



**WALKS IN NUBRA / 3**

**MURGI TO BURMA**

# Walks in Nubra



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Front Cover: Ensa Monastery, Murgi.



# 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.

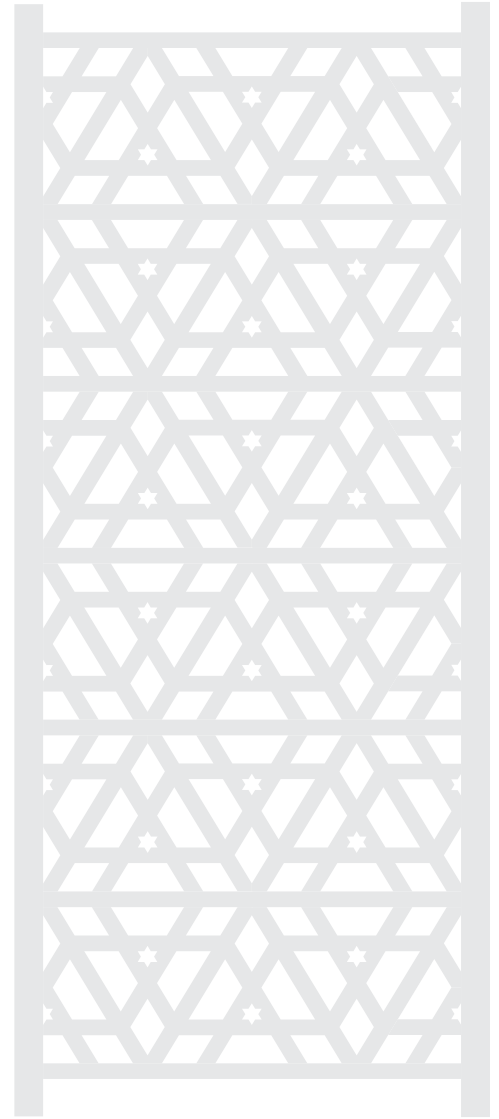
These walks have been composed and written up in consultation with local community members, and many of the researchers who worked on them were from Nubra. The idea behind this was to hear knowledgeable voices from the area, bring in stakeholders and engage with the younger generation to enable them 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 3**

## **CONTENTS**

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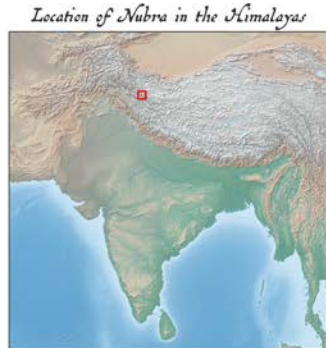
# NUBRA

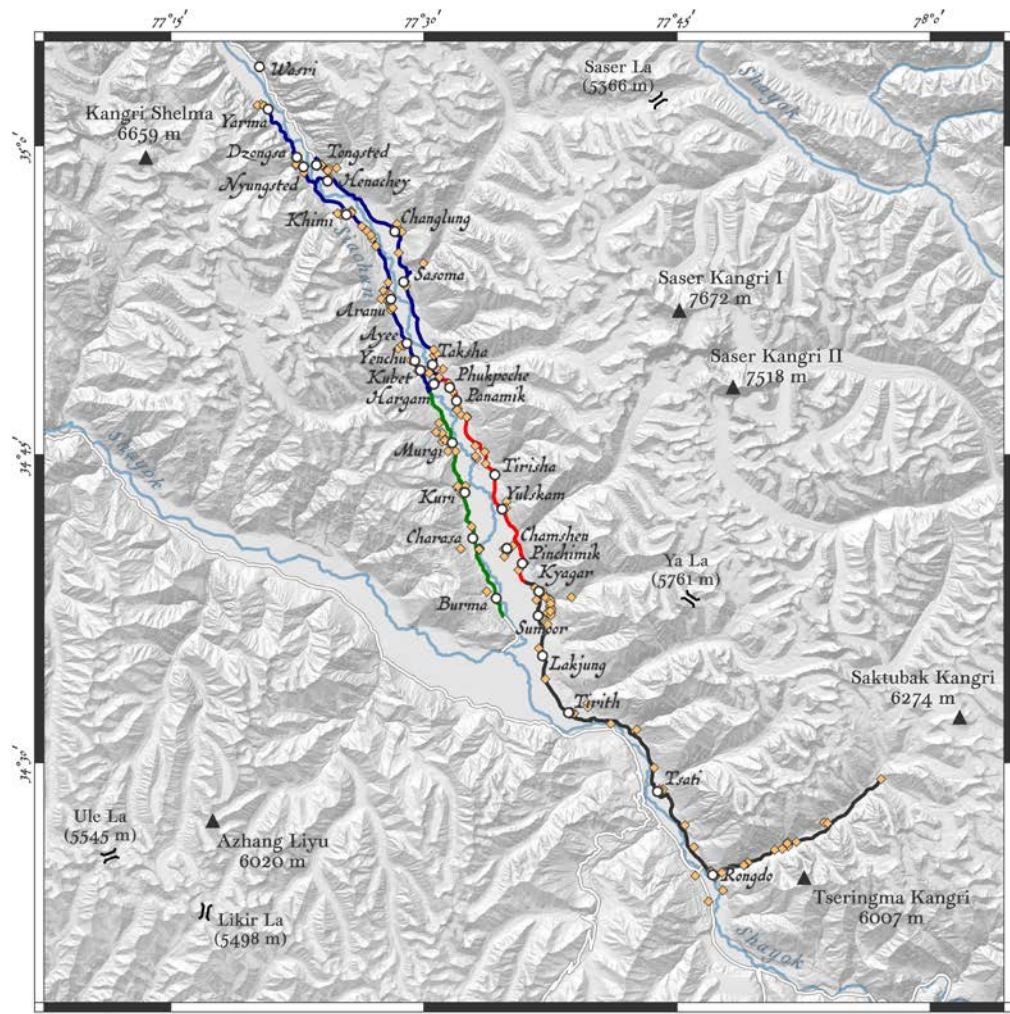
ལུབ་རྩེ།

Featuring Central Nubra

0 5 10 15 km

	place		lake
	prominent site		glacier
	peak		forest
	pass		fields & vegetation
	road		elevation
	river		2970 m 7672 m





