

# End of year Report 2021

JULY-DECEMBER 2021



The four youngest team members in Ogyen Choling with their parents

Despite the quiet days, the guest house not being used, and the international museum visitors completely absent, we and the families in the village were not locked into inactivity; two new two storied houses were built in the village and four members of the Foundation and Heritage House staff were blessed with new additions to their young families. Three baby girls and a boy joined our team.

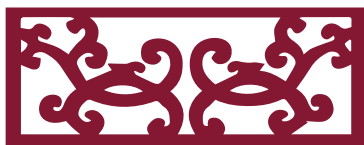
## Covid measures

- We tried as far as possible to adhere to the Covid measures mandated by the Government in all our daily activities. Measures that were initiated last year such as asking all visitors to wash hands and recording visitors through Druktrace app were continued.
- We were happy to be able to retain all permanent staff on full employment. We are fortunate to have very gifted and multi-talented staff who could be deployed for a variety of work, for example the Development Officer, worked often as a carpenter and carried out various small repairs and improvements in the museum and the temple.
- We continued to work as per the annual plan and budget, but mostly relying on staff supported by workers from the village. The supply of materials continues to be a constraint due to which some activities have been delayed.
- Rituals and prayers in the temple could be performed making use of gomchens (lay monks) from the village.
- The annual ritual (Kangsoe) was modified without performing the procession.
- It was planned that there would be a special presentation in Ogyen Choling during Kangsoe of Dr Monique Filsnoel's PhD dissertation on the temple paintings, the consecration of the three repaired chortens and new exhibits in the museum. All these plans had to be postponed again.





Land slide on the west side of the nagtshang during the night of 18th July



## Maintenance and improvements of structures

Maintenance activities continued as per the plan with much of the work being carried out by the employees of the Foundation, without any additional labor costs. Our regular maintenance activities included an ongoing battle with pests/ animals which do not respect the Ogyen Choling manor and have a different perspective on how to use the facilities. Constant attempts by mice to eat the books and artefacts in the temple, birds looking for new places to roost and deface anything below them, wild boars and deer damaging the landscape, have been our everyday reality. Despite all the frustration we tried not to harm the offenders and

have looked for solutions that will allow us to live together. We added all kinds of barriers in the roof structures, lined display boxes with metal sheet, improved our fencing systems, and trapped the mice in non-life-threatening traps. Once in a trap the rodents were transported to places across the river as according to local belief mice do not cross rivers!





Docha south of Shagor

The following activities were carried out during the period July to December:

**Guide room:** Work on the new guide room was completed. We are planning to use the room temporarily for the ECCD activities which are expected to start in March.

**Winter garden:** The work on the winter garden (extending, paneling, and insulating) progressed well but could not be completed because of unavailability of insulation materials. Nevertheless, the room has become very useful for sheltering our flowers over the coldest winter days.

**Parking:** The retaining wall below the parking was completed. This makes it possible to extend the width of the parking space by at least 2 meters.

**Stone slabs:** The mason and our staff placed stone slabs (docha) near buildings and walkways. Work on the docha near the main entrance and on the docha behind the nagtshang could not be completed because we did not have enough stone slabs.

**Water supply:** After consultations and soliciting permission from the village drinking water supply group and the villagers, the new water pipe which will provide an independent water supply system for the manor was placed from the source to the manor. We have committed to pay a nominal amount to the water supply fund. However, the work could not be completed because we could not source the new water tank.

**Drainage space behind nagtshang:** Our efforts of planting willow cuttings and bamboo to stabilize the slope behind the nagtshang to mitigate further erosion which would endanger the old buildings were years too late. The inevitable happened in July. After a period of heavy rains, the lower part of the slope went down in a slide. Immediately pipes were laid out to divert the rainwater from the structures away from the slope. Although this is a temporary solution, it has worked well. In the meantime, a nursery has been raised to continue with the replanting activities along with making a more permanent diversion for the runoff water. A permanent drainage line will be laid after getting the required pipe.

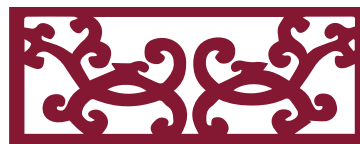
**Employment of a night warden:** After one of the chortens within the compound was vandalized earlier this year (see Mid Year report) and considering the constant danger of fire hazards, the Foundation decided to employ a night warden. Pema Rikzin from the village has been employed to be the night warden from November onwards. It is reassuring to have the night guard regularly patrolling the compound.



