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Friendship from the beginning

by Dr. Saamdu Chetri, Dy-Resident Co-ordinator Helvetas / SDC, 1988-2006



33 HM Queen Mother, Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck (1960)



34 Lisina von Schulthess (1955)

1948

Two gracious ladies met during their studies at the house of citizenship in London in 1948 and became very close friends; Ashi Kesang Choden Dorji daughter of Raja S. T. Dorji and Rani Chöni Dorji and Lisina von Schulthess, daughter of Fritz von Schulthess and Monica von Schulthess, Swiss Industrialists. In November 1949, Mr. and Mrs. von Schulthess visited the Dorji family in Bhutan House, Kalimpong on their invitation. It was the beginning of a long lasting friendship between the two families and the two mountainous countries Switzerland and Bhutan, which are similar in size, locked in between giants, and share challenging topographical set-

tings. Ashi Kesang Choden's family, since the beginning of the Wangchuck dynasty, had very close relation with the throne and had served as Deb Zimpons and chieftains of Haa since 1907.

When, in 1952, Ashi Kesang Choden tied the royal matrimonial knot with the Crown Prince, DASHO JIGME DORJI WANGCHUCK, the legacy of friendship with the von Schulthess family expanded to the throne of Bhutan. Thereafter, a very strong personal friendship developed between the King, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck and Fritz von Schulthess, who called him Pön.

1952

In April 1952, on invitation of Dorji family, the Schulthess family (Fritz von Schulthess, Monica von Schulthess, their daughters Adrienne Schulthess and Cornelia Schulthess) for the first time entered Bhutan via Haa, escorted by Ashi Tesla Dorji from Samtse. They drove from Kalimpong Bhutan House to Chamurchi, an Indian border town close to Samtse followed by a hard six days' ascend to Haa on foot, mules and ponies. They were the guests of the Dorji family in Haa.

After a few days of their arrival, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck invited them to visit Paro where they lived for six nights as royal guests. Fritz von Schulthess was impressed with the striking resemblance Bhutan had with Switzerland in terms of landscape and forest. Bhutan became very close to his heart and between 1950 and 1972 for over two decades several close interactions took place between the throne and Fritz von Schulthess, but all at the personal level; operation of Jigme Palden Dorji in 1950 at Zurich, the royal entourage visited Switzerland in 1953 to give birth to Ashi Sonam Choden Wangchuck at a Zurich hospital.

During this period, His Majesty had interesting visits to Cham, Lugano and other places, experiencing the different kinds of life and culture of ethnically diverse Switzerland.

1955

In September 1955, they again visited Bhutan. This time it was via Phuentsholing to Thimphu and then to Paro where they had an audience with His Majesty, the King of Bhutan.

Both the early visits to Bhutan House, Kalimpong and Bhutan took place during turbulent times; in 1949 Indian Independence and separation of Pakistan, and annexation of Tibet by China where thousands of Tibetans had fled to India and Bhutan. After 1955, their visits to Bhutan were rather frequent. They constantly kept in contact despite a messy postal system. Fritz von Schulthess was invited in 1958, which coincided with the visit of Dr. Jawarlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi to Bhutan. Nehru, during his visit promised bilateral development assistance to Bhutan through a five-year plan mechanism. All these years, the only external assistance the country had received was on a private basis from the Swiss Industrialist, Fritz von Schulthess.

Druk Yi-sing Wangyel for Fritz von Schulthess

1961

In 1961, the year India began its first five-year assistance, the Schulthess family had travelled to Thimphu through a very rough trail, driving on a jeep with a load of seven people and rations. They visited Thimphu again a year later. This time the trip was extended to Gasa, Lingshi, Punakha and Wangdue. The Schulthess family was accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Gugelmann, also Swiss entrepreneurs.

1965

In 1965, they made another visit to Bhutan. It was one of the turbulent times in Bhutan. This time they were accompanied by Nari Rustomji, Bhutan's Prime Minister Jigme Palden Dorji's friend, as the advisor to the Sikkim throne who from time to time was also providing advice to the throne of Bhutan through an Indian advisor, Prithivi Bakshi. They had flown close to Samtse and travelled as far as Bumthang on helicopter and their journey took them to Trashigang, where they had met Fathers Mackey and Kafey, and Brother Quinn, who were early foreign volunteers in the field of education in Bhutan.

The group exited out to Samdrup Jonkhar and flew back from Gauhati. May be their exploration in Bhutan ended during the following visit in 1967, which took them from Thimphu to Punakha, Gasa, and to Lunana. They were accompanied by Professor Augusto Gansser, and Dr. Blanche Olschak from Switzerland. It may be the first time that some studies on glaciers of Bhutan were done during this trip by Professor Gansser who was a geologist from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETHZ) in Zurich.

1967

The year 1967 was a special year in the life of Schulthess family. They not only had the opportunity to meet with Karmapa, head of Drukpa Kajugpa sect, but His Majesty the king of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck conferred to Fritz von Schulthess the Nation's first award of "Druk Yi-sing Wangyel" in appreciation of his support to Bhutan. It may be very appropriate to put the abstract of the translation citation for the award conferred:

"The beautiful and fascinating country of Switzerland is my second country and Fritz von Schulthess of Cham is like my second father.

Apart from the very intimate friendship between us, he has always been a great help and source of inspiration to me and to the people of Bhutan.

He is as Bhutanese more than a Bhutanese and he always did his very best to help the people of Bhutan and contributed tremendously towards the prosperity and progress of Bhutan.

In recognition of his invaluable services and love to the people and country, I, Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, am pleased to confer on Mr. Schulthess the Nation's first award of Druk Yi-sing Wangyel."



