
Ogyen Choling Trust Fund

Annual update 2013



Purpose of the Trust Fund

- To ensure the long term maintenance of the buildings, the temples and the museum;
- To sustain the traditional religious observances and rituals;
- To provide a place for religious studies, research and meditation;
- To revive and encourage traditional skills and provide a market for local handicrafts;
- To provide financial support to deserving but economically deprived students in Tang valley.

This update covers the period from 1st January 2013 to 28th February 2014. We decided to change our reporting period based on the recent approval of our application to register the Ogyen Choling Foundation (OCF) with the Civil Society Organizations Authority of Bhutan (CSOA). This is, therefore, the last update under the erstwhile Ogyen Choling Trust Fund, and henceforth our annual reports will be for the Ogyen Choling Foundation in accordance with the requirements of the CSOA.

The most significant events during the period under review include preparations for the establishment of the Foundation (viz. the planning and extensive paperwork as required by CSOA), the initiation of the construction of residential buildings, and the relocation of Kunzang Choden and Walter Roder back to Ogyen Choling .

The year 2013 ended on a dramatic note in Ogyen Choling, reminding us of the transitory nature of all things. A wind storm swept through the country on the 15th of December, wreaking havoc along its path. Although most of its ferocity was felt in the western part of Bhutan, particularly Ha and Paro, it also passed through Ogyen Choling, taking off half of the temple roof. Fearing snow, we worked quickly to replace the roof within the shortest time possible. It was heartening to see the community come together during this emergency. In keeping with a valuable tradition, much of the work was done on a voluntary basis with the volunteers only being served meals. Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to all those who came forward in the spirit of community to help in re-roofing the temple.

In early February 2014 we received yet another sad lesson in impermanence when the oldest resident of the Ogyen Choling manor, 82 year old Meme Pema Wangchuk passed away. His amicable personality made Meme Pema a favorite subject for many photographers and artists who visited Ogyen Choling. He will be missed by all who knew him, particularly by those of us who had the good fortune to live with him.

Picture: Drawing of Meme Pema Wangchuk made few weeks before his passing away by Kathy Collins of Alaska



The Ogyen Choling Foundation

On 23rd January 2014, more than a year after the first submission of our application for registration, the Civil Society Organizations Authority of Bhutan (CSOAB) granted provisional status of a civil society organization to the Ogyen Choling Foundation. The official certificate of registration is expected to be awarded soon. The first formal meeting of the Foundation’s Board will be held soon to elect the Chairperson, Managing Trustee and other office bearers as well as to finalize the activities of the first year..

With the establishment of the Foundation, all the heirs of Ogyen Choling have irrevocably ceded any individual claim to specific parts of the complex whose ownership is now wholly transferred to the Foundation.

The Museum

As in the previous years, much of our energy and time was spent on the routine upkeep and maintenance of the museum. We have been working on a display of women’s broaches (*koma*), snuff horns, and flint stones. These exhibits have been made possible due to the generous donation of Marie Noel Frei from Switzerland, who had lived in Bhutan for several years during the 1970s. We have also made good progress on a display to showcase artifacts associated with the quintessential Bhutanese custom of betel nut chewing.

The number of visitors to the museum during the first half of 2013 was low. Although the numbers increased during September, October and November, the total number for the 14 month period was just 757, significantly below the number recorded in 2012. However, on one particular day in October last year, a record number of more than 80 foreign visitors came to the museum in a single day!

Guesthouse

Because of the rather basic facilities, occupancy rates of the Guesthouse continued to stagnate. However, the number of visitors requesting for lunch after visiting the museum increased quite substantially compared to the previous year. As a first step towards upgrading our facilities, work was started on a new dining room.

Construction of residential buildings

The construction of the residential houses (being built to allow the family members to keep their registration in Ogyen Choling even after surrendering their homes to the Foundation) started in March 2013 with a ground breaking ceremony and excavation of the foundation pits. Work then proceeded very slowly until end of September when the foundations for the first building could be completed. The first door and window frames were erected shortly thereafter. From then on the construction work gained some momentum and by the beginning of March 2014 much of the work for the ground floor for the first building (which will have apartments for 3 families) was well advanced and the foundation for the second building (which will house one family) had been completed. All the work is being carried out by Bhutanese craftsmen.

Picture: The construction site at the end of February 2014



Sanitary installations and other plans

The visit of a Swiss sanitary designer, Walter Spielmann, resulted in the drawing up of a comprehensive plan for the sanitation installations for the entire complex and plans for 1) establishing a fire mitigation and suppression system for the Ogyen Choling complex as well as the village; 2) remodeling of the *Shagor* to be utilized as guest rooms, and 3) the use of solar energy for water heating. A follow up visit that will lead to implementation of some of these plans will take place in May this year.

Repair of old structures

Concurrently with the construction of the residential houses, we are undertaking various repairs on the old structures. Ap Dorji, an elderly mason from the village, carried out the repairs to the main entrance gate to the complex and the old prayer wall (mani wall). All these structures were badly in need of attention.

Part of the wall adjacent to the *Chamkhang*, the oldest building in the complex, had collapsed during a minor earthquake in 2012. It was only this year that we could mobilize the masons to rebuild the wall.

