

**CHUCKCHI LHAKHANG  
CHUME GEWOG BUMTHANG  
BHUTAN**

**CONSTRUCTION OF A KITCHEN, A KARMI SHED, A MONK HOUSE  
AND A MANIWALL, PROJECT OF THE INHABITANTS OF CHUME,  
THE DZONGKHAG BUMTHANG  
AND THE GERMAN-BHUTAN-HIMALAYA-SOCIETY**

**PROJECT REPORT BY PROF. MANFRED GERNER**

# CHUCKCHI LHAKHANG



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## Location and name

The as Bumthang designated landscape is centrally located in Bhutan and consists of 4 valleys:

Chume  
Choskhor  
Tang and  
Ura.

Coming from the west, from Thimphu via Wangdu Phodrang, the Pele La, Trongsa and the Yotung-La you will reach Chume as the first valley in Bumthang.

After many kilometers distance covered passing lots of mountains, forests and rhododendrons you realize the nearness of settlements with maniwalls and than you come across with a Lhakhang, so to speak as entrance and welcome of the cultural landscape of Bumthang: the Chuckchi Lhakhang. Next to the highway, which connects west and east of Bhutan and the steeply bank of Gyatsa-Chu the Lhakhang is located. It seems to be a little bit like a fortress with closed walls in the west, south and north. The front which lines up to the east opens completely with a regular wooden framed wall.

The Chuckchi-Lhakang has a signal effect: You reach it coming from the jagged mountains to a very densely populated landscape of culture and in fact a landscape of culture influenced by the Mahayana Buddhism.



The name of the Lhakang is spoken, written and interpreted in different ways: Chuckchi Lhakang, Chuckchan zhay Lhakang or Chuckchizhe Lhakang.

The right name is Tshuk Tshig Tshel Lhakang; Tshuk means “ten”, Tshig “one” and Tshel “face”, therefore the word means translated word-to-word: “ten and one face”. This is the Tibetan and Bhutanese paraphrase for the compassionate Bodhisattva Tshenrezig in his eleven-headed and one-thousand-armed shape.

Ten heads are shown in a peaceful expression, while one face is shown in a half-angry shape: "Ten and one faces". In Sanskrit Tshenrezig means Avalokiteshvara; he is one of the highest worshipped deities of Mahayana and Tibetan Buddhism. In the divine group of Rigsum Gönpö (Rig-gsum mgon-po) he is combined with the Bodhisattva Manjusri (Jampeyang) and Vajrapani (Chagna Dorje) and holds the middle of the group. These deities are also present on the altar.

On top of the altar there is also the main statue of the eleven-headed one-thousand-armed Tshenrezig (Chenrezig). 11 heads and 1000 arms can reduce sorry and misery, but at least they can not heal for all time.



## **The legend**

One of the legends which exist in Bhutan, belong to the story of the largeness of the Lhakhang.

Dhrubaraj Sharma, an architect from Kerala, relates the following story. A man from Chume once went to Tibet to buy salt. Some of the Tibetan men told this person of the wonderful Potala palace of the Dalai Lamas in Lhasa. Not to be left out in the religious tales the man from Chume told the following sentence to the Tibetans on Chuckchi Lhakhang: "nga chey Bumthang Chukchi Lhakhang, Nima Ni la Kora chi" (We will circulate the Chuckchi Lhakhang). "The Tibetans were led to believe that Chuckchi Lhakhang was so huge that it would take two days to complete a Kora. It seems he purposely did not clarify the fact that the Lhakhang is located in between Trongsa (Tongsa) and Gaytsa and it used to take one day by walk to reach from one place to another." The Tibetans took it that the Chuckchi Lhakhang would be so large, that its Kora would take up two days. The man from Chume did not tell the Tibetans that he himself thought about the way to Tongsa and back. In Tibet people therefore believed in the large Lhakhang with the name Chuckchi up today.

## **Some facts to the history of Chuckchi Lhakhang**

The origin of Chuckchi Lhakhang lies in the dark of history. The form and size of the main construction point out to the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century. Originally the Lhakhang was made of a high room, whose ceiling and roof were carried of 4 pillars (kachens). Elderly people of Chume remind this situation. Round about 1946/47 people divided this high room in two floors. The high of the base floor measures just 1.90 metres.

