

Hay Lung: Haa, the Sacred Valley of Surprises

In Drubthob Thangtong Gyalpo's (1385-1446/1458?) biography, the valley of Haa is referred to as Hay. The Choekey, word is used to express breath-taking surprise. Five centuries later, the great Tibetan Dzogchen master, Polu Khenpo Dorji (c. 1896-1970) confirmed the name of the valley as Hay.

Like Haa, there are multiple sacred sites by the same name, both in Bhutan and elsewhere. For example, Paro Taktsang was called Hay Taktsang. The monastery of Neyphug is actually Hay Phug. In Tibet there is a monastery called Hay Puri. Similarly in Nepal, the village next to the sacred site of the Draphu Ma Ra Tika is called Hay Li Si. All these sites have two things in common: association with Guru Padmasambhava and towering hills.

The eighth century mystic Guru Padmasambhava is credited with the creation of several hidden lands to offer safe refuge in times of crisis. Several of these sanctuaries are in Bhutan. Haa is considered one of them.

Ancient lore embraces tales of how Guru Rinpoche hid many *ter* or treasures in Bhutan including in the Haa valley. The great Buddhist master blessed Haa as a *bes ney* or hidden land. Following in the Guru's footsteps, many other great Buddhist masters visited and blessed the valley. Some of these luminaries include Gelong Ma Pem, Tertön Sherab Mebar and Drubthob Thangtong Gyalpo.

The 13th Je Khenpo of Bhutan, Yonten Thaye (1724-1784) recognised the sacred state of the Hay valley. His Holiness said that the valley is so pure that there are no traces of impediments or obstacles. So it does not come as a surprise that the valley is filled with *ney*, or sacred sites. It has at least 17 *neys*, 42 Lhakhangs and 113 *Chorten Dargims*.

Ap Chungdu

The main protector of the sacred Hay valley is Ap Chungdu. People in the valley revere him as their principal protector as much as they fear his wrath.

Ap Chungdu features in Tertön Pema Lingpa's book of revelations, *Thuji Chenpo Muensel Droenme*. According to a legend in the book, during the eighth century Guru Rinpoche performed the fifth series of Avalokitesvara's Abhisekha ceremony at the cave of Gyon-yul-pal.

At that time, Ap Chungdu had been working in concert with other evil deities. Together, they were trying to obstruct the Guru's spiritual pursuits. The combined evil forces created cyclones, set lakes on fire, split rocks, cut down forests, reduced mountains to rubble and rolled the resultant debris down the hillsides. In defence, Guru Rinpoche simply wielded a golden dorje and knocked the evil forces unconscious.

According to the legend, when Ap Chungdu regained consciousness, he found himself turned into a boy. Realizing Guru Rinpoche's power, he prostrated himself in submission before the almighty Guru with the following words: "We are all your subjects. We pledge to dedicate our lives to your service. We shall be the protectors of the Buddhist doctrine." It is said that Guru accepted Ap Chungdu's peace offering and blessed him, and made him the principal protector of the valley.

Although Ap Chungdu is only the deity of Hay, his status is that of Zorarakye, the protecting deity of the *beyul* (*bes yul*) or hidden land, Khenpajong north of Bumthang in Lhuentse. Because Ap Chungdu received blessings directly from Guru, he has been included amongst the deities of the Tantric Mandala. To this day, people in the valley pray to Ap Chungdu for protection. There is a statue of



► Photo taken in 1987 from Drukair enroute to Paro (Photo: Felicity Shaw)

him in the Lhakhang Karpo.

Black and White Temples

Lhakhang Karpo, the White Temple is one of the most important temples of the valley. The other is Lhakhang Nakpo, the Black Temple.

In the *Lho Chojung Sarpa* by the 69th Je Khenpo Gendun Rinchen who is regarded as a great scholar, there are two stories about the history of the temples. His Holiness says that in the absence of documents he had to base his research on oral accounts. According to the first story, the 33rd Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo (c.605-650, dates vary) built the two Lhakhangs at the same time as Jambay and Kyichu Lhakhangs. But this is yet to be attested.

Je Gendun Rinchen relates that the Tibetan King set a black and a white

pigeon free from Lhasa. The places where these birds landed in Haa are where he had the temples built miraculously in one day.

