



# WALKS IN NUBRA / 2 PINCHIMIK TO PHUKPOCHE

## Walks in Nubra



Supported by: Royal Enfield  
Editor: Monisha Ahmed  
Associate Editor: Tashi Morup  
Research and Text: Padma Lhamo, Rigzen Dolma,  
Stanzin Namkha, Tsering Lhadol, Tsering Palmo  
Photography: Sonam Angchok with Stanzin Namkha  
Maps: Henk Thoma  
Design: Aaron Deva Dana  
Accounts: Tsering Chonzom, Nawang Lhaskit  
Technical Assistant: Rigzin Gurmet

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# FOREWORD

Royal Enfield has always called out the Himalayas as its 'Spiritual Home'. The pursuit of exploration, woven into its DNA, has led motorcyclists to traverse the challenging yet rewarding terrain of the region for decades. And within the Himalayan region, Ladakh has evolved into a rite of passage — the diverse communities, and the rich natural and cultural heritage offering the ideal setting for adventures and memorable experiences.

Over time, word of the region's allure has reached far and wide, ringing in a flourishing tourism economy and, with it, the risks of overtourism, particularly in spots like Pangong Tso and Hanle. Within the Nubra Valley, white rolling sand dunes are arguably the main attraction and what often remains overlooked is the cultural life and heritage sites in these areas, which are dotted by monasteries and stupas, caves and pre-historic rock formations, teeming with art and beauty for the travellers to explore. Jointly with LAMO, we believe one of the ways of experiencing a destination is by exploring facets and documenting sites that people may miss out on. By encouraging exploration beyond the beaten path, our ambition is to alleviate pressure off of regions at risk of being exploited, as well as provide the local community with an additional source of livelihood.

As part of our partnership with LAMO and the local community of Ladakh, we present these Walk Booklets that put to paper lesser-known sites and pieces of history around the Nubra Valley region. These publications will offer a starting point for the mindful explorer who wishes to experience the essence of the region and contribute to the Himalayan communities residing here in a meaningful way. In line with Royal Enfield's broader social mission of partnering with 100 Himalayan communities, the project aspires to support local families and youth who have mapped out significant heritage sites and cultural practices, and are trained to guide travellers through the routes compiled within this inventory. This exercise is our attempt to build a network of sustainable and mutually enriching connections between travellers and the Himalayan communities, with the pursuit of sustainable exploration at its centre.

Bidisha Dey  
Executive Director  
Eicher Group Foundation

## WALKS IN NUBRA

‘Walks in Nubra’ is conceptualised as an alternative experience to discover the region, in a more sustainable way. The walks will guide you off the main roads and onto well-treaded pathways, through narrow lanes and into open fields and up mountain trails. Here you will encounter weather beaten rocks inscribed with centuries old petroglyphs, shrines dedicated to protective deities, graveyards of long-forgotten travellers on the ancient Silk Route and ruins of early settlements. You will also venture into the more familiar monasteries and mosques, as well as community spaces and sacred water-bodies. Stories from the past, of flying hermits and demon kings, will unfold as you explore villages along the banks of the Siachen River.

Nubra is a region with a rich and varied culture, and with a long history. It was an important place on the Trans-Himalayan trade routes, and the village of Charasa was once the King of Ladakh’s winter capital. Music, folklore, crafts such as weaving and basket-making were common here and, in some areas, continue to be. Vernacular architecture had regional influences, richly carved wooden balconies and screens can be seen alongside kitchens adorned with brass and copper utensils and densely painted interiors of Buddhist temples.

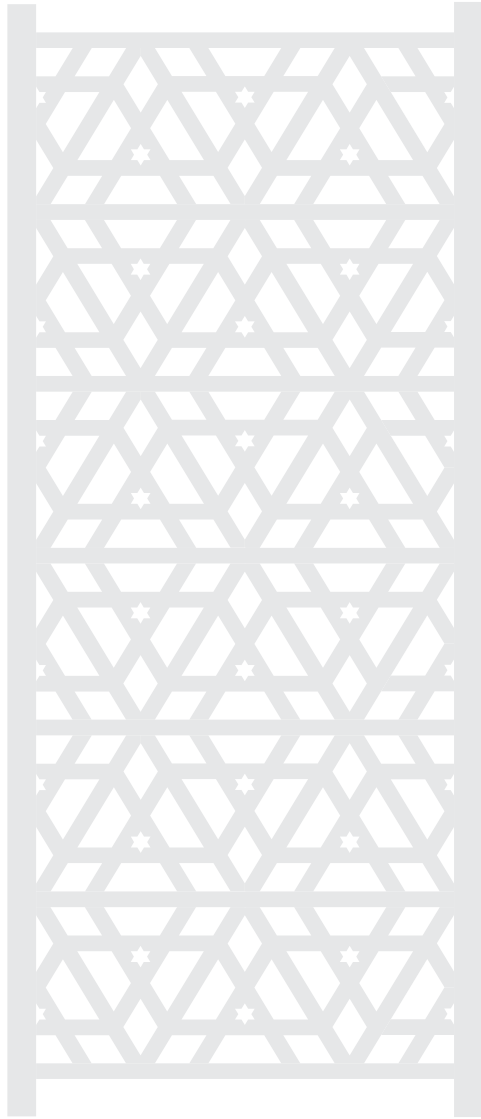
These walks have been composed and written up in consultation with local community members, and many of the researchers who worked on them were from Nubra. The idea behind this was to hear knowledgeable voices from the area, bring in stakeholders and engage with the younger generation to enable them to discover and understand Nubra’s rich heritage and the importance of safeguarding their legacy. For this we thank all those who worked with us to make the walks here possible, and remain indebted to them.

Much of the information gathered was oral and is being written up for the first time. While there may be variances in oral accounts and dates, to the best of our knowledge, we have tried to be as accurate as possible. As memories fade and events are forgotten, this documentation will be valuable for future generations. Over the years Nubra has also changed, with old buildings being pulled down for new, concrete structures and an increasing network of roads that makes going off the beaten track so much harder. But as the past continues to integrate with the present, and you walk through this terrain, try to imagine a different time.

# WALK BOOK TWO

## CONTENTS

<b>PINCHIMIK</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>CHAMSHEN</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>YULSKAM</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>TIRISHA</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>PANAMIK</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>PHUKPOCHE</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>CONTRIBUTORS</b>	<b>80</b>





# NUBRA

ལུང་རྩ།

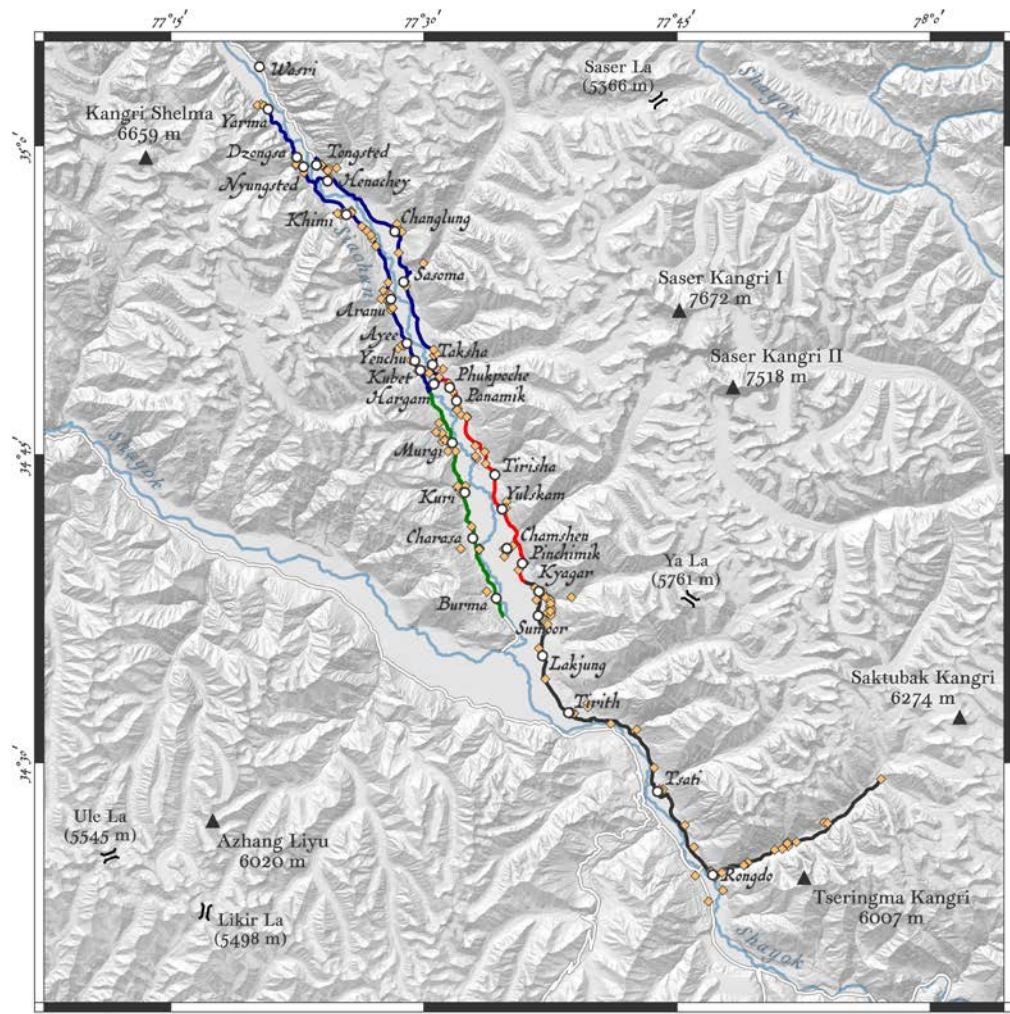
Featuring Central Nubra



○	place	🌊	lake
★	prominent site	🏔️	glacier
▲	peak	🌲	forest
⌘	pass	🌿	fields & vegetation
—	road	📏	elevation
🌊	river		2970 m      7672 m

Location of Nubra in the Himalayas





# WALKS IN NUBRA AND POINTS OF INTEREST

Featuring Four Beautiful Walks

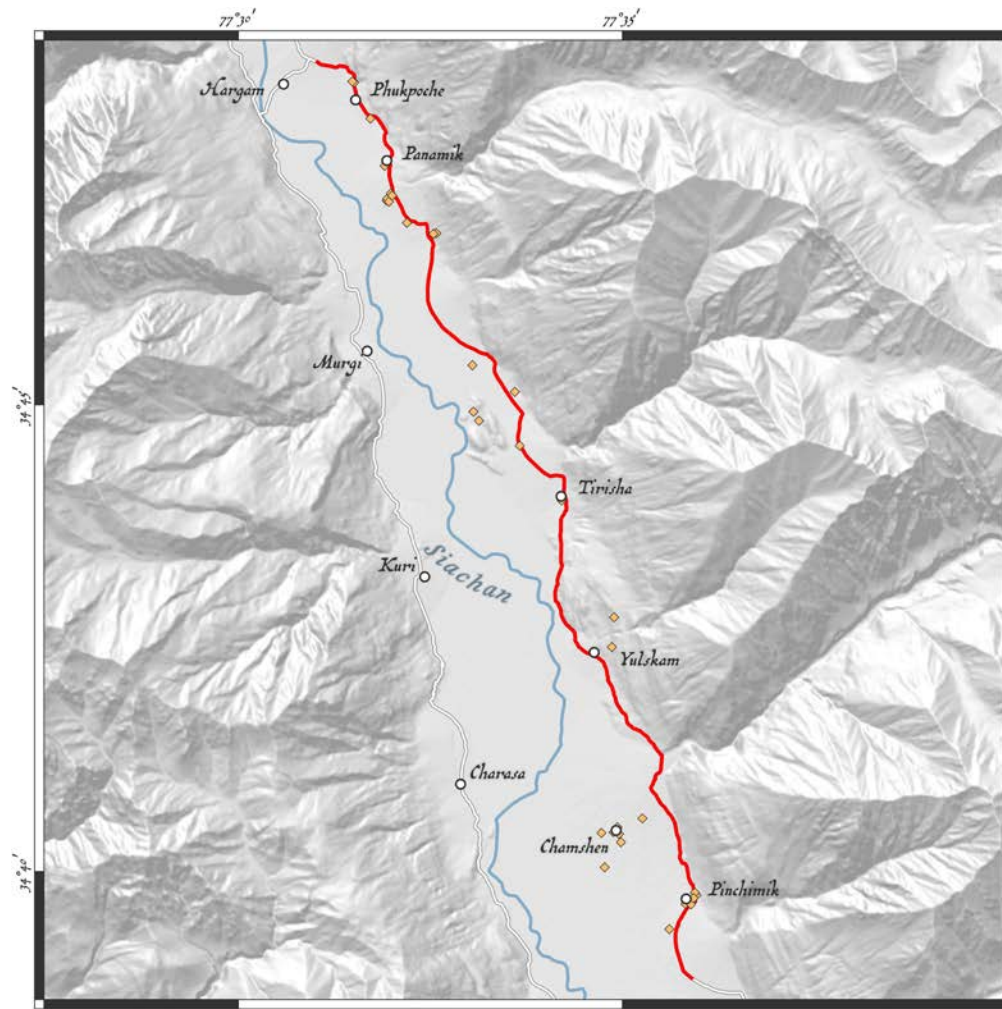


○ place	— walk 1	— road
▲ peak	— walk 2	— river
⌘ pass	— walk 3	
◇ point of interest	— walk 4	

