



# TAPRIZA SCHOOL



IN DOLPO  
NORTHWESTERN NEPAL

## TAPRIZA IN DOLPO – AN OVERVIEW



Everyday life at school  
© U. Müller

### EDUCATING THE COMING GENERATION

#### School

- in the heart of the remote district Dolpo
- for the predominantly Tibetan speaking population
- with kindergarten, primary and secondary level up to Class 10
- including local culture and Bon religion
- with boarding possibilities for students and teachers
- managed by a local non-profit organisation

#### Education

- according to the school curriculum of Nepal
- in Nepali, Tibetan and English language
- in local history and religion
- in local handicraft and traditional knowledge
- with practical workshops and excursions

Thasung Tsholing  
Gompa, monastery  
by Phoksumdo lake  
© M.Kind



### SUPPORTING AN ENTIRE REGION

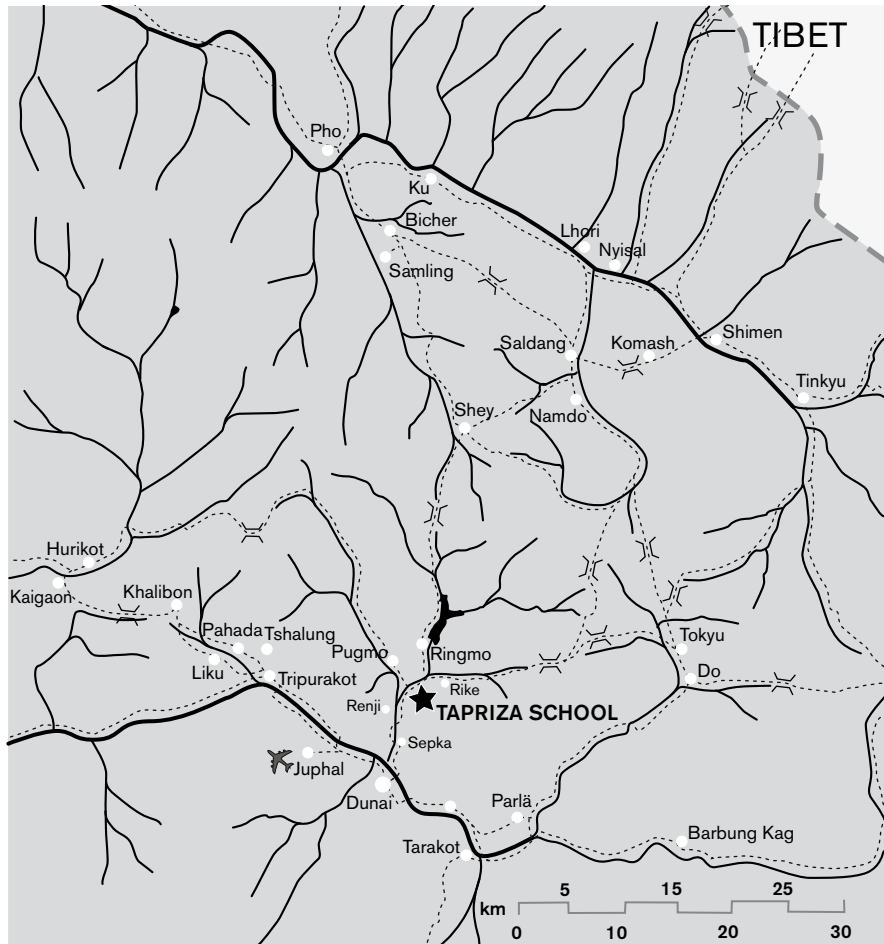
#### Projects

- Vocational trainings for adults
- Promoting local handicraft
- Preserving cultural heritage and monasteries
- Enabling transfer of traditional knowledge
- Supporting local initiatives, especially of women's groups
- Health and prevention programs

#### Policy

- Encouraging education, expertise and qualifications
- Supporting local initiatives
- Democratic decision-making process
- Transparency in budget and book-keeping
- Promoting local culture and traditional knowledge

## LOCATION IN DOLPO



Dolpo is a district in the northwest of Nepal. The Taprizi School is located in the village district committee (VDC) Phoksumdo, which includes the villages Ringmo, Pugmo, Rike and Renji. Most of the students come from these hamlets. The school complex lays centrally at the intersection of several trading routes and has become a place where the villagers meet and interact, especially during school performances and cultural programs.

## THE TAPRIZA SCHOOL

Fun and games during school break  
© U. Müller



Since 1998 the Taprizi NGO (CH) and Friends of Dolpa (USA) support the establishment and maintenance of the Taprizi School in Dolpo. The school offers a Tibetan speaking minority of Nepal the possibility to integrate their language, history and culture into the school lessons. Therefore, besides the national school curriculum their local tradition is passed on to the coming generation. An important aspect of the latter is the Bon religion practiced there today. Consequently, the school is named after the early Bon master Taprizi (tib. Ta-pi-hri-tsa).

