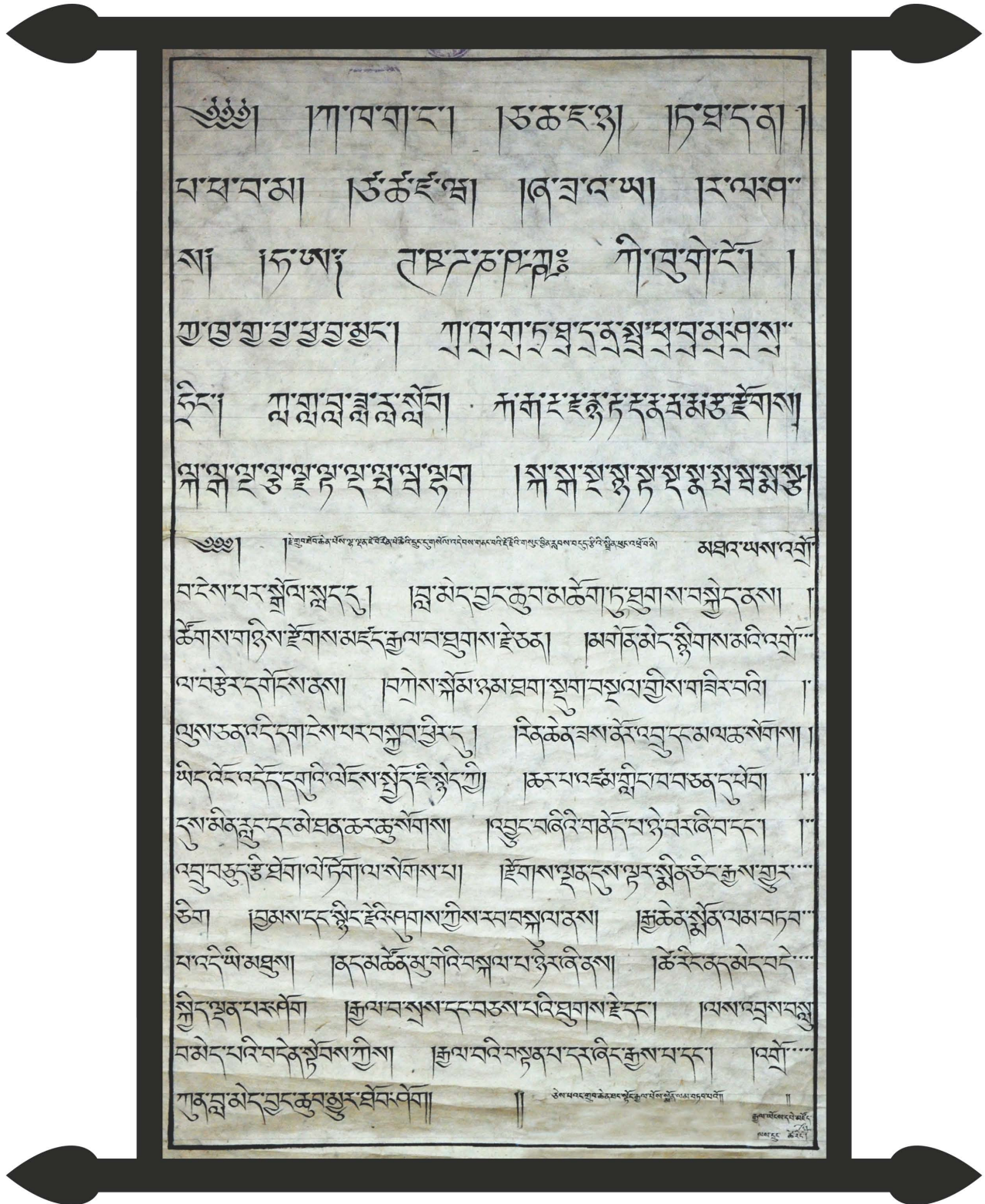


5.1.4. Calligraphy

Calligraphy or *yigzo* literally means “beautiful writing.” Hand writing was one of the earliest arts used for communication and documentation in the country. Religious texts and official correspondences were written

by hand who had the abilities to write so beautifully that it came to be regarded as an art called calligraphy. One is regarded as a true calligrapher, if, he or she possesses the six basic qualities such as, the ability to write in perfect shape, uniformity, legibility, speed, correct spellings and the execution of proportions of the scripts.



5.1.4.1. Origin and Development of Joyig

Bhutan’s formal script in printed form called *tshuyig* is adopted from the script first invented by Sambhota in the 7th Century in Tibet. It is also called *uchen* indicating that each alphabet has a bold base in the upper portion. The printed texts in the cannons and xylographic blocks are found in this form of writing. King Songtsen Gampo, of Chogyal Dynasty in Tibet, wishing to spread Buddhism in Tibetan, sent a few selected boys to India to study the Devanagri script of the Gupta period. Upon his return, Thonmi Sambhota then devised and derived a script based on the Devanagri to Tibetan language. He introduced a set of 4 vowel signs and 30 consonants. This new alphabetic script was then used to translate Buddhist literature from Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese and other languages into Tibetan.