People took two pillars for the floor downstairs from the ruins of a part of the Buli Lhakhang. Then they built on the east-side of the court a staircase to reach the upper floor.

After reconstruction of the building 1946/47 the Lhakhang owned also a room in the base which was used as a store-room, sometimes it was used also as an overnight accommodation.

The Dukhang with the altar was established in the upper floor. 4 pillars in this room divide it in 9 bays.

The altar is arranged to the west side. Beside the large statue of Tshenrezig the altar contains among other things figures of Manjusri (Jampeyang) and Buddha Shakyamuni, Amitayus (Tsepame), Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche) 2x, Shabdung Nawang Namgyäl, Vajrapani (Chagna Dorje), a picture of Shambala as well as volumes of the Kanjur. Further on there is a footprint of a saint who is worshipped highly. With all these objects the shrine contains most important deities for the religious people of Bhutan and its importance is therefore emphasized.



## The realization of the project

In summer 2005 the inhabitants of Chume gave a document of the Lhakhang of the Indian architect Dhrubaraj Sharma to the Department of Culture. The inhabitants asked the Department of Culture for help in order to build an accommodation for the monks, redevelopment of the temple and during this redevelopment the roof should be changed. After the redevelopment the roof should be on one level. This demand was also given to Prof. Gerner combined with the request for financial help of the German-Bhutan Himalaya Society for this project. Therefore, a delegation of the German-Bhutan-Himalaya-Society visited the village Chume in October 2005. During this journey the delegation was friendly welcomed and the eldest people of the village explained their ideas and concepts of the future construction works. One day after this meeting Prof. Gerner had an appointment with the Dzongda and Dzongrab of Bumthang in Jakar. He was informed that the administration strives for another version of redeveloping the temple. Mr. Gerner asked to organize a meeting with Dzongkhag, administration and the inhabitants with the subject of putting the building necessities in concrete terms.



