



CSO REGISTRATION NUMBER: CSOA/PBO-30

## OgyenCholing Foundation

Address: Tang, Bumthang, Bhutan

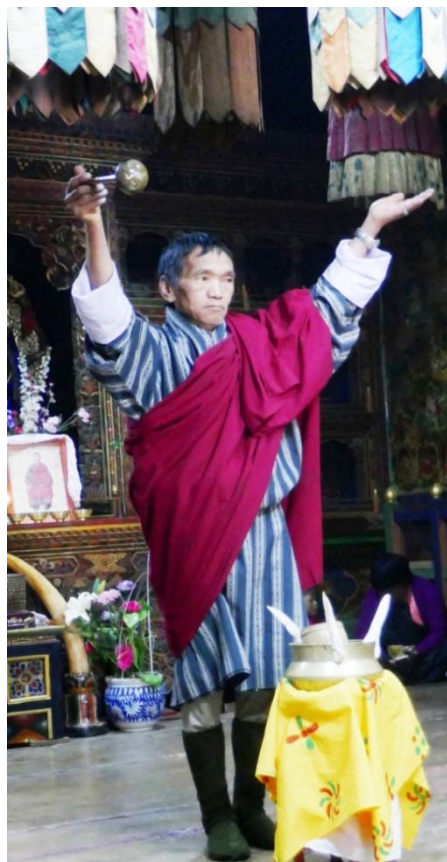
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# Annual Report 2017

As the year of the Bird fades away into the background the year of the Dog has already made its appearance, promising a year of loyalty and guardianship as are the attributes of the dog. We look back gratefully to a year that allowed us to continue our on-going projects without any major hindrances.

Although this is our annual report, it will contain more emphasis on the second part of the year (July to December) as the details for the first 6 months were narrated in the midyear report (which is available on our website at [www.oling.bt](http://www.oling.bt)). Some of the major highlights of the year include: a substantial increase in income, major achievements in the area of fire management and security and the completion of the last guest room and the kitchen in the *shagor*.



### The temple and religious rituals

We are happy that most of the regular traditional rituals could be conducted as usual. There were no major repairs or maintenance works carried out in the temples during the year. The most important annual ritual, *Kangsoe* was once again a success. Its completion always brings us a sense of relief as the preparations and the resources required (bringing together the ritualists, procuring the food and other items and having the financial resources ready) are a complex matter needing much organization and negotiation. This year all the 22 flag stands on the roofs of all the buildings in the complex had to be replaced. Now our carpenters have assured us that they have made strong and sturdy stands which will withstand even the strongest gusts of wind.

Welcoming new year with *Marchang* ceremony

### **The museum**

This year the number of international visitors crossed 2000. This is an increase of over 20% despite the fact that the total number of visitors to Bumthang has been stagnant at best. We take this as an indication that the museum is indeed becoming better known and more popular. According to entries in the visitors' book this year the largest number of visitors were from Switzerland.

Our limited human resources were largely used to maintain the museum and to attend to visitors. Simple light barriers intended to protect the exhibits from being touched were donated by Manuel Raber. The alarm that sounds when these barriers are breached has had a far stronger impact on the discipline of the visitors than the many "Please do not touch" signs that have been placed throughout the museum.



Visitors came on foot, on horse back, in buses and even on motorbikes

Good progress was also made with the documentation of artifacts, largely thanks to the work of the Shejun project, a Bhutan based Civil Society Organization concerned with cultural preservation.

We are always encouraged by positive feedback from the visitors. We were especially delighted and inspired by a very generous comment from a professional museum curator (see in box).

#### **From the visitors book**

As a former museum curator (the Smithsonian in Washington DC), I am very impressed by the quality of the collection and the knowledge expressed by the curator. This museum is a treasure not only for Bhutan but for the world.

Marc Pachter, Director Emeritus, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, 25.2. 2017



### **Scholarship, early learning and retreat**

The Foundation provided scholarships for 5 students of the nearby Khangrab primary school. As in previous years, at the end of the school year, academic prizes were provided for the 3 top ranking students of each class for the Khangrab primary school and the Tang Central school.

The Foundation is presently exploring the possibility of initiating and supporting the establishment of an Early Childhood Care and Development Centre (ECCD) in the village. This has become an issue as the village has more than 10 children who are at the right age to benefit from the presence of a ECCD. The proposal for the ECCD has been approved and supported by the local government and the district. Approval from the Foundation board and the Department of Education is still pending.

In fulfillment of one of the Foundation's objectives to provide space for scholars and mediators, we were happy to host an international group of Buddhist practitioners who used our facilities for a 4 day retreat.

### **Renovations and constructions**

The renovation works continued at a slow but steady pace whenever the carpenters could take time off from their agricultural work. Finally in July the new kitchen was inaugurated. The old kitchen will be used to accommodate tourist guides and drivers. Thanks to the efforts of two Swiss specialists, Manuel Raber and Matteo Mina, the remaining two solar water heating systems could be installed in August. The water pump to boost the water pressure is also now working.