Location of Nubra in the Himalayas



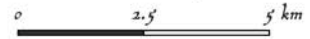




## WALK 2 AND POINTS OF INTEREST



*Pinchmik to Phukpoche*



- |                     |          |
|---------------------|----------|
| ○ place             | — road   |
| ▲ peak              | ~ river  |
| ⌋ pass              | — walk 2 |
| ◇ point of interest |          |

*Location of Walk 2 in Nubra*





# PINCHIMIK

ལྷང་ཚུ་མིག།

## PINCHIMIK

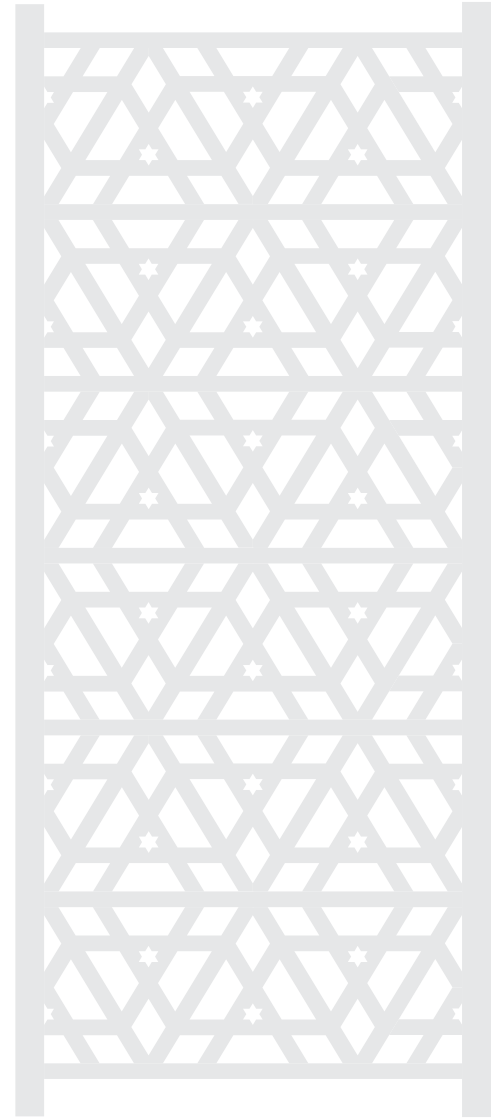
The original name of Pinchimik was '*Spang Chumik*', meaning 'meadow spring'. Today, the village comprises 74 households, and falls under the jurisdiction of the *goba* (head) of Kyagar village. Pinchimik is a relatively smaller village along this belt. Along with Kyagar, they both share the same glacial stream water that comes from the Chamshen Tokpo. Both villages claim traditional rights to this water, as the land around it is owned by the aristocratic Kyagar Zimskang family.

Historically, Pinchimik village was one of the places where the royal entourage travelling from Leh, Ladakh's capital, would stop at as they made frequent trips to Nubra during the winter as it was warmer. It was often here that they would break for tea, before crossing the Siachen River, to reach the Charasa Palace on the hill on the opposite side of the river. One of the households, Charbakpa, was specially assigned to host the tea for the Ladakhi ruler.

# MAP REFERENCE

## PINCHIMIK

1. Sabchung Chapel
2. Perapa Manekhang
3. Sonam Lotus, the Metal Worker
4. Sonam Dorje, the Weaver
5. Cluster of Stupas
6. Gonpa Marpo
7. Bamo Srinmo



77°35'30"

77°36'0"

77°36'30"

# PINCHIMIK

## ཕྱང་རྒྱུ་མིག།

0 250 500 m



- monastery
- temple
- chorten
- artisan/artist/resource person
- boulder
- road major
- road minor
- path/track
- stream
- forest
- fields & vegetation
- contours (20 m.)

*Numbers and names follow Pinchmik walk book listing*



# 1. SABCHUNG CHAPEL

As the walk into Pinchimik starts, this is the first site that can be found on the left side of the road. Sabchung chapel is in one large room in the house, that is located just at the outskirts of the village, not far from a long narrow valley (*lungdo*). Its location, set away from the rest of the village, is for a reason.

In the chapel of the house there hangs a *thangka* (scroll painting) of the powerful deity Chamsring among other scroll paintings. The deity is said to have special powers to thwart the dangers of natural calamities, such as flash floods, that often hit the narrow valley, close to where the house is located. It is as if the house is positioned to block the flood waters from reaching the rest of the village.

The *thangka* is said to have been created out of blood from a nosebleed (*shang-thag*), emanating from the Panchen Lama of Tibet in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This attribute is said to further increase the power contained in the *thangka*. The *thangka* was specially brought in from Tibet, along with other paintings, by Lama Kachen Zotpa (a monk). The family who currently live in the house are descendants of Lama Kachen Zotpa.



## 2. PERAPA MANEKHANG

The Perapa Manekhang is near the Government School. This community prayer hall (*manekhang*), has been constructed as protection against flash floods that come down from the Chamshen Tokpo glacial stream, the village's main source of water. It is a two-storey building that is made of stone, mud bricks, mud plaster and has been painted white. It is constructed on private land, owned by the Perapa family. In the late 18th century the Perapa family sought a remedy for constant dangers of floods faced by their village. They asked a high Lama in Tibet for guidance, and he instructed them to build the *Manekhang*, and enshrine within it the sacred images of Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava), Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya.

Four monks belonging to the family travelled to Tibet, brought back many *thangkas* (scroll paintings) and scriptures from there, including the statues. Beside the *Manekhang* is a large prayer wheel (*Thugje Chenmo*). Both structures are used by the community for prayers and rituals. Over time, more statues of deities were added to the prayer hall. Today, however, villagers have built a new community prayer hall about 300 metres away alongside the link road.



### 3. SONAM LOTUS, THE METAL WORKER

In the next two homes along the walk live artisans. In the first home lives Sonam Lotus, a metal worker, and in the next Sonam Dorje, a weaver.

Now in his fifties, Sonam Lotus lives in a one-storeyed house, adjacent to this is a shed, made from plaited twigs, where he works. He mainly makes agricultural tools such as shovels and pick axes.

Sonam continues his family's tradition of metal work, practising the art in the same manner as his predecessors despite modern technologies and the stigma attached to his profession. Though invaluable to the community, it represents a complex issue that has bearing on caste divisions. Nevertheless, thought patterns seem to be changing in his village brought on by modern education. Sonam Lotus has praises for the village head for being inclusive, by engaging him in regular village activities, a positive sign of a traditional society inching towards becoming more egalitarian in its outlook and behaviour.





## 4. SONAM DORJE, THE WEAVER

A little further down the road is the home of Sonam Dorje, a weaver, who is now in his eighties. He lives in a relatively old one-storey house, within a spacious compound, and his loom is set up outside the house. He has been weaving for over six decades, having inherited his loom from his uncle in the 1960s .

Sonam comes from a family of itinerant weavers and has continued his family's trade, moving from house to house and village to village with his loom. He sets up his loom in the courtyard of people's homes, usually under the shade of a tree, and weaves woollen fabric (*nambu*), blankets (*chali*), and sacks (*phat*); he also braids ropes (*thakpa*). Each family spins their own yarn, and they give this to Sonam to weave the items they require.

In return for his work, Sonam recalls that in the past he was usually paid in kind - a measure of *bo* (a two-litre wooden container), full of barley or wheat. Now he charges about 800 rupees for a roll of woollen fabric. As he moves from house to house, a small turquoise stone tied over his right ear and his long wrinkled face, Sonam has several stories to narrate. Of the changes he has witnessed during his life, and the tales he hears from each house he stops at.



## 5. CLUSTER OF STUPAS

Pinchimik shares many similarities with Kyagar, including a common village head. Both villages also have a cluster of stupas located in the centre of the village.

The one at Pinchimik dates to the 15th century, and is said to have been established by Galden Galu. He was an aristocrat, and travelled to Pinchimik along with his wife Shema Yangchen Dolma. They came on pilgrimage from Tibet, fell in love with the valley and decided to stay

back. They made Pinchimik their home, and requested the residents of the village to build the stupas as a sign of merit and goodwill. The biggest stupa, located in the centre, is known as Dungsten and was built by the residents of the village in memory of Galden Galu after his death.



## 6. GONPA MARPO

The Gonpa Marpo site is located on the right side of the main vehicular road that leads towards Panamik. This was originally the home of the Shampa family, a one-storey building with five rooms and one main shrine. It is made of stone and mud bricks and externally plastered with mud. In the 1950s, Tashi Morup, a descendant of the family, built a new home and donated the old house to Diskit Monastery as the village did not have a space for a chapel.

After acquiring the building, the villagers painted the outside of the structure red (*marpo*), and that's how it acquired its name 'Red Monastery'. However, a shrine is painted red only when it enshrines a wrathful deity, but they were ignorant of this. Later, when they realised their mistake, the villagers repainted the shrine white but the name stayed.

The chapel was recently enshrined with religious objects including scriptures, scroll paintings and statues of Buddha, and Gyalwa Tsongkhapa and his two disciples. A caretaker monk (*komyer*), has been appointed by Diskit Monastery to perform daily prayers; during the village's annual prayer ceremony (*zhi-thro*) other monks join him.

Behind the house, are several ruins of stupas and shed-like structures that are evident of an older settlement. Villagers believe their ancestors once lived here, as this was a safe area to live and one that provided protection from constant threats from raiders.

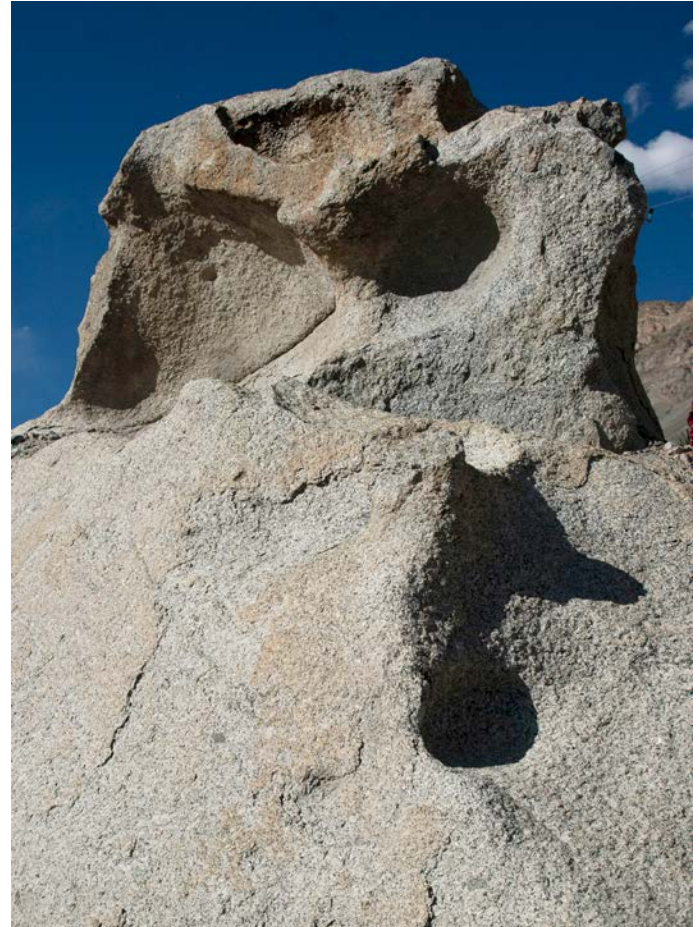


## 7. BAMO SRINMO

This site refers to a visibly weathered boulder, with interesting shapes and deep crevices, that faces the village. There is a local myth associated with it. Villagers call it 'Bamo Srinmo' (*bamo* and *srinmo* refer to different types of witches). Tales of supernatural creatures or spirits are popularly narrated throughout Ladakh, where it is said they often reside in thick groves, boulders or abandoned houses. Hidden from the human eye, appearing only to cause havoc in the world.