# WALKS IN NUBRA AND POINTS OF INTEREST



Featuring Four Beautiful Walks

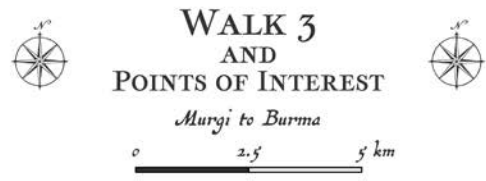
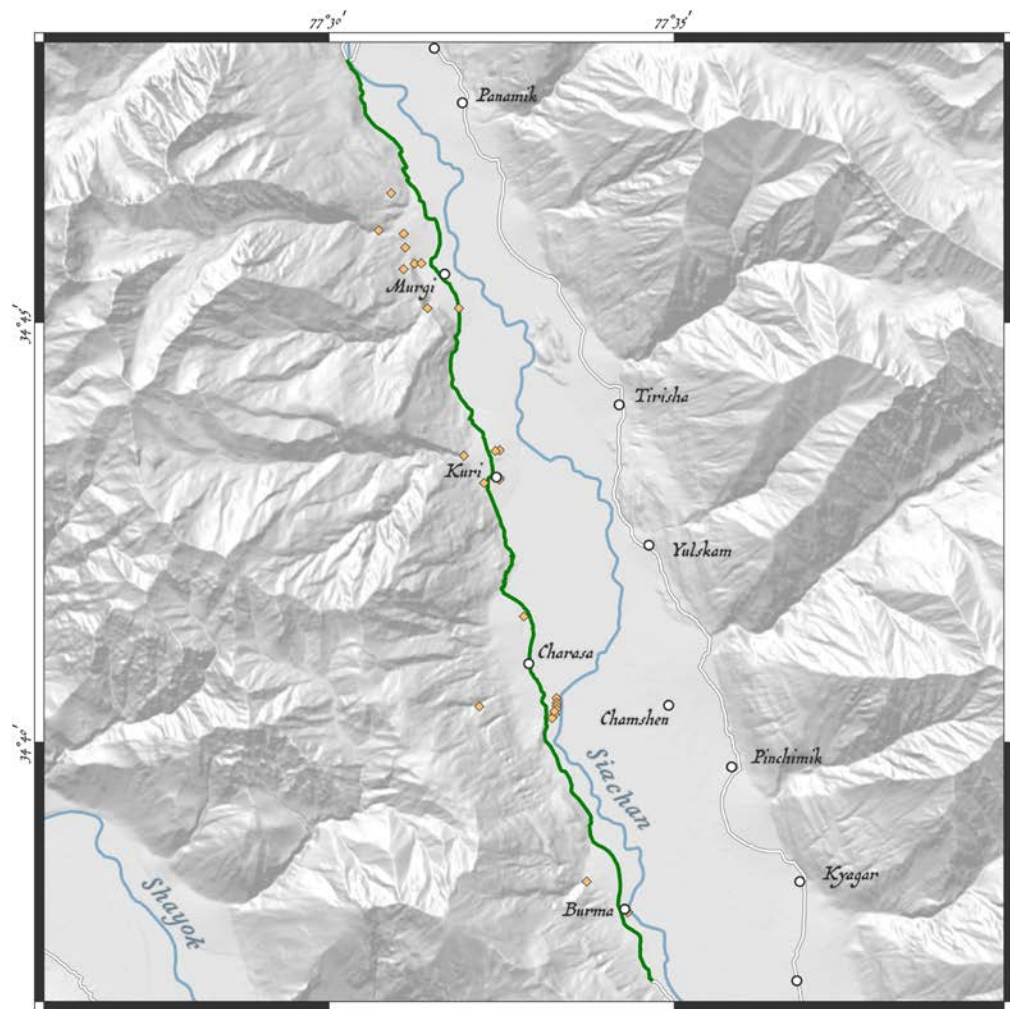


○ place	— walk 1	— road
▲ peak	— walk 2	— river
⌘ pass	— walk 3	
◇ point of interest	— walk 4	

Location of Nubra in the Himalayas









# MURGI

དུལ་རི།

## MURGI

Murgi was originally known as ‘Mulri’ (*mul* meaning silver, and *ri* is hill or mountain), this is more a reference to the village’s reserve of limestone that is used for whitewashing the houses and stupas and most probably not a direct reference to silver deposits in the area. Many villagers doubted the possibility of silver mining in the past, while others said that it could be because when sunlight fell on the limestone it gave off a silver hue, when seen from a distance, and that could be how the name came about. Another reason given for this are manuscripts owned by the Khangchenpa house in the village, the ink used for the lettering is silver.

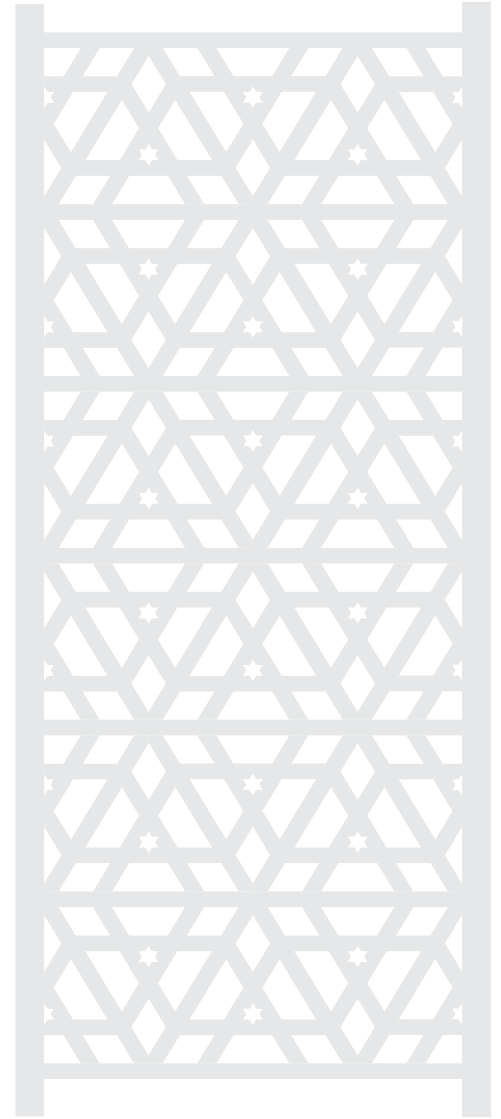
Though the village is relatively small, only 20 households, it is rich in natural resources and heritage sites and played an important role in the Trans-Karakoram trade that went through here. There is much to see in Murgi from waterfalls and caves to limestone reserves, lush meadows and sacred footprints, several stupas, as well as a large petroglyph site that was recently discovered. As well as the well-known Ensa Monastery, perched high in the hills overlooking the village. It continues to be a popular site on Buddhist pilgrimage routes.

However, the land around the village is also badly scarred as intense mining of limestone, over centuries, has left deep holes on its surface. Most of these limestone reserves are in caves, located on a hill known as Kartsi Lungpa. Murgi is also a flood prone area and constant erosion has considerably shrunk the village, forcing many of the residents to build their houses away from the stream and towards the drier areas.