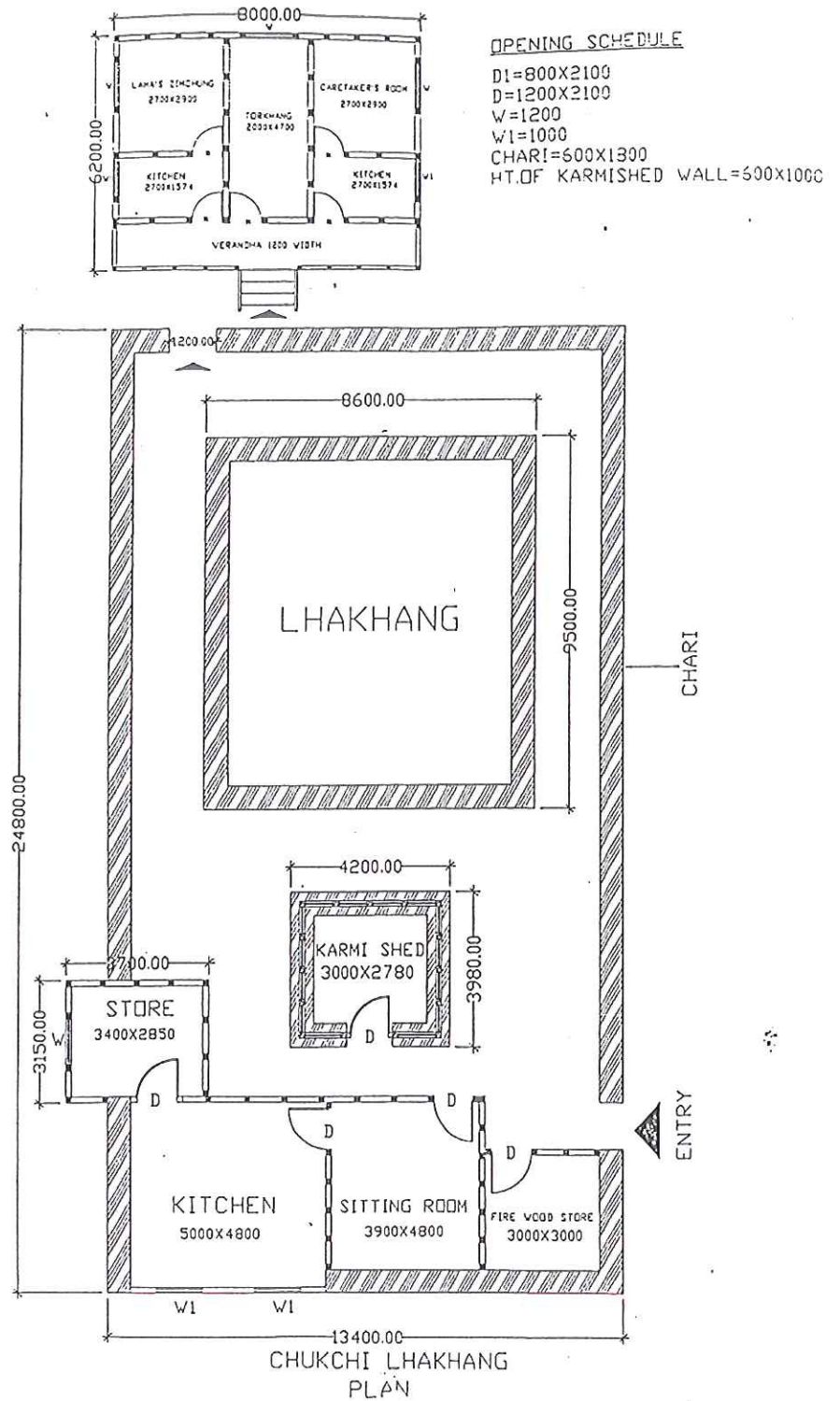
The old kitchen and karmi shed





Meeting with the eldest of Chume and a delegation of the German-Bhutan-Himalaya-Society

