



CSO REGISTRATION NUMBER: CSOA/PBO-30

## OgyenCholing Foundation

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# Mid-year Report 2020

## (January to June)

As in the previous years, both the museum and the Ogyen Choling Heritage House were closed for the entire month of January. By February we gradually opened up the facilities and there were some small groups of visitors to the museum and some guests stayed in the guest house. Everything seemed to fall into place and we were excited and enthusiastically looking forward to a successful and productive year 2020.

According to the lunar calendar, Losar or New Year of the Iron Male Rat Year fell on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February and as is the tradition, it was celebrated with the senior villagers offering prayers, good wishes and sharing meals. Although the Bhutanese astrological forecast for the year was not so favourable with cautionary undertones, nothing prepared us for the sudden outbreak of the pandemic and its horrific consequences. Now into the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the year, like the rest of the world, our lives and livelihoods are being impacted by the still prevailing COVID 19. Fortunately, Bhutan is still in the orange zone of Covid alert and although we have had over 100 cases of the infection, all of them were imported.

Considering the concerns of the local population and the directives of the Government the museum, the ECCD and the guest house were closed to visitors starting from 6<sup>th</sup> March. This will have strong implication for the funds available to the Foundation as the income from tickets sale and lease payments of the guest house accounted for more than 50% of the expected income for 2020. We are, however, confident that the cost for the permanent employees can be covered from the limited resources.



*ECCD opening, just few days before closing on 6<sup>th</sup> March*

## Prayers and Rituals

Adhering to one of main objectives we tried to keep up the prayers and rituals as usual.

**Reading the Bum:** At the end of February we had a group of 8 gomchens who read the Bum, the Prjanaparamita texts.

**Shingdrup prayers:** For the first time this year the villagers jointly sponsored the Shingdrup prayers for three days. We hope that this joint prayers can be continued in the future.



*Carrying the torma and other offerings to the village after the Shingdrup prayers*

**Tsechu:** Similarly, a family from the village also contributed towards a **Tsechu** prayer.

**Prewchod:** Although most communities celebrate Guru Rinpoche's birthday on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the 5<sup>th</sup> month, Ogyen Choling is one of the few communities which celebrates it a month earlier, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the 4<sup>th</sup> lunar month. The Prewchod tsechu was observed as usual with prayers conducted by 8 gomchens. This is a day when there is an apparent display of the spirit of community and sense of sharing. The celebration requires that people go to the high altitude to collect exotic flowers to offer at the altars to welcome Guru Rinpoche into every home. Over the years this practice was on a definite decline and only one or two people would go to collect high altitude blossoms. Our conscious efforts to revive and encourage this beautiful practice received a special boost this year because the educational institutes were closed and the school children were home. A group of youngsters went to collect flowers, which they shared with all the households in the village.

**Gompo Duchod:** On the 1<sup>st</sup> of June the annual prayers to the protective deities of the nagtshang family and the village was performed.

## Changing of Temple Caretaker

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, in the presence of the Culture officer from Jakar Dzong and the Mangmi (the elected community representative) from the Tang gewog office, the taking over of the role of the temple keeper or caretaker took place. We are very happy that the previous temple keeper Nawang Jamba agreed to take on the responsibility again. Since his reappointment he together with the Development Officer, is fully engaged in serious maintenance works in the temple and museum. The most important include, repairing walls and floors in the museum (ground floor and third floor), and repairing floors in the temples.



*During the handing over/taking over all temple articles are physically verified based on the inventory*

## Scholars and Research

### Jigme Singye Wangchuck School of Law

Ogyen Choling had some old documents which were rescued in the 1980s. from being used as kindle. The documents were in very poor condition, most of them crumbled and torn. Over the years nothing could be done with them and they were just kept in storage. Through a chance meeting the librarian of the Jigme Singye Wangchuck Institute of Law became interested. The librarian, Ugyen Thinley followed it up with a visit in March. He and his assistant spent three days here going through all these documents. We were impressed with their professionalism and determination as they patiently and carefully straightened out and assembled the crumbled papers and categorized them. Their basic interest was to see if there were any documents relating to legal procedures in the past

before the modern justice system was established. Documents that were considered to hold some obvious significance were photographed and kept here. All the other papers (a total of 121) were handed over to the library on a loan basis. The documents will be used as research material for the students and the results will be shared with the Foundation.



### **Loden Foundation Researchers**

Dr. Karma Phuntsho, president of the Loden Foundation and Board member of Ogyen Choling Foundation came here on the 16<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> of June with a research team. Their UNDP funded research was on climate change. Dr. Karma Phuntsho kindly looked through some old documents in our possession (family's historical documents) and photographed them for translations and analysis. Dr. Karma Phuntsho in his capacity as a Board Member visited the museum and temple gave useful advice for the new exhibits under progress.

In line with the Foundation's objective to provide a space for scholars and research we were happy to host some guests/scholars for a week in Ogyen Choling in early June- Dr. F. Pommaret, Dr. R. Kuyakanon, and D. Hecht).

Phuntsho Tenzin, a third year student of Sheurbtse College who worked as an intern for the Foundation in January did an interesting project on documenting the lu (nagas) within the Foundation complex. His research will contribute towards the new exhibit on lu.