# MAP REFERENCE

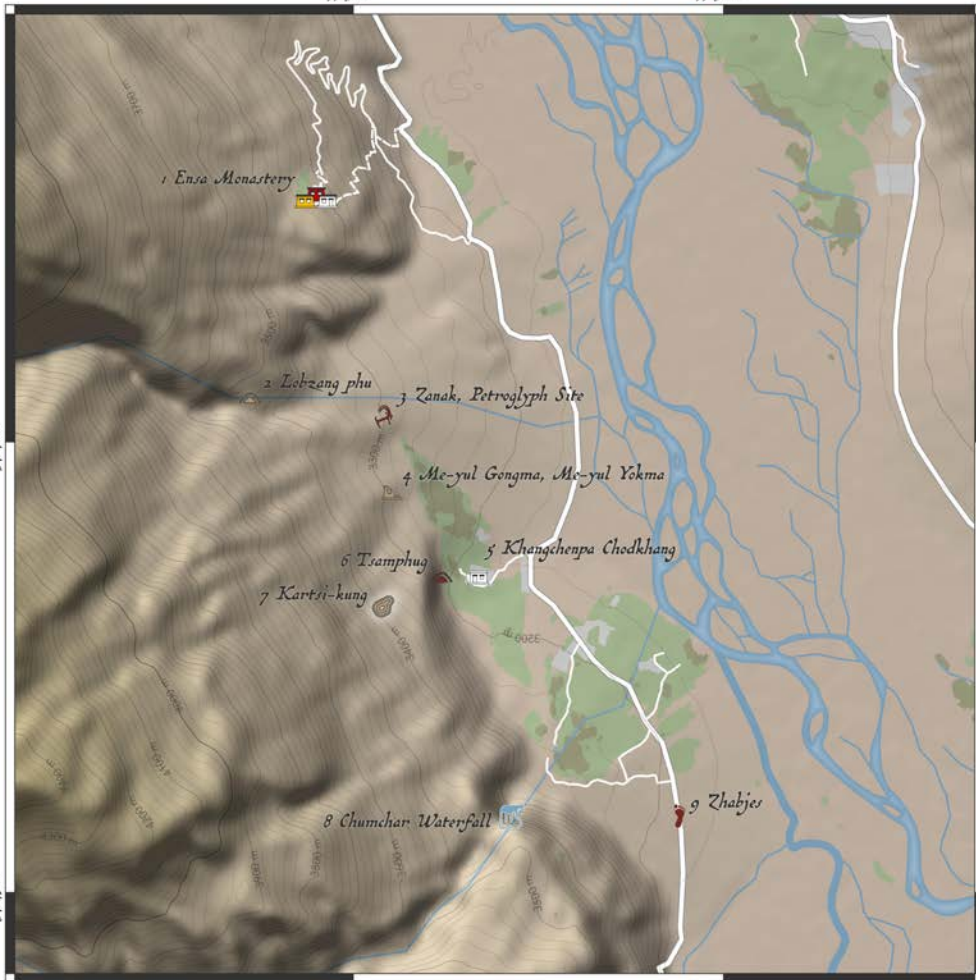
## MURGI

1. Ensa Monastery
2. Lobzang phu
3. Zanak, Petroglyph Site
4. Me-yul Gongma, Me-yul Yokma
5. Khangchenpa Chodkhang
6. Tsamphuk
7. Kartsi-kung
8. Chumchar Waterfall
9. Zhabjes



77°31' 0"

77°32' 0"



MURGI

མུར་རྩེ།

0 250 500 m



	monastery		road major
	meditation cave/house		road minor
	petroglyph		path/track
	footprint/thumbprint		river
	historic house		stream
	ruins		lake/pond
	cave		built-up area
	natural resource		forest
	waterfall		fields & vegetation
			contours (20 m)

Numbers and names follow Murgi walk book listing



# 1. ENSA MONASTERY

The name 'Ensa' is derived from *enbay-sa*, a spiritual retreat. Nestled on the lower reaches of the Saltoro mountain range, along the western side of the Siachen River, Ensa is said to be one of the oldest Buddhist monasteries in Ladakh. In fact, a recent study of a stupa in the monastic premises with a focus on the wall paintings on its inside wall, has revealed that it may have been built as early as the 9th century.

Numerous stupas of varying sizes have been built amidst the trees and bushes that surround Ensa, and there are more that dot the edge of the hill. This truly elevates the sanctity of Ensa and echoes what must have been a glorious past of its long history. In many ways, Ensa is described as the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Nubra Valley.

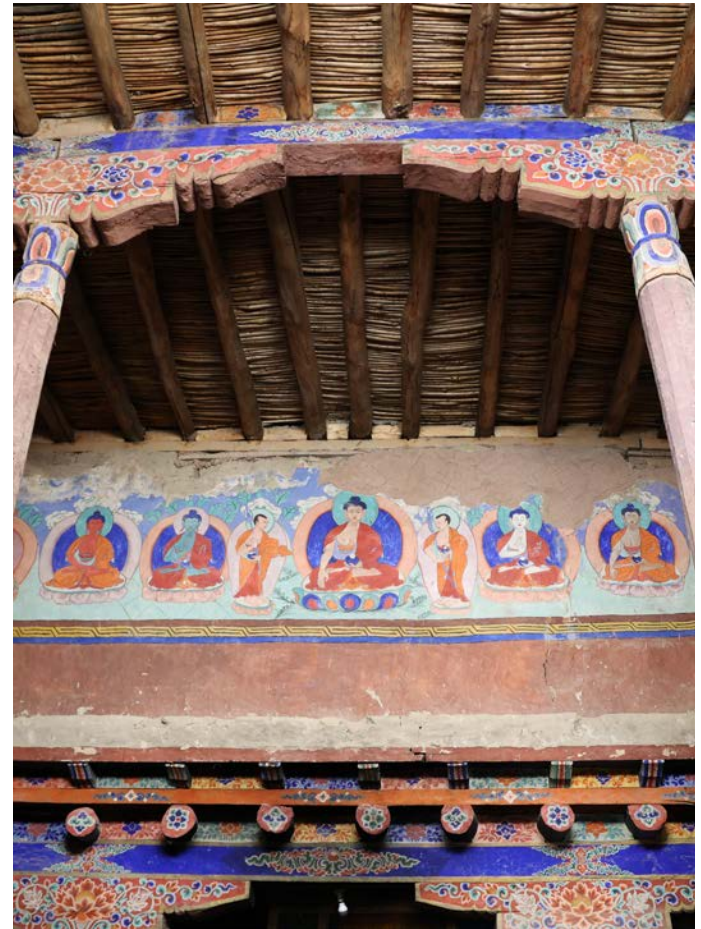
Of all the footprints left by saints and sages on rocks throughout Ladakh, none can parallel the one of Dachomba Nyima-Gungpa (Arahant Madhyantika) enshrined with great reverence here at Ensa and which attracts pilgrims from all over Ladakh and beyond. It is placed just below a ten-foot high statue of Je Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelugpa sect of Buddhism. There is a local belief that when Dachomba Nyima-Gungpa blessed the land of Ladakh, he also

visited Nubra, and left the impression of his footprint at Ensa. It is also said, that from the right side of Ensa he threw some magical seeds in the air, towards the direction of the village of Panamik, and prayed that the seeds, when they touched the ground, would be a source of medicinal hot springs that could cure many diseases.

The temple contains a chapel, which hosts several statues and a series of *thangkas* (scroll paintings) depicting *ITungshag* (a popular prayer for forgiveness). These *thangkas* are said to have been embroidered by a lady called Nyima Zangmo, who was the wife of Kushok Danma, the founder of the Dukhang Yogma next to the main temple. Kushok Danma was a well-known Buddhist monk who had come from the eastern part of Tibet and settled in this part of the Nubra Valley. He and his wife, Nyima Zangmo had settled in the hamlet of Phukpoche across the Siachen River. Today, the Zambakpa family in Phukpoche are said to be the descendants of Kushok Danma and Nyima Zangmo. However, he left his wife and married a woman from Kuri village. There is a popular song '*Ensa Takpay Zhingkhram*', that is a lament by Nyima Zangmo at the remorse she felt when Kushok Danma left her. Kushok Danma had no children with his second wife.

It was here at Ensa in 1430, that Stod Changsem Sherap Zangpo (1400-1425/38) meditated. He was one of the

six main disciples of Je Tsongkhapa, and was responsible for spreading Tsongkhapa's teachings in Ladakh. Much later, in the 19th century, when Kushok Danma came to Ensa, he expanded the monastery and also established the annual mask dance festival called 'Ensa Gustor'. This festival, however, was discontinued after his death and instead, today, the villagers of Panamik celebrate a flower festival (*mentok Itanmo*) in the month of July.



## 2. LOBZANG PHU

Continuing on the path from Ensa Monastery, descending towards the village, there is a cave known as Lobzang phu located on a small mound. From the roof of the cave, natural spring water is dripping through its upper clefts. This water is considered to be holy, and is said to reveal 'yogic accomplishment' when drunk. It also has medicinal properties, and is used in the treatment of viral infections and stomach problems.



## 3. ZANAK, PETROGLYPH SITE

Along the stream that goes through Murgi, there is one of the largest petroglyph sites found in Ladakh to date. It is located on a mound locally known as Zanak (*dza-nag*) or Chhindog Ri. At the last count, a team of researchers recorded more than 300 boulders with petroglyphs here. Some of the carvings are rare, such as the mascoid motifs. Others are more common and largely include animals, single and in groups, such as the ibex, camel, horse, and yaks. There are also rock carvings of hand prints and ones that show human figures engaged in activities such as hunting. There are some very fascinating petroglyphs, such as the one where the animal figure has smaller animal figures drawn inside their body, which may indicate the theme of pregnancy. Some of the yaks have balloon-like tails with spikes around them.

