



The NYEMA Sun

NYEMA Projects' semi-annual newsletter on humanitarian projects in eastern Tibet

Nangchen, Eastern Tibet: Steady Progress, But We Can't Rest on Our Laurels

Dear friends:

This issue of the Nangchen Sun provides a picture of steady progress and stable achievement in this remote region marked by poverty and strongly affected by the political upheavals of the last half-century. Remedying the situation in Nangchen has required a careful balance between preserving a rich culture in danger of disappearing forever, and initiating enough modernization to equip its citizens to participate in today's interconnected, rapidly changing world.

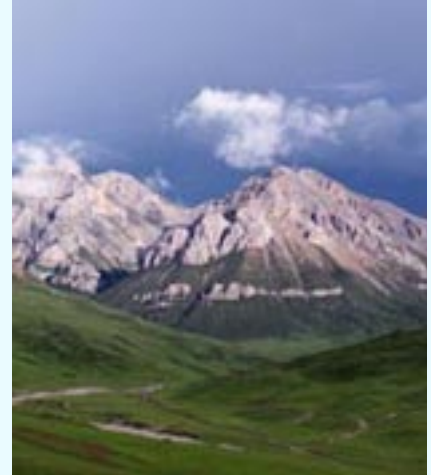
When Lama Norlha Rinpoche first returned to Eastern Tibet in 1984, his own monastery at Korche was in ruins, children had no access to education, healthcare was nonexistent, and women who wished to devote their lives to Dharma practice and study had no place to do so.

As the following pages document, Lama Norlha Rinpoche's efforts over the past 21 years, through the work of NYEMA and its many benefactors, have resulted in substantial improvements in all these areas.

However, there is more work to be done! First, we need to maintain the progress we have made. This requires continuing financial support, and we encourage you to consider an ongoing commitment to this goal.

Even more urgently, though we have received many generous donations toward rebuilding the burned shrine hall at Kala Rongo, funding to date does not nearly cover the needs for this project. Last fall we sent out a mailing in which

See Letter on page 5



©2005 NYEMA Projects

Spring/Summer 2005 Vol. 4, No. 1

In This Issue:

Letter from the Editor	1
Monastic Initiative:	
Kala Rongo	2
Korche Monastery	4
Education Initiative	5
Medical Initiative	6
Donation Form	7

If you would like to be notified via email of future newsletters—as well as important new developments in Nangchen—we cordially invite you to join our mailing list. Sign up on our website at www.nyema.org!

Copyright ©2005 NYEMA Projects, Inc., New York, USA.

All rights reserved.

Photo: Though they live in a region of breathtaking beauty, Nanchen's inhabitants are struggling to fulfill basic needs such as healthcare, running water, and literacy for their children.



Monastic Initiative: Kala Rongo Palchen Gön

Breaking News: Kala Rongo Receives Government Permit at Last August Ceremony and Celebration Planned

In mid-July, Lama Norlha Rinpoche received word that the nuns' monastery at Kala Rongo has been granted its long-awaited official government permit, confirming its legal status as a monastery for nuns. Rinpoche has been working toward this goal for the past 20 years, and is very pleased that these efforts have finally come to fruition.

In August, government officials from the towns of Xining, Yushu and Sharnda will hold a ceremony at Kala Rongo Monastery to present the permit. The resident nuns have organized several days of celebration to follow, including chanting services, picnics and festivities.

Kala Rongo has also received government permission for 40 of the resident nuns to travel throughout China in the traditional monastic custom of "traveling across the land" to beg for butter and barley to support the monastery.

In addition to the obvious benefits of its new legal status, earned by virtue of its establishment on land historically occupied by a monastery, this documentation will also protect the resident nuns from ever being displaced by monks, whose status is traditionally favored in the prevailing culture of the region.

One of Rinpoche's major goals and achievements through the work of NYEMA and its supporters has been to begin to provide an equal opportunity for women to practice the Dharma in Tibet and to receive training equivalent to that of monks. Besides providing facilities for women to undertake the traditional three-year meditation retreat, Kala Rongo is also home to the first monastic college for women in the history of Tibet, which began operation in 2001. In addition, the monastery's administration is now made up of five senior nuns, of whom two are monastery leaders and three are administrators.

