
Ogyen Choling Trust Fund

Annual update (1.1 2005-31.12.2005)

This is the fifth annual update of the activities, achievements and plans for the Ogyen Choling trust fund. The year 2005 began with the re-roofing of the *shakor* and the guest house in February. From then onwards, construction activities continued throughout the year. With substantial investments in the various construction projects the financial status at the end of the year is negative, in spite of the many generous contributions to the trust fund and the increased income from the museum and the guest house. It is most gratifying to see some signs of interest and commitment towards the support and continuance of the trust fund objectives in the next generation of the family: Gyaltsen Dorji has completed a web page for the trust fund, Dolma Roder will be taking on the task of finalizing the museum book and Dechen Roder is considering a media project documenting Ogyen Choling *nagtshang* and its history.

Purposes of the trust fund

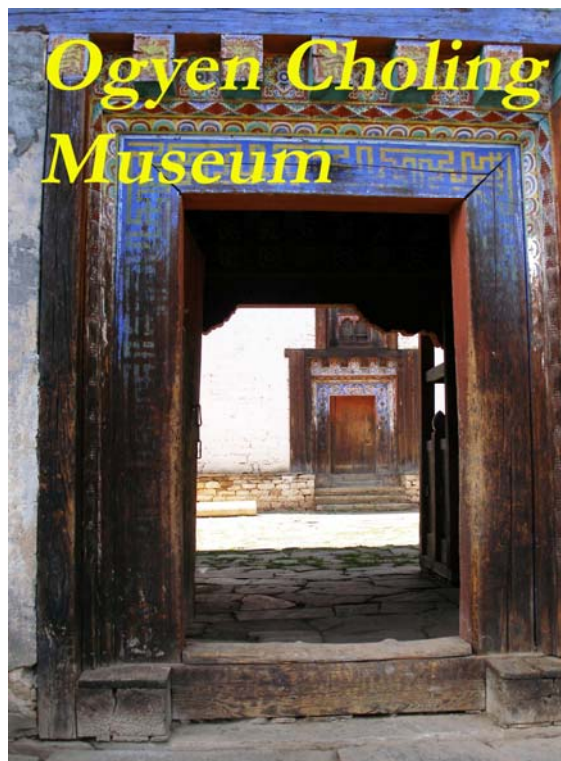
- To preserve and maintain the Ogyen Choling complex as a religious and cultural centre
- To continue the traditional religious rituals
- To create opportunities for selected persons to use the centre for religious studies, research, solitude and prayer
- To revive and enhance traditional skills and 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

As we were intensely involved in the various construction projects we had very limited time for the museum. Construction projects, although directly related to the museum (toilet, roofing) are reported under a separate heading.

New themes: Work on the new exhibits is progressing very slowly. We have started collecting photographs (family members and others of some significance for Ogyen Choling). Similarly, specimens are being identified and collected for the textile exhibit, but the work on the display boxes and lighting could not be started yet.

Museum booklet: We have since some time began to work on a comprehensive text for the museum which will be compiled into a book. The research and compilation is a major undertaking that needs some level of professional knowledge, expertise, dedication and time. As an interim solution, we have prepared a booklet on the museum. The booklet is being printed and we will be sending each of you a copy very soon. This printing was made possible thanks to funding from Helvetas.



Front cover of the museum booklet

Preservation of artefacts: With most of the items on permanent display, we now realize that we need to pay careful attention to preservation. Some of the artefacts are quite fragile from age and wear. The most pressing and visible problems are wood worms and moths on wood and textiles. The only preservatives that we have used so far are moth balls and kerosene. The floor boards in the display rooms have been rubbed with kerosene and the wooden printing blocks have been soaked in kerosene. Many visitors and well wishers have shown concern and offered advice. If any of the readers have practical expertise and suggestions on how to preserve leather, textile and wooden artefacts, please help us. We realize that this may be just the beginning and the easy part, far more demanding preservation and restorations works are waiting, especially the restoration of the wall paintings in the temples, *thangkas*, dance costumes etc.

Construction projects

Roofing: In February we could finally proceed with the re-roofing of the *shakor* and the guest house. This was quite urgent to protect the buildings as the wooden shingle roof was becoming increasingly vulnerable to leaks.