Most of the petroglyphs here are said to date to the Bronze Age. Some of them are in good condition, while others appear to be fading away. The presence of so many petroglyphs at Murgi with visual resemblances to those found in Central Asia and Persia, indicates that at one time an ancient route must have passed through this village.



For the villagers, Zanak also has a spiritual significance as it is associated with the popular myth of hidden lands (*bas pe yul* or *bayul*) that is told throughout Ladakh. It is also commonly narrated that there is a store of valuable treasure (*ster*) at this site. There is the story of the Khangchenpa family owning a valuable religious manuscript from here, this is narrated on page 18.



## 4. ME-YUL GONGMA, ME-YUL YOKMA

Above the village, there are the ruins of an old site called Me-yul Gongma, Me-yul Yokma. This place is associated with a myth that says it was once a land inhabited by '100 men with cleft mouths and 100 men with cleft noses' (*khashor gya – nashor gya*, where *gya* means 100). The settlement is perched on a hill, at a safe height from frequent attacks by raiders (*ra-chagpa*), as was fairly common in the past. It is said, the settlement where they lived was destroyed by a flash flood that killed all the residents. The ruined structures that remain, are said to be mainly of their homes, stupas and irrigation channels.



## 5. KHANGCHENPA CHODKHANG

The Khangchenpa family in Murgi are among the earliest settlers in the village, and their chapel is thought to date from the early 16th century. It is a single-storey structure, set back from the main house, but within the same compound. It is said that in the past it had two levels, but the upper one was destroyed in a flood.

The building is long and narrow, with a low wooden door that opens up to a small inner courtyard. Another door, directly opposite the entrance, leads to the altar room. Between these two doors, there is a path for circumambulation around the altar. The chapel contains several scriptures, *thangkas* and statues including that of the eleven-faced Avalokiteśvara, Guru Padmasambhava and Buddha Shakyamuni. There is a wooden prayer wheel in the room, this used to be run by water, but this is no longer the case. The chapel is also used by the community, for prayers and offering rituals, though this was more common in the past than it is now.

The chapel contains a scripture with an interesting story on how it came into their possession. This is the *Gyastongpa*, a scripture that contains Buddha's teachings. Family members narrate that it was loaned to one of their forefathers by a *balu* (dwarf) from the

mythical hidden land (*Bas pe yul*), on condition that it be returned by sunset. However, so engrossed was he in reading it, plus he had not come to the end, that he forgot about the time and the sunset passed. Thus, this scripture has remained with the family ever since. The scriptures are also said to contain protective powers, family members consider it their saviour as they claim it saved their house from a flood in 2014 that washed away the houses around them.

Until recently, the text was frequently borrowed by neighbours, but on condition that they return it by sunset. They believe that if it is not returned in time,

then misfortune would fall upon the two families. This practice has now stopped because the scripture is in a poor condition. However, it is still recited in the Khangchenpa's chapel as protection from floods, as the village is prone to these.



## 6. TSAMPHUK

Tsamphuk is a meditation cave above Murgi, this was largely unknown to the villagers until 2021. That year, IDwang, a self-proclaimed dakhini (*khandroma*), from Changthang region, revealed the secret retreat. IDwang identified an impression on a rock inside the cave as a holy footprint, she said it was made during a visit to the cave by a previous incarnation of hers. She instructed the villagers to make regular offerings to the footprint and keep the butter lamps burning.



## 7. KARTSI-KUNG

Limestone is widely used in Ladakh for white-washing sacred and secular structures. An hour's walk from Murgi is a limestone reserve, the deposits are said to lie deep within the hill of Kartsi Lungpa. As a result of continuous mining over centuries, several deep holes are visible on the hill's surface. Every year, on the 15th day of the fourth month of the Tibetan calendar, people from all over Nubra come here to collect limestone (*kartsi*). They then use this for the annual whitewashing of stupas, shrines and *mane* (prayer) walls in their villages.



## 8. CHUMCHAR WATERFALL

The Chumchar waterfall has become a popular attraction in recent years, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when many young people from the village would come here. The sharp, almost vertical fall, of a steady stream of water from the cliff of a granite mountain is a stunning sight.



## 9. ZHABJES

The Arahant Dachomba Nyima Gungpa is said to have taken seven large strides as he made his way through the valley of Nubra, before flying away to Tibet. Each of these steps of his left footprints engrained in the surface, usually on rock. This is one of them, most probably his right footprint. In 2010, the villagers enshrined the footprint in a small room and make regular offerings of butter lamps and ceremonial white scarves (*khatag*). People believe it has inherent healing powers.





# KURI

གུར་རི།

## KURI

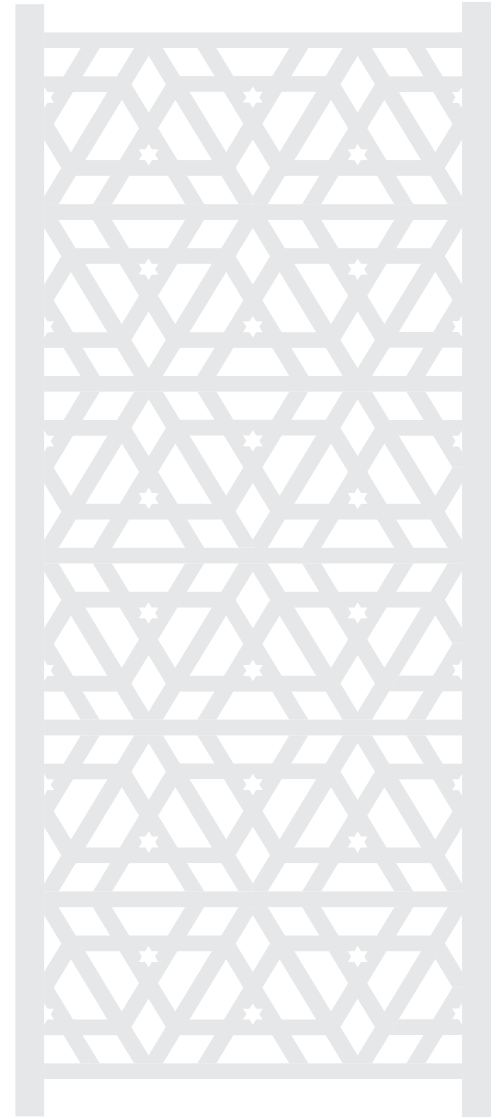
The village is said to derive its name from two words – *kur* or *gur* meaning tent, and *ri* is mountain. It is said that the granite hill, located in the centre of the old and new residential areas of the village, looks like a tent and hence the name Kuri or Guri. However, the monastery is said to have records that document the name as *ku ri* and not *kur ri*, raising doubts among the villagers about associating the village name with ‘tent like mountain’. Yet other accounts by villagers say the name is derived from ‘*ku yangs po*’ meaning ‘a beautiful peak in the middle of a village’.

Hargam bridge, across the Siachen River, is the only motorable route to reach Kuri. At the beginning of the village is a stream, fed by the glacier of the Saltoro ridge, that is the main source of water for the villagers. In the centre of the village is a hill, with a monastery on top, and surrounded by many stupas and *mane* (prayer) walls. The monasteries of Diskit, Samstanling and Chemde continue to play a role in the village’s economy under the system of *shaszhing* (taxable shared lands). There are some petroglyph sites here as well, which indicate trans-migration of people over centuries. Kuri is also associated with the legendary figure of Wanla Lonpo, and is the site of his execution.

