

NYIMALUNG MONASTERY

Chumey, Bumthang, Bhutan

A BRIEF HISTORY

*OF ITS FOUNDING AND FOUNDERS
DORING TULKU AND CHUMEY DRUNGPA
GOEMPO DORJI*

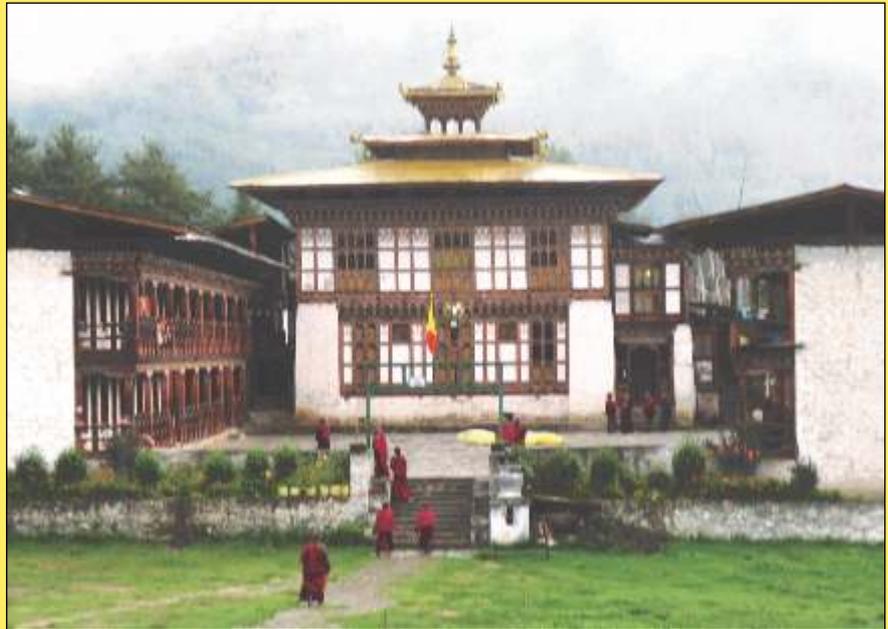
A fortuitous 1933 meeting in Bumthang, central Bhutan, between a Tibetan lama and a local Bhutanese dignitary led to the establishment of Thubten Shaydrup Darjay Choling¹ monastery, known more popularly by its local place name, Nyimalung,² meaning “sun and wind.”

Doring Tulku, Jamyang Kunzang Lunrig Choki Nyima (1902-1952),³ was born in the village of Doring in the eastern Tibetan area of Kham. He was recognised as the third mind emanation of Jigme Lingpa,⁴ which placed him in the illustrious Longchen Nyingthik⁵ lineage of the Nyingmapa⁶ school of Tibetan Buddhism.

Briefly, his lineage antecedents emanated from the great scholar Kuenkhen Longchen Rabjam (1308-1363),⁷ continued to Jigme Lingpa (1729-1798) and then Jigme Lingpa’s first and second mind incarnations Do Khyentse Jigdrel Yeshe Dorje⁸ and Jigme Dechen Lingpa.⁹

By the age of 13, Doring Tulku had already finished his basic Buddhist studies and had become acquainted with the writings and times of the revered Kuenkhen Longchen Rabjam, known more simply as Longchenpa. Inspired by his life story, Doring Tulku left home at this tender age to travel around Kham and Tibet, studying with various masters. This he did for seventeen years before leaving for Bhutan.

Longchenpa himself had travelled some 600 years earlier from Tibet to



Bhutan, and here had established eight monasteries, the most famous of which is Tharpaling¹⁰ Monastery in Bumthang. Doring Tulku, following in the footsteps of his mentor Longchenpa, arrived at Tharpaling at the age of about 30 determined to read the great saint’s *Kuenkhen Zoeduen*¹¹ one hundred times.

Unfortunately, Doring Tulku was called away from his admirable undertaking, before he could complete the one hundred readings, to help perform funeral rites for a local official named Chumey Dasho Zhelngo Jamyang,¹² father-in-law of His Majesty Jigme Wangchuck, the Second Druk Gyalpo (or, King).¹³ This official’s son and hereditary heir, Chumey Drungpa Goempo Dorji,¹⁴ would now inherit his father’s title and position as drungpa, the regional administrator.

