

we contribute to the construction of a new Labrang building and the waterproofing of roofs in the monastery compound. Together with the villagers of Ringmo, we finally return homeward to the Tapriza School. The large pilgrim and horse caravan of Ringmo villagers descends along exposed paths above the Phoksumdo lake.

On arrival at the Tapriza School we meet exited students and teachers as the final preparations for the annual cultural festival run at full speed. From entire Dolpo parents and visitors arrive and mount their tents around the school. The anticipation is growing, the school building is alight thanks to the new solar panels and the courtyard is filling up with hundreds of people. After some speeches and thanksgivings to the helpers and sponsors the show begins. With Tibetan and Nepali dances, poems and own song compositions the crowd is spellbound until the early morning hours. In sheer excitement the spectators cheer, donate abundantly and applaud vigorously. Not only the high grades at the final exams attest the quality of our school, but also a stable team that operates well together and conveys the children delight in their own culture. Happy and proud of the school and projects we all support I bid farewell and set out for home.

A big 'Thank you' to all who support the Tapriza School and to those whose participation enables the success of the school and the projects!

We wish you all the best for the
water-snake year

Marietta Kind and the Tapriza Team



Events and News

General assembly Tapriza NGO

Friday, 28th June 2013, 7 pm, around 8.15 pm film screening.
Quartiertreff Hirslanden, Forchstrasse 248, 8032 Zürich,
Tram 11 up to Burgwies, www.tapriza.org
(Non-members are also welcome)

New publications by Dr. Marietta Kind

The Bon Landscape of Dolpo – Pilgrimages, Monasteries, Biographies and the Emergence of Bon. Marietta Kind.
Bern: Peter Lang Verlag. CHF 91.–/ Euro 70.– / \$ 98.–

Mendrub – A Bonpo Ritual for the Benefit of all Living Beings Performed in Tsbo. Marietta Kind. Kathmandu: Vajrabooks. Reprint. CHF 25.–

The books can be purchased by us on request.

Illustrations:

- 1 Shey Festival, monk dances
- 2 Hurikot monastery with lama, teachers and students
- 3 Channel of the Kagmara Kagmara Micro Hydro Project
- 4 Meme Yungdrung Lama of Samling
- 5 Samling monastery
- 6 River crossing on the way to Shey
- 7 On the pilgrimage to Shey
- 8 Shel Jangmen, the dancing local deity of Shey
- 9 Semduk Lama in the Phoksumdo pilgrims group
- 10-11 Tapriza students during their dance performance

Photos: Marietta Kind & Semduk Lama



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NEWSLETTER 2013

Pilgrimage to the Crystal Mountain of Shey and Visit at the Tapriza Projects



In late summer 2012 our NGO president, the socio-cultural anthropologist Marietta Kind, travelled to Dolpo. She laid out the route of her pilgrimage around the sacred crystal mountain of Shey in such a way that she could visit the projects we support and the Tapriza School. During six weeks she traversed six passes over 5000 metres, participated in local meetings and intensively exchanged ideas and views with the local population. Here is her account.

The large pilgrims' festival of Shey is only celebrated every twelve years in the dragon years of the Tibetan calendar. The year 2012 once again is a water-dragon year. Together with our school and project manager Semduk Lama I travel to Dolpo. Our journey starts at the beginning of August. Already in Nepalganj we get delayed. As usual during this season the monsoon rages even in the so-called rain shadow of the Himalaya. In this bad weather airplanes can neither take off nor land. A few days later than planned we finally reach the small airport of Juphal. From here we head in the northwestern direction to Kalibon. High above the village lies the monastery

we have supported to construct. It is nestled up to the holy mountain Monrisursum after which the monastery is also named. Geshe Tsultrim Chogden inaugurated it appropriately last year. Sadly, during the current heavy rainfalls two supporting pillars were undermined by water and a part of the building collapsed. Luckily no one was injured. In consultation with the monastery committee we contributed an amount for the repairs.

Our journey then took us further to the west over the Barang pass to Kaigaon and Hurikot. Geshe Nyima Ozer and his students receive us ceremonially with songs and *kathbas* (white ceremonial scarves). We dry our soaking wet clothes at the fire while having butter tea and *dbal-bhat*. In the evening we listen to the sounds of the novice monks praying in the Yungdrung Droduling monastery. Since many years the Tapriza NGO has supported the monastery, the Tibetan classes at the school and the accommodation of students from difficult economic backgrounds at the side of the monastery. It is a great pleasure to see the many children eager to learn and to watch the two teachers who studied Tibetan in the Bon monastery in India, during their work. I am especially happy to



finally marvel at the high quality murals and statues done by the presently best Bon thanka painter of Nepal. Bonkyab also comes from Dolpo. Currently, a selection of his work is featured in an exhibition in Vienna. With pleasure we will continue to support the monastery and school, the impressive life's work of Geshe Nyima Ozer.