First draft of the Dzongkhag administration Bumthang

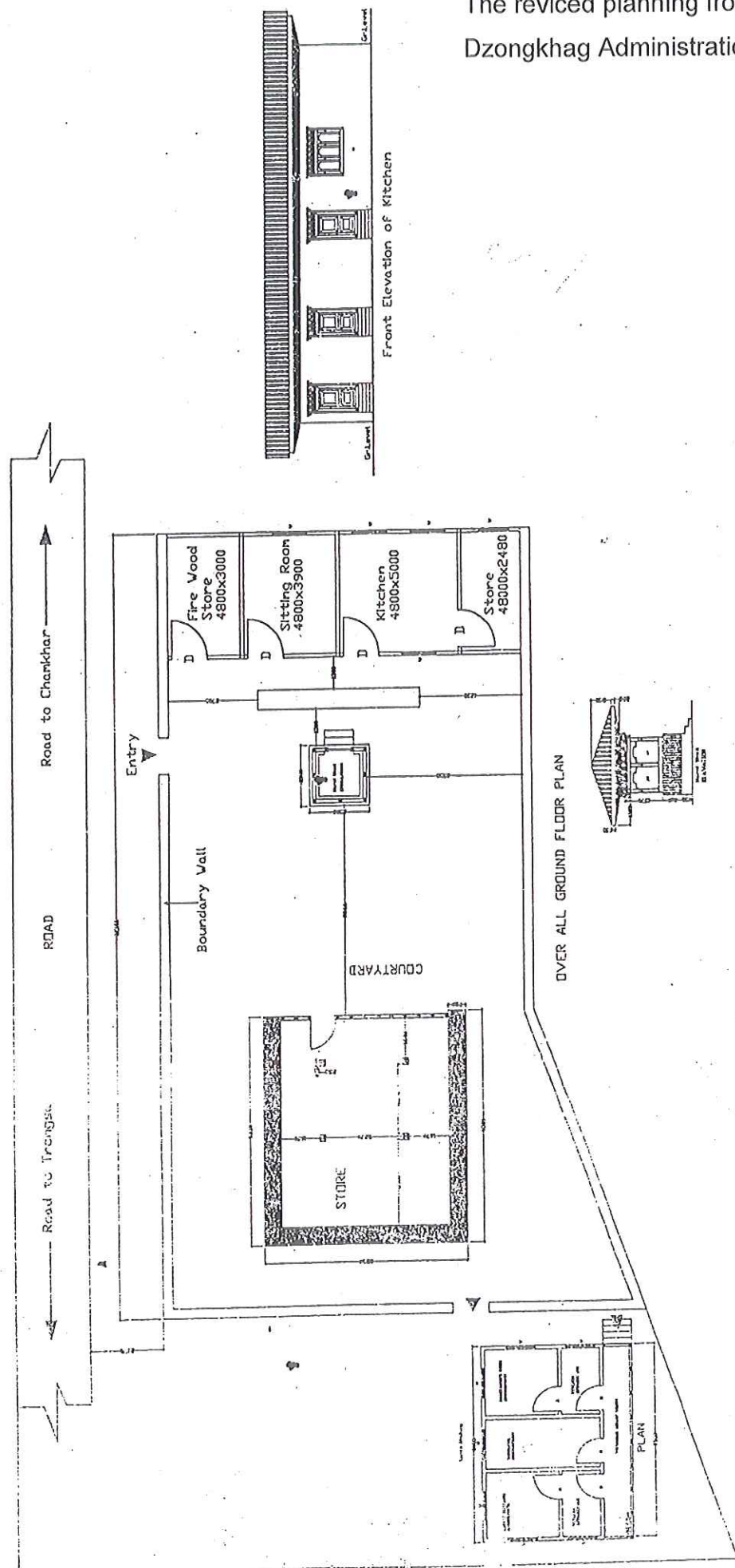


The calculated costs were 919,260.00 NU. The board of directors of the German-Bhutan-Himalaya-Society agreed to finance this project with the total amount mentioned above.

On September 26, 2006 Prof. Gerner met Dzongrab Pema Jungnay, the eldest of the village and the carpenter master. There were just some little changes in the planning concerning the dimension of the Karmi Shed and the kitchen, that means the dimension of the Karmi Shed should be reduced and therefore the kitchen should be enlarged. After having spoken about these changes an agreement has been drafted and signed and without any hesitation the place on which the house for the monks should be built has been staked out.