Despite the apparent setback for Doring Tulku’s original intentions of personal meditation practice, it was here at these funeral ceremonies in

1933 that he met Drungpa Goempo Dorji. After talks together, Doring Tulku and Drungpa Goempo Dorji agreed they would establish a new monastery at Nyimalung, only a few kilometres from Tharpaling, to further the teachings of the Buddha and the Longchen Nyingthik lineage in particular. Since Drungpa Goempo Dorji was descended from Bhutan’s great *terton*¹⁵ Pema Lingpa (1450-1541), the *terton*’s Peling lineage practices would also be taught. In addition to these two principal lineages, several of the various lineages of the Nyingmapas are still represented at Nyimalung Monastery today.

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Nyimalung Monastery

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The proposed monastery would train monks to help local people at times of birth, sickness, dying and death with appropriate medicines, prayers and ceremonies. The local population would also receive guidance in both mundane and spiritual matters.

In 1934 construction of the main temple began. Doring Tulku thus became the founding abbot of Thubten Shaydrup Darjay Choling monastery at Nyimalung, and Chumey Drungpa Goempo Dorji its founding sponsor. The monastery's name, Shaydrup Darjay Choling, encompasses within the word "shaydrup" the aspects of *shaydra*, or the study of arts and literature, and *drupda*, or meditation. *Darjay* indicates spreading or disseminating, while *choling* translates as a place of Dharma.

Accordingly, within the monastery the monks learned the arts of medicine, pharmacy, mandala painting, tormas¹⁶ making, calligraphy, reading and writing, as well as meditation. Each day Doring Tulku gave teachings from the precious texts he had brought from Tibet. These included Karma Lingpa's¹⁷ *terma*¹⁸ *Kaling Zhithro*,¹⁹ and it was Doring Tulku who first brought this text into Bhutan. It has since spread to many of Bhutan's monasteries. He also established a *Kaling Zhithro drubchen*,²⁰ still held at Nyimalung during the first

fifteen days of the first lunar month of each year.

By 1940, Doring Tulku wanted to make a short trip back to Tibet for collecting ritual objects to conduct large pujas at the monastery. Immediately before leaving on his trip, Doring Tulku had an audience with His Majesty Jigme Wangchuck the Second Druk Gyalpo of Bhutan. When the King asked what he might do for Doring Tulku, he received a very heartfelt response: Doring Tulku requested His Majesty's assistance in finishing the construction of Nyimalung monastery. The King in response promised to do whatever he could.

Doring Tulku then departed for Tibet during *Saga Dawa*²¹ of 1940. He roamed widely throughout Tibet, seeking out teachers and opportunities for extended meditation practice in seclusion. He also gave teachings to many people along the way. Eventually he was requested to tutor the reincarnation of the tenth Rigzin Chenpo,²² which he undertook—despite his preference for solitary retreat—because it seems he felt under some obligation to Rigzin Chenpo's monastery.

It was during this time that Doring Tulku heard the news that the Second Druk Gyalpo had indeed sent assistance to Nyimalung monastery in the form of painters and carpenters to finish the construction of the first and second floors of the

main building, both inside and out. Doring Tulku was overjoyed to hear of this, and dispatched his close Bhutanese disciple Pema, who had joined Doring Tulku in Tibet some time earlier, to the King with a letter of thanks.

Pema travelled to Bhutan to deliver the letter of thanks to the King. He later rejoined Doring Tulku in Tibet for further pilgrimage, study and meditation. Eventually, while Doring Tulku met and received teachings from Dudjom Jigdrel Yeshe Dorje,²³ Pema returned to Bhutan to stay.

The two were never to see each other again, as Doring Tulku died suddenly of an illness in Tibet, aged about 51, in 1952. Pema, who would later in Bhutan be affectionately called "Lam" Pemala, eventually served as one of the most outstanding abbots of Nyimalung Monastery from 1993 to 2009. Before his death in 2009, he handed over the role of spiritual director to Dudjom Jigdrel Yeshe Dorje's reincarnation, Dudjom Tenzin Yeshe Dorje.