The night warden Pema Rikzin



Novice monks from Tangsibi (Trongsa district) who visited the museum and temple (3rd August)



## Museum

In November the electrical installations and especially the lighting arrangements were reviewed taking advantage of the electricians working on the lighting in the temple. Based on this, the entire system will be redone during 2022.





Village members being served lunch after participating in the flag hoisting during Kangsoe



## Rituals and Temples

### Kangsoe

Following the Covid mandate we were still able to observe the annual ritual for Kangsoe in October. The lhadar (flag) was taken down, the new cloth was attached to the flagpole and raised on the same day. Thowadrak Lama kindly led the prayers and most of the people from the village participated. Breakfast and lunch were served to all on the day of the flag hoisting.

### Protecting books and artefacts

The bookshelves in the temple which were originally built into the masonry walls have always been a concern, because of rodents. The mice living in the stone walls frequently ate the cloth covers of the books, fortunately, no books so far, were damaged. Blocking of the holes with soil, stones and wood did not offer full protection. The temple caretaker and the staff have now covered the interiors of all the bookshelves with metal sheets from all sides. The sheets were painted to conceal the metallic appearance. Hopefully this intervention will have a lasting effect.





The team working on the lighting of the temple  
(20th November)



Lam Kezang and the statue of Thangthong Gyelpo  
(25th October)

### A gift

Lam Kezang, head of the Agency for Promotion of Indigenous Crafts (APIC) has kindly gifted a clay statue of the 14th century Mahasiddha Thangthong Gyelpo, the widely revered and much-loved iron bridge builder, to the Ogyen Choling Temple. In the time of the pandemic, this was a thoughtful gesture, as prayers to this Mahasiddha are believed to ward off diseases.

### Improving the lighting system

Emanuel Fluckiger from Switzerland, generously contributed a new lighting system for the temple. In December two electricians from his company with our own staff installed the new lights in all the altars in the temple. The new installations have brightened the altars and now most of the statues, especially the smaller ones which were not visible, as they were hidden in the shadows, can now be seen. We would like to record our appreciation for this kind gesture.



Presentation of the Ogyen Choling temple paintings in Bern



## Scholars and Research

In November Dr. Monique Filsnoel was invited by the Society Switzerland Bhutan to give an overview of her research and the inventory of the paintings of Ogyen Choling temple at the University of Berne, Switzerland. The presentation was based on her PhD research. It had been planned for her to come and present her work here in Ogyen Choling but because of the Covid, this could not happen in 2021. It is hoped that she will be able to come one day when travel to Bhutan becomes easier.

In the same month Mr. Sangye Nidup, the assistant Librarian from Jigme Singye Wangchuck School of Law, brought back the legal documents which had been taken to the school earlier in the

year. The documents were categorized, studied, and scanned. The contents of the documents are presently being translated into Dzongkha, as the language used in the documents were mainly colloquial.



Catalogued documents being returned by Mr. Sangye Nidup (4th December)





The students of Tang Central School who received prizes for academic achievements (17th December)



## Education and scholarships

The three top achievers in each class of Tang Central school in Misethang were recognized and awarded cash prizes during the celebration on the 114th National Day, on 17th of December. The academic achievers in Khangrab Primary school also received cash prizes in their school. The Ogyen Choling Foundation was once again happy to offer the cash prizes.

As mentioned in the Mid-Year report the ECCD was closed because there were not enough children to justify the services.





HE the Minister of Agriculture and Forest interacting with the village members of Ogyen Choling (10th October)



## Visitors

The museum was kept open and local visitors and pilgrims continued to visit. The national Covid measures that discouraged travel outside the country brought many Bhutanese visitors and pilgrims to the temple and museum. The guest house remained open, but it was rarely used for overnight stays although we did occasionally host lunches for guests.

The Choling Foundation was honored to receive HE Excellency A.K.M. Shahidul Karim, the Ambassador of Bangladesh and his wife Mrs. Syeda Mahrufa Akter. It was the first ever visit by a Bangladesh Ambassador to the museum. The Ambassador was accompanied Mr. and Ms. Sujan Debnath Counsellor and Head of Chancery.