Prior to the foundation of the Taprizi School no functioning primary school existed in the region. The nearest school was in the district head quarter Dunai at a distance of three days by foot. Barely any families could afford the costs of the school life there. Thus, most children did not receive a school education, a few parents sent their children – mainly sons – to the Bon monasteries Triten Norbutse in Kathmandu or Menri in India where they were accommodated free of charge and educated without loss of their own culture. Formal education however fell by the wayside.

Discontented with this situation, the people of the region Phoksumdo joined hands with the cultural anthropologist Marietta Kind and Conservation Education Specialist Catherine Inman to advocate for their own school, in which in addition to the state school curriculum Tibetan language, local history and culture were to be taken into consideration. The parents wanted to preserve their traditions and pass them on to the younger generation and at the same time give their children the opportunity of a modern education so that they have better prospects for their future. This idea was the point of departure for the foundation of the Taprizi School with the goal to offer local education combining tradition and modernity.



During a school lesson  
© U. Müller

## THE LESSONS

Besides the national school curriculum, which includes Nepali language, history, mathematics and sciences, local culture and history as well as Tibetan and English language are taught at the Taprizia School. Lessons in Tibetan medicine are supplemented with excursions. During these plants are classified and collected accompanied by Tibetan doctors. While visiting villages the students participate in workshops with village elders and learn local history, songs and traditional knowledge from them. Additionally, the school organises an annual event with dance and theatre performances, a volleyball tournament, and various games and competitions. In their everyday activities a team of state and private teachers, cooks, school mothers (Ama) and other helpers support the children.

In the mean time the Taprizia School has expanded and offers education up to secondary school qualification. For the first time the children can attend up to Class 10 locally and then take the state final exams in the district head quarter Dunai. After passing these, the way to university or additional trainings in various jobs is open.

In Nepal all students attend the same state annual exams from Class 8 onwards. The first Taprizia students took these exams in 2007. From the 300 participants of the district Dolpo three Taprizia students passed with distinction and achieved the first, second and fourth place – a small sensation for students whose mother tongue is not Nepali. These results reveal the high quality of education at the Taprizia School causing the school enrolment to increase annually.

The schoolhouse with the new multipurpose building and the yard  
© U. Furger



## THE SCHOOL HOUSE

In March 1998 the school opened its doors for 38 children and lessons began in rooms provided by the Shey-Phoksumdo National Park. These were soon too small to hold the increasing number of students. Therefore, the construction of a new school building was desperately needed. On land donated by the villagers a new school complex was erected and inaugurated in 2001. Since then, the complex has constantly grown together with the amount of children attending the school.

The school is located centrally between the several villages and offers all children of the village district committee access to modern education. To avoid long daily walks to the school, most students live there.

The Taprizia school area consists of classrooms, bedrooms, staff rooms, a library and a large multipurpose building. Kitchen and sanitary facilities have running water. Solar tubes provide the showers with hot water and solar panels produce electricity for light and other electronic devices.

## VEGETABLE GARDEN AND GREEN HOUSE

In cooperation with the women's group and the parents, the school has established its own vegetable garden. Annually the parents donate the seedlings, which are planted by the students and cultivated during lessons in 'Environment and Nature'. Cabbage, pumpkins, cauliflower, beans and radish flourish and enrich the meals. Thanks to the new green house even tomatoes and chillies grow. The planted apple trees are starting to bear fruit and add important vitamins to the nutrition of the students and staff.

## PROJECTS IN DOLPO



Yungdrung Droling  
Monastery in Hurikot  
© N. Bianda

On requests of local people the Taprizia NGO and Friends of Dolpo are also supporting additional projects besides the school. These attempt to preserve local cultural heritage, ameliorate the health care or offer trainings for the adult section of the community.

### PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

Monasteries, shrines, statues and paintings contribute to the unique cultural heritage of Dolpo. Often the financial means are lacking to maintain and renovate the cultural artefacts professionally. With its contributions the Taprizia NGO enables the renovation and extension of several monasteries. The expansion of the Thasung Tsholing monastery in Ringmo (tib. Tsho), in Hurikot the extension of the Yungdrung Droling monastery and in Pugmo the complete renovation of the Thaktsen Rabgyeling monastery with a new roof, statues and paintings as well as the purchase of an important set of religious texts were supported. With donations the Taprizia NGO contributed to the construction of a new monastery in Kalibon. Renovation of various shrines (Chörten), the reconstruction of hermitages and the preservation and reprinting of historical texts are assisted.