NOTES ON THE HISTORY

¹ Thubten Shaydrup Darjay Choling (*Thub bSten bShad sGrub Dar rGyas Chos gLing*) monastery

² Nyimalung (Nyi Ma Lung), literally "sun and wind"

³ Doring Tulku, Jamyang Kunzang Lungrig Choki Nyima (*rDo Ring sPrul sKu 'Jam dByangs Kun bZang Lung Rig Chos Kyi Nyi Ma*)

⁴ Jigme Lingpa (*Jigs Med gLing Pa*)

⁵ Longchen Nyingthig (*kLong Chen*)

(History continued page 3)

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sNying Thig)

⁶ Nyingmapa (rNying Ma Pa)

⁷ Kuenkhen Longchen Rabjam (Kun mKhyen kLong Chen Rab 'Byams), also known as Longchenpa (kLong Chen Pa)

⁸ Do Khyentse Jigdre Yeshe Dorje (rDo mKhyen brTse 'Jigs bDral Ye Shes rDo rJe)

⁹ Jigme Dechen Lingpa ('Jigs Med bDe Chen gLing Pa)

¹⁰ Tharpaling (Thar Pa gLing)

¹¹ Kuenkhen Zoeduen (Kun mKhyen mZad bDun)

¹² Chumey Dasho Zhelngo Jamyang (Chu sMad gZhal Ngo 'Jam dByang)

¹³ His Majesty Jigme Wangchuck, the Second Druk Gyalpo ('Jigs Med dBang Phyug)

¹⁴ Chumey Drungpa Goempo Dorji (Chu sMad Drung Pa mGon Po rDo rJe)

¹⁵ Tertön, a discoverer and revealer of "hidden treasure" Dharma texts.

¹⁶ Torma (gTor Ma), a ritual offering cake

¹⁷ Karma Lingpa (KarMa gLing Pa)

¹⁸ Terma, or hidden treasure teaching

¹⁹ Kaling Zhithro (Kar gLing Zhi Khro)

²⁰ Drubchen, a great prayer offering extending to several days

²¹ Saga Dawa, the fourth month of the Tibetan calendar, considered particularly auspicious because the month marks the three anniversaries of the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and parinirvana.

²² Rigzin Chenpo (Rig 'Zin Chen Po)

²³ Dudjom Jigdre Yeshe Dorje (bDud 'Joms 'Jigs bDral Ye Shes rDo rJe)

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INTERVIEWS CONTRIBUTED

Dudjom Tenzin Yeshe Dorje Rinpoche, Lama Rigzin Wangchuk, Lopen Ogyen Thinley, Lopen Sangay, Dungchay Tshering Dorji

THANKS TO

Jamyang Lhundup
Thinley Tobgay Dorji
Tsering Wangdi

Abbots of Nyimalung

(1934–1940) **Doring Tulku**

(See Founding above)

(1940–1943) **Ngawang Thinley**

(Kah Thog bLa Ma Ngag dBang Phrin Las)

(1943–1956) **Dang la Yeshe Pema**

(Brang La Ye Shes Pad Ma)

(1956–1959) **Geshe Gyaltsen**

(dGe Shes rGyal mTshan)

(1956–1961) **Lama Yeshe**

(bLama Ye Shes)

(1963–1978) **Bairo Tulku**

(Bairo sPrul sKu)

Acquired lands beyond Nyimalung for growing the monastery's food, made dance (*cham*) costumes and masks, danced role of Dorje Drollo, developed relations with the Bhutanese royal family.

(1979–1982) **Lama Kunga**

(bLa Ma Kun dGa')

Gave dzogchen, tsa lung, yeshe lama teachings. His "study friend" was Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. He himself was a student of Khyentse Chokyi Lodro.

(1982–1985) **Tulku Nuden** (sKrul sKu Nus Dan)

Constructed Nyimalung's Gelephu hostel and temple. His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck the Fourth Druk Gyalpo became a sponsor of Nyimalung.

(1985–1990) **Ugyen Tenzin** (O rGyan bsTan dZin)

Built the shedra. Completed the second story of the main temple, including adding frescoes on the second floor. Constructed mediation centre adjacent to the current office.

(1990–1993) **Thuksey Rinpoche** (Lha Lung Thugs Sras Rin Po Che)

Third mind incarnation of Padma Lingpa. Made dance (*cham*) masks of Yeshe Tsogyal, Mandarava and others. Painted thankas.