# MAP REFERENCE

## KURI

1. Tsering Chednga Lhato
2. Takbar
3. May Geylong Lhato
4. Wanla Lonpo Tulsa
5. Kuri Monastery
6. Khatotpa House





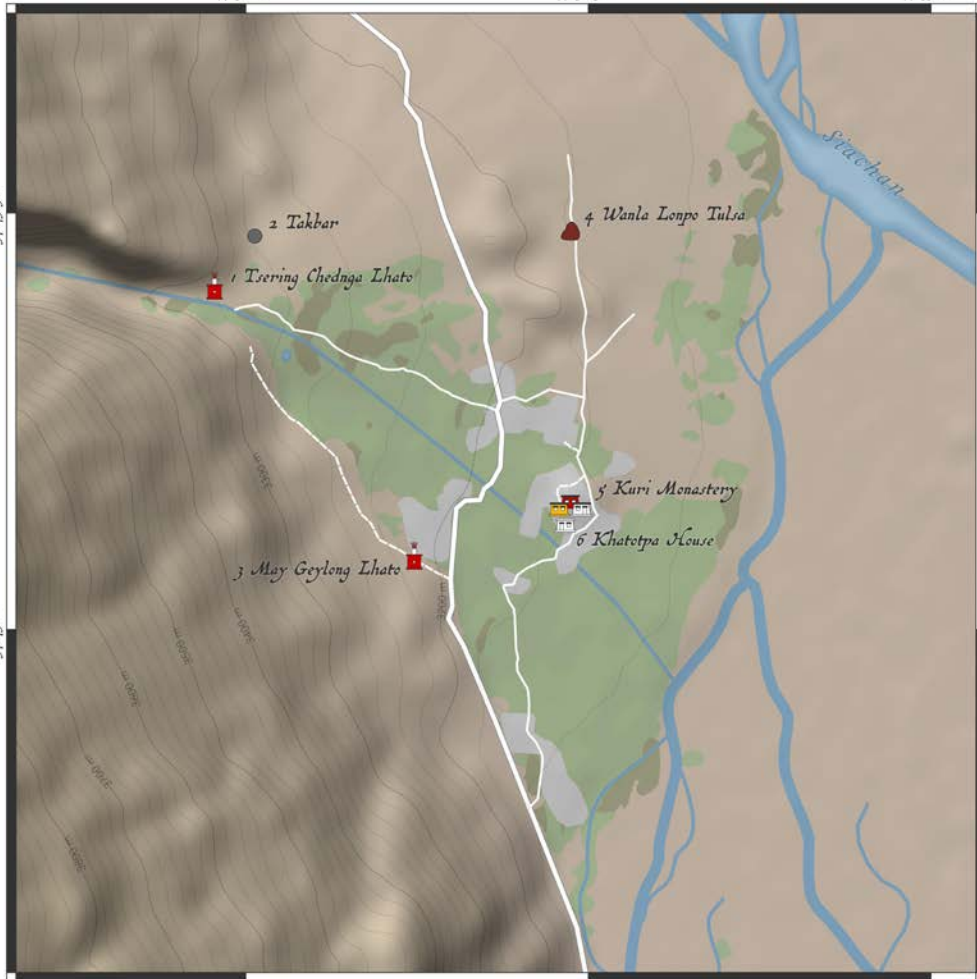
77°31' 0"

77°32' 30"

77°33' 0"

34°43' 30"

34°43' 0"



KURI

ཀུར་རི།



0 250 500 m

- |  |                      |  |                     |
|--|----------------------|--|---------------------|
|  | monastery            |  | river               |
|  | lhato/altar          |  | stream              |
|  | sacred rock/mountain |  | lake/pond           |
|  | historic house       |  | built-up area       |
|  | historic site other  |  | forest              |
|  | road major           |  | fields & vegetation |
|  | road minor           |  | contours (20 m)     |
|  | path/track           |  |                     |

*Numbers and names follow Kuri walk book listing*



## 1. TSERING CHEDNGA LHATO

Tsering Chednga is Kuri's protector deity and his *lhato* (shrine) is located on the left side of the stream, on the slopes of the hill overlooking the village. Positioned on a large rock, which further elevates the *lhato*, it is made of stone and mud mortar. Wooden pillars are visible around the *lhato*, these could have at some point in time, supported a roof of some kind over the structure, providing it shelter from the elements. The *lhato* has been painted white, and in the centre a bunch of juniper branches, tied together with a white cloth, has been placed. There are prayer flags around the *lhato*.

While the exact date for its establishment is not known, village elders say it has been there for as long as they can remember. Every month, incense (*sang*) is offered at the *lhato* and its contents are renewed on the 3rd day of the 3rd month of the Tibetan calendar. The rituals are carried out by Tsewang Nurboo of the Yogmapa family, who are appointed as the caretakers of the *lhato*.



## 2. TAKBAR

The entrance to Murgi village is marked by a natural pass or passageway created in the landscape, between two hills. This space is known as '*Takbar*', and is an important meeting place for the villagers. It is here that they spend their leisure time, especially the men, while waiting for the herders and their livestock to return from a day's grazing in the high pastures. Children also join them in the evenings, playing with each other while the adults sit and chat.



## 3. MAY GEYLONG LHATO

There is yet another *lhato* that was once of importance to Kuri, but now lies abandoned. A narrow path, along the edge of the hill, in the direction of the village *phu* (upper pasturelands) leads the way to it. Here there are two stupas, the abandoned *lhato* is near here. It is locally known as '*May Gelong lhato*', named after a monk the villagers say used to reside near it. The ruins of a shelter nearby is evidence that he once lived here. No one from the village can remember the *lhato* being used in their living memory, or rituals performed here. Only the name is now remembered and its connection to the monk who once resided nearby.



## 4. WANLA LONPO TULSA

At a short distance from the village is a group of three large rocks, surrounded by prayer flags, that mark the spot where Wanla Lonpo was murdered. Locally, the villagers refer to this site as Wanla Lonpo Talsa or Pholong Talsa.

Wanla Lunpo was a petty, yet powerful, chieftain in the king's court in Leh. It is said that the king, as well as some of his other ministers, felt threatened by the power Wanla Lonpo wielded. He was also wealthy as he owned much land and an iron mine in Photoksar hamlet of Wanla village that they were envious of. The king sent Wanla Lunpo, along with some of his ministers, to Kuri on a pretext, but with the intention of having him executed there. On reaching Kuri, Wanla Lunpo was beheaded at this spot and his body crushed by a large stone. It is believed that this stone, positioned on the top of the middle of the three large rocks, is the very one used. A greasy smear mark visible on the rocks is presumed to be his blood, that oozed out of the wounds inflicted on his body. Local narrative says that it was milk and not blood, that flowed out of his body!

His head, was severed from his body, and then taken and placed inside a stupa to prevent his rebirth. While

the location of this stupa is not known, some villagers believe that Wanla Lonpo will eventually take rebirth. They mention that over time, the stupa in all probability will develop cracks and that his head will eventually be freed from its state of eternal imprisonment.

The villagers of Kuri consider this site sacred, as they believe that these three rocks signify a *Rigsum Gonbo*. The three rocks also have slightly different colours, adding to their belief in this. The prayer flags around the rocks and small pebbles in clusters, indicate that the villagers circumambulate the site and make offerings here. In the vicinity, there is a ruin of a *mane* wall which is built with stone rubble and contains some stone inscriptions on it.