The boulder here is also one such object of fear for the villagers, who claim that the 'Bamo Srinmo' lives there. Concerned that the boulder overlooks Pinchimik and so could bring misfortune to them, villagers used to cover it with stones and bushes to prevent any harm that it might bring them.

Now though, the boulder lies exposed. Perhaps the fear of the 'Bamo Srinmo' no longer haunts the village?







# CHAMSHEN

འཇམ་ཤེན་

## CHAMSHEN

Nestled on an alluvial fan, on the bank of the Siachen River, is the historic town of Chamshen. Much of its former glory was by virtue of its association with the royal family of the Namgyal dynasty of Ladakh, and under their patronage, Chamshen was a flourishing township. Together with Charasa, the villagers of Chamshen served the royal family and took care of the Charasa Palace located on the opposite bank of the Siachen River. It is said that within the two villages, several royal appointments were made such as the *mane-pa*, who were the royal horticulturists; the *namzhupa*, who took care of the king's bow and arrow; and the *korpon-pa* who tended to the royal livestock.

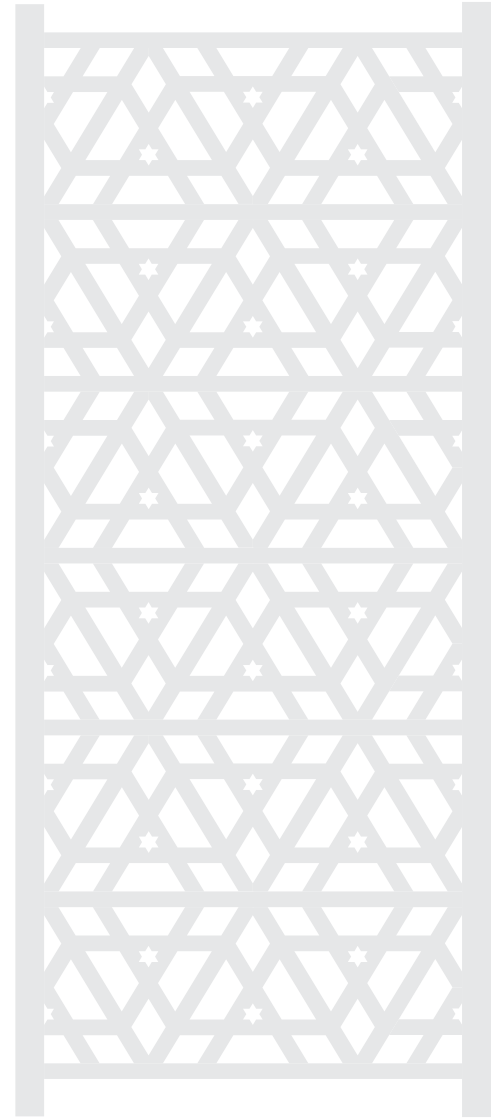
Over time, flash floods and river erosions have erased most of the village's rich heritage. And today there is an almost complete absence of old structures such as stupas and *mane* walls that are known to have once existed here. It is said that during the reign of King Nyima Namgyal, in the 17th century, there were 18 households in the village. But then a flood came and more than half of the village was washed away, leaving only seven households. However, over time that number has grown to 75 today.

(... continued on: Pg. 26)

# MAP REFERENCE

## CHAMSHEN

1. Dzamo Chonga, Serchen and Chamsrhung  
Thundel Tsogspas
2. Lhardak Chodkhang
3. Gyamtsopa House
4. The Old Settlement
5. Khangchenpa
6. Nightingale of Nubra, Tsering Yangchan
7. Tsering Tundup, Craftsperson
8. Rta Polo Bethang





77°35' 0"

77°36' 0"

## CHAMSHEN

ཇམས་ཆེན།

0 250 500 m



- |   |                                |   |                     |
|---|--------------------------------|---|---------------------|
|  | temple                         |  | road minor          |
|  | historic house                 |  | path/track          |
|  | ruins                          |  | stream              |
|  | self-help group/society        |  | built-up area       |
|  | artisan/artist/resource person |  | forest              |
|  | historic site other            |  | fields & vegetation |
|  | road major                     |  | contours (20 m)     |

Numbers and names follow Chamshen walk book listing



1 Dzamo Chonga, Serchen and Chamshung Thundel Trogspas

4 The Old Settlement

5 Khangchenpa

3 Gyantsopa House

2 Lhardak Chodkhang

6 Nightingale of Nubra

7 Tsering Tandup, Craftsperson

8 Rta Polo Bethang

77 41 0

77 40 0

Large numbers of pilgrims still throng the township for it has some of the holiest natural sites associated with Buddhist deities. In fact, the name 'Chamshen' is derived from the words 'Chamba Chenmo', literally meaning 'Grand Maitreya', the Future Buddha. This reference is because an image of the Future Buddha, along with other deities from the Buddhist pantheon such as Chamba Gonbo, Takstao, Chakyun (lu khagnon), Gyalwa Tsongkhapa, and Cho-Parigon, are believed to have been self-emanated (*rangjon*), on large rocks deep in the upper reaches of the valley of Chamshen.

These self-formed rock formations are considered sacred, and people across Ladakh visit the sites in Chamshen for pilgrimage. The route to this sacred site is said to be treacherous, but that does not dissuade the pilgrims. However, villagers of Chamshen say they dread taking their livestock and cattle there to graze, in spite of knowing that there is lush pasture around this holy site.

## **1. DZAMO CHONGA, SERCHEN AND CHAMSRHUNG THUNDEL TSOGSPAS**

Chamshen is known for its sweet apricots, and they grow in abundance here. These were largely consumed in the village, and at one time also exchanged with traders and pilgrims passing through. Now that the trade routes have stopped, the surplus still remains in Chamshen and the villagers have long thought what to do with this.

In 2004, under the Government of India's Watershed Development Scheme, three Self Help Groups (SHG) were started in Chamshen: Dzamo Chonga, Serchen and Chamsrhung Thundel Tsoqspa. The women were trained in jam and juice making by the SHG from Chushot village, near Leh, who are experts at this. They were also taught to package the products and market them to hotels and guest houses in the area. This livelihood scheme has been hugely successful, giving the women financial independence and boosting their self-confidence.

Over time, the women have diverged into making craft products such as local baskets (*tsepo*). If you are in the area, do sample their apricot jam and juice. The best time for visiting their outlet is the morning, just after ten.



## 2. LHARDAK CHODKHANG

The Lhardak Chodkhang lies in the centre of the village, where the first seven households of Chamshen used to be. It is a two-storey structure and has nine rooms. The site is connected to the link road that comes through the centre of the village. It was constructed by an ancestor of the Lhardakpa family many years ago, but no exact date is known. The family has now shifted to a new house, but their chapel remains here.

The family looks after the royal altar at Charasa Palace. It is a hereditary role the family head has played for generations. Sonam Angchuk, current family head, performs the annual purification ritual at the altar every 11th day of Losar (New Year). The purification ritual is accompanied by music on kettle drums and *surna* (double-reed oboe).

Sonam says that he must be present or consulted for any rituals or activities that take place at the altar, otherwise the deity (*gurla*) is angered and there can be negative consequences. He recalls how, 20 years ago, a man from Charasa repaired the altar in the absence of the Lhardak and fell sick and died. The power of the deity is recognised as being all-pervasive.



### 3. GYAMTSOPA HOUSE

The Gyamtsopa historical house is located on the right side of the link road that leads to the centre of the village, where it connects with the main vehicular road. It is located a little ahead of the Government School.

The Gyamtsopa family has been living in Chamshen for generations. They are revered in the village because it is said their ancestors may have played a role in pushing back invasions from Central Asia; evidence of this lies in a Central Asian sword (*sogpay rai*) and arrow (*sogpe diu*), the family still possess and keep in their chapel. The sword, in particular, is said to be powerful against skin ailments; villagers visit the house to rub the blade against the infected parts on their body.

Outside the chapel, lies the altar of the *tsan* (wrathful spirits), it is a red coloured stone, shaped as an obelisk. Offerings are made here daily and it is consecrated regularly to avoid any harm that the *tsan* may bring to the house. It is said that one of their ancestors, a grandmother, once overheard footsteps of *tsan* walking by the house. However, the *tsan* did not enter the house because it was protected by the stone.



## 4. THE OLD SETTLEMENT

A little further down the road from the village entrance gate, and almost in the centre of the village, is the old settlement of Chamshen. All that remains of this now are ruins in the form of dilapidated foundations, walls and roofs of the structures that were first built here. They represent early examples of the vernacular architecture of the region, for instance the presence of plaited twigs plastered with mud (*shak*), was a common feature in wall construction, especially during the summer season as they were cooler.

Below the ruins of the old settlement are the remains of an even older village. It is thought that this village was destroyed when it was hit by a flood. This could be the flood that is spoken about that took place after the 17th century.

Though the villagers rebuilt their homes here after the flood, over time they moved away from this site as they believed the location could harbour a bad omen.



## 5. KHANGCHENPA HOUSE

The Khangchenpa house is one of the largest residential houses in the Nubra Valley, consisting of 46 rooms and two chapels. An ancestor, Tsewang Tundup, was appointed Zaildar (tax collector) during the Dogra rule (1841-1947) in Ladakh. This also made him the principal lender of grain across the length of the Siachen belt in Nubra, and thus was a coveted position.

Tsewang Tundup used a lot of his wealth for spiritual purposes, such as building two richly decorated chapels in his house. Each chapel contains numerous religious objects, manuscripts, paintings and statues of deities. One of these chapels served as a community prayer hall (*manekhang*) for a long time, wherein the villagers held the night long prayer of *Tsanthun*. Such was the position of the family, and continues to be, as during Losar (New Year) celebrations all the villagers of Chamshen visit the house to greet the members on the occasion.



## 6. NIGHTINGALE OF NUBRA, TSERING YANGCHAN

Tsering Yangchan was born in the 1960s in Sumoor village and learnt to sing and compose songs from her father Stanzin. Tsering is a warm, gentle lady whose face brightens up when she is asked to sing. Among her favourites are the songs written by the second Srasi Rinpoche, '*Born as humans, spend no time engrossed in worldly activities that are impermanent*' is a line from one song that reminds her of the Buddhist philosophy of impermanence and the urgent need to devote oneself towards leading a pious life for salvation. She also sings to accompany the dances of Stanmo and Nagshon, clapping her hands and stamping her feet to the rhythm of the songs.

The song she composed on Chamshen village has gained popularity beyond Nubra; this was first sung on the occasion of the inaugural ceremony of the community's new *manekhang* in 1980. She was asked by the villagers to compose a song specially for this occasion, an extract of the text is on the opposite page:





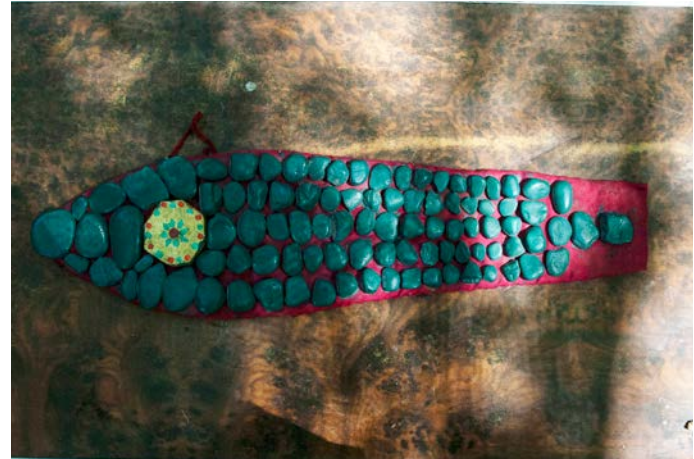
*kalang kari kangri karmo de*  
*Yarchu silmo de*  
*La mayongs pe chamba gonboa*  
*Yom a ngaza yonchab la phul*  
*La zetsun chamba gonbe ni*  
*Yom a ngaza yomchanb la phul*  
*La ngatang yulchung skitpa skitsal gi metok na*  
*La mayaongs pe chambe gonbe a*  
*Chan a ngaza chan ziga phul*  
*Ngatang yulchug skitpe nangsang gi shingstog gun*  
*La mayongs pe chamba gonbe a*  
*Sang a sangshing a pu*  
*Ngatang danda skitpe ga ga rig lu luyangs gun*  
*La mayongs pe chambe gonbe*  
*Nyan a nyangsang a phul.*

*O white snow mountain!*  
*O cool summer water!*  
*O future Buddha Maitreya!*  
*Let us offer the pure water,*  
*To holy Maitreya,*  
*Let us offer to the Future Buddha.*  
*We, the colourful flowers of a happy land,*  
*O the Future Buddha Maitreya!*  
*Offer we do for the noble gaze,*  
*Fruit trees of our happy land.*  
*To the future Buddha Maitreya,*  
*Offer him the plants as incense.*  
*Let us all friends sing songs of joy,*  
*To the future Buddha Maitreya,*  
*Let us offer the melodious music.*

## 7. TSERING TUNDUP, CRAFTSPERSON

Tsering Tundup was extremely versatile and proficient in several crafts (*namru pa*) during his life. Now in his late eighties, he seldom practises, but recollects how he spent most of his life doing carpentry, which was the first skill he learnt. His major contributions in carpentry can be seen in the woodwork at Samstanling and Diskit Monasteries, where his workmanship also brings him a sense of fulfilment in terms of accumulating merit for his next life according to Buddhist practises.