(1993–2009) **Lama Pema** (bLa Ma Pad Ma)

- Built Kaling Zhithro Lhakang and the mandala (*kyilkhor*) within it as a memorial to his teacher Doring Tulku, a master of the practice (see page 6).
- Constructed new hostel at Nyimalung, other buildings.
- Acquired needed ritual objects, including the giant thanka (*thongdröl*) of Padmasambhava and his eight manifestations, courtesy of Japanese sponsors. Unfurled each year, early the last morning of the annual Tse Chu held on the eighth, ninth and tenth days of the fifth Bhutanese month.
- Wrote a history of Bhutan and the first grammar book of the Dzongkhar language at the request of the King of Bhutan.
- Awarded two gold medals for services to Bhutan by H.M. Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Fourth Druk Gyalpo.



Doring Tulku, depicted here in the giant Nyimalung embroidered *thongdröl*. According to Lam Pemala, "He wasn't as fat as that, but very tall. He was chosen as a body guard for the 13th Dalai Lama but preferring practice, ran away instead."



Lama Pemala

(Abbots continued page 4)

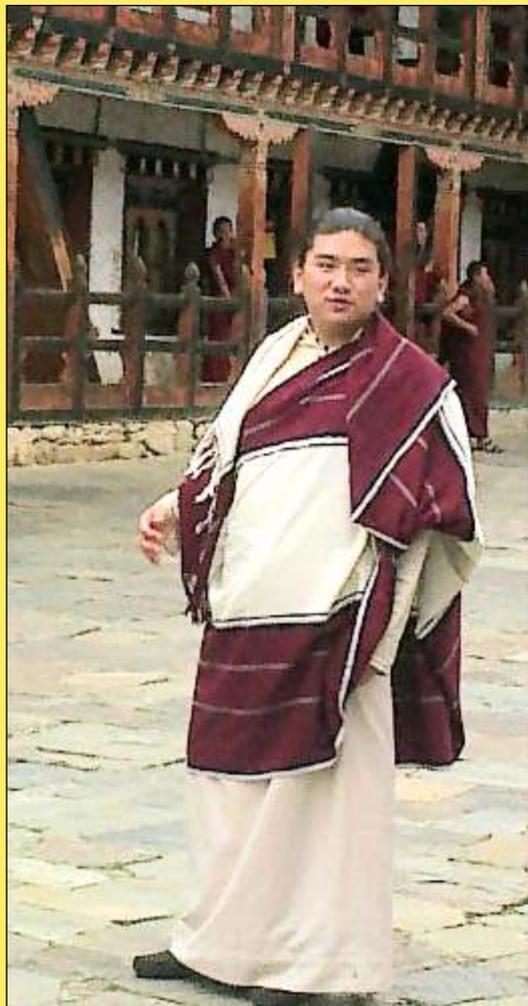
(Abbots continued from page 3)

Current Spiritual Director

(2005–present)

**Dudjom Rinpoche,
Tenzin Yeshe Dorje**

Boudhanath stupa in 1992 at the behest of Sangyum Kusho Rigzin Wangmo.



Dudjom Rinpoche, Spiritual Director

Dudjom Tenzin Yeshe Dorje is recognized as the heart emanation of the late Kyabje Dudjom Jigdrel Yeshe Dorje, the first head of the Nyingmapa school of Tibetan Buddhism.

Born in 1990 as the first of two sons to Yab Kezang Dradul and Yum Sonam Choki, he was formally recognized by H.H. the Dalai Lama and given the name Tenzin Yeshe Dorje. He was enthroned by the late Kyabje Trulshig Rinpoche in Kathmandu at the Dudjom Gonpa near the

Dudjom Rinpoche currently resides and studies at Dudjom Namdrol Choling across the valley from the Yanglashed cave in Parping, Kathmandu, and at his residence in Sartsham Chorten, opposite Takshang monastery, Paro, Bhutan, where he has founded a *gomdey*, or study and practice centre for lay practitioners. Rinpoche also heads and oversees the activities of the Nyimalung Dratshang in Bumthang and Gelephu, Bhutan. He was appointed as the monastery's head abbot, or spiritual director, in 2005.

In the last few years, Rinpoche has performed drubchens and conferred initiations at various monasteries in Bhutan and has presided at the Ngagyur Nyingma Menlam Chenmo world peace prayers at Bodhgaya, India.

