

Editorial

By Marianne Frei President

The outstanding events of the first part of 2011 were the successful fundraising campaign for a new sewerage system after the Chamkhar fire, the two photo exhibitions «Bhutan by Bhutanese» in Baar and Ziegelbrücke and the speech of Dr. Karma Phuntsho at the General Assembly.



This year's General Assembly took place at the Kulturhaus Helferei in Zürich on March 26th. We were very honored to have Dr. Karma Phuntsho and Ms. Dawa Dem from Cambridge, Mr. Rinchen Kuentsyl (Counsellor Bhutan Embassy in Geneva), and Mr. Peter Schmid (Member of our sister organization in Thimphu) to join us for the meeting.



our sister organization in Thimphu) to join us for the meeting.

Mr. Peter Schmid presented a message from Lyonpo Dr. Kinzang Dorji (President of Bhutan-Switzerland Society), which was very well received.

In the afternoon, Dr. Karma Phuntsho, gave a lecture on «Socio-cultural changes in Bhutan between tradition and modern times». He illustrated the active and calculated development in education, health, agriculture, legal and judiciary systems and governance and pointed out how Bhutan is trying to control the passive



influence of globalization in Bhutan. Dr. Phuntsho spoke about traditional learning and modern education with its difference in purpose, content, methodology and ethos. He presented his observations regarding the changing outlooks on nature and on people within the Bhutanese society. The audience appreciated the inspiring presentation which was indeed considered as «food for thought» for all of us who have been involved in different roles and at different stages of the development in Bhutan.

On our website you can find the minutes and further documents regarding the event. (<http://www.bhutan-switzerland.org>)

New SSB Board Member

Karin Meichtry Fischer

SSB Board: Organisation General Assembly, Special Tasks

My motivation for joining the Board is helping to strengthen the relationship between Switzerland and Bhutan, two countries which have many things in common and who can learn from each other.



Address: Schleifetobelweg 4, 8810 Horgen

Profession: Translator

My experiences in Bhutan: First contact with Bhutan through Gisela Treichler in 2008; several trips since then; friendship with Bhutanese families.



SSB – BSS Programs: latest stand

By Erwin König

As less than three months passed since the General Assembly was held in Zurich, the latest stand on the Bhutan Program primarily addresses guest readers and the members who were unable to attend the Assembly.

The “*School Children Scheme*”, chosen by the Bhutan–Switzerland Society (BSS) as a starter of their field activities, benefited 58 children of Tradijong Community Primary School, Phangkhar Gewog of Zhemgang District. The 32 boys and 26 girls were provided with one school uniform, a pair of shoes and slippers, two pair of socks and stationery. These children from pre-primary class up to class V walk each day between half an hour to two hours to reach the school. On request of BSS, the budget balance was used to provide roofing material for the family houses of the most impoverished children. On request of the head master for a minimal computer and internet literacy, SSB agreed to finance some computers and printers. Specific requirements are presently being worked out and funds are already secured with Swisscom.

The “*school to school exchange project*” between Switzerland and Bhutan has not yet started but will be pursued after the support in Tradijong.

250 books «Far apart and close together – Bhutan and Switzerland – Partners in Development since 1950» were shipped to Bhutan in June: 200 will be given to schools, 20 for the READ programme and 30 for the board of BSS.

The relevance of handing out “Academic SSB Awards” to students for an outstanding performance during their diploma/thesis work will be decided upon at the next BSS board meeting.

And finally, three requests submitted to SSB (tangkha painting, documentary film by Ugyen Wangdi, capacity building/family business) will be discussed at the next SSB board meeting.