After carpentry, he went on to learn tailoring, masonry and even jewellery making. He learnt to make the woman's *perak* (turquoise-studded headdress). Most of this he did to sustain his large family, his parents and seven siblings. Today, Tsering Tundup is known all over Nubra for his skillful work in all the crafts he mastered.



## 8. RTA POLO BETHANG

The *rta polo bethang* is located at the end of a link road that comes through the centre of the village and connects with the main vehicular road. It can be reached through the said link road via the area of the village known as *Thurpa*. This large stretch of barren land, called *bethang*, was used for '*rta polo*', literally translated as 'horse polo'. At one time, polo was a popular sport throughout Ladakh, and also in Nubra. It supposedly originated in Baltistan (once a part of the Ladakhi kingdom, but now in Pakistan), and gradually made its way to other parts of Ladakh.

The *rta polo bethang* was a well-known location along the famous Trans-Karakoram route and it is said polo matches were often played here during the reign of the Namgyal dynasty. Today, the annual 'Siachen Folk Festival' is held here. It is an initiative of a local community group called Chamskong Chostsogs Tsogspa and Himalayan Cultural Heritage Foundation (HCHF). This is usually held in the first week of June. During the festival, the villagers showcase the culture and traditions of their valley, namely archery, folk dances, songs, and cuisine. Stalls made in traditional fashion out of twigs of local Willow trees are woven into patterns, called *shak*, to make huts called *tsele*.





# YULSKAM

ཡུས་སྐམ་

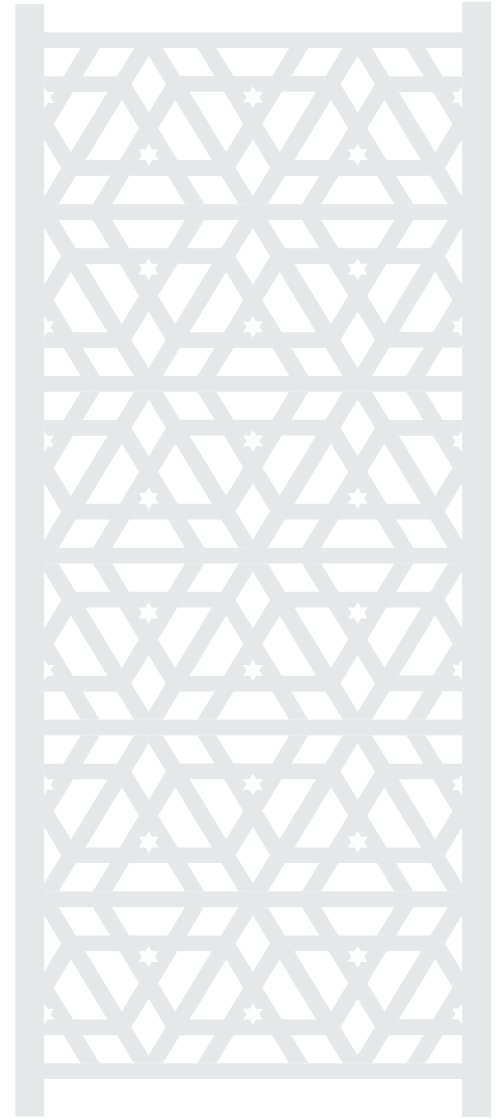
## YULSKAM

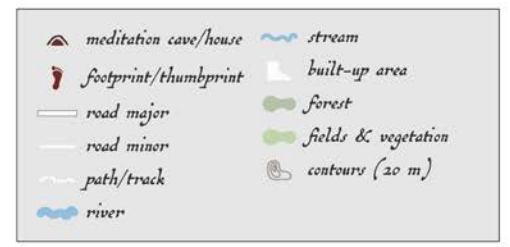
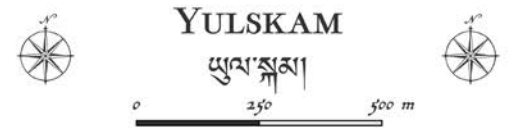
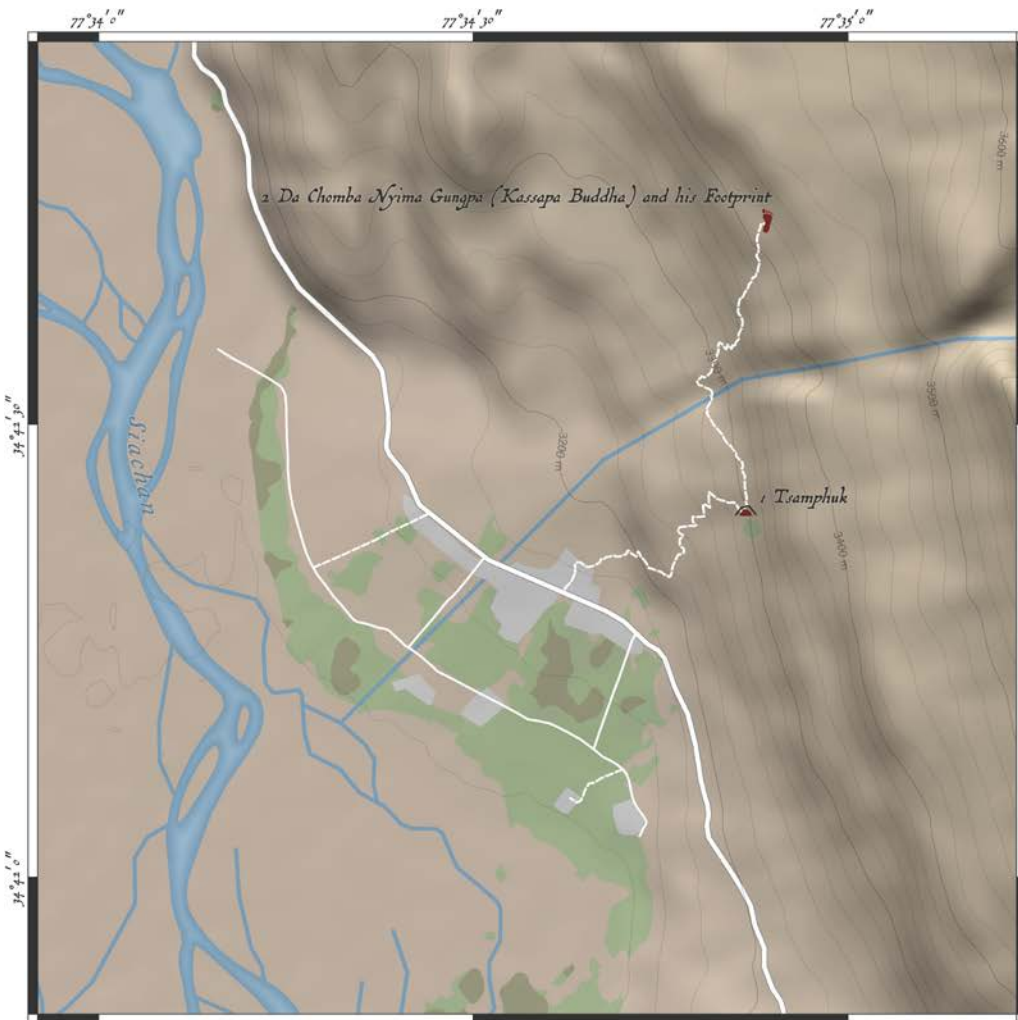
Yulskam is a small village of 15 households. It is said that two families settled here first and the number gradually grew over the years. The limited number of households is attributed to the meagre source of water to the village, and its inability to sustain a larger population. In fact, the word '*yulskam*' refers to a dry (*skampo*) land (*yul*). In reality, the village does not have its own source of water and it is completely dependent on the water from the Chamshen stream for both agricultural and drinking purposes.

# MAP REFERENCE

## YULSKAM

1. Tsamphuk
2. Da Chomba Nyima Gungpa  
(Kassapa Buddha) and his footprint





*Numbers and names follow Yulskam walk book listing*



# 1. TSAMPHUK

The villagers of Yulskam take great pride in the fact that there is a meditation cave, or cell for retreats (*tsamphuk*), in close proximity to their village. This is located on Chomoling Hill, opposite the village, and is about an hour's walk away.

Parts of the retreat are now in ruins and it lies surrounded by a spring, trees and bushes. It is said to have been built in the early 19th century; some villagers believe it was built by a visiting hermit for the sole purpose of meditating in a cell. Others believe the structure was a nunnery, and was used by nuns from various villages in the Siachen belt. The structure consists of four rooms with two windows, and is built entirely of flat stones.

Near the retreat is a *mane* (prayer) wall, and villagers often circumambulate the entire site during holy months as they consider it sacred. The view of the mighty Siachen River from the retreat is spectacular and is well worth the hike.





## 2. DA CHOMBA NYIMA GUNGPA AND HIS FOOTPRINT

Footprints of revered saints and deities hold great significance for people in Ladakh, especially since they are signs of the persons having once passed through here and blessed the land. On the top of Damthang Hill, the villagers have a deep veneration for a foot-like shape, formed on a stone; they claim it is the right footprint left by the legendary Buddhist master Da Chomba Nyima Gungpa. He was said to be a mythical being who flew into Nubra to bless the valley with many Buddhist signs and symbols, some impressed in the rock face, including the famous Ensa Monastery. This print is one among seven that he left while leaving Nubra and heading towards Tibet. One is also at Tirisha, the next village on this walk.

The footprint is kept in an enclosure of stones, and on auspicious occasions the villagers make offerings of butter lamps. To reach here, it is a 30 minute walk from the village.





# TIRISHA

ཏི་ཤི་ཤ།

## TIRISHA

It is said that 'Thiksha Lag-ya' was the initial name of Tirisha, and that the land the village is settled on resembles the 'limb of a sheep'. Much of this land belongs to Diskit Monastery, and the villagers' land holdings are referred to as *shazhing* (taxable land). The villagers pay a nominal amount as a token to Diskit Monastery, and also give them a portion of their agricultural produce depending on the size of their land holding. This practice continues today, and demonstrates Diskit Monastery's ownership of their land.

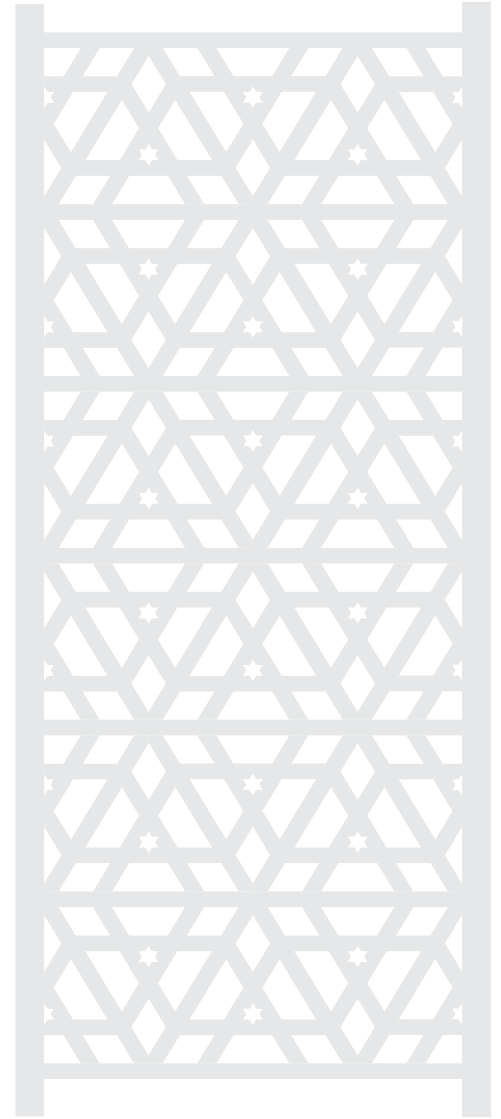
Interestingly, Tirisha is the last village in Nubra belt to perform *metho* (a procession with fire torches), during Losar (New Year); villages beyond and upstream have no such tradition. The burning torches are to re-enact the murder of the mythical tyrant chief Cho Bongskang-chan, by the villagers of Tirisha when they pushed him into the blazing flames. The villages beyond Tirisha do not participate in this act.