He has received all the major initiations of the Nyingma Kama and Terma teachings from several lineage holders, particularly the late Kyabje Trulshig Rinpoche. Lineage holders from whom Rinpoche has received initiations and teachings include H.H. the Dalai Lama, the late Trulshik Ngawang Chokyi Lodro Rinpoche, the late Penor Rinpoche, Dodrubchen Rinpoche, Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche, Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche, Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche, Namkhai Nyingpo

Rinpoche and the late Lhalung Thugsey Rinpoche.

On education for the monks and their monastery

"If we can enlarge the monastery we can improve the quality of the education offered. Having more students will require more teachers. We will always try to attract the best possible teachers, and this will build our quality.

... Also, if we steadily improve the quality of our education, then talented Bhutanese students can choose to study at Nyimalung without feeling the need to study in other countries.

... If we increase the numbers of students in the dratsang, or middle school, there will be more monks learning and performing the ritual activities and arts. Not only will this strengthen the cultural and religious arts, it will also relieve the advanced shedra students from having to take time from their studies."

—Dudjom Rinpoche



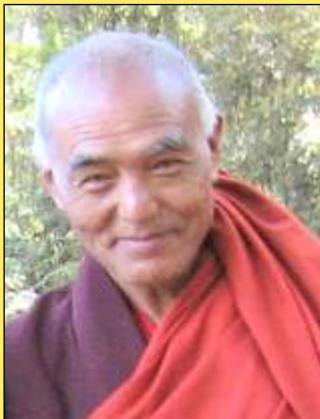
as Dorje Drollo in cham costume

Academic Heads of Nyimalung

Lama Rigzin Wangchuk
Resident Abbot & Dorji Lopen

Arrived at Nyimalung in 1959, aged 8, and has taught here since 1984.

Lama performed as chant master (*umdzay*) for seven years and is known for his beautiful chanting voice.



Khenpo Tenzin Palzang
Head of Shedra

Arrived at Nyimalung 1993 as a young student, and later entered Namdroling Monastery under Penor Rinpoche.

After topping his shedra class years one through nine there, he returned to Nyimalung in mid-2011 as a khenpo.



Lopen Sangay
Co-principal of Lobdra

Entered Nyimalung aged nine in 1968, and became a lopen here at age 28.

Lopen would like to remain at Nyimalung to teach the young monks all his life.



Lopen Ogyen Thinley
Co-principal of Lobdra

Started at Nyimalung lobdra in 1971 at age 8, becoming a lopen at 27.

He is appreciated for his skill at *torma* and *kar gyen* making, and gained widespread recognition using the black-necked crane and flowers in *torma* decoration.



Dungchay Tshering Dorji
Administrator

Arriving at Nyimalung in 1982 at the age of 16, Dungchay became a teacher by 29. He eventually took the role of Administrator.

Dungchay is well respected for accomplishing whatever the monastery needs.



A Centre of Excellence

THE PRACTICE OF KALING ZHITHRO

100 Peaceful and Wrathful Deities of the Bardo



First brought from Tibet to Bhutan and established at Nyimalung by Doring Tulku, this practice is now performed at many monasteries within the kingdom.

Doring Tulku also established an annual *drubchen* for the practice, which continues to the present day at Nyimalung, during the first 15 days of the first lunar month (February or March) of each year.

Later, Lama Pemala built the Kaling Zhithro lhakang to house the 4.5-metre high, 3-dimensional mandala depicting the visualisation of the practice (see photo left). He did this as an offering to his root lama Doring Tulku. There are over 130 fine clay statues within the mandala representing the deities and other figures, exquisitely painted in minute detail. Lama Rigzin Wangchuk, who assisted Lama Pemala in this undertaking, says that this mandala (*kyilkhor*) is unique in the world.

CHAM (RITUAL DANCING)

The ritual dancing (or, *cham*) at Nyimalung is considered among the best in Bhutan. At the annual Tse Chu festival held on the eighth, ninth and tenth days of the fifth Bhutanese month (usually June or July), hundreds of people from the local community come for three days to see the re-enactment of historic and religious themes in dynamic dances performed by the monastery's monks. The extravagant and colourful costumes and masks add to the thrilling atmosphere.