News from

Society Switzerland – Bhutan (SSB)

By Werner Külling

Donations of totally 80'000 CHF (= 4 mio. Ngultrums) from Switzerland for the victims of the two big fire catastrophes which destroyed the Bazar area of Chamkhar Town in Bumthang on Oct. 26th, 2010 and Febr. 18th, 2011

A cheque of 50'000 CHF from the Society Switzerland-Bhutan for the construction of a Sewerage Network for Chamkhar Town

After the first fire in October 2010 which destroyed many houses and shops in the Bazar of Bumthang, the „Switzerland related“ Lyonpo in RGoB, Agriculture Minister Dr. Pema Gyamtsho, asked the SSB to launch a fund-raising campaign in favor of the many unfortunate victims. The SSB Board immediately started necessary actions and it became a full success: 45'500 CHF were collected in a very short time for the installation of a new sewerage network during the reconstruction. The SSB added an additional contribution of 4'500 CHF, so that on March 14th a cheque of

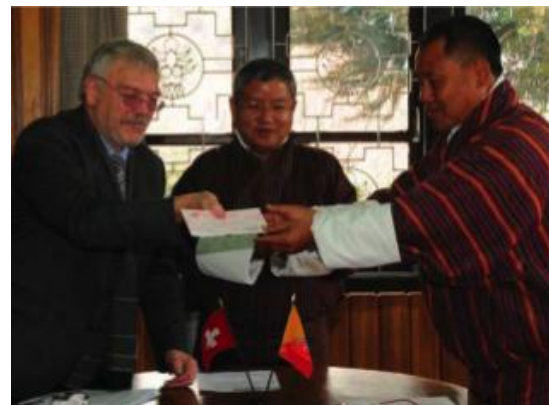


Photo: Kuensel, March 15, 2011

50'000 CHF could be handed over by SSB-Board member Werner Külling during his last visit in Thimphu to Dasho Dzungda Sangye Thinley for the Kidu Fund in a modest ceremony led by SBS President Lyonpo (Dr.) Kinzang Dorji.



A new Swiss donation for the victims of the second fire

In the meantime, an unfortunate second incident of a fire at the other side of the Bazar road took place, which destroyed again a big number of houses and shops. Again, many of



the victims had no fire insurances at all and lost all their accommodations, properties and working places, among them also the blind bear mauled spare parts shopkeeper Gembo Tenzin who knows many people in Switzerland from the time when he stayed for a year in Zürich for medical treatment. He was generously supported from longstanding friends and families who are in relation with Bhutan since decades.



A group of **Medical Doctors from the Toggenburg**, having visited Bumthang recently with the SSB-member Heinz Bürgin, also donated spontaneously a sum of 8'000 CHF, which will also be used for the installation of a new drinking water and sewerage system at the left side of the Bazar road after the second fire. This means that with the assistance and relations of the SSB a total amount of almost 80'000 CHF could be arranged for relief and

rehabilitation in favor of the concerned population.

Our biggest gratitude goes to all the supporters and donators in Switzerland who made this impressive sign of solidarity possible.

Post Scriptum: A third fire!

Sad news: A third fire destroyed again a big part of the Bazar in Chamkhar Town, Bumthang.

The above lines on the second fire were written on May 22nd, 2011, and a few days later, on May 27th, we got the sad and surprising news that a third big fire disaster destroyed again the partly reconstructed Bazar of Bumthang after the first fire incident.



At the moment we do not know the causes of the new disaster. But more and more people think that the third fire was put deliberately. See also articles in the media. A Bhutanese citizen and friend of Switzerland wrote us the following mail:

„We as Bhutanese are also extremely shocked to hear that a third fire incident took place on Friday, 27th May, early morning and this according to the people of Chamkhar town now confirms that the fire has been deliberately carried out by somebody in the town. The reason being that the left side of the shops are all cleared and the old structures left from the October 2010 fire was still remaining. In fact, in the process of the fire eight newly built structures were also burnt down before even the sewerage works with the generous financial assistance from SSB could be completed. In the BBS interview some of the Bumthaps



now say that they are ashamed to call themselves as Bumthaps after what has happened in Chamkhar town, and this only a short time after His Majesty the King announced that he is going to get married to a young lady who comes from Bumthang. What a sad news and shameful for Bhutan, and especially for people from Bumthang! I can understand how the donors feel about such incidences which occurred one after the other and around the same time of the nights / early mornings. In Thimphu people are saying that the Bumthaps are behaving as if they are the only ones who are affected by natural calamities while in the East there are many poor people who are still living under bamboo huts after the earthquake and not even a structure like in Chamkhar town. People are saying all the three fires could have been set deliberately, so that the Government could build new houses for them in the town.“

So much what Bhutanese men and women may think. We will wait and see what comes out of the investigations of the police and the Government administration. We shall keep the SSB-members informed.