(... continued on: Pg. 46)

# MAP REFERENCE

## TIRISHA

1. Thugjey Chenmo
2. Khangchenpa Manekhang
3. Makzur Gyalpo and Gyamo
4. Lophan Tso and Petroglyphs
5. Chorgok
6. Pul Thang

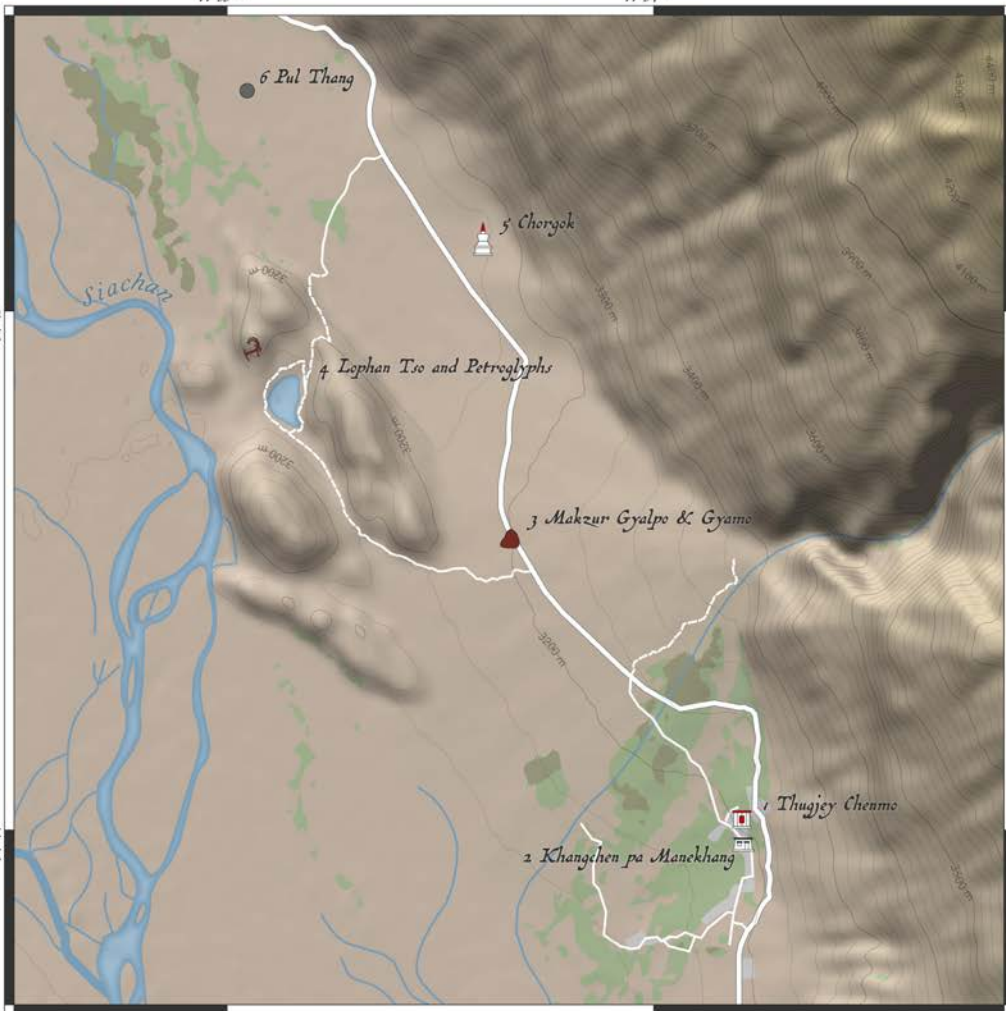


77°33' 0"

77°34' 0"

28°45' 0"

28°44' 0"



TIRISHA

ཏིརིཤ།

0 250 500 m



	temple		path/track
	chorten		river
	prayer wheel		stream
	petroglyph		lake/pond
	sacred rock/mountain		built-up area
	historic site other		forest
	road major		fields & vegetation
	road minor		contours (20 m)

*Numbers and names follow Tirisha walk book listing*



In the middle of the village there are abandoned structures of old residential houses. Here, in the courtyard of the Rigsum Gonbo family lies one of the seven footprints of Da Chomba Nyima Gon, they occasionally perform smoke offerings and light butter lamps here. A large red spot on a hill above Tirisha village is a mark of the past activity to extract a mineral called *Tsal*, it is a natural pigment used for the colour red.

Visitors to Tirisha experience a drastic drop in temperature, as from here onwards the altitude increases and so it is colder. This drop in temperature continues in the remaining villages along the Siachen belt.

## 1. THUGJEY CHENMO

The walk to the village starts from a large prayer wheel turned by the pressure of water; it is next to the Bangkhapa house. It is known as *Chuskor Mane*, quite literally 'water-turned prayer wheel'.

The prayer wheel is considered special and sacred by the local people, and they believe it protects their village. They state that because of its content and power it cannot be moved from its place to anywhere else. An attempt to move it, by a wealthy person from Panamik village, failed after the owner (from the Bangkhapa family) decided to give away this prayer wheel. It is honourably addressed as 'Thugjey Chenmo', another name for the prayer wheel.



## 2. KHANGCHENPA MANEKHANG

The Khangchenpa Manekhang is located on the left side of the link road that goes through the centre of Tirisha village and connects with the main vehicular road. It is located almost at the centre of the village, ahead of the school, in a compound filled with Poplar and Willow trees. From the compound wall one can get a glimpse of a large Changchub Chorten and *mane* wall outside the *Manekhang*.

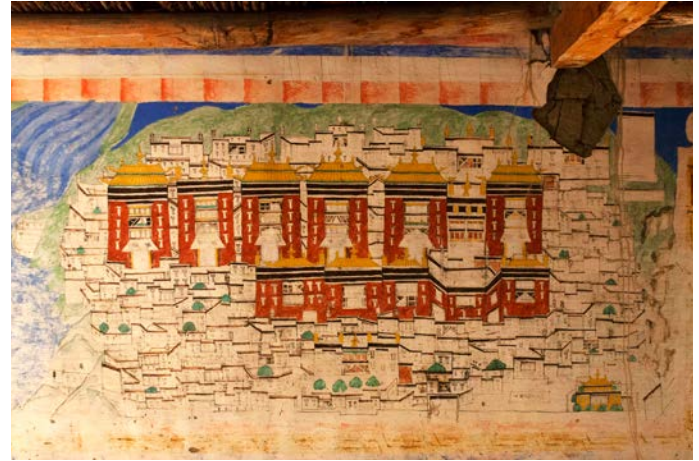
This is a community prayer hall (*manekhang*), built in the 1800s, by a local aristocrat known as Sonam Joldan. The



consecration of the foundation of the community space was led by an ancestor of the Khangchenpa family called Meme Tashi, and the structure was completed during his son Paljor's lifetime.

The prayer hall is a two-storey structure with an open space at the entrance, and the main chapel is on the upper floor, surrounded by prayer wheels. Inside, there are statues of Avalokiteśvara, Buddha Shakyamuni and other deities. The upper part of the structure has narrow windows along with a beautiful balcony containing wall paintings of Lhabab Chorten and major monastic institutions of Tibet such as Samyas and Tashi Lhunpo Monasteries (upper image is of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery), and the Potala Palace in Lhasa. As well as the Jarung Kashor in Nepal (lower image).

Within the premises, there is a round stupa and a *mane* (prayer) wall partially buried under debris from a past flood. Both are said to have been built around the same time as the prayer hall.





### 3. MAKZUR GYALPO AND GYAMO

A pair of boulders, a little ahead of Tirisha village, contains natural impressions that are considered to be manifestations of the deities Makzur Gyalpo and Gyamo, king and queen respectively, on the two boulders. The villagers offer prayers here and light a butter lamp. Miraculously, the boulders remained untouched during the last flood here, in 2018. Everything else around it was damaged or washed away.



## 4. LOPHAN TSO AND PETROGLYPHS

A ten minute walk away from Tirisha village, is a petroglyph site located on the south and north-east of Lophan Tso. It can be accessed via a footpath from the village. The petroglyphs are also to be found along the footpath leading to the lake. The carvings are done on the brownish surfaces of the rocks. They include engravings of stupas and animals such as the ibex, deer and horse.

Lophan Tso is a sacred lake, it lies almost hidden from sight, surrounded by mountains, beyond the Siachen River. There are many myths associated with the lake, that visions appear on its still surface, of sacred objects or buildings, including the Potala Palace. This resonates with the literal translation of the word '*lophan*', where *lo* means heart and *phan* means benefit. Therefore, it refers to the fact that the lake actually 'reflects what is in your heart'. The water in the lake is considered sacred, and is used to make offerings (*yonchab*), to various deities. The lake is holy and special (*kyadparchan*), so any unruly behaviour, such as dipping your feet in it, amounts to committing a grave sin. The villagers believe that if large crowds visit the lake often, this results in "pollution" that

brings harm to the village such as floods. Visitors are requested to respect the sacredness of the lake.

The villagers also observe the lake for good and bad omens, signs of calm water mean peace and harmony will prevail and a drop in the water level is an ominous sign of poor crop yield or an anticipated natural calamity. There is also a local legend that talks about a mythical sheep and a horse emerging out of the lake and two households, including the Khangchenpa family, found these animals and took good care of them. As a result, they had healthy and prolific herds of livestock for generations.

A *mane* (prayer) wall, along the lake, was built in memory of an eight-year-old child who drowned in the lake while herding livestock. In the 1990s, the villagers built a one-room structure beside it for keeping butter lamps, which they light regularly and where they perform a monthly ritual (*labsang*).

Beside the lake there is the shrine of the village deity called Kushuwar Lhato. This deity is one of the seven sibling spirits known as Zangnam Spunlha, and are believed to have migrated from Central Asia (*Hor*). This is a new shrine, constructed at the same place as the old one which was damaged by a flood in 2018.



## 5. CHORGOK

Though resembling a mere heap of earth, Chorgok is a large stupa ruin that is considered an important Buddhist site. It is located on the right side of the vehicular road that leads to Panamik, almost opposite the Lophan Tso. The site draws much curiosity because it is believed an ancient Buddhist temple exists under the stupa. Hence, it is also thought to be one of the oldest Buddhist sites in Ladakh, but there is no evidence about this to date. However, according to oral accounts by the villagers, they say that once the entire village was settled near Chorgok. Proof of this lies in the ruins of houses nearby.



## 6. PUL THANG

*Pul* (bicarbonate of soda, commonly known as baking soda) is a popular ingredient used in the preparation of Ladakhi butter tea; it is also a natural soap and was used in the past for washing, especially as a shampoo.

Between the Lophan Tso and the road there is an open field (*thang*) where the soda can be found. The source is a plant that grows wild. However, the quantity here is limited so people are cautioned against over-exploiting the field for soda and just taking what they require. This plant was also exported from Nubra to different parts of Ladakh and Baltistan. Until 1989, this area was leased to the government and they protected the production of baking soda. It is now a shared natural resource between the villages of Panamik and Tirisha.

At the side of the field lies the ruin of structures known as *Pul Kuti* (literally 'soda room'), it was used by people to store the soda as they extracted it from the field.





# PANAMIK

པ་ན་མིག།

## PANAMIK

There are two stories that tell how Panamik got its name. One says the name of the place was *Spangmik*, meaning ‘a meadow with eyes’. This refers to the seven geological fissures in its landscape that are hot springs (*chutsan*); these are famous for their medicinal properties. It is said these hot springs were created when the ancient sage Kassapa (also known as Da Chompa Nyima Gungpa) threw seven grains of barley from the top of Ensa Monastery towards Panamik. Where they landed, the hot springs sprang up.