Kitchen and toilet projects: Kitchen and bathroom facilities in the Ogyen Choling complex have been very basic. Over two generations the residents of the *nagtshang* tried in vain to improve the facilities. Further more, experiences of others have shown that incorporating internal plumbing into old traditional mud and stones structures is not a feasible option. As the situation with the dark, smoky kitchen and the rudimentary bathroom facilities could not continue, we took up the challenge and started 3 different kitchen/toilet projects simultaneously. These projects are:

1. A kitchen complex for the resident family and the guest house which also includes toilet and shower facilities
2. Toilets for visitors to the museum and temples
3. Private toilets attached to the quarters in the *shakor*.

All 3 structures are attached to the *shakor*. They were planed in such a way as not to distort the original buildings. We are happy to say that we think we succeeded. We are confident that when the new structures are painted they will blend well with the original buildings. As most of the construction work involved concrete and reinforced steel we had to employ Indian specialists. We were fortunate to have a good team of 3 masons and

plumbers from Cooch Bihar who stayed in Ogyen Choling for seven months, until it was too cold to work with cement towards the end of December. Although not fully completed, the major portion of the work was finished.

While all the roofing materials were still carried up to the Ogyen Choling *nagtshang* by people, the newly made road helped to reduce the transportation problem. Most of the required construction materials, such as iron rods, cement, sand and stones could be transported to the site by tractors.



Roofing of *shakor* under progress (east side)



Kitchen and bathroom annex (west side)

Guest house

Compared to the previous year, there was no marked increase in the occupancy rate for the guest house. During 2005 we could finally complete the tiling and painting of the bathrooms. Other than that, no further investments were made.

Visitors

In 2005 the number of tourists visiting Bhutan crossed 13,000. As a result of increased tourist numbers and growing publicity on Ogyen Choling, there was a substantial increase in the numbers of visitors. According to our records the museum had 524 foreign visitors. There are no records available for Bhutanese visitors as no entrance fees are charged. Most of the visitors come on day trips and many others camp rather than use the guest house facilities. Among the visitors we would like to mention the following:

- His Holiness, the yangsay of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and the yangsay of HH Dudjom Rinpoche blessed Ogyen Choling with their visit in May.
- The Minister of Health, Lyonpo Jigme Singye accompanied by the Bumthang Dzongda Dasho Kunzang Tshering and their entourage honoured Ogyen Choling with a visit in September.
- The Department of Tourism organised a field trip to Ogyen Choling for the

tourist guide trainees. This demonstrates that department recognizes the significance of Ogyen Choling in the Bhutanese tourism industry.

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 at the end of the school year for the first three positions in all the classes of both the schools.

Other activities and happenings

Web page: The web page is presently hosted under www.geocities.com/ogyencholingmuseum. Please visit the web site and give us your feed back.

Road access: The village of Ogyen Choling now has a farm road, which was paid for by the villagers. Although we are still waiting for a bridge across the Tang river, the tractor can cross at times when the water is not too high. The construction of the bridge has been delayed because of a controversy on the location of the bridge.

Fire Extinguishers: The hazards of fire are a constant fear. Eight fire extinguishers were purchased and installed in key points in all the buildings. In October we were very fortunate to

have the former chief of the fire fighting department in Albuquerque (New Mexico) to instruct us on the use of the fire extinguishers. Ms. Aileen came to Ogyen Choling with a group of tourists and graciously obliged.

income generated from the museum and guest house increased.

During the year 2005 more than Nu 0.7 million was spent. The expenditures were unusually high because of the various construction projects. Because of this, an additional loan of Nu 0.2 million had to be obtained. The most significant expenses were:

- Kitchen construction, Nu 372'000
- Salaries for assistant curator and temple keeper, Nu 96'000
- Bathroom project museum, Nu 55'000
- Private bathroom Shakor, Nu 50'000
- Roofing, Nu 28'010
- Annual ritual Kangso, Nu 54'931
- Scholarship and academic prices, Nu 32'560
- Interest on loan, Nu 20'000

Future plans

The Bhutanese astrologers have forecast 2006 and 2007 to be black years. During these years no major events and activities such as new building projects, weddings etc should be undertaken. This forecast suits us well because we had decided to give ourselves a period of reflection and consolidation and to recover our energies and finances. However, we will have to complete the on-going construction work and continue working on the additional exhibits planned for the museum. Some other minor works may also continue such as re-roofing and repairing the *chamkhang* or the dance house located between the temple and the *utse*. This building is of significance, as it is the only building that withstood the 1897 earthquake and is, therefore, older than all the other buildings in the complex.



Cloth for covering books. New exhibit under the theme library

Financial report

In the year 2005 the trust fund received contributions from 26 donors (groups and individuals). We would like to extend our warmest appreciation to all of you. It is only because of your donations that we can continue the preservation and renovation activities in Ogyen Choling. In addition the