Bhutan might be endangered by more natural calamities in the future

By Werner Külling

It seems that Bhutan is hit during the last months and years more and more by natural disasters, calamities and catastrophes like floods, landslides, fires, earthquakes and others. Many of them are man made. Glacier melting seems also to become a major problem as well, like in Switzerland, due to consequences of climate change. Measures to fight against such events and to provide humanitarian aid in the forthcoming cases may become an important and challenging necessity for the „Land of the peaceful Thunder Dragon“.

Therefore, a specialized „Department for Disaster Relief“ has already been created some times ago in the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs of the Royal Government of Bhutan. The „Kidu Fund“ of His Majesty the King is also a very important instrument for the financing of first aid activities in favor of the hit population. And the question has started to be discussed and studied, whether the country

should create a „Bhutanese Red Cross Association“ as a Civil Society Organisation. SRC, the Swiss Red Cross, has already shown some interest and readiness to support such ideas. Main goal of thoughts in this direction must be to enable locally determined self-help efforts of the people and the Government of Bhutan and to avoid too high dependences from outside countries and institutions.

Many and important visitors from Bhutan in Switzerland

In the months of April, May and June, Switzerland got the chance to receive many and important visitors from Bhutan. Among them:

H.M. the Queen Mother Ashi Sangay Choden Wangchuck, Geneva, June 21, 2011, Bhutan Cultural Evening & Fundraising Cocktail (Droelma Lhaxhang Construction Project, RTA Foundation and RENEW).

Lyonpo (Dr.) Pema Gyamtsho, Minister of Agriculture and Forests, RGoB, together with his wife Chopel Dayang and the bhutanese WWF Director Kinzang Namgay and his wife Deki Choden. (Negotiations with the City Council of Zürich, the Rietberg Museum, Helvetas and SSB and attendance of the WWF 50 years Jubilee in Zürich.

Lyonpo Minjur Dorji, Minister of Home and Cultural Affairs, RGoB, together with two delegations of the MoHCA; one visiting Lucerne, the Rietberg Museum Zürich and discussion of SLSA / Helvetas engagements in Archaeology (City of Zurich), as well as contact to SSB; the other one visiting disaster relief activities and institutions.

Lyonpo Zangley Dukpa, Minister of Health, RGOB, together with a delegation of the MoH. Meeting and discussion in Berne with the SHMSC / Helvetas regarding the engagement in the Wangdichoeling Hospital in Bumthang.

Dorjee Dukpa, longstanding Health Collaborator having worked with all Swiss Doctors of Helvetas in the Wangdichoeling Hospital Bumthang (Private journey of several weeks in Switzerland).

Kesang Dorji, former Manager Brown Swiss Farm in Bumthang, having worked with many Helvetas agronomists in cattle breeding. (Private journey of several weeks in Switzerland).



New SSB Members

By Julia Menk

In the last months the Society Switzerland-Bhutan could again record a gratifying increment of membership. So we're very pleased to welcome the following persons:

Annedorli & Walter Frei-Maurer, Kloten

Balint & Merran Berg-Matthews, Hedingen

Ursula & Hans Pfaffen-Hartmann, Chur

Heinz M. Buhofer, Zug

Hanspeter & Monique Bürgi Sieber, Bern

Excursion to the Bhutanese suspension bridge 10.09.2011

By Rosmarie Frey and Christof Frei



We are happy to invite you for a special excursion on Saturday, September 10th 2011. We shall visit the Bhutanese suspension bridge in the upper

Pfynwald of Leuk. During the international year of the mountain in 2002, the Canton of Wallis and the *Association Mountains 2002* decided to realise together with Helvetas and the support of Bhutanese know-how a "bridge between two mountainous countries and between the two languages of the Wallis" as a symbol. The bridge was built in 2005 and is very well frequented.

From the bridge - after an apéro - we shall walk back to Leuk through the famous Pfynwald (ca.40. min.). For those who cannot walk, or if the weather is too bad, we organize a lift to Leuk.



At Leuk lunch will be served in the Restaurant Casa Villa. After Lunch we have the opportunity to attend a guided tour through Leuk (2 castles, one restored by Mario Botta, old town, Beinhaus).