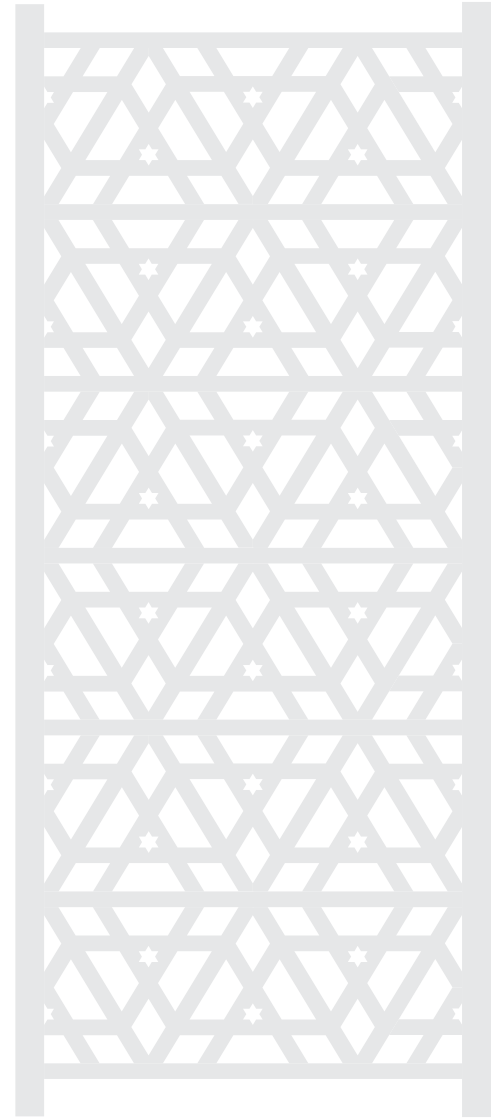
The other story is about the terrifying mythical ruler Cho Bongskang-chan. The ruler saw a woman feeding her infant on her lap and uttered the word ‘*pang-na-mik*’, referring to the ‘eyes on the crossed leg’, he is said to have asked for the eyes (*mik*) on her lap (*pang*). So horrific were his words, that they stayed in people’s memory and the place became identified as ‘Pang-na-mik’; over the years this became Panamik.

Panamik was an important stop-over on the historical Trans-Karakoram trade route, and traders coming from Central Asia were relieved to reach it after crossing the treacherous Depsang plain. They would call the village ‘Panamik *Shahar*’ (city), and the town provided them many facilities such as rest and store houses, and pasture for their animals. On the way back, it was at Panamik that the traders got their last bit of leisure time before the difficult road home. During the Dogra rule, taxes (*babs*) were collected at Panamik from traders coming in from Central Asia.

# MAP REFERENCE

## PANAMIK

1. Self-Help Group
2. Hot Springs
3. Hor Cemetery
4. Baltipa
5. Khangchenpa House
6. Bange Khana or Ration Depot
7. Kagan Chorten
8. Rock Carving
9. Walnut Tree





77°32' 0"

77°32' 30"



PANAMIK

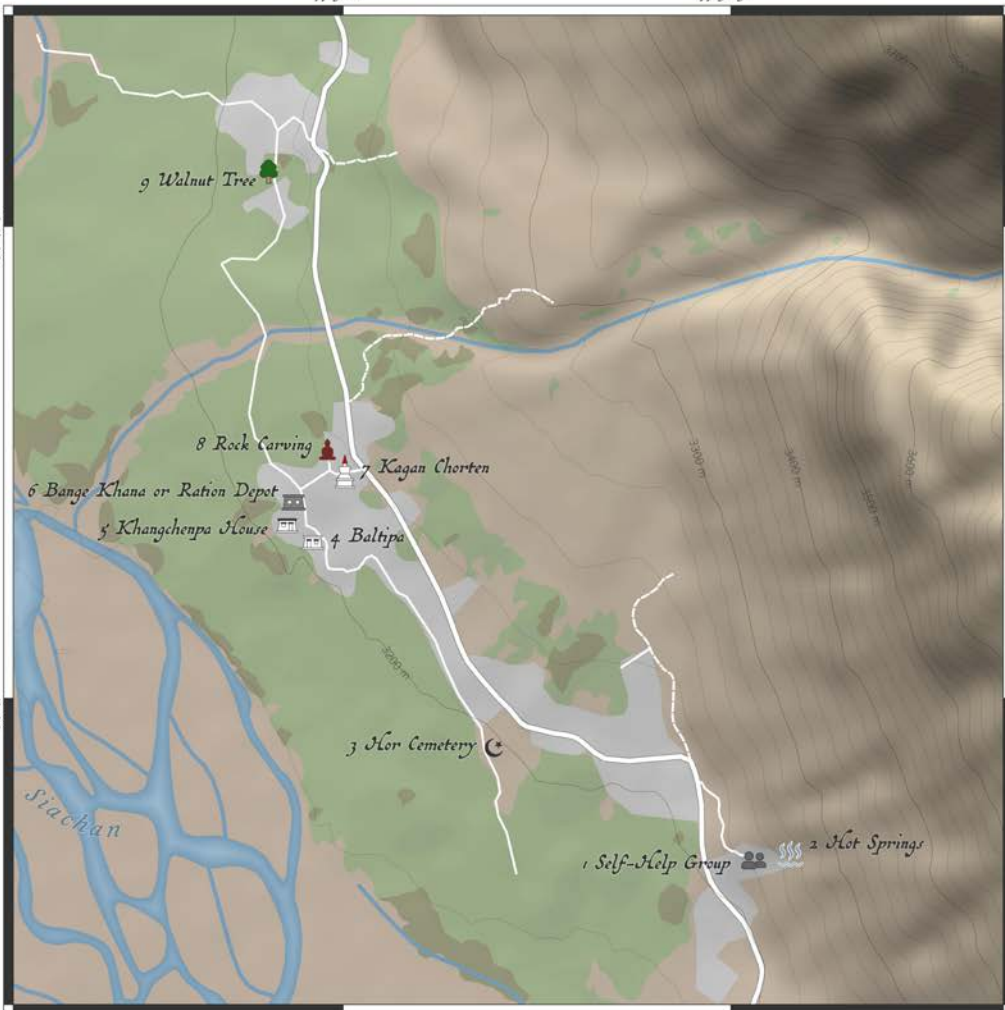
པ་ན་མིག།



0 250 500 m

	temple		road major
	chorten		road minor
	rock carving/statue		path/track
	sacred tree		river
	muslim cemetery		stream
	historic house		built-up area
	factory/store		forest
	self-help group/society		fields & vegetation
	spring		contours (20 m)

Numbers and names follow Panamik walk book listing



## 1. SELF HELP GROUP

There are three registered Self Help Groups who take care of the Hot Springs, they are Yarskit Tsogspa, Kuntus Tsogspa and Serzang Tsogspa. They work collectively to maintain the cleanliness of the place, and make sure all the people who come to use the hot springs are attended to. They run a café there serving local food; they also sell various local products they make such as jam and juice.



## 2. HOT SPRINGS

Panamik's renowned natural hot springs (*rangjung chutsan*), are located at the beginning of the village, when one comes from Sumoor, on the right side of the main road. There are seven springs and they contain medicinal properties that are known to cure arthritis, skin infections, obesity, muscle aches, migraine, headaches, and appetite loss, among other diseases.

Most patients consult an amchi (local doctor) while undertaking their treatment, this generally involves regulated dips in the water and drinking the water. Excessive use of the hot springs without consulting an amchi is not advisable, as it can have a negative impact on the body. It is always advisable to take traditional medicine along with the treatment, as the medicine will enhance the power of the water. Most favourable time for the treatment is in spring, when the apricot blossoms are out, and also in late autumn.

In 2010 some rooms and a bathroom were constructed nearby for patients. A local Self Help Group runs and manages the hot springs. Many people across Ladakh visit the hot springs, the other well-known hot springs in the region are at Chumathang and Changlung.



### 3. HOR CEMETERY

The Hor Cemetery has the graves of mainly Central Asian traders, as there are no Muslim families living in the village. The cemetery is located on the left side of the main road, a little further down from the Hot Springs. Most of the Central Asian traders were Muslims, and thus they were buried; Buddhists commonly practise cremation. In Islam, it is not advisable to bury the dead at any random place, so whenever a trader died nearby, his body was brought to Panamik to be buried.

Individual graves can be recognised by the boundary of low stone walls containing earth within, there are no headstones or markers mentioning the name of the deceased. The number of graves indicates the risks the traders took, as not only was the journey between Central Asia long and treacherous, they also exposed themselves to the difficulties of the high altitude and other illnesses. Most of the deceased were buried in Panamik, but those who could afford it took the bodies back home with them.



## 4. BALTIPA

The Baltipa house has probably been around since the late 16th or early 17th century, though with a lack of documentation it is difficult to say when the family settled in Panamik and when the house was built. The origin of their house name 'Baltipa' is also vague, one suggestion is that they may have come from Baltistan (now in Pakistan) and settled here. Another, is that they may have hosted Balti traders and so their name could have been derived from that act. Especially since it is also said that one of the members of the family had

an important role in trade operations during the Dogra regime.

Their home is a two-storey structure, which has probably been renovated over the years. A member of the family talked about there once being a cemetery in the compound of the old house, but this is no longer there. This could have been a burial site for Muslim traders coming from Central Asia, as was common in other parts of Nubra.



## 5. KHANGCHENPA HOUSE

The Khangchenpa house is an old two-storey structure dating to the 18th century, it is located in the centre of Panamik Yokma. The house has two chapels, a small one on the top floor of the house and a larger one beside the house that is used as a community prayer hall (*manekhang*). The walls of the *manekhang* are painted with images of Avalokiteśvara, Guru Pamasambhava and the thirty-five forms of Buddha; there is also a clay statue of Gyalwa Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelugpa sect of Buddhism. There are also several handwritten scriptures and *thangkas* (scroll paintings). At one time all the village rituals used to be performed here, and a caretaker monk from Diskit Monastery resided in the premises. Women are not allowed to enter this chapel.

It is said that there was a time when the villagers of Panamik were fed up by the tax and forced labour enforced upon them by the Dogra rulers. They performed a powerful ritual called *zhingsrhag*, seeking respite from the atrocities meted upon them by the Dogra officials. As a part of this prayer, they also built a water-run prayer wheel (*Mane Chuskor or Chuskor Thugjey Chenmo*), which still stands beside the *manekhang*.



## 6. BANGE KHANA OR RATION DEPOT

The structures at this site were demolished some 15 to 20 years ago, but the villagers still recall the buildings that once stood here. Most of them were government offices, built during the Dogra rule and used for the collection of tax (*thral*), mainly in the form of grain (*du-thral*). Other forms of tax collected included land (*sa-thral*) and currency (*mul-thral*).

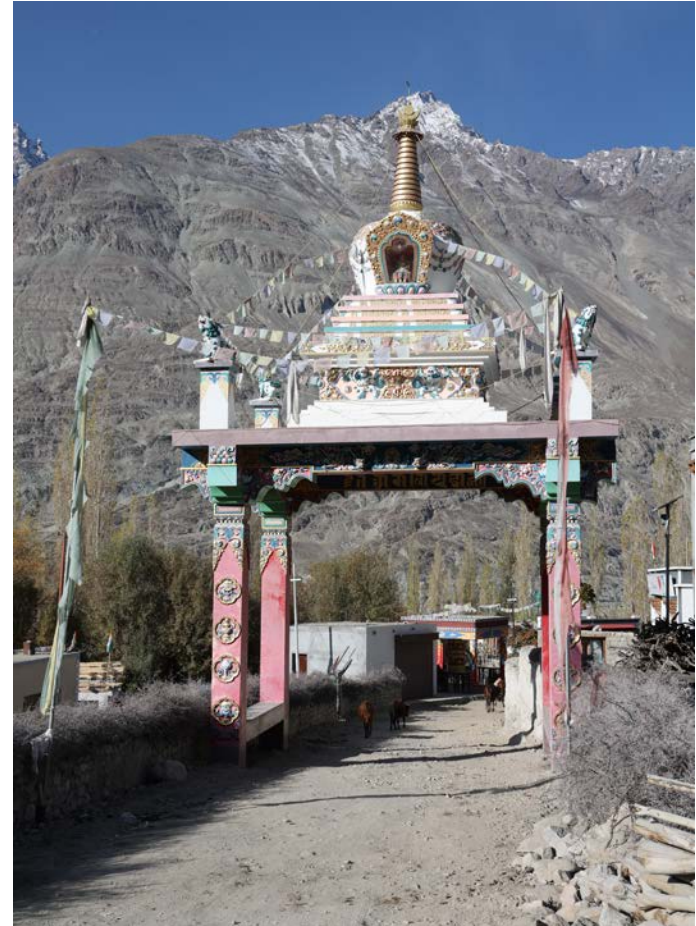
Panamik was the tax collection centre, and there were large granaries built here to store barley. It is said the building was L-shaped and doubled-up as a *serai* (inn). There were rooms for traders and travellers to stay, stables for their animals, and a spacious diwan khana (Urdu, hall for meetings). In addition, villagers recall other official buildings in the vicinity such as a Charas (hashish) Depot (also known as *Bange Khana*), Revenue Office (*Patwari khana*) and a bungalow named 'Charas bangla'. This was a rest house specially for important people involved in the import of *charas*, from Yarkand. This was exported as far as England where it was mainly used as anaesthesia.