In Kürze

Im April 1952 besuchten Fritz von Schulthess und seine Frau Monica Bhutan zum erstenmal. Die Reise von Indien war anstrengend: sechs Tage lang zu Fuss, oder auf dem Rücken von Maultieren. Beide waren tief beeindruckt von der Schönheit des Landes. In Paro genossen sie die Gastfreundschaft des Königs Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. Fritz von Schulthess nannte ihn kurz und bündig Pön. Während der nächsten 20 Jahre reiste Fritz von Schulthess immer wieder nach Bhutan, zweimal war die Königsfamilie auch zu Gast in der Schweiz.

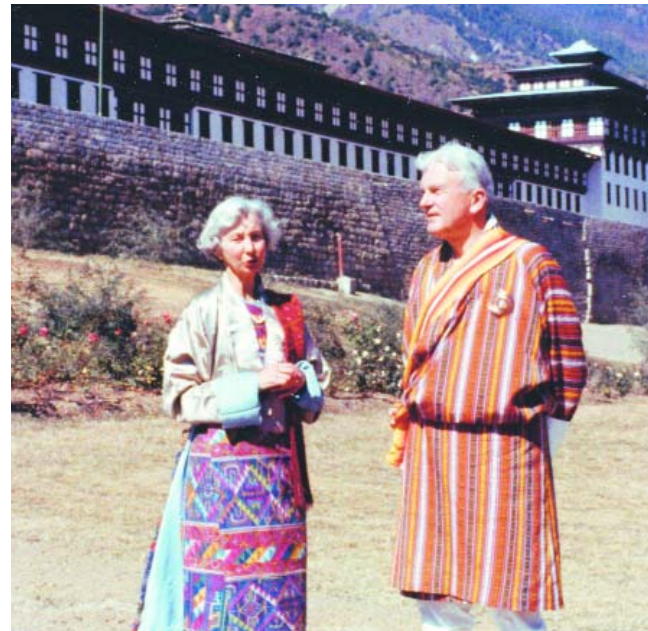
1967 verlieh der König seinem Schweizer Freund die höchste Auszeichnung des Königreichs: Druk Yi-sing Wangyel – in Anerkennung der Unterstützung durch die Familie von Schulthess. "Fritz von Schulthess von Cham ist wie ein zweiter Vater zu mir", schrieb der König in die Urkunde.

En bref

En avril 1952, Fritz von Schulthess et sa femme Monica visitèrent le Bhoutan pour la première fois. Le voyage à partir de l'Inde était pénible: 6 jours à pied ou à dos de mulet en longeant la rivière. Tous deux furent émerveillés par la beauté du pays. À Paro, ils apprécèrent l'hospitalité du roi Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. Fritz von Schulthess l'appelait simplement Pön. Pendant les 20 années suivantes, Fritz von Schulthess s'est rendu régulièrement au Bhoutan, et à deux occasions, la famille royale fut accueillie en Suisse. En 1967, le roi décerna la plus haute distinction du royaume à son ami suisse: Druk Yi-sing Wangyel, en reconnaissance du soutien de la famille von Schulthess. "Fritz von Schulthess de Cham est comme un deuxième père pour moi" écrivait le roi dans l'acte joint à la distinction.

Our contribution to the development of Bhutan

by Fritz von Schulthess, Entrepreneur, in: Souvenirs from Monica and myself. Journal for his grandchildren, Easter 1982



35 Monica and Fritz von Schulthess

In return for the largess and extremely generous hospitality, which the king of Bhutan had extended to us, we tried to give Bhutan something in return.

Stoves and chimneys

First, we sent Franz Bruderer, an expert furnace and chimney craftsman from the town of Schöftland in the Canton Aargau, Switzerland to Bhutan. At the beginning we had noticed that the kitchens in Bhutanese houses used an earthen 'chulo', an open hearth for cooking. There was no chimney for the smoke to escape out of the house. As a result, people sat permanently in thick smoke in their kitchens. The kitchens and everything in them turned pitch black from soot and, of course, the consumption of firewood was disproportionately large. So we thought that a Swiss expert could show them, how, when you build a new house and/or a kitchen, you can equip it with a chimney or a flue. Also, we thought, our expert could show them how, by using a fireplace (cheminée) in winter, rooms could be kept warm. Naturally, all this was meant only for the royal family. Our man remained in Bhutan for three months and



36 Fritz von Schulthess, HM Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck, HM Jigme Dorji Wangchuck

taught young Bhutanese how to build chimneys and fireplaces. The king did not want to hear about the smoke reducing flues. This probably would have changed the old habits too much.

Radio connections

In 1964 the king asked me about a Swiss radio expert. For the control of the borders, mainly against China in the mostly uninhabited and wild mountain areas, he had installed small border posts. The messages brought through runners to Thimphu took several days and the orders back to the posts took again the same amount of time. A radio connection was very valuable for the king. The Indian government would have liked to install such a connection but the Pön (King) wanted to receive information without any possible Indian 'adaptation' or interference.

We sought therefore a radio technician, who in addition should also be a practical man, and found Arthur (Turi) Christen [Tenzing Dorji]. Until his documents and papers were ready for his mission, quite a few months elapsed. Finally, at the end of April 1965, he could finally enter Bhutan. He proved to be a very

versatile and practically talented man. He built the desired radio stations and quick radio connections and links were achieved. Unfortunately, he had to work with obsolete equipment. The receivers and transmitters consisted of old US army equipment from the Second World War. Since Bhutan had practically no foreign exchange reserves (tourism hadn't started yet) new material had to be procured through the Indians and for obvious reasons they refused such requests.

Turi Christen suffered from the fact that there was no bread to be found in all of Bhutan. He asked us, therefore, to send him some yeast but that was difficult at that time, because yeast didn't come packaged in tins. Well, we finally managed to send him some. Now, Turi built a baking oven out of an old gasoline barrel and started to bake his own bread. Soon his bread was in demand from many sides. So he set up a real bakery for which we had to send all kinds of equipment from Switzerland. Next to its radio activity he now ran a bakery with an adjoining tea-room. That business quickly prospered, earning a good reputation under the name of "Swiss Bakery".