The programme will end at ca. 4.30 p.m. We suggest walking down to the train station visiting the Ringackerkapelle (baroque style) on the way; of course there is also a bus to the station.

We look forward to an interesting excursion and first of all to meet many friends of Bhutan, exchanging news, making and renewing friendships.

Details of the excursion on Saturday, September 10th. 2011:

Meeting point: Leuk station 11:17h

Getting there: ZH 09:02h / Bern 10:07h,
seats in 2. class will be reserved if possible
Lausanne: 09:45h - Leuk: 11:11h

Getting back: Leuk 17:42h - Bern 18:54h
- ZH 19:58h

Leuk 17:47h - Lausanne 19:15h

Costs: Bus to suspension bridge, Apéro and guided tour through Leuk are offered by the Society Switzerland - Bhutan and members of the board. Lunch Fr. 30.-, excl. drinks, is to be paid on the spot, train individually (please check: a "Tageskarte" Fr. 68.- with Halbtax-Abo could be best), seat reservation will be charged in the train.

Registration please till July 15

on: <http://www.bhutan-switzerland.org/pages/excursion.php>

If by misfortune you are forced to cancel your registration, please let us know before Sept. 7th 2011. Otherwise we shall have to charge you for the costs of the booked lunch (Fr. 30.-) as we try to keep the expenses low for the Society Switzerland - Bhutan.



bim – bhutan institute of media – Bhutan by Bhutanese

By Charles Erik Huber

Already from the beginning, with the establishment of the “*School of Commercial & Art Photography (SCAP)*” in the year 2000, the slogan “*Bhutan by Bhutanese*” was the central goal. Local photographers should show their country. Therefore this slogan became the main title also for all exhibitions of our institute.

In the year 2001/2002 the first exhibitions took place in Bhutan and Switzerland. In 2001 the first exhibition under the title “*Bhutan by Bhutanese I*” opened its doors in Lhuentenphu/Thimphu. In the following year “*Bhutan by Bhutanese II*” was invited by the “*PhotoGalerie94*” in Ennetbaden, Switzerland, to show the outcome of the first year of training. The works of the students were classic analogue black and white documentary photographs.



This exhibition was not only a success for the students and SCAP, but also for the **PhotoGalerie94**. The chief guest at the exhibition in Ennetbaden was His Excellency the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bhutan, Mr. Bap Kezang.

The school has developed since its establishment as the “*School for Commercial and Art Photography (SCAP)*” to an institute known since 2008 as “*bim -bhutan institute of media*”, offering professional trainings (2½ years) and short term workshops in the large field of media, as there are Photography, Photo-Journalism, Journalism, IT/Graphics & Design and Visual Art, with local and international teachers/lecturers. Since 2008 the institute is also monitored and assessed by Swiss partners and companies.

bim - bhutan institute of media was guest at the “*KunstAmbulatorium*”, Baar, hosted by the commune and city of Baar, and at the “*Gartenflügel Gallery*”, Ziegelbrücke.

**Exhibition *KunstAmbulatorium, Baar*
Bhutan by Bhutanese IV:
*Bhutan yesterday & today***

The exhibition celebrated its opening ceremony with the chief guest, His Excellency Tshering Tobgay, MP and leader of the opposition, the finance minister and officials of the city of Baar, honorable guests and friends of Bhutan at the *KunstAmbulatorium* in Baar, on Saturday January 29, 2011.



Under the lead of Annemarie Huber-Hotz, Swiss Federal Chancellor (retired), Tshering Tobgay, Marianne Frei, President of the Society Switzerland-Bhutan and Werner Külling, Head Helvetas and Coordinator Helvetas to Bhutan (retired) discussed on Sunday 20, 2001 at a round table the development of democracy in Bhutan. The large number of interested persons at both events, and also during



the following four weeks, but also the compliments received by professionals from the photography and media sector, witnessed the high quality of the works of the students.