The last of the eight guest rooms in the *shagor* was completed in October and was used immediately. The only work remaining in the *shagor* is the conference room, which we hope will be ready for the coming fall season. During the coming year we will also continue to make minor improvements on the existing rooms.



The new kitchen

## Documentation and inventories

The work on the documentation and inventorying of artifacts continued with good progress thanks to inputs by the Loden-Shejun project and the efforts by Monique Filsnoel, Phd candidate at School of Oriental and African Studies.



The Shejun team working in the temple

Three photographers, Rinchen Dorji, Sherig Dentshog and Yeshi Wangchuk, from the Loden-Shejun cultural project spent 17 days in Ogyen Choling, documenting each individual artifact in the museum. They also photographed statues along with the shrines and mural paintings inside the temples. In total, they took 3993 shots, which included 2478 items from the museum and 565 items from the temples. Through the Loden-Shejun project these photographs will be archived and made available to scholars.

Monique Filsnoel has completed a draft describing the wall painting of the *Tshug la lhakhang* at Ogyen Choling.



Young visitors, Rohan and Jack, making noodles

## The Guest House

Due to the poor road conditions between Thimphu and Bumthang this year tour operators and informed visitors were reluctant to travel to Bumthang. Because of this deterrent, 2017 was generally a poor tourist season for most Bumthang hotels and guest houses. Yet, Ogyen Choling Heritage House has continued to enjoy increasing attention. We are pleasantly surprised that the Heritage House was mentioned among a small list of places to stay in Bhutan in the New York Times Travel



section list of 52 places to travel to in 2018. Several visitors have shared their experiences and views on the website Tripadvisor. Below are the remarks of a British visitor this year.

**Magical, unique, comfy and delicious!**

You haven't experienced Bumthang if you haven't been to Ogyencholing.

Stay for at least two nights to rest, relax and enjoy the marvelous Tang valley and local hikes and sites - insist on this in advance with your guides/tour agencies, so that you aren't rushed through and can really experience this magical place and its denizens. You can also drive directly to and from Bumthang airport (2hrs max). If you are lucky and Kunzang and Walter are in residence, you will also get to meet some of Bhutan's loveliest and most knowledgeable hosts, as well as courteous and enthusiastic Kezang who works for the foundation.

This historical manor-house on top of its own hill in Tang valley is gorgeous and the one place to visit in Bumthang if a choice has to be made. It encapsulates the region's past and present in its transition from ancestral home to museum, while remaining an important site of pilgrimage. In addition to the immense walled manor house with tower in the middle, there is a temple dedicated to Tara, and numerous chorten (stupa) around the grounds, and small farming village with cows, etc., just outside on the same hilltop.

Guest rooms are utterly charming and sensitively converted within the heritage living quarters, but with the added comforts of European plumbing (the best in Bumthang yet). There are sweeping views over the whole valley, and closer by apple and plum blossoms peeping in the windows in spring, and scented flowers on the grounds and in the gardens in summer. The food is delicious, and in season, much of it comes straight from the kitchen garden. The best yoghurt, bread and rhubarb tart in Bhutan has been found here!

*Swift 108, Cambridge, 29. September, 2017*

**Other notable activities**

**Our First Audit:** We were relieved that the audit for the first 3 years (2014, 2015 and 2016) could be completed thanks to work by a team from the Royal Audit Authority's Bumthang Office. No major issues were observed and the audit report states that "the financial statements present fairly in all material respects the financial operations of the Ogyen Choling Foundation, Tang Bumthang, in accordance with the Financial Rules and Regulations of the Foundation". The audit findings have been uploaded to the Ogyen Choling website.

**Company car:** Thanks to the donation of an old Maruti 800 vehicle by Kunzang Choden, the Foundation finally has its own vehicle. Despite its small size and its age, the vehicle will be useful for running errands.



**Fire management and security:** This year good progress was made with respect to fire management and security. We benefited from the expertise of a group of fire management experts from Switzerland who stayed in Ogyen Choling as guests in April. They not only provided advice on how to reduce fire risks but also helped in the recruitment of two Swiss specialists Matteo Mina, an electrician and Manuel Raber an electronics/security specialist. Thanks to their work we now have a modern security system with movement sensors and a fire alarm system. The sensors were generously donated by Manuel.



Installing smoke detectors for fire alarm system



Solar panels for heating water

The two men also checked and improved all the electrical installations. In general they felt that electrical installations were made quite professionally by the local electricians, but at the same time various rectifications in the system were carried out. Following their advice we also acquired 15 fire extinguishers and placed them in all the buildings.

**The bird menace:** One of our most unpleasant but consistent problems is the menace of jackdaws and magpies who roost under the roofs of all the buildings. They demonstrate absolutely no respect for beautifully painted walls or stairs and splutter their droppings indiscriminately.