In addition to this, all the clocks and watches of the entire royal family as well as cars were sent to him for repair.

While Turi worked at the expense of the government of Bhutan, we – over the years – sent different experts at our expense. But unfortunately, they could not really prevail in their set duties and tasks. First we sent a second radioman as Turi's assistant, then an auto mechanic for whom it was planned that he teach young Bhutanese how to look after automobiles and perform small repairs. He was able to do nothing else but repair the cars of the Royal family at no expense to them, which is not something that can be called development assistance. So in due time we sent him back to Switzerland.

Haflinger Horses

The king had also the wish to try out Haflinger horses in Bhutan. We bought in Innsbruck, Austria at the expense of the king a stallion and five mares. Accompanied by the 18-year old son of the seller, by the name of Schweisgut, the animals travelled to the port of Bremen in Germany to be shipped by an East German ship to Calcutta. Because the Suez Canal was closed at that time, the poor horses had to cross the equator twice, and had to go around the Cape of Good Hope to get to India. In Bombay, the young assistant bought Indian hay so that the animals could get used to the new fodder. After nine months of

travel in great heat on the ship they arrived in Calcutta. There, the dockworkers refused to unload the East-German ship, so that the poor animals had to wait another 40 days in enormous heat outside the port of Calcutta, before the strike was finally ended. I was at that time in Bhutan and was able to arrange that these horses were to be transported on trucks only as far as Phunthsoling. From there they would go on foot to Thimphu. In that way the horses could get used to walking again and also adjust to the great differences in climate and elevation. The Haflinger breed turned out to be ideal for Bhutan. They bred well and were crossed successfully with domestic horses. Later, the Austrian government provided for fresh blood by sending another group of horses as a gift to Bhutan. The Haflinger horses were used in Gogona and later in Bumthang in some of our projects.

Erosion control

In 1968, we were again on a short visit in Bhutan. For two weeks prior to our arrival it had rained incessantly. The rivers had risen and, here and there, landslides had obstructed the rivers and temporarily dammed them up. Because it kept raining, the creeks and rivers swelled to new heights and broke through the emerging barricades and obstructions. The waters tore trees from their roots and large rocks came rushing down, crashing what was in the way of the torrents of water. Many bridges were destroyed, including the charming bridges in Paro, Thimphu and Wangdiphodrang, but also the chain bridge above the confluence of rivers in Thamchogang. Only in the year 1980 were the chains found again. More than 70 houses were destroyed at that time.

The rains and floods in the Indian plain, especially in Jalpaiguri, caused an even greater disaster. These events strengthened me in the view that Bhutan had to have greatly improved agriculture and forestry development, serving primarily the forests, so that erosion does not get the upper hand. These hundred-year old bridges would not have been destroyed if the depletion of forests had not gone on unchecked.

Thus, our Dairy-and-Forest-project has the goal of showing the Bhutanese how they can get a better return from their agriculture while simultaneously preserving and using the forests by sustainable harvesting.



37 The Royal family

Cheese production

At the beginning our project had no clear purposes. I knew that they produced cheese in Nepal. Swiss churchmen (Swiss Fathers) in Kalimpong also produced cheese, which was in high demand. So, I thought, let's get going! In Switzerland in 1967 I hired a cheese expert, by the name of Josef Dubach, in Switzerland and sent him to Bhutan to start cheese production. He travelled to Bhutan and once there was sent near the vicinity of the Black Mountain area: At an elevation of 4000 meters he started to build his dairy. When it was all beautifully finished and the building had been furnished with real copper kettles and the like, Dubach realized that there was not enough milk. The cows only produced one to two litres of milk a day. That wasn't even enough to raise the calves. Dubach gave notice and we sent a second cheese-maker, Fritz Maurer, who quickly changed gears. He realized that he first had to go in for real dairy farming. The breed of cows in Bhutan was very resistant to the harsh weather and in good health, but it produces little milk and yields hardly any meat to speak of. Thus, he had to get cows which gave much milk and whose meat was also to

be put to good use. From an Indo-Swiss-farm in Kerala, India, Fritz Maurer was able to buy a number of Swiss brown cows and breeding bulls. The transport of these animals from far away India to Gogona in Bhutan, where Fritz Maurer had decided to build his dairy farm, was beset by much bureaucratic obstructions, because at the various border posts overzealous officials did not want to let the animals pass, because they were afraid of diseases and of the risk of infection. Finally, the transport reached Gogona where it was snowing and the animals could recover from the heat of India. Now the necessary fodder had to be procured. All kinds of seed were sent from Switzerland, clover, cabbage and grass. But the yields differed widely. The first hay was produced and other products landed in the silos. During summer, the cows were out on the meadows, during the night they could go to the newly built stable, so that soon a pile of manure was available for increasing the yields. The Bhutanese were in the habit of cultivating their land for one year and thereafter letting it rest for two years. We were able to show the local population that if you fertilize the land with manure there would be a yield each year.



38 HM Jigme Dorji Wangchuck and Fritz von Schulthess (1955)

How to get on with setbacks

But there were also setbacks. For example in the first year, the cabbage seeds from Switzerland brought a great yield for silage. In the second year however the cabbage butterfly had developed and devoured the entire harvest.

And our brown cattle had difficulty in adapting to the other food-stuffs. Then ticks developed, against which the local cattle was immune, but they invested by the thousands the bellies of our good brown cows until they were nearly or entirely dead. In the whole of Bhutan no means against this tick was to be found. Finally, after long months we got a remedy from Switzerland. It turned out that we had to crossbreed local and Swiss cows in order to get the most favourable animal for successfully inhabiting this country. The exact ratio of crossbreeding, which is best for Bhutan, whether 50/50, 75/25 or 25/75%, can only be determined locally by rather long-time trials.