The second story is as magical as the first one. It recounts that people appeared from the three hills, built these two lhakhangs in a day and then disappeared back into the hills. These three hills are considered Ap Chungdu's neykhang or abode. Hence, from that day the hill was called Rig-sum and the valley given the name Hay Lung or the Valley of Surprises.

In Lopen Pema Tshewang's paper titled, *Neyig of Hay Valley*, he records an oral account of how the head of the Amitabha Buddha statue miraculously appeared in Lhakhang Karpo. Lopen Pema Tshewang said that while the main statue was being sculpted, a stran-

ger came to sell the head of the statue. Drawn by the workmanship, the sculptor placed it on the body and it stuck like a magnet.

Fondly known as Lopen Pemala, his story validates local knowledge but the village elders have more details to share. According to them, when the sculptor was finding it difficult to sculpt the head of the statue, a stranger dressed in blue appeared at crack of dawn. After delivering the head of the statue he disappeared from view.

Seeing the statue fit perfectly, the sculptor is amazed. When he looks for the stranger, he is nowhere to be found. Overwhelmed, the sculptor exclaims "Hay".

That statue is the main *nangten* (relic) of the Lhakhang Karpo and can still be seen today. The peculiar feature is that the head is slightly bent and somewhat disproportionately large for the body.

The other main *nangten* of the Lhakhang Karpo, a statue of Jowo, is considered equally sacred. Lopen Pemala found that both temples were built by the same carpenter. It is believed that the master craftsman was the manifestation of King Songtsen Gampo. While no written records have yet surfaced, oral tradition holds it that the master carpenter miraculously built the temples at the same time as the Kyichu temple in Paro.

Yipri/Kipri

In Lopen Pemala's *Neyig*, he also unravels the enigma of Kipri Budethangkha. The popular pilgrim site is where the rock with the impression of Guru's body and hat can be seen. It is believed that the impression is similar to the one at Kurje Lhakhang in Bumthang. The impression of where Guru tied his horse Balaha on the rock can still be seen today.

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From Pg 10

Stories in the *Neyig* tell of Guru's pursuit of a demon that had transformed itself into a serpent. When local residents heard about it, they hid behind a hill, an act that gave rise to the name of their village Yipri, which is now known as *Kipri*. Guru is said to have tamed the serpent and transformed it into stone. The place where the rock stands is Budethang, with Bu meaning snake and De means demon and thang meaning flat land.

A village elder narrates another version. He said that when Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel was fighting the Lam Kha Nga, it is said he hid behind the hill and hence the name Yipri.

Below the Budethang rock is another rock. Though smaller in size it is associated with Guru. It is said that when Guru visited Kipri (Yipri), the locals hid behind the hill because they were feeling shy.

Another legend talks about how the tutelary

deity Vajrakila Kumar (Dorji Zhonu) appeared at a house in Kipri. The man of the house was not the most pious person in the valley. When he saw the deity, he threw sticks and chased the divine being away. It is said that the deity took flight, landing on an oak tree in Chubarna in close proximity to the Black Temple. It is said that the deity then flew onwards, flying above the Hay Dzong and finally settling down on another oak tree in the village of Bangyena.

The owners of the two houses went in front of the tree and invited the deity to their respective homes. The deity went to the upper house, causing the owner of the lower house to become envious.

He began quarrelling with his neighbour, the quarrel escalating into a bloody fight that resulted in the death of the owner of the upper house. As required by the traditional laws of the time, the accused offered the family of the victim a plot of land. Since then, every year

on the eleventh month, the Vajrakila ritual is performed. A statue of Vajrakila is said to have flown to the Zang Lhakhang at Hechu. The statue can still be seen today.

Rig-sum Gonpo

Our elders in Haa are convinced that the three sacred hills in the valley represent and remind them of our two living monarchs and Gyalsey, our Crown Prince.

According to these elders, the central hill represents Chenrezig (Avalokitesvara) and corresponds to His Majesty the Fifth Druk Gyalpo who has evidenced this appellation by his actions and is revered by the populace as representing the ultimate embodiment of compassion. Our elders are convinced of His Majesty's ability to recognize and empathize with the suffering and pain experienced by all sentient beings.

According to our elders, the hill that represents Jampelyang (Bodhisattva Manjusri) symbolizes His Majesty the Fourth Druk

Gyalpo, as he is seen by them as the embodiment of transcendental wisdom.

