
Ogyen Choling Trust Fund

Annual update 2011



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 solitude
- 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

In 2011 well wishers generously donated time, materials and skills for the museum and the temple. This sustained interest and goodwill have maintained the momentum of our work in Ogyen Choling. Thanks to these contributions our expenses were lower than expected. In comparison, our own contributions fell short of the inputs from our friends and well wishers. Once again we experienced the challenge of trying to keep up the pace of work over long geographic and temporal distances.

The occupancy of the guest house has increased, even though we have not made any improvements or investments in 2011. Perhaps the simplicity of the lodging facilities and the unusual environment encourage tour operators to use our guest house for their clients.

The Museum

In spite of the museum being accessible by road and the government's policy of attracting more tourists, the numbers of paying visitors to the museum increased only by 2%. We recorded 970 visitors. We are, nevertheless, hopeful that the numbers will increase over time. But we also realize that we will have to be more innovative and proactive to make the visits more attractive. In the meantime, Bhutanese visitors who do not pay any entrance fee, continue to visit the museum and the temples regularly. The nuns from the Pema Choling Nunnery (located down the valley) visited the museum and performed special prayers in the temple of Tara.

Our incubating museum theme on the 9th and 10th Pema Lingpa Thuksey Rinpoche (spiritual heart son of Pema Lingpa) had a significant beginning as we were able to identify historical documents in our collection which show interesting details of the links between Ogyen Choling and the Thuksey lineage holders. We were fortunate to have these documents translated by the foremost Bhutanese/Tibetan scholar Dr. Karma Phunthso of Cambridge University. Besides these small but significant initiatives much of our time was taken by the continuous repairs and small improvements on the existing themes.

Next to the entrance of the *nagtshang* we have added a display that provides an introduction to the architectural details and layout alignment of both the buildings and the rooms. This new exhibit means that we now have a total of 21 themes in the museum.



Book – Ogyen Choling: A Manor in Central Bhutan

We have been fortunate to get the manuscript edited by a professional editor who has lived in Bhutan for over 20 years and therefore has a good understanding of Bhutan. The editing and layout process has taken more time than expected. In the meantime the publisher we had been negotiating with has backed out of the project and we have not yet found a satisfactory alternative option for printing. We are currently investigating other possibilities including self publishing with a local Bhutanese printer.

Revival of *Losar* celebration

Reminiscing and writing about the elaborate *Losar* celebration (lunar new year) for the book “Chilli and Cheese” made us realize how important such traditions were for the community. This prompted us to reintroduce the observance of this important event as a symbolic way of honouring an important tradition in the Ogyen Choling household. The ceremonial sharing of *Zhudrel phuentsum tshogpa* (literally meaning “coming together and seating in rows for all the good things”) is an auspicious and highly symbolic ceremony that originated in 1640 AD in Punakha dzong during the reign of Shabdrung, the unifier of Bhutan. In the past this ceremony was always carried out on *Losar* in Ogyen Choling. So we were happy to observe this tradition in the temple of the Tara in the morning and share a traditional lunch outside, in the beautiful and warm sunlight. This was appreciated by all of the 30 invitees from the village.



Invitees receiving the flour of long life (*pchie mar*)

Special visitors and events

Last January 2011, we had the special privilege to host a group of Bhutanese and international writers and poets in Ogyen Choling. Wendy Erd, writer and film-maker from Alaska and Hanoi was the main organizer. She partnered with the Thimphu based Sacred Himalaya Travel Agency to make this “amazing, three day writer’s pilgrimage and retreat” possible. The group was guided by Kim Stafford, Director of the Northwest Writing Institute in Oregon, and Wendy Erd. Talking of her experience Wendy wrote; “ Participants from America, Poland and Bhutan practiced the art of writing about place, about illuminating moments, about images that have shaped each of us. Together we shared our stories, the universal passport, around the crackle of the guesthouse bukhar (wood burning stove)”. In the future we would like to see more such activities in Ogyen Choling.



Writers and poets during a tea break

Rainbow Tours and Travels a major tour agency has introduced a new dimension to tourism to Ogyen Choling, which relies on community participation. Over the last few years they organized longer stays in Ogyen Choling in order to let visitors interact with the communities and get a glimpse into the everyday life in the village. The highlight of their stay includes a game of *Khuru* (game of darts) with the village men and a meal with the players and dancers. A second tour agency, Keys to Bhutan, has followed the example and has tried the same with their clients. This is definitely a more holistic experience for both the tourists and the communities and we would like to build on this idea.

Ogyen Choling museum and guest house were also featured in the Lonely Planet Magazine Thailand in their first issue of September 2011 entitled “The Incredible Journey Bhutan the Realm of Happiness”.

Voluntary services and contributions acknowledged

- Kay Kirby: Edited the manuscript of the book; “Ogyen Choling: A Manor in Central Bhutan”
- Pierre Pichard: Worked on the architectural project including drawings and text for the above book, poster for museum
- Dhondup Dorji (member of family): Did the layout of the above book
- Gyeltsen Dorji (member of the family): Totally revised the webpage (<http://www.oling.bt>)
- Dr. Karma Phunthso: Translated documents relating to Pema Lingpa Thuksay Rinpoche
- Fritz Baumgartner (architect): Visited Ogyen Choling twice to make a preliminary study of the possibilities of renovating *shakor* building and moving the living quarters.
- Marie Noelle Frei: Donated artefacts to be displayed in the museum including woollen fabrics (*yathra*), a pair of silver broaches, snuff horns and a flint iron lighter. These items were bought by her during the time she and her husband Christoph worked for Helvetas and lived in Bumthang in the 1970s.
- Dorji Rinchen (a tailor in Thimphu originally from Ogyen Choling): Stitched and contributed ritual hats and door covers in memory of his late wife from Tang.

We extend our profound gratitude for your acts of generosity and goodwill, which made a significant contribution towards Ogyen Choling’s posterity.



Gem Phurba, caretaker of the temple with ritual hat donated by Dorji Rinchen



Artefacts donated by Ms Marie Noelle Frei and brought back to the Ogyen Choling museum collection

Financial report

We recorded an income of 560'470 with more than 60% generated from income through the museum and the guest house. We gratefully acknowledge the generous donations which will not only contribute to sustain the ongoing activities, but make it possible to start new ventures.

Donations	Nu
Martin & Kungold Menzi	12'750
Wendy Erd and Sacred Himalaya	9'800
Fabienne Grossenbacher	30'460
Writers workshop Oling	3'000
Werner Kuelling	10'200
Heijo Scharff	31'154
Hogan	44'088
Daphne Cunningham	44088
Undisclosed	22'000
Total	207'680
Assets	Nu
Long-term investments	80'000
	250'000

¹Temple care taker and assistant curator

²Oling: Nu 1286; Thimphu: cash Nu 105'290 bank: Nu 142'000

Income	Nu
Donations	207'680
Guest house	204'290
Entrance fee museum	145'500
Museum books sold	3'000
Total income in 2011	560'470
Balance 1.1. 2011	213'591
Total	774'061
Expenditures	Nu
Long term deposit with BoB	250'000
Salaries ¹	96'000
Scholarships, academic prizes	55'600
Other expenditures	123'885
Total expenditures	525'485
Balance 31.12. 2011 ²	248'576
Total	774'061

Looking forward to the Year of the Water Dragon

We hope that we will be infused with the energy and the prowess of the Water Dragon to realize at least some of the long list of projects which beg our attention. We hope we can count on you for your continued support.

We take this opportunity to thank you and wish you all the best in the year of the Water Dragon.

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