After a visit at the village school our travels continue through rain and snow over the Kagmara pass. In two days we reach Pugmo, Semduk Lama's home. With home-brewed beer, tea and *kathas* we are welcomed warmly and the exchange of news begins. On route we already saw the camp with many pipes and the water channels made of stone and cement for the Kagmara micro hydropower project. The next day half the village, old and young, men and women, go to the construction site and help building the plant. With great zeal they bring stones to the site, dig ditches, crush stones to gravel and mix cement. Everything is accomplished with pure muscle power and without electricity. The villagers are supported by a team of labourers from southern Dolpo. As soon as further financing is secured, the generator and the turbine can be delivered and installed with the help of an engineer. The vision of producing own electricity boosts everyone. Together they have founded a non-profit organisation and initiated the project

swiftly. The enthusiasm and zest are contagious. Then and there we support the project with a contribution and at the same time I promise to search for more sponsors together with Semduk Lama.

A few days later there is a ceremony in the Namgyal Lhakang monastery in the heart of the village. As the representative of the Taprizo NGO I am invited by the village community and lamas. To thank us for our longstanding support of the school, adult education and the monastery and shrine renovation a blessing ceremony is held for all our donors who are respected highly in Dolpo as «Tschintaks». I am overwhelmed with boundless thanks and gifts. I wish I could bring the bountiful edible gifts with me to the next general assembly along with the woven blankets and bags. Instead, I am passing on the great gratitude and appreciation here in words.

In the next village Ringmo I first of all visit my host family where I lived for a year during my anthropological field study. It is a heartfelt reunion. This time I come back with my newly published book on Bon pilgrimages in Dolpo (*Bon Landscape of Dolpo*) and am overwhelmed by the reactions. The book is strictly examined, people are recognised, texts read, and I am questioned if I have included this story or that biography. A great deal is described,

but already new material is accumulating... The next day I spend in the Thasung Tsholing monastery by the lake, a peaceful place that only turns into a pulsating centre of prayers, ceremonies and mask dances during community rituals. Here a new prayer wheel house is being built which we gladly contribute to.

In the meantime many Nepali and foreign pilgrims from near and far have arrived and relax for the last time at the lakeside before they continue the exhausting trek to Shey. Parents of our school children have equipped me with a horse so that for the first time I can cross rivers and passes in a slightly more comfortable manner. Nevertheless, the journey remains arduous in these weather conditions, especially crossing the overflowing rivers is challenging.

In three days we reach Shey. Several pilgrims have already arrived and an extensive tent town has come into existence. In the monastery of Shey Sumdo since a few days the monks have already started with the preparation ceremonies. In an endlessly long row the pilgrims line up to welcome the highly esteemed Shenchen Rinpoche who flies in with a helicopter and opens the festival by lighting a peace candle. In the following days there are religious mask dances, several speeches, horse races, archery and

traditional dances. We hold a meeting with Dolpo Tulku, a representative of One Heart International, an *amchi* (Tibetan doctor) and a local nurse to coordinate our efforts for health improvements in Phoksumdo. Every day, but especially in the full moon night, pilgrims head out in the early morning hours to do the *kora*, the auspicious circumambulation of the crystal mountain. Shey Riwo Drukta – the crystal mountain in the dragon's roar – is understood as the younger brother of Mt. Kailash and who circumambulates the mountain, accumulates religious merits. The pilgrim can drink from sacred water sources, touch blessed rock formations or imprints which bear witness to legendary deeds of great masters or accomplish the arduous journey through the allegorical paths to hell and heaven to purify the own soul. Exhausted by the day-long circumambulation which leads over a 5000 metre high pass up to the hermitage of Tshakhang and Gomochi Gompa, the pilgrim begins the next day as if newborn. After the cleansing bath in the river, the pilgrims receive blessed edibles, protection cords and holy water at the final ceremony of the ritual before they journey home.

We go further towards the north to the Bon monastery of Samling to receive blessings from the highly esteemed Bon lamas Meme Yungdrung and Sherab Tenzin. There,