In the mountain valleys around Gogona (about 3000 meters above sea level) the local population is very conservative. They viewed our development efforts rather sceptically. Because Fritz Maurer was the only foreigner in Gogona and the local

people only spoke the Bhutanese language, he had to quickly learn the local language. As soon as he could make himself understood, he was able to explain his ideas to the people. Then slowly the ice melted, reticence and restraint disappeared. The local people noticed soon that more cows grazed now on their pastures than before when the cows were out day and night, summer and winter. They also noticed that fertilizers allowed them to cultivate their fields not only every third year but each year and gave a higher yield than before. The good looks and the yield of the cows, which had been crossed, with the Swiss cows also made an impression.

How to celebrate a birthday

Fritz Maurer took up residence in the Gömpa (monastery). This Gömpa is a cult site and inhabited by many lamas. But most of the lamas don't live there but on their farms with their wives and children.

In 1972 when I celebrated my 70th birthday in Gogona, we paid the main lama a visit in his beautiful house. He treated us royally with buttered tea, Chang and Arrack which was served in big water glasses. Because it was only 11 in the morning we didn't drink too much of it. Then in the evening there was a large birthday party in the Gömpa. The people naturally came to the party in droves, because we served some treats. It was thinned rum, rice and vegetables. The main lama with his wife was also there. She must have drunk the rest of the Arrack after we had left her house. In any case, one glass of the drink sufficed to get her so inebriated that she sat for hours as stiff as a broomstick in a remote corner of the holy place. This was however an isolated case. When I was in western Bhutan, I didn't see any alcohol abuse to speak of.

Better use of the woods

Next to cattle raising, we also promoted the care and maintenance of the forests. We sent Swiss forestry engineers and foresters to Gogona. As the general population gradually came to realize that they could get a higher yield from the land under cultivation, they also realized that it was wrong to cut down the forests simply to get more land for herding the cows as they had done in the past. We also had to make clear to the people that it was wrong to cut only the trees at the forest edge and not look after the rest of the forest. In this way they reduced the available forest but in the deeper parts of the forest, the

trees suffered from overaging and huge half rotten trees took away so much light that hardly any new young trees managed to grow. So we built small forest trails and/or built small gravity cable-cranes in order to get into the interior parts of the forests and care for the trees there. Clear cutting was avoided whenever possible. This way the population still got their firewood for their kitchen but also for building their houses, etc. We also introduced other ways to make better use of the wood. For example, the Bhutanese didn't know the saw. With the hatchet they cut a single wooden board out of a whole tree. We introduced the wood saw and showed them how, depending on the diameter, it was possible to cut four or more boards out of one log. In this manner we brought many other good practices from Switzerland to Bhutan.

But our efforts in cattle-raising and forest management were no instant success. It needed many years of sustained efforts to show good results and speak of success. This led us to look for ways of reaching our goals more quickly.

Growing other products than rice

Although the Bhutanese subsist mainly on rice, they were quite interested in growing other products, especially if they were able to sell them quickly, as for example, the potatoes. All of their potatoes were susceptible to potato blight. We were in a position to import disease resistant seeds from Switzerland and other countries, for example Mexico. Already in the first year the harvesting success was great and after two, three years, the "Swiss potatoes" were renowned in all of Bhutan and this mainly because the yield was a multiple of the previous potato harvest. But the successfully satisfied market became a problem. So the government stepped in, bought the potatoes at harvest time, developed proper means of storage and sold their potato reserves gradually in the country as well as to export markets.

Another problem was the marketing of apples. In 1952, the year of our first trip to Bhutan, we hardly saw any apple orchards. The government started to promote apple production by giving away young trees to their farmers. Beginning in the seventies, there was a great overproduction of apples. They were the kind of apples, which did not keep for very long. Fritz Maurer decided to buy two large cider presses in Switzerland. This permits us now to pick the apples immediately. For the cider, a good market exists in Bhutan and India.



39 Opening of the Aum Monica Project, Bumthang, 1976

Project handing-over

In 1967 our project began with the efforts of Josef Dubach to make cheese in Maneting; it was continued as an agricultural and forestry enterprise by Fritz Maurer in Gogona in 1969. We were able to hand over this project to the local people while a Swiss agriculturalist stood by to give advice or lend a helping hand if need be. In the same year the 'Rural Development Project' was started in Bumthang that has since developed admirably. In Bumthang a hospital under the direction of a Swiss physician was affiliated with the agriculture and forestry project.

"Aum Monica Project"

While my wife Monika and I alone originally led the entire project which we financed with the help of friends, in 1971 the Swiss Government began to support us financially after the Foundation 'Stiftung Pro Bhutan' was set up. As the load of administrative work became increasingly heavier and I could no longer execute it correctly, I turned over the administrative and financial direction in 1974 to HELVETAS, the Swiss Develop-

ment Organisation for assistance to developing countries, headquartered in Zurich. This organisation continues to lead the project to the highest standards, whereby the mission tasks are always increasing. Unfortunately our work in Bhutan was also beset by grave accidents. One of our young Bhutanese counterparts was murdered in the vicinity of Gogona by a group of thieves, another died in a car accident and our excellent colleague and expert in all matters of cattle-raising, Fritz Meister, perished while on a boat trip in Charmorchu. We thank all our Swiss and Bhutanese colleagues for their efforts and we are saddened that the work is also connected with large risks.

On the occasion of our visit in 1976, the project was opened officially by Monica in the presence of Tenge Lyonpo. It was baptized the "Aum Monica Project", which name was later abandoned by HELVETAS. Monica spoke some suitable words and cut the silk ribbon. On this occasion I would like to sincerely thank Tenge Lyonpo, HRH Prince Namgyel Wangchuck for his efforts and assistance for making the project a success.

