



Ogyen Choling Trust Fund

Annual update (1.1 2009-31.12.2009)

Purposes 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

The year 2009 was a trying one. The floods earlier in the year, the more recent earthquakes and fires in the eastern part of Bhutan have left the country shaken and cautious. As we slowly recover from the emotional and physical scares left by these natural catastrophes, we felt grateful and relieved that Ogyen Choling was spared of any seismic effects this time. A much stronger earthquake in 1897 had destroyed the buildings of Ogyen Choling and we were reminded of our vulnerability. The present structures of Ogyen Choling were rebuilt in 1899 and completed in 1903, so they are just over 110 years old.

The Museum

As envisaged in our 2008 update we were finally able complete the narratives and the photo gallery about the ancestors of the Ogyen Choling family. This makes a very pleasing addition to the already existing displays. The visitors can actually see pictures of the people mentioned in connection with the museum. We have had very enthusiastic and positive responses to the gallery. A general poster providing some historical background and an overview of the museum was also added to the entrance room.

For these new displays we used large posters, formatted by artist Pema Tshering and printed in Thimphu. Unfortunately the print appears to be very sensitive to light and is already fading. In spite of this, we are pleased to have reached a more sophisticated level in the methods for making displays and we realize that we will have to gradually change all displays using this method. Of course the printing quality still needs to improve.

We are still working to improve the textile exhibit. Work is under progress for a new exhibit with the material generated by Pierre Pichard for the architectural mapping project. This exhibit, which will be housed in one of the rooms on the ground floor of the *utse* will show the setting, architectural details and construction methods for the Ogyen Choling buildings..

Over the last few years the number of exhibits has increase and proportionally the routine maintenance has increased substantially. Fortunately the resident family is still able to manage the upkeep of the museum with occasional help from other family members. Our ambition and our passion for improving the museum is undeterred and we will continue to add new exhibits and continuously improve on existing ones.

The fire extinguishers which we had installed in the museum some years ago had to be refilled. This proved to a very cumbersome endeavour as the containers had to be transported to the Bhutanese border town of Phuentsholing (two days journey) and brought back to Ogyen Choling. Moreover we are also not fully confident of the effectiveness of the extinguishers and we are looking at better options.

The guest house

The use of the guest house remained at levels similar to the previous year. Beside some kitchen gadgets purchased for the guest house no major expenditures were made. Based on the feedback, most visitors do appreciate the simple facilities as described with a drawing and words by a visitor from Germany and a guest book entry by a family from India.



What could be more relaxing after hiking from Chokor valley over Phephela (3360m) to Ogyen Choling, (7 hours) than.....
..... a beautiful house in
..... a beautiful landscape
..... hot water for weary feet
..... good food and company
..... warm tea and a bukhari

Annette Blecher Germany

The Ursakars, a family from Bombay looked beyond the buildings. They wrote “..... wonderful vistas, clear blue skies, calm peaceful atmosphere, absence of noise and air pollution, green autumn foliage and excellent hospitality makes the stay at Ogyen Choling a wonderful unforgettable experience!”

Reconstruction of the prayer wheel

The prayer wheel (Mani Dungkor) which is housed under the temple has not been functional for quite sometime. This prayer wheel is nearly a hundred years old and there was always somebody to turn it, an older family member or a villager. Repeated ad hoc attempts at repair were unsuccessful. So a thorough reconstruction was undertaken by local prayer wheel experts recently and the prayer wheel is now working. The tingling bell of the swirling prayer wheel and the soulful chants of Grandfather Pema Wangchuk (a family member) who turns the prayer wheel fill the courtyard of Ogyen Choling once again.



Meme Pema Wangchuk turning the wheel before it broke down

Book in preparation

Pierre Pichard, the architect, paid “the final visit” to Ogyen Choling in December to finalize details. A detailed, mostly personal narrative has been written to complement the architectural drawings. The narrative which includes historical as well as the lived experiences of the family members and some of the villagers is complete. We are hopeful that the final draft of the book will be ready sometimes this year.

The prayers and rituals

The monthly prayers and rituals have been conducted regularly, and annual prayer of three days, Kangsoe was well attended. The good attendance ensures that the ceremony of the taking down the flag and hoisting it again becomes easier. Unfortunately the floods earlier in the year washed away a footbridge across the river up the valley and the yak could not be represented at the procession of animals during the festival.



Although the yak was missing the young bull put up quite a show

Registration of Ogyen Choling Trust as a Civil Society Organisation (CSO)

The Government of Bhutan has finally established a commission for the registration of the civil society organisations in the country. The commission has distributed the final guidelines for the organisations. We have completed the ground work required for the registration and will apply for registration of the Ogyen Choling Trust as soon as the rush for the first registration for more than 40 organisations is over.

Continuing works

Two activities planned for 2009, building a main entrance gate and a wall around the main entry could not be initiated because the boundaries could not be verified. These projects can only be taken up after the government cadastral confirms the boundary of the property. The survey department seems to be overwhelmed with backlogged work, so we can only wait.

Financial report

As usual we would once again like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to all of you for your support and contributions. Along with the earnings from the guest house the income for 2009 was Nu. 430'619. The amount generated by the Ogyen Choling activities was Nu 269'467, with the income for the guest house and the museum similar to 2008. The most significant expenses besides salaries and loan repayment were scholarship/academic prizes, contribution towards Kangsoe, reconstruction of the prayer wheel and painting the temple roof.

Donations	Currency	Amount	Amount in Nu
Lisina Hoch	CHF	1000	42'000
Heijo Scharff	CHF	736.4	32'401
Ashi Deki Choden	Nu	30000	30'000
Prof. Martin & Kungold Menzi	CHF	250	10'500
Australian group (Blue Poppy)	Nu	8701	8'701
Bruce Newcome	USD	200	9'000
Herbert Roder	CHF	200	8'400
Fabienne Grossenbacher	CHF	200	8'400
Harry and Phillipa Frank	Nu	5000	5'000
Heinz Buergin	CHF	100	4'200
Helen Dingetlans	Nu	2000	2'000
German Group	Nu	450	450
Jessica	Nu	100	100
Total			161'152

Assets and loans	Nu
Long-term investments	80'000
Loan	100'000

Income	Nu
Donations	161'152
Guest house	164'517
Entrance fee museum	94'050
Museum books sold	10'200
Library catalogue	700
Total income in 2009	430'619
Balance 1.1. 09	103'553
Total	534'172

Expenditures	Nu
Loan repayment	100'000
Salaries ¹	96'000
Scholarships, academic prizes	42'000
Towards Kangsoe	27'427
Prayer wheel	25'830
Painting temple roof	23'000
Gadgets guest house ²	22'080
Construction wood	21'880
Interest on loan (9%)	18'000
Other expenditures	85'439
Total expenditures	461'656
Balance 31.12. 09 ³	72'516
Total	534'172

¹Temple care taker and assistant curator

²Heater, rice cooker, oven; ³Oling: 573; Thimphu:71'943

Looking forward to the Year of the Tiger

The astrologer of the Newspaper Kuensel predicted that "The year of the Tiger will be a year of grand beginnings and new directions." As for Ogyen Choling we are not looking for grand beginnings but we are open to new directions, ideas and projects. In the past our work was made easier with your generosity and we look forward to your continued interest and support. We are sending our update on the auspicious day of the Bhutanese New Year, and we take this opportunity of wishing you a happy, healthy and a successful year of the Iron Male Tiger.



For additional information write to kcrjakar@druknet.bt