The revised planning from the Dzongkhag Administration Bumthang



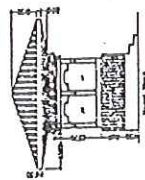
Road to Chankhar

ROAD

Road to Trongsa

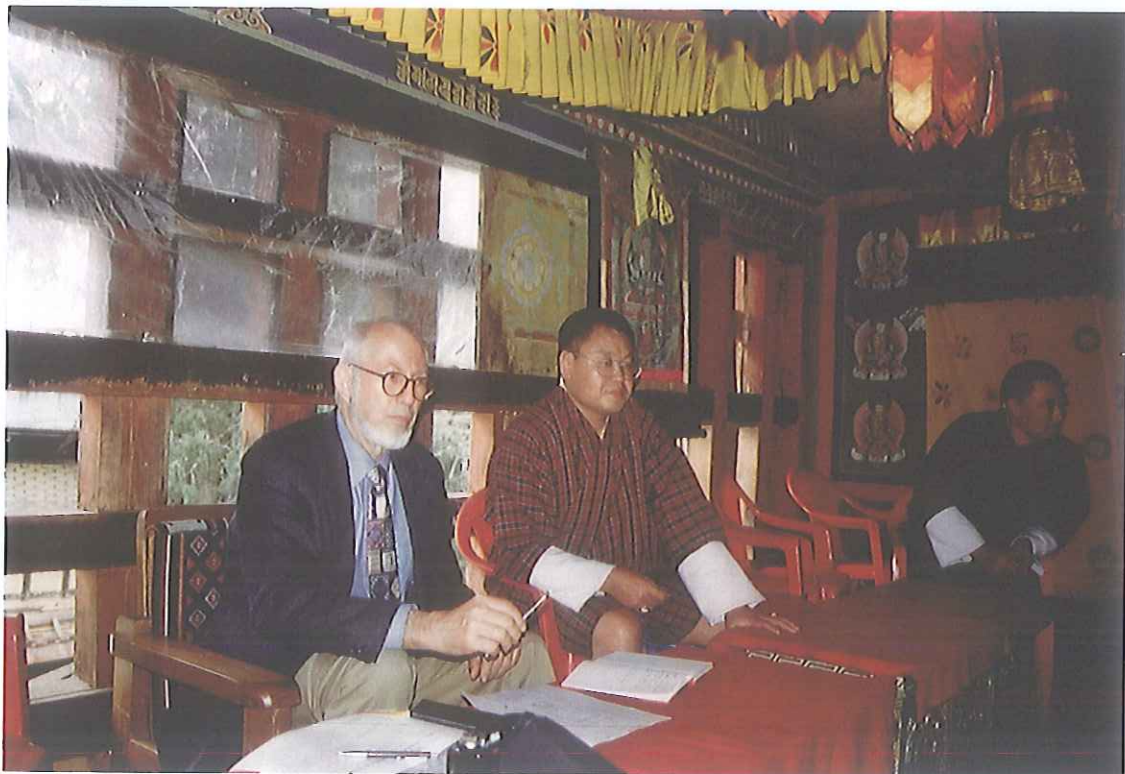
Front Elevation of Kitchen

OVER ALL GROUND FLOOR PLAN

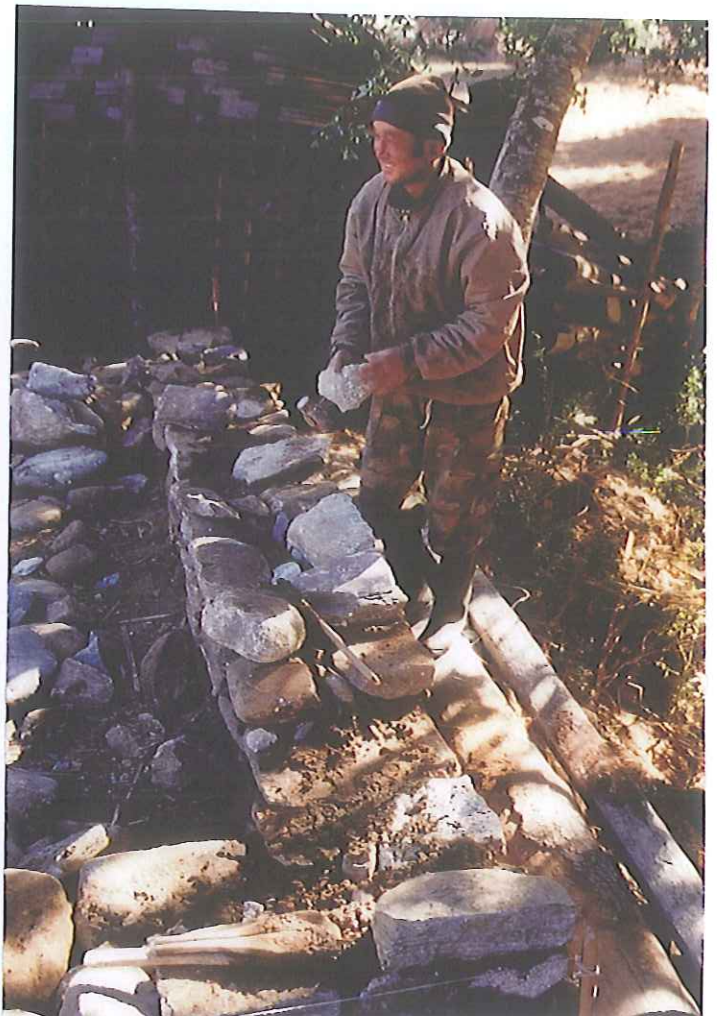
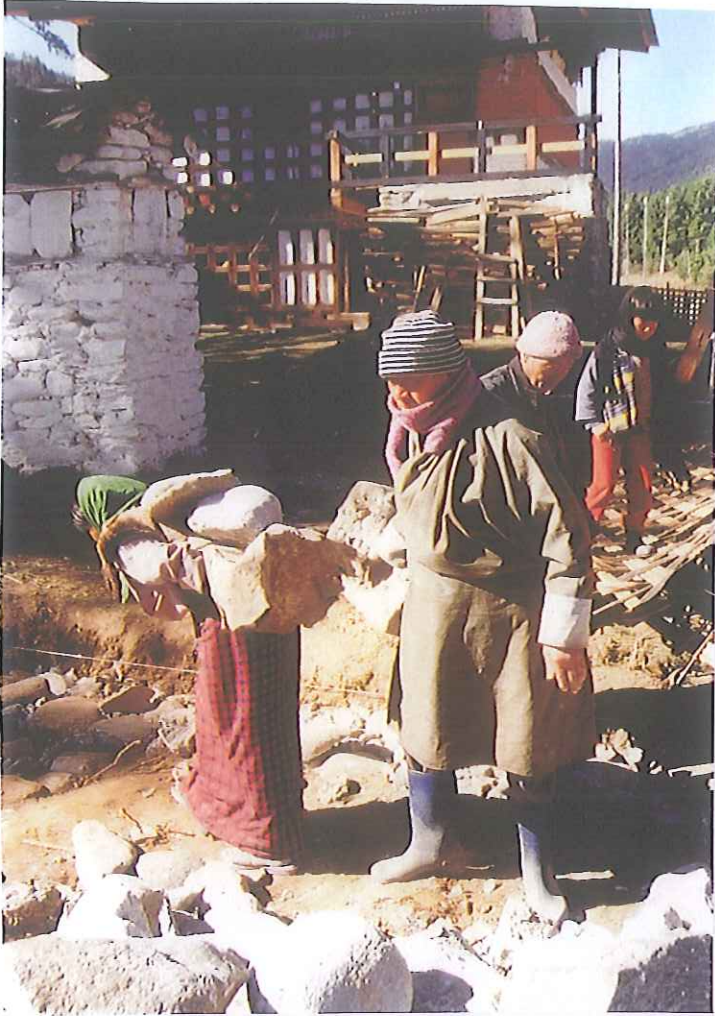