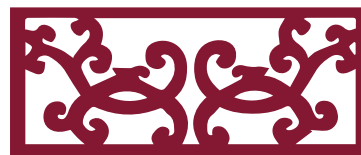


HE the Bangladesh Ambassador and his wife in Ogyen Choling (30th September)



Pilgrim group consisting of senior civil servants and senior clergy (25th October)





## Other news

### Changes in the board

As already mentioned in the Mid-Year report, the board member Kunzang Choden was replaced by Dechen W. Roder. During the period under report the chair was handed over from Sonam Wangchuk to Gyalsten K. Dorji. We would like to thank the outgoing chair for his contribution and for holding this post for over 8 years. We look forward to work with the younger board member and chairperson, who we hope will bring new perspectives and youthful energy

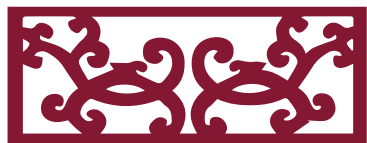
### Audit

The Regional Royal Audit Authority kindly carried out the audit for the financial year 2020 in August. We are happy to report that the auditors found no problems with the accounts.

### CSO Annual Meet

It was fortunate that the venue for CSOs annual meet was Lobesa in Wangduephodrang district, where our honorary adviser, Pema Rigzin is based. Without any logistical considerations, he could represent our Foundation at the meet in December.





## Financial

This was the second year that the Ogyen Choling Heritage House was exempted of paying any of the lease fees to the Foundation, in consideration of the fact that there was almost no income this year. This left a significant shortfall in our income. After our remarks in the last year-end report regarding the diminishing funds, the Foundation received a spontaneous response with many generous donations. The total amount received in the form of donations was Nu 2.585 million. Thanks to this, we had not only sufficient resources to carry out our planned activities and retain our staff, but also have comfortable reserves to start activities in the year 2022.

### Donations received

#### Donations up to Nu 10000

Alf Pearson, Dolma C. Roder, Trulku Jigme Tenzin, HE Minister of Agriculture, Anonymous, F. Pommaret

#### Donations Nu 10'000-50'000

Monika Kramer, Dr Urs Niederhauser, Peter Stein, Reto Ludwig, Prof. Martin Menzi, Vincent Danecker, Dechen Emchi, Verena Roder, Roger Harmon, Werner Kuelling, Vreni Bollmann, Harry Frank. Kunzang Choden

#### Donations Nu 50'000 – 100'000

Dominique Bastien, Brigitta Kunz, Richard O. Frey, Amis du Bhutan

#### Donations Nu 100'000 – 300'000

Fabienne Grossenbacher, Regula & Kaspar Mettler, Monique Filsnoel, Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton (through the Bhutan Foundation), Swiss-Bhutan Association

#### Donations above Nu 800'000

Erick Rinner



## Looking forward to 2022.

### Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD)

As there will be about eight to nine children (aged between three to five years) in the village who will be ready for ECCD in the coming year, the Foundation will reopen ECCD services. Although the old space in the village is no longer available, the newly prepared additional guide room in the Heritage House will be used. The previous facilitator is happy to run the Centre. The reopening has been discussed and approved by local coordinators for ECCDs, and if all goes according to plan, the facility will be operational in March.

### A sanctified center.

Ogyen Choling is included among the eight sanctified centers established in Bhutan by the great 14th century Buddhist Master Longchen Ramjampa (1308-1363). Longchenpa was one of the greatest scholars and the most prolific writer of the Nyingma tradition. Many pilgrims come to Ogyen Choling especially because of its connection to Longchenpa. Pilgrims also invariably ask to have the opportunity to view some of the internal relics (nangtens) of Ogyen Choling. In recognizing the importance of its

religio-historical connection to the master and in responding to the popular demand of the people, it has been decided that the Foundation will initiate activities to sustain its connection to Longchenpa. This year, for the first time, the Foundation together with the community will celebrate the kuchoe of Longchenpa, the commemoration of the 659th death anniversary.

After nearly two years of uncertainties and anxiety, the inevitable has come to pass, and Bhutan is facing the challenges brought on by the new variant Omicron and more and more people are being infected every day. We like to think that this is the beginning of the end, and we can now look forward to a new beginning of a new normal and lives can move forward in ease and hope.





2022

TASHI DELEK for a Roaring Tiger Year

TASHI DELEK from Ogyen Choling  
for a roaring year of the Male Water Tiger