Exhibition *Gartenflügel Gallery, Ziegelbrücke* Bhutan by Bhutanese V: *Bhutan through the eyes of young Bhutanese photographers*



The next exhibition opened its doors on March 19, 2011 with Mr. Dragyel T. Dorjee, CEO of **bim**, as chief-guest. The welcome and introduction speeches were given by Mr. Ernst Reinhardt, former President of the Society Switzerland-Bhutan, and Mr. Robert Jenny, the host, at *Gartenflügel Gallery Ziegelbrücke*.

On April 10, 2011 a round table discussion took place. Under the lead of Ernst Reinhardt, Annemarie Huber-Hotz and Werner Külling discussed “democracy on national and communal level”. Even at the *Gartenflügel Gallery* the many visitors interested in one or another way in Bhutan were impressed by the professionalism of the students works.

The team of **bim-bhutan institute of media** and the students would like to offer their gratitude to all who made these events so successful, the city of Baar, with their representatives Mr. Andreas Hotz, Mayor, and Mrs. Claudia Emmenegger, cultural affairs; Mr. Ernst Reinhardt, former president of the Society Switzerland-Bhutan, Mr. and Mrs. Jenny, *Gartenflügel Gallery, Ziegelbrücke*; the participants of the two round table discussions, Mr. Tshering Tobgay, Mrs. Annemarie Huber-Hotz, Mr. Werner Külling and Mrs. Marianne Frei, President of the Society Switzerland-Bhutan. Last but not least we would like to thank all the persons “behind the curtain” who made the events so successfully possible.

For further information please visit our website:
<http://www.bimc-bhutan.com>

Dragyel T. Dorjee and the team of bim

Account of one's journey to Bhutan, 26 Sept. to 14. Oct. 2010

Travelogue by Christop & Ilse Ditzler
Pictures by Herbert Buerge & Jigme Dorji

Translation/summary by Erwin Koenig

After a marvellous and inspiring journey across Bhutan in a group of seven people, this short travelogue tells about our feelings and impressions.

What made our trip special, were unique events such as the monk in a monastery of Haa, who reverently unwrapped a holy book to show us some pages, before quietly wrapping it back in its protecting cloth. The daughter who manages a guest house with her



grandmother and told us in her best English that she wanted to read books to further improve her language.



The monks in Bumthang, who rehearsed the blowing of cultish trumpets under the conductor's elegant hand movements or learnt debating in the best ciceronian way.

An extraordinary



enrichment were the discussions: with the board of the Society Bhutan -Switzerland, with farmers, lodge owners, civil servants, and with our cautious guide and drivers.

Particularly inspiring was the brainstorming session at the successful “start-up” Bio Bhutan.



Since 2005 Bio Bhutan proposes a selected range of certified bio-products. Remote farmer communities in need of additional income produce these products. Meanwhile

they are available in town shops and worldwide via internet: <http://www.biobhutan.com>

But, Bhutan is in no way a “hamlet” for civilization tired Westerners. Indeed, some 20% of the people still live under the poverty line, and youth unemployment reaches worrying figures. However, the Government purposefully tackles these complex problems.

What raises our optimism is the numerous chattering school going children, who even dare to talk to foreigners. There are also the numerous strong women who as girl-students put boys on their back at the Judo course, or with almost nothing, qualify for the finals at the U-19 Cricket World Championship.



We returned to Switzerland with our heads filled with a 1'000'000 new images. Our thanks go to all the ones who planned our trip and safely led us.

Meeting Point

The Bhutan-Swiss Archaeology Project (Phase I and II): Preserving and Discovering Bhutan's Cultural Roots

By Peter Fux Peter Fux, Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter, Museum Rietberg, Zürich

The *Bhutan-Swiss Archaeology Project* was initiated by the Royal Government of Bhutan with the overall goal to «Contribute to the preservation of Bhutan's cultural heritage, and income generation from tourism through strengthening and institutionalization of archaeology», as expressed by His Excellency Lyonpo Jigmi Y. Thinley, Prime Minister of Bhutan.

The formal cooperation between the government of Bhutan, SLSA (Swiss-Liechtenstein Foundation for Archaeological Research Abroad), and HELVETAS started in 2008 with the excavation of the fortress of Drapham Dzong in Bumthang, as the first phase (2008-2010). On behalf of the SLSA, represented by the secretary general Dr. Eberhard Fischer, Prof. em. Dr. Werner Meyer and a team from the University of Basel excavated the hilltop fortress during three field seasons (2008-2010) of up to three months duration each.



