the following reasons are why *tsangmo* has survived in modern society in a new form. From our previous investigations it is understood that the tradition of *tsangmo* continues to exist across many generations throughout the various regions of Bhutan (Ino, Kuroda, Gondo and Yamamoto 2012-2015). This

continuing of the tradition across many generations and in many regions of Bhutan is the foundation of *tsangmo*'s new life. If the people living in the various regions of Bhutan did not understand the meaning hidden in the ballads at all, they would not have been able to participate in the radio programmes and converse through *tsangmo*. Additionally, the reason that *tsangmo* competitions have frequently been held in schools is closely related to fact that there is a close adherence to education in the Dzongkha language, the national language of Bhutan. Education about the traditional culture of *tsangmo* is carried out in many schools as part of general education along with education in Dzongkha as the national language. A similar example can be found in the relation between education in traditional sung dialogs and general education in schools of *Dong* ethnic group in China.

## 7. Conclusion

As Kunzang Dorji suggested, culture and traditions play significant roles in the country and are of utmost important in preserving and promoting cultural heritage across generations and regions. However, as Pema Wangdi warned, one's native language and thinking processes are so tied together that the entire way of thinking will be lost when a language dies. *Tsangmo* is also a kind of oral culture inherent in the language.

However, we surely find that *tsangmo* has survived in modern society in new forms such as the *tsangmo* competition and the radio programme, which are devised from the way of *tsangmo* playing in daily folk lives in each region of the past. This Bhutanese sensible approach to the problem will be effective if these forms continue and are developed, and we Japanese should strive to make up for the traditional folk culture lost in modernization. In this symposium, as we discussed about the singing dialogue *tsangmo* together, we could take small steps to bridge the culture between Bhutan and Japan, from the past to the future.

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## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> The list of works already published appears at the end of this article.

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