

4.7.4. Measurement of Area

Land was measured on the basis of *lang dor* (*glang dor*). One *lang dor* is usually equivalent to land ploughed by a pair of oxen in a day. One *lang dor* on dry land is approximately a third of an acre = 1350m², and one *lang dor* on wetland is approximately a quarter of an acre = 1012m².

4.7.5. Measurement of Volume

Although there is no standard unit for measurement of volume it was measured according to the size of the particular container. While *pala*, *dop*, *zo*, *kuo*, *damji*, etc. are used to measure the volume of liquid, *bangchung*,



luep, *lagchung*, etc. are used to measure the volume of grains and cereals. Those containers were also used for storage purpose and transportation.

4.8. FOLK BELIEFS AND SUPERSTITION

Cambridge Advanced Learners' Dictionary defines "beliefs" as a strong feeling that something or somebody exists or is true, while the "superstition" as a belief which is not based on reasons or science, but is a mental construct. It is said that the "beliefs have guided human conduct and shaped behavior and action in unique ways in different culture." According to T. Powdyel's foreward note in "*Ta She Gha Chaa*" although superstitions and beliefs are often subjected to ridicule and considered as lacking rationale, popular beliefs are a window to the inner life of the community and a society. They express the workings of the psychological, emotional and spiritual world of communities in their attempt to explain the world around them. Examples of some aspects of beliefs and superstitions given below:

4.8.1. Signs and Omens

Examples:

- **Wooden Phallus** - It is a common sight to see four wooden phalluses hanging from each of the four corners of the roof of a traditional house, and one at the main entrance or front wall. It is considered a "mascot" or a "talisman". Bhutanese believe that this phallus will help to ward off the *mikha* (malicious gossip or curse which is believed to cause harm or bring bad luck or suffering to the house). A child too may wear a tiny wooden phallus or even a calf can wear one around its neck to ward off the influence of evil spirits.
- The villages will be hesitant to give away their paddy on Fridays since they believe that the luck associated with the good harvest will be taken away by the person who receives the paddy. Friday is believed to be a day of fortune.
- The metallic items represent permanence, power and indestructibility. So if you come across any rusted safety pin or any metallic items you should pick it up and preserve them. When you pass on any metallic items to others, you should place it on the floor or surface without passing it directly.
- When a household goes through material loss like money, gold or any valuable belongings, it is believed that one's illness will go away. However, if the lost gold ornament like a finger ring is retrieved, it signifies ill happenings which may befall the family or any member.
- While embarking on a journey, if one encounters a person with an empty container at the starting point, it is an indication that the mission would fail or there would be obstacles. It is advisable to stay back and plan ones trip for another day which may be more favorable, so as to evade the ill omen. However, if one encounters filled containers, cattle or langur on the way, it is considered to be auspicious and indication of success.
- Belt, knife and rosary are of great spiritual value – *sung-kyi*. Therefore, no one should walk over them or place garments used for lower part of the body and brooms over them. Therefore, it is believed that if someone has got stomach ache, whipping with belt will cure as it is believed to have been caused by evil spirits.
- Whistling inside the house especially at night is discouraged as it is believed to invite ghost and evil spirits. Shamans whistle to gather spirits during their performances.