Drapham Dzong is prominently situated on a hilltop above the Joekhor river valley and dates into the 16th and 17th centuries. Obviously, long distance trade from north (Tibet) to south (Assam, Bengal) and vice versa was controlled



by the lords of the castle. Furthermore, Drapham Dzong is strategically favorable located at the northernmost east-west traverse between the valleys of Joekhor and Tang. Prof. em. Dr. Werner Meyer is now working on a monograph about Drapham Dzong, and interesting archaeological insights into life and culture before and around Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal's era (1594-1651) can be expected. During the next years the ruin of Drapham Dzong will be consolidated and opened for public visits. Bhutan's first archaeological site is located at the Bumthang culture trek, and therefore can perfectly be valorised as a touristic attraction.

This spring, the second phase (2011-2013) of

the *Bhutan-Swiss Archaeology Project* was taken up. After the first archaeological excavation at Drapham Dzong, the institutionalization of archaeology in Bhutan should now be realized in collaboration and with support of Swiss experts. Therefore, the first *Educational Workshop on Archaeology* was held in Thimphu and Jakar from March 28 to April 1, 2011. It was organized as a joint initiative of the Division for Conservation of Heritage Sites of RGoB, HELVETAS Bhutan, and SLSA. Invited lecturers were Prof. Dr. Philippe Della Casa (Department of Prehistoric Archaeology of the University of Zurich), Dr. Andreas Mäder (Laboratory of Dendrochronology and Underwater Archaeology of the City of Zurich), and lic. phil. Peter Fux (Museum Rietberg Zurich).



Participants of the first Educational Workshop on Archaeology, spring 2011

42 participants attended the workshop, which consisted of two days of classroom teaching in Thimphu, one day of field school at the excavation site of Drapham Dzong and other potential sites, and one day of seminar and discussion in Jakar. Among the participants, there were several Dzongdags (district governors), cultural officers from all 20 districts of Bhutan, lecturers from different institutes of the Royal University of Bhutan, and representatives from various governmental institutions.

In an inaugural ceremony at the City Hall of

Thimphu, His Excellency Lyonpo Minjur Dorji, Minister of Home and Cultural Affairs, welcomed the lecturers and participants of the *Bhutan-Swiss Archaeology Project* workshop. The long list of honorable guests invited to this opening ceremony underlines the importance given to the event by the government and people of Bhutan.

The workshop covered most of the topics relevant to archaeological research and heritage management; it was meant as an essential contribution to the Bhutanese government's aim of institutionalizing archaeology in the



country. The workshop was very successful in raising awareness for the topic of archaeology both as a scientific approach and a heritage management issue – a view that was largely shared by the co-organizers and participants as expressed in written and oral feedbacks at the end of the event.



Opening of the first Bhutan-Swiss Archaeology Project workshop in spring 2011 by His Excellency Lyonpo Minjur Dorji, Bhutan's Minister of Home and Cultural Affairs.

Several issues of development were defined during this first workshop on Archaeology. In view of implementing an archaeological heritage management in Bhutan, a series of proposals and goals have been defined, which need follow-ups and further coordination.

As next steps, an archaeological survey project and rescue excavations are planned for fall 2011.

Generally, the implementation of a partnership between the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, Bhutan, and the Swiss institutions involved in the second phase of the project is expected.

I had the privilege to participate in the *Bhutan-Swiss Archaeology Project* from the very beginning. Every visit of Bhutan was an overwhelming experience. I would like to take up the opportunity to express my deep gratitude for this opportunity to all our friends in Bhutan, and I am sure that I can do so in the name of all Swiss colleagues, too. We are ready to do our best to make this great collaboration successful.

Tashi Delek!

And don't forget!

*Under the heading **"Meeting Point"** the SSB Newsletter regularly features interviews with Bhutanese and Swiss people working, studying and visiting in the respective host country. It will give insight in the experiences and activities of Bhutanese and Swiss people in contact.*

Contributions to this rubric from members of SSB and SBS, as well as the circle of readers of the Newsletter are most welcome!

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