In Kürze

Mit Schreibmaschine geschrieben und mit Originalphotos illustriert, so hat Fritz von Schulthess seinen Enkeln die abenteuerlichen Erlebnisse in Bhutan weitergegeben. Er erzählt, wie er als erstes den Ofenbauer Franz Bruderer aus Schöffland nach Bhutan schickte, damit er dem königlichen Haushalt anständige Öfen baue. Als nächstes kam ein Radioexperte, weil der König eine Funkverbindung zur Grenze mit China wünschte. Turi Christen war der Mann, der nicht nur sämtliche Uhren reparierte, sondern später auch noch die "Swiss Bakery" in Thimphu begründete. 1967 wurden Josef Dubach und Fritz Maurer ins Drachenland geschickt, um Milchwirtschaft und Käseproduktion zu entwickeln. Forstwirtschaft war ein weiterer Schwerpunkt. Wenn die Bhutaner ein Brett brauchten, fällten sie einen Baum und schlugen mit Äxten ein Brett zurecht. Die Schweizer lehrten sie, dass man mit einer Säge aus einem Stamm mehrere Bretter schneiden kann. All diese Projekte und viele mehr, finanzierte die Familie von Schulthess aus eigener Tasche, oder mit Hilfe von Freunden. 1971 wurde die Stiftung pro Bhutan gegründet, 1974 übergab Fritz von Schulthess die Projekte an Helvetas.

En bref

C'est au moyen de rapports dactylographiés agrémentés de photos originales que Fritz von Schulthess a transmis ses impressions du Bhoutan à ses petits-enfants. Il raconte qu'en tout premier, il avait envoyé le constructeur de poêles Franz Bruderer de Schöffland au Bhoutan afin qu'il construise des fourneaux "convenables" pour la famille royale. Ensuite il envoya un expert en communication radio car le roi voulait disposer d'une liaison radio avec la frontière chinoise. Cet expert était Turi Christen, qui ne se contenta pas de réparer toutes les montres et horloges, mais qui ouvrit également la « Swiss Bakery » à Thimphu. En 1967, Joseph Dubach et Fritz Maurer se rendirent dans le "Royaume du Dragon" pour y développer la production laitière et fromagère. La foresterie était un autre point fort. Lorsque les Bhoutanais avaient besoin d'une planche, ils abattaient un arbre et façonnaient une planche à la hache. Les Suisses leur ont appris à scier les troncs pour en tirer plusieurs planches. Ces projets et beaucoup d'autres ont été financés par la famille von Schultess, ou avec le soutien d'amis. En 1971 fut créée la Fondation Pro Bhutan, et en 1974 Fritz von Schulthess remettait les projets à Helvetas.

Swiss Kids: We got two Bhutanese elephants!

About 1.000.000 persons a year are visiting the Zoo of Zurich, half of them are kids. The two elephants Druk and Chhukha have lived there for 40 years. Thus, more than twenty million kids have enjoyed seeing the Bhutanese elephants – a present of the 3rd King of Bhutan. Twenty million words of thanks are going to Bhutan.

20 million
words of
thanks sent
to Bhutan

Swiss newspapers informed in 1968 in detail:

Accompanied by loud and repeated flourishes, little Chhukha welcomed the visitors of the zoo. However, only protest due to hunger could have been the reason for this powerful music. As fast as lightning, she lowered her trunk into the bucket of milk, guiding it into her mouth and back. The director of the zoo explained that Chhukha is just outgrowing infancy and she still has a problem with ingesting liquid food the way older elephants do. The full-grown elephant does not absorb the water through the trunk; he just fills it and then leads it to his mouth in order to quench thirst.

In Kürze

Der König war dankbar und revanchierte sich: Mit zwei Elefanten für den Zürcher Zoo. 1978 kamen die Elefantenbabys "Druk" und "Chhukha" mit dem Flugzeug in die Schweiz. Der Zootierpfleger Ruedi Tanner begleitete die Dickhäuter auf ihrer langen Reise.

One of the biggest problems was the transport of the two elephants from Bhutan. Finally, an airplane was organised with a rear to be flapped sideways, thus allowing for an entrance broad enough for the elephants to be pushed through. The keeper, Ruedi Tanner, accompanied the two little elephants on their journey around the world. The initiator was Fritz von Schulthess in 1968.

Unfortunately, Chhukha died in 2006. During those 40 years of her life she was a tremendous eater and grew over time from a little girl-elephant of 220 kg to a lady-elephant of 4500 kg. Druk, the other elephant, still lives in the zoo and now enjoys respect and consideration.

En bref

Le roi, reconnaissant, offrit en contrepartie deux éléphants au zoo de Zurich. En 1978, les éléphanteaux "Druk" et "Chhukha" arrivèrent en Suisse par avion, accompagnés pendant ce long voyage par le gardien de zoo Ruedi Tanner.



40 Young elephants in the Zoo of Zurich



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A wonderful present of the King of Bhutan



43 Old Lady Chhukha dancing (2006)

The Foundation Pro-Bhutan

by Dr. Saamdu Chetri, Dy-Resident Co-ordinator Helvetas / SDC, 1988-2006

Dairy and Forestry Project in Bumthang

In 1971, when the people of Bumthang asked His Royal Highness (HRH), Prince Namgyel Wangchuck, for a dairy farm in Bumthang. In those days, Bumthang was considered one of the poorest districts in the country. It was also the wish of His Majesty to begin development work in Bumthang. During the same year, Fritz von Schulthess decided to start the so-called Foundation Pro-Bhutan to give the assistance a broader and secured base. Peter A. Wiesmann visited Bhutan as the first Swiss government official on the request of the Foundation to support the Dairy and Forestry Project in Bumthang. Based on his advice, the Foundation later sought assistance from Helvetas, a Swiss Non-Governmental Organisation formed in 1955 in Switzerland. The success of dairy development and the early base of Swiss Assistance to Bhutan are due to the committed patronage of HRH Prince Namgyel Wangchuck (brother of the 3rd King), the Tengyel Lyonpo (Minister for Trade, Industry and Forests).