## 7. KAGAN CHORTEN

At the entrance to the Panamik ration depot, there used to be an old Kagan Chorten or a stupa gate located on the village footpath leading to the Khangchenpa house. This was built by Duk Tsewang of the Baltipa family in the 18th century after they converted to Buddhism. Everyone who passed under the stupa received the blessings of the Buddha.

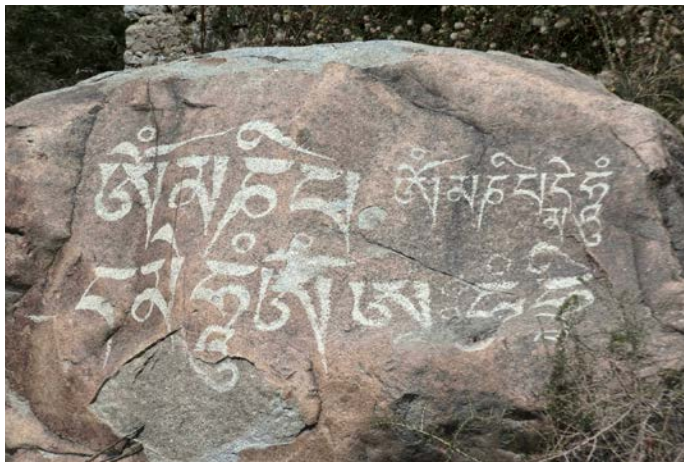
In 2010, the old Kagan Stupa was dismantled to make way for a vehicular road that passes through the middle of the village; a few of its remains can still be seen on the walls of the Manepa house. A new stupa was constructed at the same place to compensate for the old one; it sits on a raised platform supported by four pillars. The stupa is said to resemble the old one exactly, only the new one is built from cement.





## 8. ROCK CARVING

Three large boulders bearing finely worked Buddhist inscriptions and mantras, in Tibetan script, lie a little ahead of the Khangchenpa house. Tsetan, a prominent forefather of the family, is said to have hired a calligrapher from Kubet village, in Nubra. This was Tsewang Yangjor of the Yultakpa family, and he carved the letters into the rock face. Similar works by Tsewang are also found around the site of the Hor Cemetery. According to Buddhist practices, carving Buddhist inscriptions and mantras on rocks brings both the maker, and the person who commissioned the work, merit.



## 9. WALNUT TREE

A large, imposing Walnut tree lies a little further down the road, access to this tree is via a narrow lane away from the main road. It is said that in the early 19th century, on one of his trips to Central Asia, Tsering Sonam of the Gongmapa family returned with a sapling of a Walnut tree. Tsering would often accompany trading parties to Central Asia, mainly Yarkand, working as a guide or a porter. He planted this tree in his orchard where it still stands today.





# PHUKPOCHE

ཕུག་པོ་ཚེ།

## PHUKPOCHE

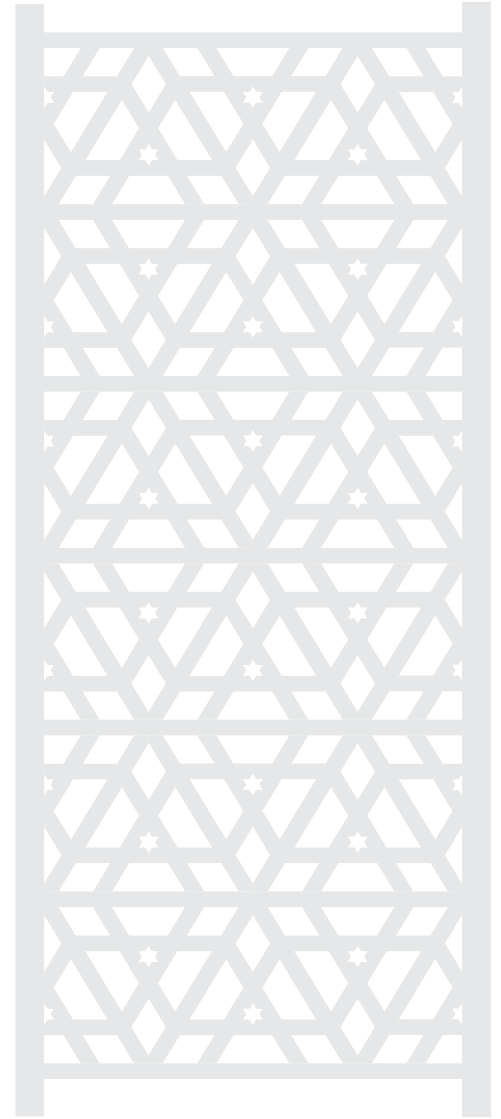
Phukpoche was once part of Panamik, but is now an independent village with its own village head (*goba*). There is a stream separating it from the larger village of Panamik.

In government revenue papers, the name of the village has been recorded as Khuluche. During Losar (New Year) celebrations, the village has a special ritual called Tsaskor, where a plate is filled with many herbs that are mixed with flour into a dough. This is to ward off harmful spirits and evil, similar to the *metho* ceremonies that are performed in Tirisha.

# MAP REFERENCE

## PHUKPOCHE

1. Zambakpa House
2. Border Security Force (BSF) Memorial
3. Lhuchang



77°31'0"

77°31'30"

77°31'0"

34°48'30"

34°48'0"



# PHUKPOCHE

ཕུག་པོ་ཆེ།



0 250 500 m



	sacred tree		river
	historic house		stream
	memorial		built-up area
	road major		forest
	road minor		fields & vegetation
	path/track		contours (20 m)

*Numbers and names follow Phukpoche walk book listing*



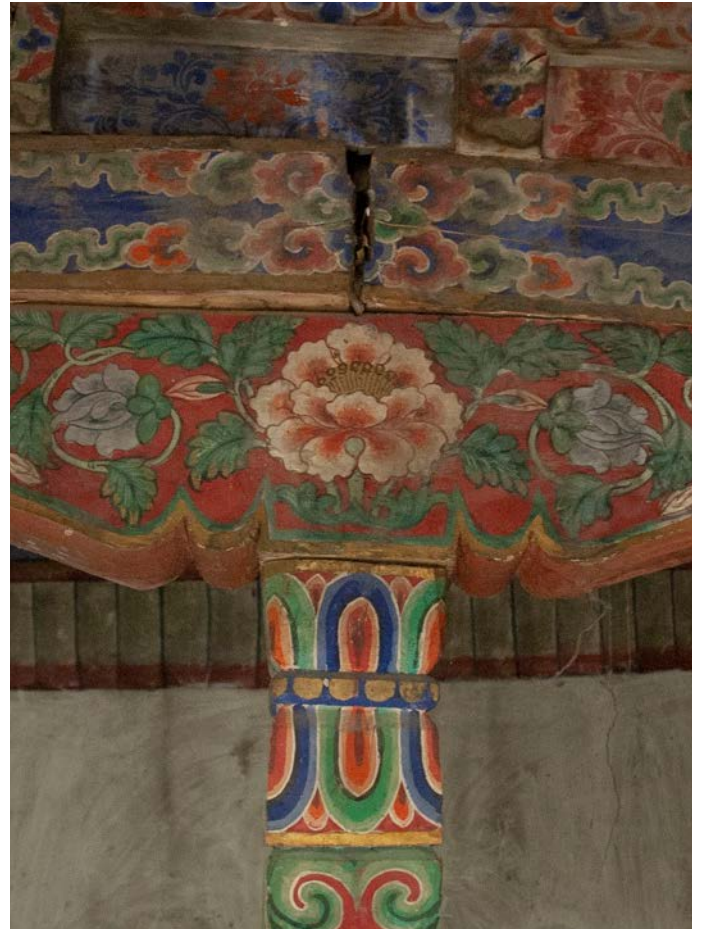
# 1. ZAMBAKPA HOUSE

The Zambakpa House is located in the centre of the village and is said to date from the early 1800s. It is a large two-storey house, still in fairly good condition with its winter kitchen (*chansa*) and temple (*chodkhang*). The temple has a wall painting of *Tsering dukskor* (symbols of long life), along with the eight auspicious symbols of Buddhism.

The Zambakpa family's ancestors are said to have originally come from Kham in Tibet. In the 19th century, a yogi from Kham visited Nubra and spent many years meditating at Ensa Monastery. The yogi was accompanied by his wife, who was from Purang in Tibet, but he divorced her and married a woman from Nubra. He later came to be known as Dhamma Tulku or Kushok Dhamma. The Manepa family of Phukpoche donated land to him to build his house, and so he settled here. Today's Zambakpa family are the descendants of Kushok Dhamma.

The family and Ensa Monastery share a very close relationship till date, and many of the rituals associated with Ensa are performed in the Zambakpa's temple. The *komnyer* (caretaker monk) of Ensa Monastery is also a *komnyer* of Zambakpa's temple.





## 2. BORDER SECURITY FORCE (BSF) MEMORIAL

The memorial is located at the end of the village, towards the Taksha side, it was built to commemorate the BSF mountaineers who lost their lives climbing the Saser glacier. The mountain lies at a height of 25,171 feet. In 1995, BSF organised an expedition to the Saser glacier in which 13 mountaineers participated. On 27th August 1995, as they were climbing, an avalanche took place and they all lost their lives. With the help of the villagers, the BSF organised a rescue team and managed to recover eight bodies.

In 2008, the BSF built a memorial to the brave mountaineers who lost their lives. Since then, every year on 27th August, they organise an event here to pay homage to the soldiers and show their gratitude to the villagers who had provided support to the BSF rescue team in locating the missing mountaineers.





### 3. LHUCHANG

A sacred grove filled with Poplar and Willow trees is a special site in the village. It is considered sacred by the villagers as they believe a spirit (*lhu*) resides in them. The villagers say this belief has existed for centuries, and the trees were never harmed or cut down. In the 1800s, Kushok Dhamma ordered the villagers to cut some of the Poplars so that they could be used as beams in the construction of the new prayer hall (*dukhang*) at Ensa Monastery. The villagers, while cutting witnessed a very unusual scene, it is said that milk came pouring out of the trees. Since then, the villagers have not touched the trees, not so much as even taken a twig from there.



# GLOSSARY

This includes common Ladakhi words that appear frequently in all walk books.