There is still a long way to go in improving the status of nuns in Tibet, and Kala Rongo's official recognition by the government is a very important and meaningful step toward this goal.

His Eminence Tai Situ Rinpoche Sends Teacher to Kala Rongo

In other news, His Eminence Tai Situ Rinpoche has sent a retreat and chanting master from Rinpoche's seat in Tibet at Palpung Monastery to teach and supervise the retreat center at Kala Rongo. The entire monastery will benefit from his knowledge and experience.

Construction of the three-year retreat facility at Kala Rongo Monastery has been completed, and the three-year retreat begun last fall is going very well, according



to Lama Norlha Rinpoche. This is the fifth retreat cycle at Kala Rongo, with 45 nuns participating. Each nun's room is furnished with the traditional shrine and meditation box.

Further construction at the retreat facility has begun, to build a bedroom, bathroom and kitchen for the new retreat master, as well as a room for his attendant.

Photo: The newly completed retreat facility (left) and monastic college (right) at Kala Rongo.



Monastic Initiative: Kala Rongo Palchen Gön

More Funds Needed to Rebuild Shrine Hall

As previously reported, a sudden fire consumed the shrine hall of Kala Rongo Monastery on October 25, 2004, leaving the 300 resident nuns with no central place to gather and perform group practice and activities. Pending reconstruction, the upstairs of the monastic college facility is being used as a makeshift shrine hall for the monastery, with monastic college functions confined to the downstairs area.

Lama Norlha Rinpoche extends his heartfelt thanks to the many generous donors who have helped raise funds for rebuilding this essential structure, replacing its contents, and providing emergency food and necessities to the monastic community.

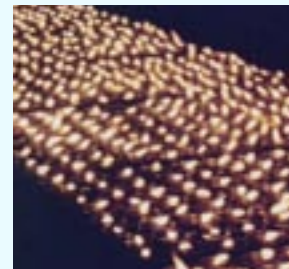
Due to the magnitude of the material losses sustained in the Kala Rongo fire, much more funding remains urgently needed. All donations are tax deductible to the extent of the law. Please see the Donation Form on page 7. For the full story on this devastating incident, please visit www.nyema.org.



©2005 NYEMA Projects

Butterlamp House To Be Constructed

The next phase of improvement at Kala Rongo Monastery is construction of a traditional butterlamp house for tong chu offerings of 1,000 butterlamps and 1,000 bowls of saffron water. The butterlamps and bowls have already been purchased with existing funds. (Information on this tradition may be found at www.kagyuu.com.)



The projected cost of construction is US\$10,000. A tong chu may be sponsored at Kala Rongo on behalf of anyone who is ill, recently deceased, or experiencing obstacles or difficulties of any kind. The cost of sponsoring a tong chu is \$500 for a pure butter offering, or \$250 for a “wood butter” substitute (similar to margarine).

The tong chu offering is an extremely meritorious activity that will bring great benefit to the monastery and its environs, and exert a positive influence throughout the world in these times of pervasive strife, conflict, disease and poverty. The nuns of Kala Rongo look forward with great joy to getting started on construction of the butterlamp house.

Water Project Now Underway

Workers have begun digging trenches to lay the pipes for water lines at Kala Rongo. Pipes and cement have been purchased. Once the pipes are laid, cement water tanks will be built.

This will be a major improvement in the standard of living at Kala Rongo, where the nuns have been living without running water since construction began 20 years ago. It will also significantly reduce the risk of a disastrous fire like the one that destroyed the shrine hall last fall.

According to Lama Norlha Rinpoche, the water source at Kala Rongo—a place that is considered sacred to the Buddhist saint Guru Rinpoche—was blessed by Guru Rinpoche himself, and is thus believed to bestow long life upon those who drink from it.

Photos:

Top right: An offering of 1,000 butterlamps.

Bottom left: Ruin of the Kala Rongo shrine hall, destroyed by fire last October.



Monastic Initiative: Korche Monastery

Korche Provides a Stable Center for Dharma Activity in Eastern Tibet...