Under the Foundation Pro-Bhutan, the Dairy and Forestry Project (DFP) was created in Bumthang in 1972-73. DFP was governed by a board of directors chaired by HRH, the Tengyel Lyonpo. For the office's infrastructural set-up land was selected at Bapalythang and at Kharsumpe; a historical building along with an old apple orchard became part of the project area. Due to the fodder shortage at Gogona, six purebred brown Swiss cows were sent to Bumthang. Ernst Meister, a competent cattle breeder, arrived at Gogona and later moved to Bumthang, where he unfortunately drowned kayaking in the Chamkhar River. During this time, the important decision was taken that cows should not be purebred, as they were not strong enough in the harsh environment of Bumthang.

In 1973 a preparatory mission was set up by the Foundation Pro Bhutan, consisting of Prof. F. Fischer, forestry expert, Dr. R. Schatz, economist, and Dr. M. Menzi, agronomist. During this visit the Dairy and Forestry Project was shaped into a full programme and a full-fledged cattle breeding programme was started. The forestry programme on the other hand could not be defined as concretely as the animal husbandry wing. Although the project was still to be signed, the work in Bumthang had already started.

A value chain for potatoes

Within a short period of his posting, Walter Roder – the fodder expert – shifted his base in February 1974 from Gogona to Bumthang. During the same year, four young boys who were trained for some years received Nu 10,000 each to begin their own farming at Phobjikha. Tragically, bandits, later on, killed one of them. A very positive aspect of these trial farmers was the spread of potato seed growing. Later the valley became the major potato seed-growing place in the country. A first review in Bumthang was made on the progress of potato farming, after having distributed seeds in 1970 (400 kilograms wart resistant potatoes imported in 1970, the two varieties “Swiss red” (also called “Desiree”) and “Maritta” were distributed by Dasho Nishioka to people in most valleys including Paro. Before, farmers had stopped the production of potatoes, lacking a market. With the support of the project, where Fritz Maurer was again instrumental, farmers were promised an outlet for their produce and were asked to go ahead and produce lots of potatoes. He linked the potato producers with the Food Corporation of Bhutan, as an outlet for potato marketing. In the first year, producers made cash sales of 40 metric tons of potatoes. This boosted the production and potatoes subsequently became the major cash crop. In ten years the production figures had multiplied by a factor of 50, bringing cash income to a large part of the country's population.

Medical clinic

Even though on a small scale, in 1974 a medical mobile clinic was established, covering the central region of Bhutan where the projects were taking shape. A certain amount of curative medical support to health around Sha Gogona, on a voluntary basis, had already begun in 1972 through two trained nurses, namely the wives of Ernst Meister and Hans Jutzi. The work of the two ladies did not only include the provision of basic medicine, but their voluntary assistance helped in creating trust for the project in the area. However, as the entire central part was suffering from little or no medical support, Dr. F. Töndury and Miss Cadalbert built up a mobile clinic in Bumthang, which was a welcome relief. The mobile clinic did not succeed, however, and Dr. Marcel Brüderlin established a permanent clinic at Wangdicholing. Dr. Richard Frey, followed by Dr. J. Ruckstuhl in 1975 succeeded him; thus, four doctors followed one another within two years. Between 1974 and 1994, there were 11 medical Swiss doctors who worked for the health programme in Bumthang.



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Pioneers

Leo Caminada, a forest engineer, began his duty at Bumthang. As was the case with most Swiss, his first job was building the infrastructure before concentrating on forestry work. The major forestry work began with the repair and renovation of Lamegompa, an old Dzong, which was the summer residence of the first King. It was handed over to the Dairy and Forestry Programme as forestry centre by HRH, the Tengyel Lyonpo. The building was renovated and the training centre was established along with divisional and other forestry administrative offices. The forestry activities did not seem to be as well planned and targeted as the Dairy Division. This possibly was due to the lack of basic information and data on the forestry

side. To begin the forest activities more consistently, a second Swiss forest engineer, Christof Frei joined the division.

With the increasing number of expatriates, the vehicle park also grew and there was a need to establish a vehicle workshop. The first mechanic, R. Schmidhalter, was posted and in 1974 the infrastructure for repair work and maintenance began. As development work expanded, other service units were required. In order to meet the demand for seasoned sawn timber in the market and for the project, a sawmill with intermediate technology, running on water-turbine, was built.

In the same year Peter Maurer made a study to link the three isolated valleys of Khotokha, Gogona and Phobjikha to the national highway by a ropeway, as it was not possible to build a road on this terrain. For various reasons the ropeway project was delayed by almost ten years. Nevertheless, under the patronage of HRH, the Tengyel Lyonpo, and according to the plan of Prof. Fischer, the 5.2 kilometres ropeway was established between Chuzomsa, resting at an altitude of 1500 meters above sea level (masl), to 2800 masl at Khotokha. This ropeway was used largely to exploit the forestry and agriculture products from Khotokha valley.

Handing over

The year 1974 ended with a good note by the handing over of the Dairy Farm at Sha-Gogona to the lama-community (gomchens). It was the first kind of income generating venture being handed over to private initiative. They took it willingly, because they did not have any property of their own. For a smooth transfer, a project agreement was drawn. The dairy farm was priced at Nu 100,000, which was treated as a loan to be repaid over a period of ten years. An important clause of the agreement was that the gomchens would start cultivation and totally stop the shifting cultivation, which was a great achievement.

The year brought an important landmark in the history of Swiss assistance. His Majesty visited Bumthang for the third Five Year Plan discussion and during this visit he commended that the project should be integrated into the government system and no longer stay as an independent project. This was considered a prerequisite for an integrated development.



