
Ogyen Choling Trust Fund

Annual update (1.1 2004-31.12.2004)



From the latest exhibit: Astrological chart

This is the fourth annual update of the activities and plans for the Ogyen Choling trust fund. The year 2004 was a year of consolidation and reflection. Activities begun in the previous year were continued and some new activities were started. However, for various reasons most of the new activities could not be completed within the year. Nevertheless, we are pleased with the achievements and we are confident that we are on the right track. The many words of encouragement from visitors to the museum are very heartening. Generous contributions to the trust fund helped to improve the financial status considerably. The substantial negative balance of 2003 changed back to positive figures.

Purposes of the trust fund

- To preserve and maintain the Ogyen Choling complex as a religious and cultural centre
- To continue the traditional religious rituals
- To create opportunities for selected persons to use the centre for religious studies, research, solitude and prayer
- To revive and enhance traditional skills and provide a market for local handicrafts
- To provide financial support to needy and deserving students from the locality to pursue religious or modern education/training at all levels

The museum

Although the financial investment was modest, work in the museum has continued at a steady pace. We have spent much of our time improving the quality of the exhibits and adding new themes. Major attention was given to the exhibits on the 3rd floor which

were still incomplete by the end of 2003. New displays on "Astrology and Divination" and "Ritual Objects" were added in the room with the dance costumes.

By the end of the year 2004 the museum had eighteen themes. The new themes added during 2004 are:

- *The king's grain stores:* A room on the ground floor which was earlier used as a silo for storing buckwheat for times of national food shortages.
- *The library* was turned into a display room with exhibits of selected manuscripts, particularly texts of the Prajnaparamita, the transcendental wisdom text written in 100,000 words, *Bum* and 8000 verses *Gyetongpa* (written in gold and silver), book covers and other items associated with reading of the sacred literature.

Research and Publication

We have started cataloguing old documents belonging to the family. Some of them are from as early as the 1800s. Many of the documents deal with the family's properties, land holdings and other private affairs and will fit well into the overall theme of the museum. Some of the documents appear to be of historical importance beyond Ogyen Choling. We anticipate that this time-consuming activity will continue over a longer period of time. However, we hope to make a preliminary inventory of the catalogued documents available for interested scholars and researchers before the end of 2005.

Guest house

The occupancy for the guest house has picked up only slightly. Small improvements such as additional furniture and mirrors were added to the rooms.

Visitors

Many tourist agencies have started to include Ogyen Choling museum as a major attraction in Bumthang. During the year we had about 350 foreign visitors. No records are maintained for the Bhutanese visitors as they are not charged admission fees. We received many comments of appreciation. Some were overly generous with their praise:

".....it was a must to visit your museum in Ogyen Choling. Congratulations!! it is great. Also the architects Götz Hagmüller and

Thomas Schrom, both of them can be considered as museum specialists, were impressed and enjoyed the three hours we spent in it." (Christian Schicklgruber, Ethno Museum, Vienna)

"...We are really mesmerized by your breathtaking collections and the preservation of your rich traditional treasures.....this visit will be the most memorable experience in our lives (BA English honors 3rd year, Sherubse College, Kanglung, Bhutan).

"I feel privileged to have spent time in this wonderful place and congratulate you on your magical museum." (Marion Walker, UK).

Scholarship Fund

The trust fund provided scholarships for 11 children: five from Misithang Primary School and six from Kharab Primary School (both in Tang valley). Once again prizes were provided for the first three positions in all the classes of both the schools at the end of the school year.

Other activities and happenings

A room in the Ogyen Choling complex is being used for the Non-Formal Education classes (NFE). NFE is a government sponsored project to teach literacy and numeracy to those who could not attend conventional school. In the beginning of 2004 nineteen students from the village (seventeen women and two men) joined the classes.



Students looking out of the class room.

As a special activity the trust fund provided solar lighting systems for the NFE class rooms in the Ogyen Choling Naktsang and in the Kharab Primary School in upper Tang. NFE classes are conducted in the evenings after the students have completed their daily farm work and lighting is essential.

The Ogyen Choling complex has been made the administrative centre for the “Ogyen Choling Community Forest group”. This activity initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture has become very important for all the 23 house holds of the Ogyen Choling village.



A few months before the solar system was installed a documentary film on the adult literacy classes entitled “Class by Candle Light” was made by Dechen Wangmo Roder. The film explores the aspirations and hopes of the students. The film will be sold at the Ogyen Choling handicraft store in the form of VCD or DVD (proceeds from the sale of these discs will go to the trust fund).

We have initiated contact with four physically challenged persons in Tang to assess their

needs and problems. Small gifts in the form of books, clothes and cash were given to them. We plan to continue this support and interaction as a regular activity under the trust fund.

The hermitage (constructed with funds not included in the trust fund) is complete. In times when the guest house is full the two rooms will be available for visitors.

A draft of the web page is complete and will be made available shortly.

Fire extinguishers were procured. We consider this a necessary facility which was long overdue as fire is a constant source of threat to the traditional buildings.

Financial report

Because of the generous donations as well as the delay in activities and the increased income generated through the guest house and the museum, the financial situation is much better than anticipated. This year contributions were received from 26 donors. We would like to extend our warmest appreciation to all of you. Thank you!

During the year 2004 the trust fund could spend almost 0.5 million Nu. The most significant expenses were:

- Covering the deficit of 2003: Nu 69'806
- Purchase of material for the kitchen (wood, steel, sand etc) 98'264
- Museum (including salary for assistant curator, and fire extinguishers): Nu 74'144
- Solar equipment for NFE classrooms: Nu 57'000
- Additional roofing materials for *shagkor*: Nu 53'000
- Temple (solar lamps, salary for caretaker): Nu 51'610
- Scholarship and academic prizes: Nu 31'260
- Annual ritual *Kangso*: Nu 32'020
- Interest on loan: Nu 20'000

Future plans

We feel that the time has come for consolidation rather than expansion. Of course the Ogyen Choling complex will require constant attention and maintenance and there will be new activities. Beside regular maintenance of the museum, temples and other facilities, following are the activities planned for 2005:

- Roofing of the *shagkor*
- Construction of kitchen and bathroom (as an annex to the *shagkor*)

- Adding 1-2 more themes to the museum, tentatively an exhibit on textiles and a gallery of historical photographs of Ogyen Choling
- We hope to make substantial progress with the catalogue/book on the museum

Major financial requirements will be for salaries, construction of the kitchen/bathroom annex and for the scholarship fund.



The first page of the *Gyetongpa* (*Prajnaparamita* in 8000 verses) written in gold