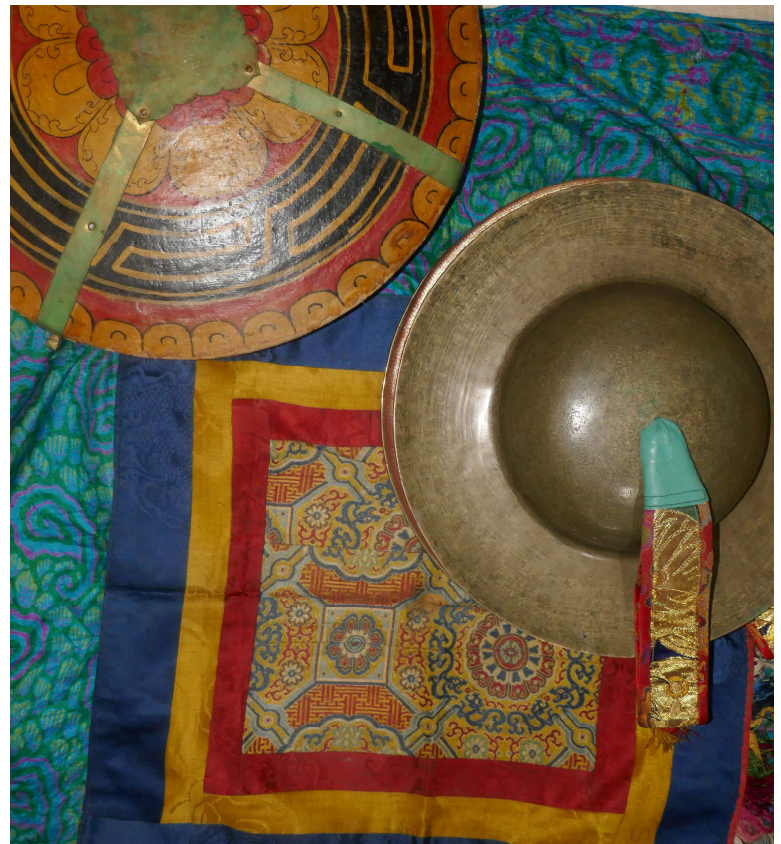
## Improvements in the Museum

We took advantage of the quiet period without visitors to engage in serious work in the museum. In some of the rooms, plaster was peeling off the stone walls which was repaired. Engaging some of the Heritage House employees, all the floors were washed after the repairs. This served the dual purpose of getting the floors cleaned and giving some temporary employment to members of the guest house team. Some of the exhibits were relocated and rearranged. Additional artefacts have been added.

- The garments exhibited on the third floor were moved to the ground floor to be consistent with the theme of textile production and use. Two rooms on this floor now showcase the garments adjacent to the exhibits on dyeing and weaving. A few pieces of clothing and textiles were added.
- One room on the ground floor is now dedicated to the lu. The room was cleaned, repaired and painted. The posters with the narratives and the pictures are under progress.
- The room where the clothes were previously displayed now has a display on baskets and basketry
- The previous room with baskets is now allocated for the exhibit of religious musical instruments and their accessories.



*Bamboo and cane artefacts*



*Roem (cymbals) with wooden container and cloth wrap*

## **Maintenance/improvements of structures**

Despite the limited finances we continued with the activities as planned and worked on:

**Parking/entrance and drainage:** The drainage work was completed in April. The entire area and all the roof gutters are finally connected to a drainage system.

**Winter garden:** Seeing how much the guests enjoyed the winter garden we decided to expand the winter garden to accommodate at least ten more people. This work is still on-going,

**Guide room:** Not having enough rooms for the guides has always been an issue for us. We have had incidents when we had to host as many as 20 guides and drivers accompanying less than 20 paying guests. A storeroom in the ground floor, the last space in the shagor not yet used by the guest house is being converted to make an extra room for guides and drivers. Besides this, we have started to improve the courtyard area in the south section which is the approach to this room. The work on the room and the courtyard is still on-going.

**Sewerage tank cleaning:** For the first time since we started the museum and guest house, the two sewerage tanks built about 20 year ago were manually emptied.

## **Guest House**

As the guest house was rarely used due to the COVID 19 pandemic, those working on a daily basis have had very limited opportunities to work. The permanent staff, however, could be retained at full salary. Efforts are being made to give the daily base employees alternative opportunities whenever possible, eg. cleaning temple and museum, food processing/preserving, etc.

## **Various**

**Audit:** We are happy that just before the partial shutdown of all Government Offices a team of three auditors carried out the audit of the accounts for the year 2019

**ECCD:** We could open the ECCD Center for a few days just before the mandatory closure of all educational institutes in the country.

**Book Donation:** In March the Foundation gave a donation of 32 library books to the Tang Central School.

**Training:** Two staff members, Kelzang Namgyel (Development Officer) and Yeshe Tshomo (ECCD facilitator) had the opportunity to take part in the online training “Gender Equality and Social Inclusion” conducted by the Bhutan Media and Communications institute.

**CSO quarterly meeting:** The Managing Trustees (MT) attended the 4<sup>th</sup> general meeting of the Civil Society Organization. The meeting which was held in Thimphu was attended by 41 of the 47 registered. It was a good opportunity for the MT to meet the other members of the CSO fraternity.

**Ornamentals/landscaping:** continuous efforts are made to add and improve the surrounding areas by planting of ornamental plants especially around the expanded structure.

TASHI DELEK from Ogyen Choling

*Kunzang Choden and the Team of the Ogyen Choling Foundation*