## 5. KURI MONASTERY

The monastery was built in the early 1700s, and is a two-storeyed structure with around six rooms; the main temple is at the top. A new *dukhang* (prayer hall), was constructed more recently, it lies just adjacent to the older one. The temple contains statues of Amitayus (tsepakmed), eleven-faced Avalokiteśvara (chushigzhal), four-armed Avalokiteśvara, Buddha Shakyamuni, Vajrapani (*Chagdor*), Guru Padmasambhava and statues of the 21 Taras. On the walls of the monastery there are new wall paintings of the 16 Arahants (*gnastan chudrug*), Tsering Chednga, Sri Devi and various other Bodhisattvas. They also have the scriptures of *Gyastongpa*, *Domang*, *Ser-od* and 16 volumes of *Bum*.

The exact timeline of when this monastery was built is still debatable, but it is thought to be around 300 years old. Around the time when the first settlements were built near the monastery, it was earlier located along the upper slopes of the hill nearby. According to the villagers, the monastery was constructed by members of their community. There is a document in the monastery called '*chatig*', which lists the names of the people who had donated their lands to the monastery and for what purpose. For instance, there is a field locally known as '*storma zhing*' which was donated to the monastery by a

family from Kuri as a space to conduct rituals related to water, as the village used to face many water shortages in the past.

The caretaker monk (*komnyer*) is from Hemis Monastery, though earlier the *komnyer* used to come from Yarma Monastery, but due to a shortage of monks there the monastery was shifted to the jurisdiction of Hemis Monastery.

One of the main rituals conducted at the monastery is the *Tsechu* prayer, held on the 10th day of every



month of the Tibetan calendar. Other than this monthly ritual, on the 10th day of the 5th month of the Tibetan calendar, there is a festival called '*Ama-pa mentok Itanmo*', that is held by the women of the village. This is the day that Guru Padmasambhava was born on, and to mark that event the women make garlands with the wild roses that bloom in their village. They adorn all the statues in the monastery with these garlands, and spend the entire day at the monastery offering prayers and chanting the mantra dedicated to Guru Padmasambhava

*'om a hung vajra guru padma siddhi hung'* and making *tsog* offerings. In the evening, the women are joined by the men and the children in one of the fields not far from the monastery and a large celebration is held. There is music, the *daman* and *surna* is played, and much singing and dancing. In the past, Kuri had its own musicians, but now they invite musicians from neighbouring villages or try and play the instruments themselves. This festival has been held over generations, and is a practise that continues in Kuri.

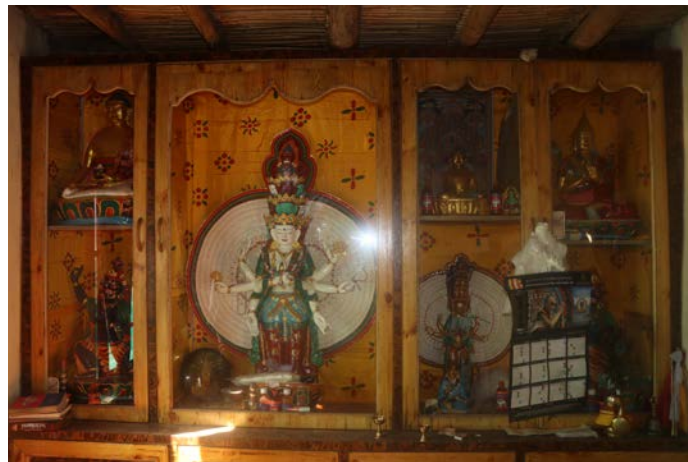


## 6. KHATOTPA HOUSE

The old house of the Khatotpa family is located on the south-western side of the monastery. They are believed to be among one of the first families to have settled in Kuri, and their home is said to have been built around the same time as the monastery, in the early 18th century. It is a three-storeyed house, with the temple located on the uppermost floor. The house has been renovated over the years and now only the foundation and some walls remain from that early period of construction.

The temple is not attached to the house, but is in a separate one-room structure alongside. Built from sun-dried mud bricks, it contains statues of the eleven-faced *Avalokiteśvara* (*Chushigzhal*), Buddha Shakyamuni, Vajrapani and other Bodhisattvas.

One of the family's forefather's, Tashi Lobtse, was a popular mystic and the contemporary of the 19th century Tibetan Yogi Kushok Danma, and with whom he often matched his powers. The villagers often narrate stories about Tashi Lobtse's mystical powers, saying that he could bring forth rain and dust storms, and was able to clear the sky of dark clouds. Several sites in Nubra





are also associated with places in which he meditated, often in solitary confinement. One such place is a retreat called Nagma Khar above Kuri village, where Tashi Lobsenz conducted special prayers to seek respite from the perennial droughts inflicting the village. He was a generous man, and towards the end of his life he donated most of his land holdings to Kuri Monastery.





# CHARASA

ཅུགས་ར་ས།

## CHARASA

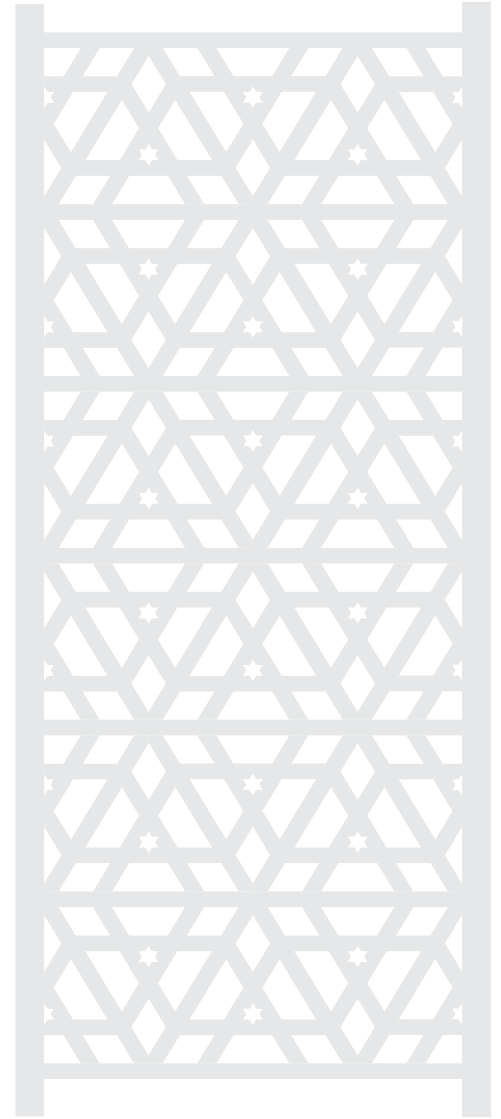
Charasa was once the winter residence of the Ladakhi King Nima Namgyal (1680-1730), and served as the capital of Nubra when he resided there. During his reign, the place grew in importance from a small village of seven households to expand to its current size. Located on a narrow stretch of land, on the banks of the Siachen River, it is today, one of the longest villages in the belt. Several families were brought to settle here as they performed various duties for the royal family, these included the *Stagopa* family who served as the king's guard, *Cherpon* or *Cheps-spon* was the king's horseman, *Chubipa* was the waterman, *Nyerpa* took care of supplies, *Togoche* managed the royal kitchen, *Kharogpa* was the royal messenger, and *Tsasbu* or *Nangso* was the minister (*Lonpo*). Many of these families received land rewards (*baliq*), for their service to the royal family. The *Nangso* family in particular, because of their unending loyalty and bravery to the king, received large tracts of agricultural land as a reward.