Front Elevation

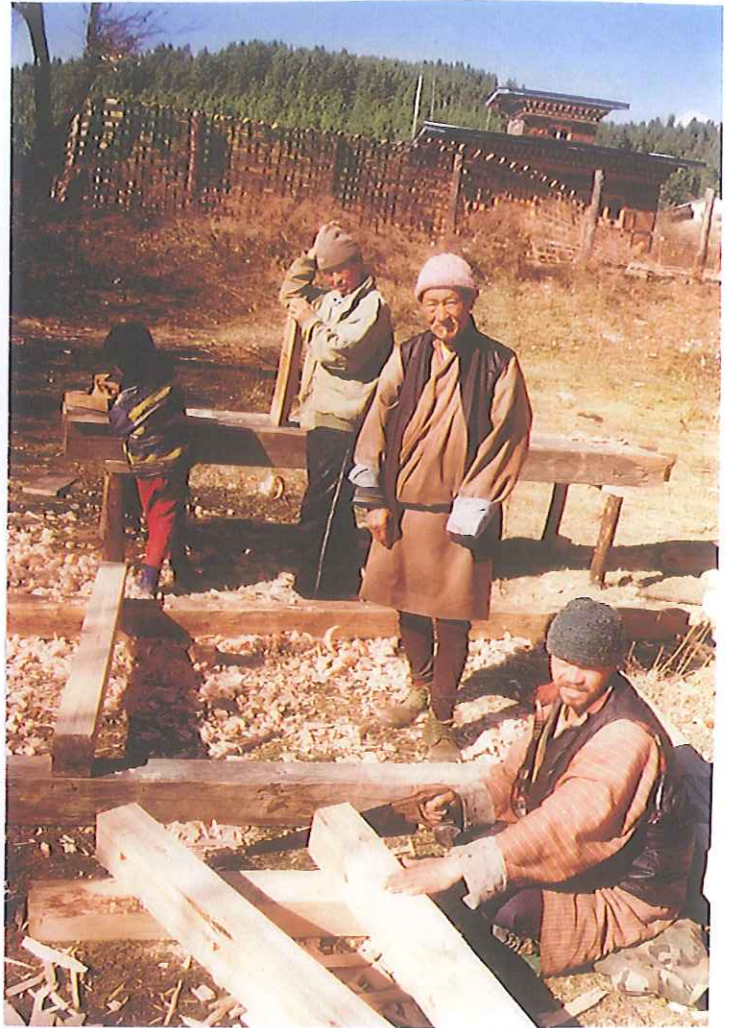
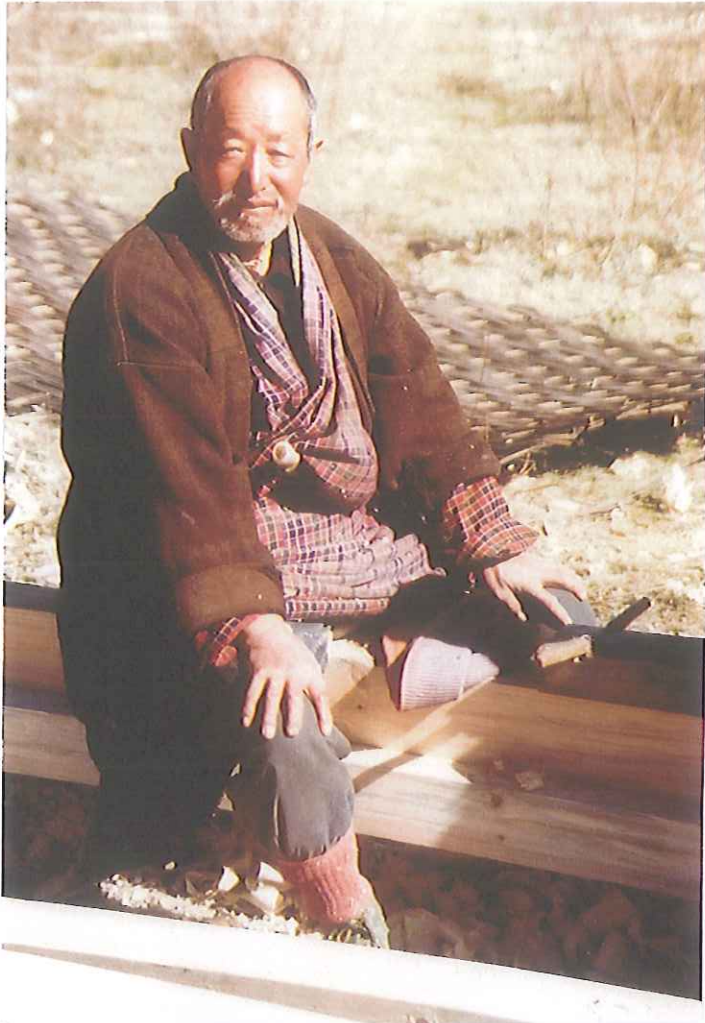
In December 2007, Prof. Gerner and the Dzongrab Dasho Pema Jungnay and Sangay Kinga of the DOC visited the site and after investigation of some details they realized that the quality, especially the foundations of the kitchen and the Karmi Shed and the wooden work for windows and doors were of a very good quality. During this stay they also realized that all the inhabitants of Chume beginning by the youngest to the eldest people have worked hard to fulfil this project.



On the site



The carpenter's place





On the occasion of the coronation ceremony of Druk Gyalpo Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck, the 5<sup>th</sup> Druk Gyalpo, from November 6 to November 8, 2008, the new building of the Chuckchi Lhakhang with all its small buildings should be opened by the administration of the Dzongkhag Bumthang, the inhabitants of Chume and Prof. Gerner together with a delegation of 12 members of the German-Bhutan- Himalaya-Society.

The German-Bhutan-Himalaya-Society shows respect to the king and the people of Bhutan for Gross National Happiness and wishes fortune and contentment.

In November 2008

Prof. Manfred Gerner

President of the German-Bhutan-Himalaya-Gesellschaft