The introduction of the script into Bhutan is closely related to the spread of Buddhism. Guru Rinpoche visited Bumthang in 8th century, accompanied by Denma Tsemang, one of his twenty-five disciples. At that time, Denma Tsemang found that Bhutanese people had a different way of writing block letters which was flexible and could be written with speed. He is said to have written down the Guru’s teachings for the King of Bumthang.1 Being located to the south of Tibet, this form of writing came to be known as *lhoyig* at that time. Legends claim that Denma Tsemang could write innumerable texts in a moment. Many of the *terma* (concealed religious texts) recorded in the Bhutanese scripts are also said to be written by Denma Tsemang

Uchen

Uchen (headed) script is mostly used for religious books and official print form. It is an upright, block form of alphabet marked by heavy horizontal lines and tapering vertically towards the bottom. Uchen’s fine clarity and elegance lends not only to wood block carving and printing but also to modern computer graphics, enabling the reproduction and preservation of the vast and rich resources of Buddhist teachings. Xylographic blocks were the main forms of prints available in this region for centuries to print religious books before the metal printing press was invented.

Traditionally, it was a basic requirement for every

student to master the style of Uchen writing before moving on to learning other scripts.

Jogtshum

When *uchen* scripts are written at a little faster speed, it gave a different style and came to be called *jogtshum*. Upon mastering *uchen*, the learners then begin with the practice of *Jogtshugm* scripts before proceeding to learn *joyig* writing.

Jo-yig

Joyig (cursive writing) is the form of cursive writing initially used for taking dictations, correspondences and personalized writings such as poems, verses and other forms of composition. Unlike *uchen*, *joyig* has greater flexibility for speed writing by using *dutshig* (abbreviated words). Though *joyig* has a standard style for writing, different styles can emerge depending upon one’s writing skills. People referred to *joyig* as *jugyig* or *juyig*. *Joyig* was also once known as *lhoyig* or *monyig* as this was only used in Bhutan.

Lentsha and Vartu

Based on the ancient Sanskrit script, decorative and ornamental scripts such as *Lentsa* and *Vartu* are also preserved and developed in Bhutan. *Vartu* is more or less a headless form of *Lentsa* (also known as *Ranjana* script), and is closely related to the *Siddham* script used in Japan. It is believed that *Wartu* is the scripts of the



nagas, since the letters bend downwards like the tail of a snake, and that Lentsa is the script of the gods, since the letters of Lentsa bend upwards.

These scripts are quite complex and occupies bigger spaces while printing and are not suitable for printing in small sizes. Therefore, these scripts are not used in everyday writing or for any reading texts, except for inscribing mantras and prayers on the walls, temple columns, prayer wheels, stones, slates, doorways, and trees, and also as a decorative script to engrave seals, and to inscribe book titles on the covers of traditional *pecha*. *Khando Dayig* (treasure scripts) is another ornamental script that can be only seen on terma (concealed religious texts), and it is found inscribed naturally on stones.

5.1.4.2. Ink

Gold is considered as the best material to prepare ink, followed by silver and stone. Important and precious religious texts are written with ink made from gold and silver dust. In the early days, when there was no pen or pencil, the writer would carry a *nagkong* (inkpot mostly made of brass or copper) filled with ink along with a *nyugu* (a pen made from a special bamboo called *si*). While inks and pen were made locally, inkpots had to be imported from either Tibet or India.



5.1.4.3. Pen

The best calligrapher would make use of a traditional hand-made pen from bamboo called *si-nyug* or of a bird's quill called *dro-nyug* or metal pen called *chag-nyug*. Their nibs must be flat and smooth with a pair of tongues. Special bamboo from *Toeb Chadana* was most commonly used to make the *si nyug*. There is a belief that a pen is an abode of *Rigsum Gonpo*, meaning that the nip of a pen represents *Manjushri* (Buddha of wisdom), the main trunk represents the power of *Vajrapani*, and the base of the pen represents *Avalokitesvara*, the Buddha of compassion.

Experts fear that with the ever increasing use of computers, the art of calligraphy may be heading for oblivion in the coming years. The preservation of the art today is due mainly to the practice that had continued in our monasteries, which are increasingly making use of computers and computer graphics.

5.1.5. The Art of Papermaking

Daezo or shogzo or the art of papermaking originates from an age-old tradition whose history can be traced back to the eighth century during the first advent of Buddhism in Bhutan. It is said that Bumthang used to export daesho papers to the Tibetan King Thrisong Deutsen as a religious offering. Known for its durability, daesho papers were used in writing Buddhist cannons and commentaries at Samye monastery.

Daesho sheets were also bartered with goods from Tibet in the past. In the olden days, daesho was mainly used for writing religious scriptures, legal acts, and letters and for maintaining tax records. *Teryig* or treasure scripts were written on daesho parchment.

In Bhutan, two species of daphne plants are used for making traditional paper; *Edgeworthia gardneri*, called *dae kar* (white daphne) and *Daphne spp.*, known as *dae*



nag (black daphne) in Dzongkha. Sometimes, these papers were known as *dug shog* (poisonous paper). The bark of daphne contains a kind of insect-repellent toxin and is known to last for hundreds of years. In the past, paper was made to meet domestic needs except for supplying some to Tibet, but today daesho is sold in the market and even exported. A person who makes daesho is known as *daezop*.

5.1.5.1. Process of Papermaking

The art of papermaking is confined to the northern, central and eastern part of the country where the high