The village is rich in natural resources, especially iron ore (*chak-rasa*), from which it derives its name 'Charasa'. This is most likely the reason for the king establishing his residence here, so that he could both prosper and control the trade in iron ore. Several popular folk songs – *Kharpoche khar*, *Sponba gurla* and *sponzang kiu* – allude to this. The village and its surroundings are dotted with numerous stupas and *mane* (prayer) walls. Many of these were built as punishment by people the king penalised for breaking the law or committing other unruly acts. They are referred to as *thal le mane* (penalty stupa); similar stupas were built at Shey which was also the royal capital till the 17th century.

# MAP REFERENCE

## CHARASA

1. Serga
2. Perathang
3. Zangskar Chorten
4. Serdung Monastery
5. Thu-gu'i Manekhang
6. Lobzang Samstan, Metal Artisan
7. Tsering Wangdus, Folk Singer
8. Charasa Palace or Kharpoche Khar
9. Phala Kangzu



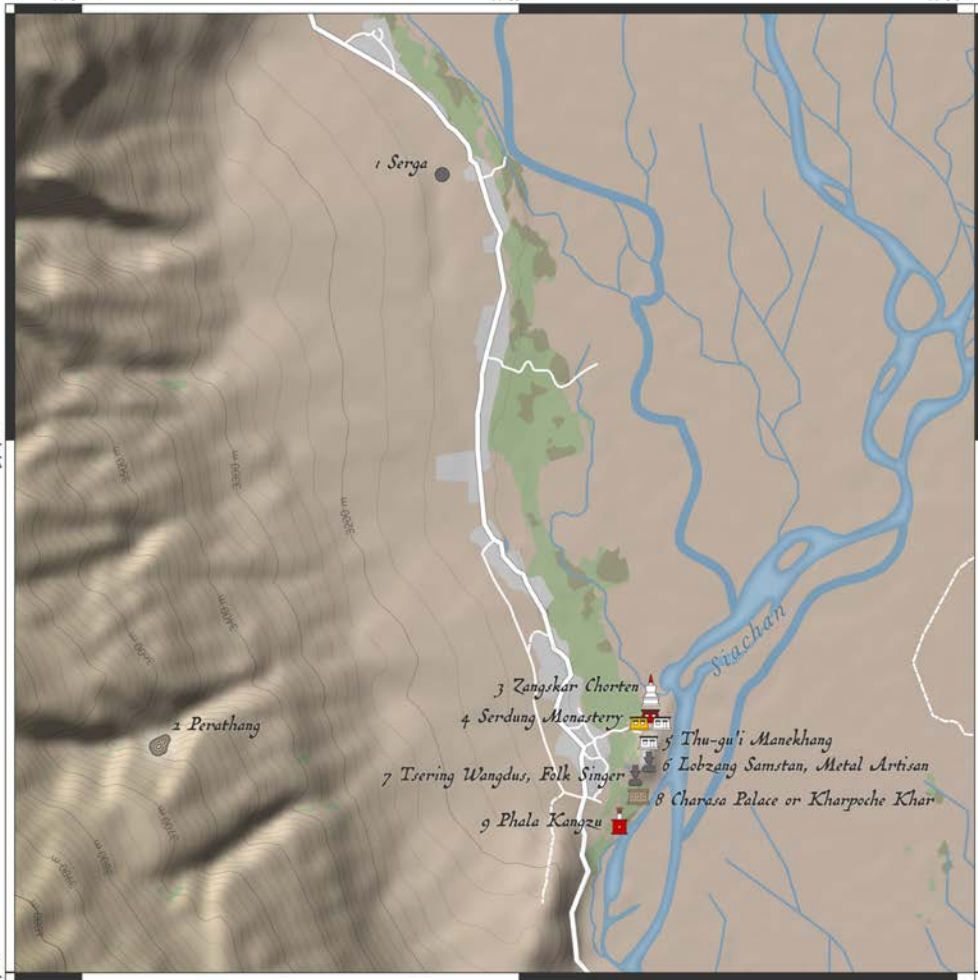
77°32' 0" E

77°33' 0" E

77°34' 0" E

34°41' 0" N

34°40' 0" N



# CHARASA

ཇུག་ས་ར་ས།

0 250 500 m



	monastery		road miner
	temple		path/truck
	chorten		river
	lhato/altar		stream
	palace/fort/watchtower		lake/pond
	artisan/artist/resource person		built-up area
	natural resource		forest
	other		fields & vegetation
	contours (20 m)		
	road major		

Numbers and names follow Charasa walk book listing



# 1. SERGA

At the start of the village, a dry earthen field can be seen with several deep fissures or cracks (*serga*) visible on its surface. This is most probably a geological phenomenon, the result of an earthquake that took place here in the past and whose tremors it is said were felt as far as Burma and Phukpoche. Both these villages also have similar fissures on the land around them, though they are not as deep.

However, local beliefs say that the fissures were created by a powerful deity, Kurgon of Tangyar village. They happened when Kurgon was engaged in a duel with Charasa's protector deity, Spao Stadin, and he hit out at the land with a magical spell. At first, before this occurred, Spao Stadin had cast a magical spell on Tangyar village, splitting it in three parts. In retaliation, Kurgon launched an attack on Charasa and as he moved towards the palace, Spao Stadin drew him away from the building and towards the open field. Thus, averting an attack on Charasa Palace.

Inspired by this geological formation, the 'Serga Festival' was started by the villagers. The festival showcases traditional sports such as archery, as well as folk dances, music and songs, local crafts and cuisine.



## 2. PERATHANG

Charasa prospered because of the iron ore deposits in its vicinity. Perathang was the area where the iron ore was smelted, once it was brought down from the deposits in the mountains surrounding the village. *Pera* refers to the art of smelting, and *thang* to an open flat ground.

This valley was once busy with miners from all parts of Ladakh, and some men even came from as far away as Khapulu in Baltistan (now in Pakistan). After collecting the impure metal from the rocky mountains surrounding the valley, they would bring it to Perathang for smelting. This is the process of extracting metal from its ore. It is said there were once multiple kilns in this area, and blades for swords were commonly made here.

There are still signs of smelting in the field, dark patches where the intense heat burnt through to the soil. Water was brought in from a reservoir close to Perathang, this was specially built for cooling the metal after the smelting. Perathang is now used as an agricultural field, and renamed Perachan-zhing, where *zhing* means field.



### 3. ZANGSKAR CHORTEN

Walking towards Charasa Palace, there is a gradual ascent up the hill, and along the way there is a cluster of stupas. One stupa stands higher than the rest, as it is perched on a large rock. This stupa is called 'Zangskar Chorten'. Most of the stupas in this area were made by craftsmen from Zangskar who were specially brought here by the King Nima Namgyal in the early 18th century. It is said that this particular stupa was one of the last to be constructed by them, out of some surplus material that remained, before they left Nubra to return home to Zangskar.





## 4. SERDUNG MONASTERY

Within the fortification of Charasa Palace is Serdung Monastery. It comes under the Gelugpa sect of Buddhism. Serdung was built in the 15th century for Panchen Lhatsun, a learned monk, from Udmaru village in Nubra. He became a monk at an early age and first lived in Diskit Monastery as a young novice, later he left for Tibet to study. In the period between the demise of the fifth Dalai Lama and before the sixth Dalai Lama was appointed, Panchen Lhatsun was put in charge of the Gelugpa order in Tibet. He sat on the great seat of the Gelugpas and controlled the order's religious affairs at that time. Later, when he returned to Nubra, he spread the teachings of the Gelugpa order throughout Nubra Valley. Unfortunately, he died under mysterious circumstances, it is said that on a visit to Hundar he disappeared and his body suddenly showed up in the river near Charasa. Surprisingly, his body had floated upstream. The villagers then preserved his body and parts of it are enshrined in various places in Nubra, including Charasa and Tangyar, as well as Tsemo Hill in Leh.