Students and teachers of the Taprizia School research the local culture, question the village elders and record traditional songs. In collaboration with the Nepal Bon Buddhist Association, an organisation founded in 2008 to promote the Bon tradition, the compilation of an indigenous teaching aid is planned, in which the research results of the school will be included.

- Prevention  
and HIV-education  
courses in the region of  
Phoksumdo  
© S. Lama



### MEDICINE AND PREVENTION

The Taprizia NGO supports the Tibetan medical clinic close to the school that was founded by WWF Nepal and the PPI (People and Plants Initiative). Since recently an employee of the health department is working there along side the Tibetan doctors (Amchi). The medics complement each other in their competences and their ranges of action. The Taprizia NGO financed the construction of additional rooms, especially one for patients in need of a stationary treatment or longer medical investigations. The clinic has improved the health care of the school and the surrounding villages tremendously, for the closest hospital is in Nepalganj, which takes about two weeks walk from the school.

Together with the Tibetan doctors and the health officer health education, child care programs and prevention programs on the topic of HIV, tuberculosis, hepatitis and other diseases are organised.

### TRAININGS AND PROMOTION OF WOMEN

On request from local people the Taprizia NGO supports various workshops and courses for the training of adults. The local master of Thangka painting passed on his expertise in several courses to local youth. For the first time girls were also included and a woman, Yeshe Sangmo, was the best student in the course. She was later supported with scholarship for additional training in Kathmandu. Furthermore, on request of the villagers sowing and carpet-making courses for the women and English courses for beginners were organised. Individual teachers participated in trainings in solar energy techniques or computer courses.



Geshe Samdrup Nyima during the inauguration of the new building  
© U. Müller

## TAPRIZA AND BON RELIGION

The school is named after an important master of the central oral tradition from Zhangzhung, a former kingdom in today's western Tibet. Due to his religious practice, Tapriza (tib. Ta-pi-hri-tsa) achieved the rainbow body – meaning enlightenment. Initially Bon religion was practiced by a few eremites who settled in remote valleys of Dolpo. In the 13th century Yangton Gyaltsen Rinchen Samling founded the first Bon monastery in northern Dolpo. Today, besides Samling, there are several Bon monasteries in the villages Pugmo, Ringmo, Do-Tarap, Tsharka, Parlä, Hurikot, Tshalung and Kalibon. The tradition practised in Dolpo is called Yungdrung Bon, 'The imperishable Bon', and traces back to the founder Tonpa Shenrab Miwo. He established a religious practice to develop wellbeing by generating wisdom and compassion. This is transmitted in the teachings of the 'Four Gates and the Treasure' and the teachings of the 'Nine Ways'. The highest level of meditation is Dzogchen 'The Great Perfection', during which the practitioner is introduced to the true nature of mind. There are many parallels to Buddhism, especially to the Nyingmapa tradition, yet it is a separate tradition with much older roots. Albeit in historical perspective many disagreements existed between Bon and Buddhism, Bon is today denominated the fifth school of Tibetan Buddhism and was accepted as such by the Dalai Lama in 1988. Since the occupation of Tibet by China Dolpo is one of the few regions in which Bon religion has been practiced uninterruptedly.

## ORGANISATION AND SUPPORT POSSIBILITIES

### TASHI-D

The people of the Region Phoksumdo founded the officially recognised non-profit-organisation TASHI-D (Tapriza Association of Social Help in Dolpo) in 1997. Its democratically elected board committee manages the Tapriza School and various projects with the goal to shape the economic and cultural developments in Dolpo themselves. Tashidelek is a Tibetan greeting and means fortune and blessing.

### TAPRIZA NGO, FRIENDS OF DOLPA & AMERICAN HIMALAYAN FOUNDATION

The non-profit-organisations 'Tapriza NGO' and 'Friends of Dolpa' ([www.friendsofdolpa.org](http://www.friendsofdolpa.org)) were founded in 1997 correspondingly by Marietta Kind and Catherine Inman to address people interested in the school project and the region Dolpo and collect donations in Europe and America. Both Organisations exchange regularly among themselves and stand in close contact to the local NGO, the school manager and the local population of Phoksumdo in Nepal. Their members and donors are regularly informed on the homepages, through newsletters and an annual report. Since early on the 'American Himalayan Foundation' ([www.himalayan-foundation.org](http://www.himalayan-foundation.org)) has also been regularly supporting the school.

### YOUR SUPPORT

To ensure the future of the school, the contributions from abroad are essential. There are various ways of supporting the Tapriza School and other projects in Dolpo. Donations can be given to the Tapriza NGO and to the Friends of Dolpa, additionally both NGOs offer memberships and class sponsorships or other forms of project sponsorships. We do not support sponsorships of individual children to prevent inequality. The board of the Tapriza School decides over the usage of the money and distributes it to children in need. It is important to have the same conditions for all the children, regardless if they are supported mainly by their parents or through money from a sponsorship.

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