Ama	Mother	Chagzot	Manager of a monastery
Amchi	Traditional doctor	Chali	Blanket made of goat and/or yak hair
Archog	Deconsecration	Chak	Prostration
Bab	Tax	Chamba	Future Buddha, also known as Maitreya
Bagston	Marriage ceremony	Changchub Chorten	Stupa, symbolizing Buddha's enlightenment
Balu	Bear	Chang	barley beer
Bamo	Witch	Changthang	Northern Plains
Bayul	Hidden land	Chanrazig	God of Compassion, also known as Avalokiteśvara,
Bo	Measuring cup, 2 litres	Chansa	Winter kitchen
Bok	Cloak or cape	Chadpe mane	Stupa built as a penalty
Bugzhal	Cymbal	Chodkhang	Chapel or temple
Bum	Buddhist text (literally 'hundred thousand')	Chodme	Butter lamp
Bumskor	Act of taking Buddhist texts around the fields for blessing	Chorgok	Stupa that is in ruins
		Chornga	Gong
		Chorten	Stupa
		Chotrul Chorten	Stupa symbolizing miracles performed by the Buddha

Chu	Water	Dungsten	Funeral stupa containing relics of a saint
Chugshigzhal	Avalokiteśvara, depicted with eleven heads	Dzod	Store
Chuli	Apricot	Gelugpa	One of the sects of Tibetan Buddhism
Chura	Large basket	Goba	Headman of a village
Chuskor Mane	Prayer Wheel turned by water	Gomang Chorten	Stupa, symbolizing Buddha's first teachings
Chutsan	Hot spring	Gonpa	Monastery
Daman	Drum	Gos	Robe, Clothes
Darchen	Large prayer flags	Gya	Hundred
Daru or Damaru	Drum, held in the hand	Gyanak Ichagris	Great Wall of China (pattern)
Do	Meeting point of river and valley	Gyastongpa	Buddhist text
Doksa	Upper pastures	Gyathab	Decorated metal stove
Dolthok	Stone pot	Gyelong	Buddhist monk
Drangyas	An offering made of dough	Kagan Chorten	Stupa gate
Drilu	Bell	Kagyur Lhakang	Library
Dru-thral	Tax, paid in grain	Kangyur	108 volumes of text, Buddha's teachings
Druk	Dragon		
Dukhang	Assembly Hall or main chapel, in a monastery		

Khangpa	House	Lhardag	Caretaker of a deity
Khar	Fort or palace	Lhato	Altar or Shrine dedicated to a protector deity
Khargog	Ruined fort or palace		
Kharmon	Royal musician	Lhu	Spirits of the water and earth
Khatag	White ceremonial scarf	Lhubang	Shrine dedicated to <i>Lhu</i>
Khulu	Yak wool	Lonpo	Minister
Kirkir	Circle, circular	Losar	New Year
Komnyer	Person in charge of monastery	Ltanmo	Festival
		Lung	Valley
Kushu	Apple	Mane	Prayer
Labrang	Monastic living quarters	Mane Kambum	Circular prayer wall
Lacha	Wax	Mane Lagskor	Prayer wheel, small and held in the hand
Lakshes	Craftsman		
Lchangma	Tree	Mane Tungchur	Prayer wheel, large
Lchangra	A grove of Willow trees	Manekhang	Community temple or prayer hall
Lha, Lhamo	God, Goddess		
Lha-lchang	Sacred tree	Manthang	Long prayer walls
Lhabab Chorten	Stupa, symbolizing Buddha's descent from heaven	Marpo	Red
		Member	Lamp
Lhagchung	Shrine or temple	Mentok	Flower

Meto	Torch, made with fire	Phaspun	Group of families who worship the same protector deity
Mikha	Bad mouth		
Mokham	A drum beat		
Mul	Silver	Phat	Sack
Naktsur	Type of natural dye	Phey	Flour, roasted barley
Nambu	Woollen cloth	Pholongs	Rock
Namgyal Chorten	Stupa, symbolizing Buddha's victory over illness	Phu	Pastureland in the upper valley
Nyangdas Chorten	Stupa, symbolizing Buddha's ascent to nirvana	Phurpa	Ritual dagger
Nyerpa	Male community representative, manager	Piuchan	Knoll
		Podshog	Handmade paper
Nyingmapa	One of the Sects of Tibetan Buddhism	Pul	Bicarbonate of soda
		Rabsal	Balcony, wooden
Onpo	Astrologer	Ragan	Brass
Pabu	Shoes, short boots	Ral	Goat hair
Padspung Chorten	Stupa, symbolizing Buddha's birth	Rangjon	self-appeared or self-formed
		Ranthag	Watermill
Pecha	Texts	Ri	Hill or mountain
Perak	Turquoise-studded headdress	Ri ter-ter	Rolling hill
		Ridag	Deer

Rigsum Gonbo	Three stupas representing Avalokiteśvara, Manjushri and Vajrapani (Bodhisattvas of compassion, wisdom and power respectively)	Shang thag Shukpa Singe Skampo Skarma	Nose bleed Juniper Tree Lion Dry Star
Ringmo	Long	Skerag	Belt
Rinpoche	Incarnated High Lama	Skorlam	Circumambulation path
Rong	Valley	Skudung Lhakhang	Relic shrine
Rta	Horse	Skurim	Rituals
Sa	Land	Snas ig	Religious text
Sa-thral	Tax for land	Soljong	Community rituals
Sadaq	Spirits of the land	Sojong	Spiritual retreat
Sangs	Incense or smoke offering	Soma	New
Ser	Gold	Spon	Artist, painter
Sergar	Goldsmith, also metal craftsman	Srinmo Srubla	Witch Harvest festival
Serthod	Golden hat	Stangyur	Buddhist text, 225 volumes
Shak	Plaited twigs plastered with mud	Starga Ster	Walnut Treasure
Sham	Lower Ladakh	Stodthung	Short sleeveless woman's

Sum	jacket	Tsele	Hut of plaited twigs
Surna	Three	Tsemo	Top of a mountain, peak or summit
Tangra	Wind instrument		
Thagsha	Shed for animals	Tsepo	Basket
Thakpa	Loom	Tso	Lake
Thang	Rope	Tsogspa	Association or Society
Thangka	Field, open plain	Tsugthul	Blanket, made from wool
Thap	Scroll painting	Yarkhang	Summer kitchen
Thigma	Stove	Yogor	Felt cape
Thral	Tie-dye design	Yul	Village
Tibi	Tax	Yul lha	Village protector
Tokpo	Hat	Yundum	Swastika
Tsa-tsa	Stream	Zampa	Bridge
Tsakhang	Miniature stupa	Zang	Copper
	Relic house, where miniature stupas are kept	Zhabjes	Foot print
Tsamkhang	Retreat cell	Zhugthis	Seat or throne
Tsamphuk	Meditation cave	Zimchung	Rinpoche or high Lama's residence
Tsan	Mountain dwelling spirits, also demons	Zimskhang	Noble house

# CONTRIBUTORS

## MAPPING THE CULTURE AND HERITAGE OF NUBRA, LADAKH

This project set out to research and document the cultural practises and historical sites in Nubra's Siachen Belt, and disseminate the results through an 'Inventory Catalogue' and four 'Walks in Nubra' booklets. The project relied heavily on oral narratives and local knowledge, as much of the culture and history of this area was being documented for the first time. Local community members were involved with the project and interviews were held with key resource people from the area, village elders and artisans amongst others. The project team consisted largely of researchers and trainees from Nubra.

### **SONAM WANGCHOK**

Principal Researcher, primarily focusing on the 'Inventory Catalogue'. He has a PhD in Buddhist studies from Delhi University, and is the founder of the Himalayan Cultural Heritage Foundation (HCHF). He is an independent researcher and cultural activist, specializing in the preservation of cultural heritage, and is the editor of 'Heritage Himalaya', a biannual magazine dedicated to the cultural and natural heritage of the Himalayas.

### **PADMA LHAMO**

Principal Researcher, focusing on the 'Walks in Nubra' booklets. She has a BA and MA in History from Delhi University. In 2023, she received her PhD in History from Punjab University. Padma is currently Assistant Professor at Government Degree College Nubra.

### **TSETAN TONYOT**

Research Associate, focusing on the 'Inventory Catalogue'. He has studied at the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies (CIBS), Choglamsar. He completed his undergraduate and graduate studies there in Comparative Philosophy, in 2022 he received his PhD from CIBS becoming the first student from the Institute to successfully receive his doctorate.

### **TENZING PALMO**

Research Associate, focusing on the 'Inventory Catalogue'. She completed a Master's of Liberal Studies degree with a concentration in Sociology and Anthropology from Ashoka University in 2022. Tenzing is currently a Field Researcher with the Centre for Pastoralism.



## RIGZIN DOLMA

Research Associate, focusing on the ‘Walks in Nubra’ booklets. She has a BA in History from Delhi University, and is currently studying for a MA in History from Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU).

## HENK THOMA

Cartographer for both the ‘Inventory Catalogue’ and ‘Walks in Nubra’ booklets. He has a background in physical geography and environmental science. He is an avid trekker, likes motorbiking and swimming, and has great concern for the culture and nature of Ladakh.

## AARON DEVA DANA

Designer for both the ‘Inventory Catalogue’ and ‘Walks in Nubra’ booklets, he is LAMO’s Creative Director. He has a BFA in Applied Art from the College of Art, Delhi, and a foundation in Design from the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad. In 2004, he set up Digital Mine, and specializes in drafting for buildings and graphic design; he is also empaneled by the government.

## SONAM ANGCHOK

Photographer for both the ‘Inventory Catalogue’ and

‘Walks in Nubra’ booklets. He is the Media Officer at the Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation. Angchok has done a certified course on Cinematography and Film making conducted by the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune.

## TASHI MORUP

Assistant Editor for ‘Walks in Nubra’. He is Projects Director of the Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation, Leh. His areas of research include the environment (especially water and glaciers), the impact of development and tourism mainly in Leh town, and music. Tashi has a postgraduate in Mass Communication from Punjab University, and a postgraduate in Journalism from Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU).

## MONISHA AHMED, EDITOR

for both the ‘Inventory Catalogue’ and ‘Walks in Nubra’. She is the Co-founder and Executive Director of Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation, Leh. She is an independent researcher, writer and curator whose work focuses on art practices and material culture in Ladakh, as well as other areas of the Himalayan world. Monisha has a DPhil in Social Anthropology, from Oxford University.

## TRAINEES:

### LOBSANG SAMDUP

is from Panamik Village in Nubra. He has an MA in Buddhism from the Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath. He is currently studying for his PhD at Visva-Bharati Santiniketan, West Bengal.

“This project helped me to understand the culture and history of Nubra.”

### STANZIN NAMKHA

is from Wakha, in Kargil district. He has a BSc Hons in Zoology from Hansraj College, Delhi, and is currently studying for a MA in Folklore and Culture Studies from Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). Stanzin assisted with the photography for this project.

“Nubra project was such a beautiful learning opportunity for me. It made me realize how interdependent even our cultural practices are and how a loss of one will lead to the loss of the whole.”

### STANZIN SPALBAR

is from Kuri village in Nubra. He has a BA and MA in history from Punjab University.

“This project made me realise how beautiful and rich my culture is. I learned many interesting stories about my ancestors and which they have proudly carried through the generations. Now it’s time to keep this tradition alive in every possible way.”

### TONDUP NAMGAIL

is from Kuri village in Nubra. He has a BA in Arts from Eliezer Joldan College, Leh. He has an interest in photography.

“During this project I got an opportunity to explore my region like never before and heard many different stories, myths and facts about Nubra valley which I was not aware of.”

## **TSERING LHADOL**

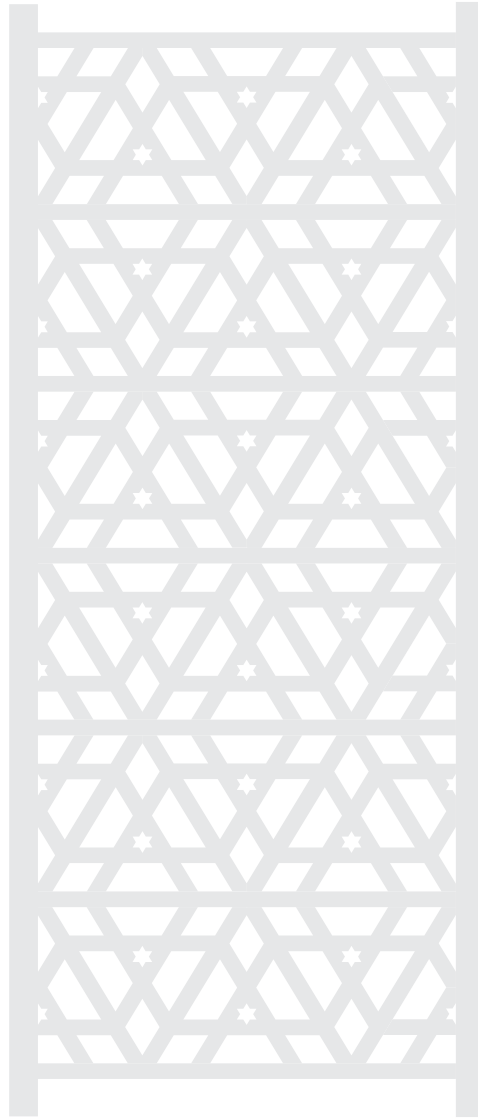
is from Tiger village in Nubra. She has a BA in Arts from Punjab University, along with a diploma in Travel and Tourism. She is working with one of the Self Help Groups (SHG) in the Siachen belt.

“I discovered a lot of new places and sites, and learnt about customs and traditions I did not know about. This project is great for anyone working in the tourism industry who would like to expand their knowledge.”

## **TSERING PALMO**

is from Tiger village in Nubra. She has a MA in Political Science from Delhi University and is currently studying for a B.Ed. She is also working as a Bhoti language teacher at Lamdon Model School, Sumoor.

“I visited so many new places, many of which were unfamiliar to me, and learning about the history and culture of these places has been incredibly moving. My understanding of my heritage and culture has expanded as a result of this project.”









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