©2005 NYEMA Projects



©2005 NYEMA Projects

...But Further Support is Needed

Twenty-one years ago, in 1984, Lama Norlha Rinpoche made his first return visit to his home monastery at Korche since his journey from Tibet took him first to India in 1960 and then to New York City in 1976. In 1984, Korche Monastery was in ruins. Today it is a flourishing center of Dharma activity benefiting the entire region of Eastern Tibet. At Korche, monks are able to enter into the traditional three-year retreat program (currently in its seventh full retreat cycle), to complete post-retreat studies at the monastic college, to fulfill the spiritual needs of the community, and to help preserve traditional Tibetan culture and spiritual practice.

Even though the situation at Korche is stable and flourishing 21 years after Lama Norlha Rinpoche's first return visit, continuing financial support is necessary both to maintain the facilities there and to continue to improve and expand the facilities in accordance with Rinpoche's vision for the benefit of all beings. To contribute, please see the Donation Form on page 7.

Korche Shedra Restored to Full Use

The monks at Korche Monastery are very grateful for the renovations to the shedra (monastic college) building sponsored by NYEMA donors and completed by skilled construction workers last fall. Readers may recall that the original construction, carried out more than 15 years ago by enthusiastic but inexperienced volunteers, had developed some cracks, resulting in hazardous living conditions.

Thanks to the new foundation and the addition of concrete support beams, the structure is now safe and sound, and the monks are once again able to make full use of the shedra facilities.



©2005 NYEMA Projects



©2005 NYEMA Projects

Photos:

Top left: An overview of construction progress at Korche Monastery, 2005.

Middle left: Small stupas at Korche Monastery may be sponsored for \$200 each.

Bottom left: The shedra at Korche, with roof and porch completed. Khenpo Tenrab's new quarters are to the right and Khenpo Sonam Dorje's are to the left. Garchen Tulku, currently a student at the shedra, resides in one of the courtyard rooms.

Bottom right: New back wall of the shedra, with support beams.



NYEMA Schools Continue to Flourish Despite Obstacles

Establishing a Stable School System



In 1997, the first NYEMA school opened its doors in the Korche Valley of Nangchen, Eastern Tibet. Prior to that time, there were no schools close enough for children in the region to attend, and none that taught Tibetan language, history and culture. An estimated 75% of the population was illiterate, and residents feared that their culture and language would disappear within another generation.

Lama Norlha Rinpoche and NYEMA resolved to remedy this situation by creating a system of free education in this poverty-stricken region, providing a basic education

in Tibetan language and culture, Chinese and English languages, and mathematics. They began by establishing Yonten Gatsal Ling (Garden of Joyful Learning) School in the Korche Valley, which is now run by the Chinese government after establishing a strong record of success during its first five years. In addition, in order to reach children unable to travel to this central location, NYEMA has established a network of more than 40 satellite schools over the past decade to teach basic literacy and math skills in outlying areas.

Maintaining Opportunities For Children Eager to Learn

In our fall newsletter, we wrote about the difficulties students must overcome to take advantage of this rare opportunity for education, such as the harsh winters that make travel impossible for two months each year, and the need to help their families with farm and herding work in the warmer months.

Students at NYEMA's schools have proven themselves eager to learn and willing to work hard and overcome obstacles, if the opportunity is there. It is thus very important for NYEMA to maintain this critical educational network and to expand it to accommodate the many children who remain on waiting lists. To help, please see the Donation Form on page 7.

Letter continued from page 1

Lama Norlha Rinpoche asked us all to "please help." We must now ask you to help again, to whatever extent you are able, to assist these devoted nuns in fulfilling their commitment to the benefit of all beings.

There is also some very good news from Kala Rongo: see page 2. Thanks for being part of NYEMA's work in Eastern Tibet.

Best wishes,

Linda Jordan
Editor

Photo: The children of Korche School performing a welcome dance during Lama Norlha Rinpoche's 2004 visit.



Nangchen Healthcare Network: A Snapshot of Progress to Date

From A Bleak Prognosis in 1984...

When Lama Norlha Rinpoche returned to his homeland in eastern Tibet in 1984, he found the population lacking in even the most basic healthcare, resulting in serious illness and deaths from problems that should have been easy to treat. Poverty and lack of transportation prevented access to distant government health facilities.