The right hill represents Chana Dorji (Vajrapani) the Holder of the Secret Doctrines, remover of obstacles and our spiritual guardian. This reminds the elders of our Gyalsey who is seen as the embodiment of the energized power of all the Buddhas of the past, present and future.

Haa is often described like a mirror covered by the vapour of one's breath. The

sacred valley is filled with traditional folklore that often blends with facts. In the valley of the three sacred towering hills, hangs stories that are now only seen in movies. As a cool, wet alpine haunt of Bhutan, with pristine white water gushing through it, the magnificent valley of Hay can easily qualify as an earthly paradise filled with breathtaking surprises.

Contributed by
Tshering Tashi

Happiness and well-being project to be completed next year

Thinley Namgay

Happiness and Well-being Project, coordinated by the Paro College of Education (PCE) for the nine colleges under the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB), is on track.

European Union (EU) has certified the overall progress of the project as 'good' in the last two reports.

Project Officer, Pelden Dorji Dadil Jamtsho, said: "Due to the good certification, we received budget on time which is crucial to carry out activities. "Fund is from EU's Erasmus+ programme under its capacity-building project in the field of higher education."

The total budget for the project is Euro 505,960. So far, for the last two pre-financing period, 90 percent of the budget has been received.

"Remaining budget will be

disbursed soon," said Pelden Dorji Dadil Jamtsho.

To enhance mental health, counselling and well-being support for students, the project has some specific mandates such as establishing a happiness and well-being centre in all the nine colleges, with lead centre at PCE with an extension at Samtse College of Education.

"We are in the final stage," Pelden Dorji Dadil Jamtsho said. "So far training level-three has been completed at PCE and Thailand."

The two-year project, which started in November 2018, was supposed to be completed by November this year. However, due to Covid-19 restrictions, the project completion dateline had to be postponed until November next year.

Some of the activities

delayed, Pelden Dorji Dadil Jamtsho said, were proper setting up of ICT equipment and books at the centres, signing of final memorandum of understanding between 10 national stakeholders, further training and certification of trainees by the Bhutan Board of Certified Counsellors, among others.

He said that during this pandemic, time and stress management handouts were developed and yoga, meditation and other mindfulness activities were carried out in the colleges. "Counsellors are supporting frontline workers at Paro airport by printing and issuing brochures related to mental health for those who came from abroad."

University of Birmingham, the UK, Institute University of Da Maia ISMAI, Portugal, and Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium are the project partners.



TOMORROW

Good Day

- to perform lhapsang
- to learn astrology
- to appoint into new post
- to marry and celebrate
- to enter into new house
- to shift house
- to start new business
- to hold good discussions
- to roof house

- to hoist prayer flags

Bad Day

- to set up storage

A good day for rituals (laza):
those born in the dog year.

Generally a good day (sogza):
those born in the sheep year.

AUGUST 31, MONDAY

Good Day

- to perform daily offerings

- to start new business
- to venture on a long journey

Bad Day

- to consecrate
- to appoint into new post
- to learn astrology
- to enter into new house
- to shift house
- to hand and take over office
- to hold good discussions
- to marry and celebrate
- to roof house

A good day for rituals (laza):
those born in the snake and horse years.

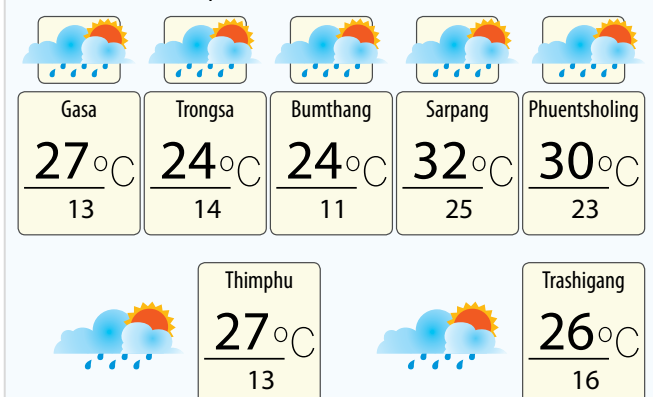
Generally a good day (sogza):
those born in the rat and pig years.

A bad day (shedza):
those born in the monkey and rooster years.

WEATHER

SUNRISE : 5:39am | SUNSET : 6:25pm

Time of issue: 04:00 PM,
28 August 2020



Source: National Center for Hydrology and Meteorology.
For any weather information: Call hotline 335578