45 The Swiss team at Bumthang, ca. 1974

In Kürze

1971 begann die Stiftung Pro Bhutan mit aktiver Unterstützung durch das DEZA mit ihrem Programm für Milch- und Forstwirtschaft in Bumthang. Sechs Stück Braunvieh wurden importiert, junge Bhutaner wurden zu Bauern ausgebildet. Resistenterer Kartoffelsorten liessen die Produktion rasch wachsen. Eine mobile medizinische Klinik wurde installiert. Krankenschwestern und Ärzte begannen mit der medizinischen Versorgung der Bevölkerung. Die Zahl der Schweizer nahm ständig zu, was nach entsprechender Infrastruktur wie Reparaturwerkstätten für den wachsenden Wagen- und Maschinenpark rief.

En bref

En 1971, la Fondation Pro Bhutan démarrait son programme de production laitière et forestière à Bumthang avec le soutien actif de la DDC. Six vaches de la race brune étaient importées, alors que de jeunes Bhoutanais étaient formés comme agriculteurs. Des variétés de pommes de terre résistantes permirent une forte augmentation de la production. Une clinique médicale mobile était installée. Des infirmières et des médecins commencèrent à fournir des soins médicaux à la population. Avec un nombre de Suisses résidents en constante augmentation est apparue la nécessité de disposer d'ateliers de réparation pour assurer l'entretien du parc de véhicules et de machines.

Fighting the yak disease

by Fritz von Schulthess, in: Souvenirs from Monica and myself. Journal for his grandchildren, Easter 1982



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47 Dogs, the carriers of the tapeworm

3000 pills for healthy dogs?!

In Kürze

Pön erzählte seinem Schweizer Freund von Yaks, die an einer sonderbaren Krankheit verendeten: Tagelang drehten sie sich im Kreise, um dann plötzlich zusammenzubrechen. Fritz von Schulthess erzählte die Geschichte dem Direktor des Tierspitals Zürich, der ihm riet, bei der nächsten Reise ein Yak-Hirn mitzubringen. Ursache sei wohl ein Bandwurm, der das Gehirn der Yaks befallt. Und siehe, es war der Bandwurm, übertragen durch den Kot der Hirtenhunde. Die Schweiz schickte 3000 Pillen nach Bhutan – der erste Akt eidgenössischer Entwicklungshilfe.

Pön (King) once told me in Switzerland that in certain areas of Bhutan there is a great amount of yaks that die due to a strange disease. The sick animal spins round for a couple of days and finally dies. The reason for it is not clear. From staff members of the veterinary hospital in Zurich, we learnt that we probably are confronted with a tapeworm, which develops in the yak body and causes a bubble in the animal's brain, which then leads to its death. The course of disease is described as follows: The shepherd's dog feeds from the perished yak and therewith ingests this bubble. The bubble contains the tapeworm, which develops in the dog's stomach and produces eggs that are digested together with the dog's excrement. The yak feeds from the grass where such eggs are dropped and the tapeworm develops in the yak body. The director of the veterinary hospital in Zurich was not entirely sure about the diagnosis and therefore asked me to bring along an affected brain after my next travel to Bhutan. Thus, Monika and I brought along a large yak brain in a big bottle. The first diagnosis has been confirmed.

As a first donation to the development aid in Bhutan, the Swiss offered 3000 pills against this disease. The Bhutanese yakherders, however, had troubles to understand that they had to give the pills to their dogs in order to save the yaks from further affection. After many explanations the yakherders were finally convinced. Today, as far as I know, the disease has almost entirely disappeared.

En bref

Pön racontait à son ami suisse que des yaks mouraient d'une maladie particulière : pendant des jours entiers, ces animaux tournaient en rond avant de s'effondrer. La cause probable était un ténia s'attaquant au cerveau des yaks. Fritz von Schulthess rapporta cette histoire au directeur de l'hôpital vétérinaire de Zurich qui lui conseilla de ramener un cerveau de yak lors de son prochain voyage. Le diagnostic du ténia fut confirmé, ce parasite étant transmis par les crottes des chiens de bergers. La Suisse envoya 3000 pilules au Bhoutan, ce fut le premier acte de la coopération suisse.

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Change of Guard to Helvetas

by Dr. Saamdu Chetri, Dy-Resident Co-ordinator Helvetas / SDC, 1988-2006

The visit of Professor Dr. Martin Menzi, a founding member of Helvetas, in 1973 was already an indication that Helvetas was going to take over the Foundation Pro-Bhutan. Together with Professor Fischer he had planned the Dairy and Forestry Programme. The programme was rapidly growing and thus becoming too large for the Foundation. Therefore, on the request of Fritz von Schulthess, the programme was taken over by Helvetas in Bhutan on July 1, 1975.

Landless farmers

During the process of shifting the programme from Gogona to Bumthang, it was realized that land was in the hands of a few and there were many landless families. With Fritz Maurer's initiative, the project managers proposed to grant loans to the farmers for buying land. As HRH Tengyel Lyonpo was the patron of the Dairy and Forestry Programme (DFP), the scheme was approved and the project managers became responsible for handling the scheme.

The first steps that had to be taken by Helvetas were to dissolve the board and to align the management with the official structure under the concerned departments. The year 1975 saw the construction of infrastructure. A carpentry workshop was developed for catering to the project needs and the people of Bumthang. 11 brown Swiss bulls were imported from the Indo-Swiss project in Patiala, India. They became the backbone of the breeding programme until artificial insemination was practised.

All agriculture and animal husbandry programmes were taken over by the Swiss Project. In April 1977, Fritz Maurer was appointed as the District Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Officer. This was an important step towards decentralisation, which helped the effective local decision-making when there were no modern communications means. During the same year, a mechanical technical adviser arrived, who was instrumental in tuning the future of the vehicle workshop towards privatisation. The first successful experiments on manufacturing apple juice were done and a food-processing unit was developed. The last Swiss expert stationed at Gogona was attacked by a bear and returned to Switzerland. The government took over the extension services, while Helvetas only backstopped it until coming back with a bigger programme, the Bhutan National Potato Programme.

Dasho Tshering Wangda, probably the first Bhutanese youth trained by the Swiss Cooperation in export and import trades, stayed in Switzerland for more than five months in 1975/6. On his way back home he carried a few kilograms of different kinds of fodder seed for pasture development in Bhutan.