Remedying this situation became one of NYEMA's four main initiatives in Nangchen: rebuilding Korche monastery, providing a monastery for nuns at Kala Rongo, establishing schools to educate children and help preserve Tibetan language and culture, and establishing medical clinics accessible to all the region's inhabitants. For a synopsis of the history of the NYEMA healthcare initiative, please visit www.nyema.org.

...to Current Projects: Primary Care, Medical Training, and Women's Healthcare

To date, Western healthcare workers have traveled to Tibet with Lama Norlha Rinpoche to evaluate the situation and map out a strategy for introducing relevant Western medical techniques while supporting and strengthening traditional Tibetan medicine; 17 primary care clinics have been established throughout the region; 160 patients have been successfully treated for tuberculosis; and most recently, a clinic and medical training program have been initiated at Kala Rongo to specialize in women's healthcare. This clinic is open part-time and seven students are currently enrolled in medical training.

Donations are used to defray clinic construction costs, to provide medical supplies and equipment for all the clinics, and to purchase texts for the medical training program. Please help us maintain and expand this essential program that is improving and saving lives throughout Nangchen on a daily basis. All donations are tax deductible to the extent of the law. Please see the Donation Form on page 7.



©2005 NYEMA Projects

Photo: The medical clinic at Kala Rongo.

NYEMA Projects, Inc. Donation Form

Through investing financial resources, educational or medical supplies, time or skills, you can help the people of Nangchen improve their standard of living and protect their unique cultural heritage. Less than 5% of funding provided by our donors goes to administrative overhead. On behalf of the people of Nangchen, we thank you for your interest in these initiatives

I would like to contribute to the following:

- NYEMA Projects (general) \$ _____
- Monastic Initiative (general) \$ _____
- Kala Rongo Monastery \$ _____
- Kala Rongo Three-year Retreat \$ _____
- Kala Rongo Shedra (college) \$ _____
- Korche Monastery \$ _____
- Korche Shedra (college) \$ _____
- Korche Three-year Retreats \$ _____
- Damkar Monastery \$ _____
- Samten Ling \$ _____

- Education Initiative (general) \$ _____
- Yongten Gatsal Ling \$ _____
- Satellite Schools \$ _____
- Korche School \$ _____
- Kala Rongo Children's School \$ _____
- Medical Initiative (general) \$ _____
- KR Shrine Hall Emergency Fund \$ _____
- Community Initiative (general) \$ _____
- Water Project \$ _____
- Senior Housing \$ _____
- Solar Power Project \$ _____

- Sponsor stupa at Korche Monastery \$200
- Sponsor Nyunge practice at Kala Rongo:
 - \$300 for 100 \$1,500 for 500 \$3,000 for 1,000
- Sponsor food at: Kala Rongo Korche
- Select the meal(s) by circling the amount(s).

	Regular day	Chanting day
Breakfast	\$30	\$50
Lunch	\$100	\$120
Dinner	\$30	\$50
All 3 meals	\$160	\$220
Tea	\$20	\$20

Total donation: \$ _____

Special Instructions (if any) _____

Payment Options (Please print clearly to ensure proper handling.)

- Check in the amount of \$ _____ is enclosed.
- Charge US \$ _____ to my credit card: Visa MC

Card # _____ Expires _____ / _____

Name as it appears on card: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Important note: For your protection, please **do not** e-mail your credit card number. You may send this form by mail, or fax to (845) 297-5761. Charges must be sent to NYEMA Projects in Wappingers Falls, New York.

In Hong Kong only*:

Payable to **NYEMA (Hong Kong) Association Limited** and send to:

A. Michael Bough
 Bough & Co. Solicitors
 Rm. 2407, 24th Fl., Nan Fung Tower
 173 Des Voeux Rd.
 Central, Hong Kong
 For your convenience, NYEMA (Hong Kong) Association Limited donations can be wired directly to: DBS Bank (Hong Kong) Limited (SWIFT: DHBKHKHH), A/C 788083955. Bank address: 16th Fl, The Centre, 99 Queen's Road, Central, Hong Kong.

To ensure proper handling, please complete the following:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: Day () _____ Eve () _____

Fax: () _____ E-mail: _____

Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent of US law.
 NYEMA Projects, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charity.
 NYEMA (Hong Kong) Association Limited is a Hong Kong SAR government registered charity.