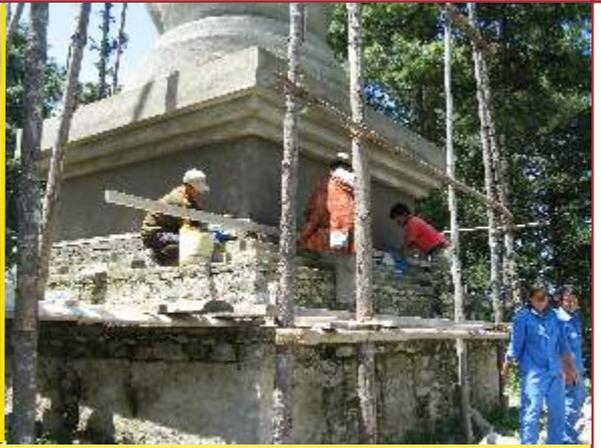
Although *cham* is performed at many monasteries throughout Bhutan, often including lay persons, Nyimalung dancers are exclusively monks. Here, unique to Nyimalung, you can watch the story in dance depicting the assassination of the last emperor of the unified Tibetan Empire. Langdarma (797–841) had brutally suppressed the Buddhadharma in Tibet over the period of his three year reign (838–841). At last, a monk named Pelgyi Dorji of Lhalung, disguised as an entertainer for the king, wore a robe with overly large sleeves. At the right moment, he drew a bow and arrow from his sleeves and shot the king between the eyes, ending Tibet's darkest period of suppression of the Dharma until the Chinese invasion of the 20th century.



SPEAKING DOLMA

As recounted by Lama Rinzin Wangchuk, the Speaking Tara (Dolma) statue in the main temple was brought from Kham, Eastern Tibet by Doring Tulku when he first arrived in Bhutan. It is said to be very special, associated with stories of the statue speaking to individuals. The monks recite a Tara

puja each day without fail, with all monks together whenever possible, but with only one or two monks if necessary. This situation arises over the winter when a skeleton crew of monks are left at Nyimalung while the greater body of monks go to Nyimalung Monastery at Gelephu in the warmer south of Bhutan.



EIGHT CHÖRTEN

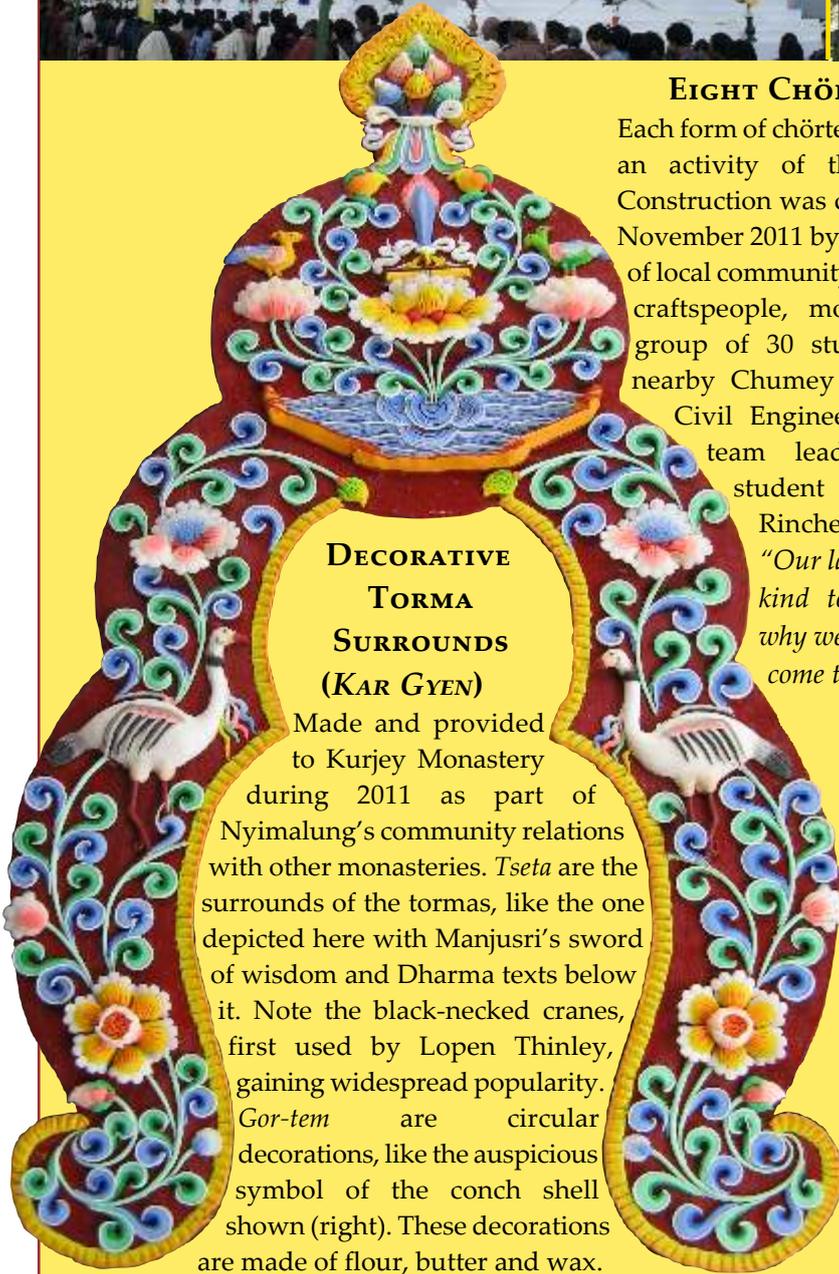
Each form of chörten represents an activity of the Buddha. Construction was completed in November 2011 by a large team of local community volunteers, craftspeople, monks and a group of 30 students from nearby Chumey Institute of Civil Engineering. Said team leader of the student engineers, Rinchen Wangmo, "Our lamas are very kind to us. That's why we are happy to come to help."