Inspired by the use of traditional toilets in Ladakh, even in the palace in Leh, we reconsidered our earlier decision to replace the old public toilet. This toilet was built at the same time as the *Nagtshang* complex and fits nicely with the wall enclosing the whole complex. Rather than demolishing it, as we had planned earlier, we have modified it, to make it more hygienic.

Other happenings:

A determined reader: The temple is always open to visitors and pilgrims and normal rituals and worship take place throughout the year. But the presence of Meme Lhamola in the temple everyday made a wonderful difference by transforming the entire atmosphere of the temple. Ninety four year old Meme Lhamola who is associated with three generations of the Ogyen Choling family decided to do a solo reading of the entire 108 volumes of the *kanjur*. Volume by volume, folio after folio he took almost a whole year to complete a

reading of the texts. His daily presence in the temple made the temple a welcome gathering place for worshippers, well wishers and acquaintances. His determination and dedication was an inspiration and a blessing to all who experienced it.

Picture: The completely reworked entrance steps and gate



Picture: Meme Lhamola reading in the temple



A marriage Ceremony. In October, Gyaltzen K Dorji one of the family members (who is a board member and our web-master) and his long time partner Ugyen Wangmo celebrated their marriage in Ogyen Choling. In keeping with the local tradition, rather than having a modern day wedding party, they were betrothed in a traditional “*tsangma*” ceremony which is conducted when the woman becomes pregnant. The entire village joined in the ritual.

Picture: The couple sitting for the *tsangma* ceremony



An enthusiastic prayer wheel turner: An eighty seven year old woman from the village, Aie Sonam Pema has decided to spend the rest of her days turning the prayer wheel (*mani dungkhor*) in the temple building. The welcoming sound of the tingling bell greets all who enter the complex.



An old ritual revived: Reminiscent of the old days a special ritual called *torjab* was conducted this year for the first time in decades. This ritual which used to be an annual event in the past, is conducted to banish malevolent spirits and ensure good health for all. The ritual was elaborate in its preparation and grand in execution. The lama from the faraway hermitage of Thowadrak performed the ritual to perfection.

Picture: Burning the tormas at the end of the ritual



Losar celebration: As the family was in mourning and in the midst of the death rituals for Meme Pema Wangchuk we did not have the regular Losar celebration. We hope to continue the tradition next year.

Financial Report

This year we are happy to report that our income, with more than Ngultrum 0.85 million was substantially higher than in the previous years. Nevertheless, it was far below the expenditures incurred for the construction of the residential buildings, the cost for planning and initial works for the modification of the *shagor*, the unexpected roof replacement for the temple and the extensive maintenance and repair works.

The cost of the residential buildings was reduced substantially through direct contributions by the beneficiary families in the amount of Nu 1.0 million. Overall we had a negative balance of about Nu. 1.3 million which was covered through a loan from the family.

We take this opportunity to warmly thank all of you who have helped us to come this far with your generous donations, encouragements and good will. We would specifically like to thank Fritz Baumgartner who has provided his service backstopping the construction work and Walter Spielmann, for his input (see above).

Donations	Nu
Ruth Schlatter	59,800
Anna Schlupe	31,694
Christa and Urs Rohner	23,200
Walter Schlupe	45,400
Jennifer Candler	2,000
Regula Mettler	41,304
Nicolas de Quinamar	5,000
Julia Dickens	5,950
Hansruedi and Gabi Pfeiffer	12,300
Marino and Christof Frei	4,250
Pradeep KP and family	5,000
Amis du Bhutan	42,500
Vincent Dannecker	42,500
Martin and Kuengold Menzi	13,600
Monika Kramer	8,000
Allison Boyd	900
Roger Harmon	27,560
Jos NL	1,230
Isabelle Pairs	3,075
Mike and Ellen Turbow	2,000
Paul and Ellen	3,660
György Hetényi	2,000
Amanda Joy Ruben	18,300
A. and G. Tardy and T. Singer	30,000
Manfred Garner	3,000
Wendy and group	18,300
Fabienne Grossenbacher	14,000
S. Bauersfeld	1,243
Daphne Cunningham	62,180
Others	9,700
Total amount	539,646

Income	Nu
Balance 1.1. 2013	60,736
Books, painting, royalties	36,150
Museum fees	113,560
Guest house	167,100
Donations	539,646
Loan	1,300,000
Family members contribution towards new residence	1,000,000
Total	3'217'192
Expenditures	
Salaries ¹	181'000
Woodworking/construction Machines	274'041
CGI sheets temple	116'100
Other cost new residences	1'769'586
Other cost museum	183'067
Other cost guest house	595'739
Other cost temple	22'280
Education and social welfare	72'600
Total expenditures	3'214'413
Balance 28.2. 2014	2779
Assets	
Long-term investments	80'000
In the form of bank drafts	250'000

¹Temple care taker, assistant curator and assistant museum and security

The Year of the Horse

With your support and good wishes we hope that the Ogyen Choling Foundation will have a good start. We will try to be ever conscious not to go into a full gallop but continue to trot carefully and mindfully.

We hope we can depend on you for your continued support and generosity.

For additional information check: <http://www.oling.bt>