Reorganisation

The DFP was renamed Rural Development Project (RDP) in 1978, the horse breeding programme took shape and discussions on a new programme on potato production began. The road construction to Phobjikha began with the technical support provided by Helvetas, executed by the Public Works Department. It was a first step towards opening the three valleys of Phobjikha, Gogona and Khotokha. The Bumthang forest range and four other district departments came under the direct control of the RDP. The duty of a zonal medical officer was also assigned to the Swiss and a logging centre and a sawmill were set up at Domkhar in Bumthang.

With the expansion of the programme there was a growing need for a permanent coordination office. The government accepted the proposal made in 1981 and two years later the office was set up in Thimphu. The year is marked with big changes in the management of Helvetas. During his visit to the district for finalisation of the 5th Five Year Plan (FYP), His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo ordered to dissolve the Board of Directors which oversaw the management of the programme. This allowed Helvetas to work directly with the agencies of the government. A Bhutanese delegation led by the Deputy Minister of the Planning Commission visited Switzerland to frame the future programme. The Forestry Training Centre at Lamegumpa was set up in 1983 and the forestry programme began to grow on more solid grounds.

In 1982, a delegation from Switzerland led by Ernst Werner Külling, Secretary General of Helvetas, prepared a detailed study on possible areas of intervention. In April 1983, Ernst Reinhardt joined Helvetas Bhutan as the first Resident Coordinator and set up the Coordination Office in Thimphu, supported by his very dynamic wife Annegret. The major task of the Coordination Office between 1983 and 1985 was to consolidate ongoing projects, to prepare the handing-over of various projects and functions of expatriates to local personnel, and to

develop mid-term planning covering the 6th FYP. This included outlining avenues for multilateral projects as well as co-ordination with the local donor community.

During 1986, the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation signed an agreement with Helvetas mandating the organisation to coordinate and implement all bilateral and multilateral aid programmes in Bhutan. The Swiss assistance broadened its base with the agreement of a country programme between 1987 and 1992 with 35 million Swiss Francs. A new vast project that has links up to the present day under the extension programme, the High Altitude Area Development Project (with the Integrated Livestock and Fodder Development Programme), corresponding to the country programme was launched. It covered the temperate zone of Bhutan from east to west. A 40-bedded hospital was designed. The agreement to support the Suspension Bridge Programme was signed, funded through United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF). An intensive discussion began to establish a National Agriculture Institute at Wangdue. Interestingly enough, town planning was initiated by Helvetas – then an important developer – an area of intervention that was shelved for unknown reasons after preparing a few town plans of Punakha, Bumthang, Pemagathsel, Damphu/Tsirang, Deothang/Samdruk Jongkhar, and having trained a town planner. A Kheng area development programme was investigated. Other projects were a small business development programme, Primary Education, Forestry II, Liquid Nitrogen Plant.

The decade of 1980's can be concluded with the remarks of Ernst Reinhardt, the first Resident Coordinator to Bhutan: "Despite early confusion created with the launching of decentralisation process, especially in decision and power delegation matters, the government recognized the need to make the system efficient and effective with productive administration, an approach to 'management by objectives'."

In Kürze

Das Programm wuchs schnell und brachte die Pro-Bhutan-Stiftung an die Grenzen ihrer Möglichkeiten. Auf Ersuchen von Fritz von Schulthess übernahm Helvetas am 1. Juli 1975 die Verantwortung für die Zusammenarbeit mit Bhutan. Die Verantwortlichen von Helvetas verlangten nach einer besseren Koordination. Der König löste das Direktorium auf, welches bisher die einzelnen Projekte überwacht hatte. 1983 wurde der Helvetas-Stützpunkt Bhutan in der Hauptstadt Thimphu begründet; Ernst Reinhardt war der erste ortsansässige Koordinator, tatkräftig unterstützt von seiner Frau Annegret. Seine Hauptaufgabe: die über weite Teile Bhutans verstreuten Projekte zu konsolidieren, und diese soweit voranzubringen, dass sie in die Verantwortung der Einheimischen übergeben werden konnten. Weiter galt es Perspektiven für den 6. Fünfjahresplan zu entwerfen, unter welchem die Schweiz zwischen 1987 und 1992 35 Millionen Franken investierte. Ernst Reinhardt sagt über seine Erfahrungen in diesen Jahren: "Trotz anfänglicher Konfusion durch den Prozess der Dezentralisierung, erkannte die Regierung die Notwendigkeit das ganze System effizient und effektiv zu machen mittels einer guten Administration und durch Führen mit Zielvorgaben."

En bref

Avec la croissance rapide du programme, la Fondation Pro Bhoutan touchait à ses limites. À la demande de Fritz von Schulthess, la responsabilité de la coopération avec le Bhoutan fut transmise à Helvetas le 1er juillet 1975. Les responsables d'Helvetas exigèrent une meilleure coordination. Le roi releva de ses fonctions le directoire chargé jusque là de surveiller les projets. En 1983, Helvetas installait son siège bhoutanais dans la capitale Thimphu, avec Ernst Reinhardt comme premier coordinateur résidant, épaulé par sa femme Annegret. Ses tâches principales consistaient à consolider les projets éparpillés sur une grande partie du territoire bhoutanais, et de faire en sorte que la responsabilité de ces projets puisse être transférée à des personnes locales. Il s'agissait également de planifier le 6ème plan quinquennal dans lequel la Suisse a investi 35 millions de francs entre 1987 et 1992. Ernst Reinhardt racontait à propos de ses expériences au cours de ces années: "Malgré une certaine confusion initiale liée au processus de décentralisation, le gouvernement a reconnu la nécessité de rendre le système dans son ensemble plus efficace et plus efficient au moyen d'une bonne administration et par la définition d'objectifs."



48 Building identity