Endum chörten—promoting harmony within the community

DECORATIVE TORMA SURROUNDS (KAR GYEN)

Made and provided to Kurjey Monastery during 2011 as part of Nyimalung's community relations with other monasteries. *Tseta* are the surrounds of the tormas, like the one depicted here with Manjusri's sword of wisdom and Dharma texts below it. Note the black-necked cranes, first used by Lopen Thinley, gaining widespread popularity. *Gor-tem* are circular decorations, like the auspicious symbol of the conch shell shown (right). These decorations are made of flour, butter and wax.



MAIN TEMPLE WALL MURALS

Many of Bhutan's monasteries contain exquisitely detailed and extensive wall paintings in their temples. It is said that a friendly rivalry around 1980 between two painters—one Tibetan and one Bhutanese—produced some of the finest contemporary temple paintings in Bhutan as they strove to outperform one

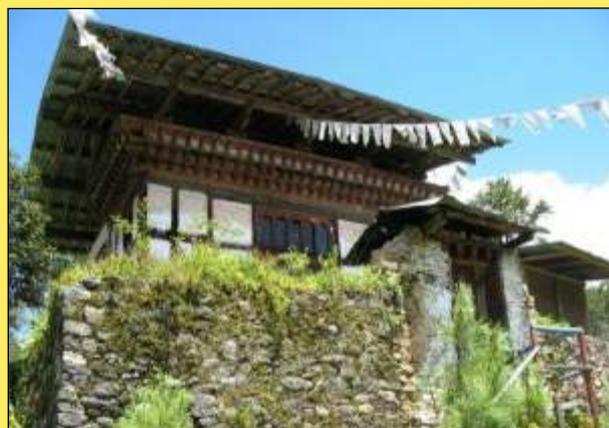
another at Nyimalung. Showcased here are many of the themes and personages of the Nyingmapas: Nyenten Chuduk, Gyenduk Choknye, Nyeway Saygyet, Marmay Daksum, Dzogchen Tonpa Chunay, and the yidams Palchen, Phurba, Gurudrak, Gyebang Nyernga, Peling Ketheng and Dungna Rangdrol Lhatsok.

Thubten Shaydrup Darjay Choling

NYIMALUNG MONASTERY



Display of the *thongdröl* during the annual *tse chu* festival



Dordem Gonpa



Pangtay Gonpa



Gelephu Gonpa

NYIMALUNG MONASTERY

Main centre at Chumey
Bumthang, Bhutan

Retreat centres at
Dordem, Pangtay and Gelephu

Phone: +975 (0)3 641 133
(Fax by prior arrangement)

Mobile: +975 1771 4132

admin@nyimalungmonastery.org
www.nyimalungmonastery.org