Over the year we have experimented with various barriers to deter them. Blocking the spaces between the rafters and the roof of the *utse* and the *shagor* using wire mesh in some places for example was only partially successful. We continue to look for better solutions and welcome advice.



**Boundary wall:** Work on the boundary wall continued as and when stones and masons were available. About half of the wall length is completed and the wall is now even visible on Google Earth maps. However, we anticipate some delays in the future, because of the administrative hurdles to stone access .



Dismantling the *chorten*

**Access road and parking:** We have acquired the stone pavers for the parking area but the leveling and other construction could not be started because the temporary carpentry shed has to be shifted first. The parking will be given high priority in 2018, as parking space for visitors is becoming increasingly critical.

**Chorten:** A memorial *chorten* built in 1966 for Dorji Dolma, the wife of late Dasho Kunzang Dorji was sinking on one side and showing serious cracks. We thought that without timely intervention it would fall and could cause harm to pilgrims and devotees. After receiving official approval for the repair work we started work on the *chorten* in December. Although work progress was very good it was not possible to complete the re-building by the end of the year. For most of us involved in the dismantling and rebuilding it was our first-time experience of working on a *chorten*. Although there was no valuable *zung* inside the *chorten* the number and the quality of the clay statues and *tsa tsa* were very impressive.



Numerous clay statues, *tsa tsa* and text were in the *chorten* all of which will be placed back in the repaired *chorten*

## Financial

The board had approved a very ambitious workplan for 2017 with a budget of Nu 4.45 million. Although the funds available fell short of this ambitious budget, most of the planned activities could be implemented. In fact we never felt constrained by funds, rather, the implementation of the activities planned were constrained by factors such as availability of manpower and bureaucratic delays (such as for *chorten* renovation or permission for stone quarry).

We are happy to report that our income in Bhutan was over Nu.2.5 million. The most important sources of income were donation and lease payments from the Ogyen Choling Heritage House. In addition the amount of CHF 9523 was received in Switzerland and used for the fire management project being the final payment for the fog-pumps and associated cost for the second phase of the fire management project.

The expenditures were substantially lower than the income leaving us with a balance that provides us a comfortable start into the new year.

As in previous years, donors who contribute Nu 5000 (CHF 80) and above are mentioned below. We sincerely appreciate every donation but space just does not allow us to mention each of our donors.

Income	Nu million
Museum	0.43
Donation box	0.03
Donations	1.22
Lease payments	0.90
Other income	0.02
<b>Total Income in 2017</b>	<b>2.60</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Construction materials	1.15
Salaries and wages	1.03
Education support (including scholarships)	0.07
Fire management and security	0.14
Office materials	0.03
Diverse cost	0.02
<b>Total expenditures in 2017</b>	<b>2.44</b>

## Donations received in Switzerland

	Amount in CHF
Anonymous (inspired by HH Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche)	5000
Gerard and Ann Tardy	2508
Martin Vernier	900
Alexis Fosler	565
Hetenyi Gyorgy	250
Regula Dannecker	100
Martin Menzi	200
<b>Total</b>	<b>9523</b>



No visitor to Ogyen Choling can miss little Sonam



## Donations in Bhutan

Donor	Amount Nu
Anonymous (inspired by HH Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche)	322524
Chelma GmbH	130695
Susanna Sigerist	130695
Doug and Tsognie Hamilton (BF) <sup>1)</sup>	160300
F. Weaver, B. Dolp, E. Betshaw (BF)	104578
Ann and Gerard Tardy	82687
Jacklin Yu group	54049
Fachgruppe Bruecken und Hochbau	53400
Urs Aeberhard	32500
Theresa Graham	32025

Donor	Amount (Nu)
Dieter & Maria Zuercher	19500
H.DT. Scharff	13671
Background tours	12760
Paul Sochaczewski	11000
Ann Kafoury (BF)	6235
Harry Frank	9000
Wendy Erd	6700
Roger Hammon group	6500
Joan Weberman	6300
Kristen Tussey (BF)	5666

<sup>1)</sup>Through Bhutan Foundation

We thank all who have in any way contributed to the survival and the well being of Ogyen Choling – the visitors who take the trouble to visit the museum and temples, pilgrims who give meaning to our temples, the staff of the Foundation and the Heritage House who ensure the daily operations, people from the community who came forward to occasionally offer food and drinks to the workers, the ritualists performing endless rituals throughout the year, every one who has given donations, our technical advisors, especially Walter Spielmann and Fritz Baumgartner, Manual Raber and Matteo Mina, the Loden Shejun Project, the members of the Board for giving their time and advice.....

*Thank you all and Tashi Delek.*

*May the year of the dog be a happy, healthy and peaceful one for all.*



Painting from the Ogyen Choling Temple