The monastery is a two-storey building with three prayer halls that hold a number of Buddhist statues, scriptures and *thangkas* (scroll paintings). It was restored in 1991,

and most of the heritage structures were lost with the use of cement and steel in the reconstruction process. Next to Serdung is the Stadin Monastery, which is a branch of Chemde Monastery of the Drugpa sect.

Every year, on the 14th and 15th day of the ninth month of the Tibetan calendar prayer ceremonies, called *Skangsol* and *Serdung Itanmo*, are held. They involve elaborate rituals with many monks and community members participating. Households take turns to help with the organisation and provide food, as well as oil for the butter lamps, under the *nyerpa* system. This is a system of obligatory services that households in a village have to comply with.



## 5. THU-GU'I MANEKHANG

Almost in the centre of Charasa Palace's two gates, one in the north and the other in the south, is the Thu-gu'i Manekhang (literally a prayer hall for children). This was built during one of the king's reigns, at a time when infant mortality was very high in the village, but the exact date is not known. Since many newborn children were dying, the villagers consulted a monk who instructed them to build a *manekhang* (prayer hall) that is located 'neither on land nor in space'. They built the prayer hall on wooden pillars, and the structure looked like it was suspended in mid-air. A statue of Avalokiteśvara, brought from Tibet, was enshrined here.

In 1999, the villagers dismantled the old prayer hall to build a new one devoid of the character of the old one, and with a stone foundation. The sacred statue of Avalokiteśvara still remains enshrined here, it is now placed directly over a passageway below, so that everyone who walks under it is blessed.



## 6. LOBZANG SAMSTAN, METAL ARTISAN

Lobzang Samstan and his son, Sonam Wangchuk, are both traditional metal artisans. They come from a family of metal artisans that have been known for their work over generations, especially for their skill in making the exquisite stupa finials (*zarazak*). The family originally lived within the fortifications of Charasa Palace, where all seven of the first families who lived here had a home. However, their old house is now in ruins and they have moved to a new home. Lobzang claims that one of his forefathers led the assassination on the mythical tyrant Cho Bongskang-chan.

Lobzang fashions items from copper, iron, gold and silver. He also makes agricultural tools, kitchen utensils, and a variety of jewellery. Well into his eighties now, he recalls learning this art from his father at a young age and by 18 he had attained many of the necessary skills. He is well-known for his work throughout the Siachen belt.

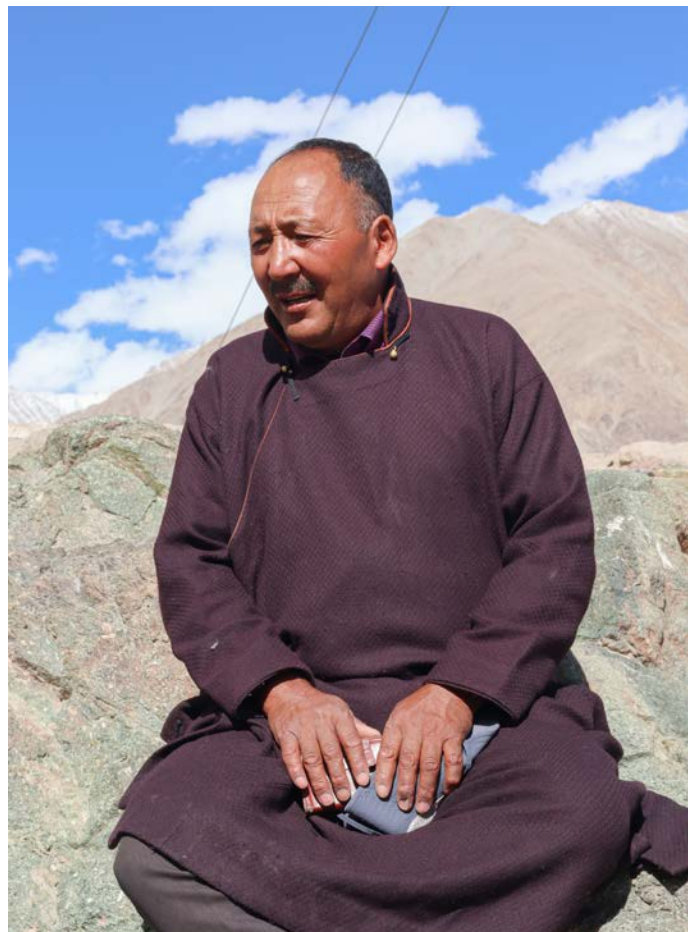
Lobzang has also passed the art of metal working to his son, Sonam Wangchuk. Along with continuing his family's profession of metalwork, Sonam is also a royal musician (*kharmon*).



## 7. TSERING WANGDUS, FOLK SINGER

Nubra is well known for its musical traditions, and Tsering Wangdus is a popular folk singer. He is often invited to celebrations such as weddings to sing songs about love and marriage. His repertoire of songs is endless, and he knows several types of folk songs such as *tal lu*, *bar lu*, *zhung lu*, *tsig lu*, and *chhag lu*, amongst others. Every singing session, he says, begins with singing in praise of the sky, sun and moon. This is followed by admiration for the landscape including mountains, rivers, flowers and trees. Praising nature in the beginning is acknowledging the fact that our source of life is dependent on nature. He stresses the importance on keeping the right tone and lyrics to conserve the regional textures and tunes of the songs. Wangdus grumbles that over the years, many songs in Nubra have changed and that the original tones and lyrics have been corrupted. One in particular stands out for him, and that is the song of *Kharpoche Khar*.

*Looking from the top of Kharpoche Palace,  
Clear is the view of Chhong (agate) hill,  
Looking from the top of Charasa Palace,  
Clear is the view of Chhong hill.*



## 8. CHARASA PALACE OR KHARPOCHE KHAR

Charasa Palace, also known as Kharpoche Khar, sits atop a rocky mountain overlooking the village. In fact, it is so strategically located that from the Palace ramparts, one can see up and down the length of Nubra Valley, almost 17 villages are in clear sight. The song 'Kharpoche Khar', dedicated to the Palace, relates many of its features and talks about the fortified town around it.

The Palace is an imposing three-story structure, though parts of it are now in ruins and some of the building material was carried away and reused in the construction of other buildings in Charasa. The fortification around the Palace had four watchtowers, each positioned to look out at the four cardinal points, as raids by foreign invaders or even neighbouring chieftains was quite common in the past. Today, only one watchtower still stands, known as *lobzang piu* after a soldier called Lobzang who protected Charasa fearlessly, while only remnants of the other three are visible. Within this fortification also lie some of the residential homes, mainly of the households who served the king.





The fortress has two main monasteries, and interestingly these both belong to different Buddhist sects – there is Serdung Monastery which belongs to the Gelugpa order, and Standin Monastery the Drukpa. Several stupas and *mane* (prayer) walls around the Palace were said to have been built by artisans from Zangskar, who the king brought in as they were highly skilled builders.

The Ladakhi King Nima Namgyal made this his winter residential Palace in the early 17th century and for a time Charasa was considered the capital of Nubra. Before him, the Palace was occupied by a local ruler from Nubra, Gyalpo Tsewang Stanba, and it is thought that he may have built the Palace but no recorded evidence of this is

known. However, according to religious texts, under him the Palace was known as ‘Deachen Snongaling’. Nima Namgyal changed the name to ‘Kharpoche Khar’. After Nima Namgyal, his son Deskyong Namgyal also lived at the Palace. The last Ladakhi king to live at Charasa was Tsewang Namgyal in the 18th century.

Nima Namgyal chose to live at Charasa because of the rich natural resources in the area, especially iron ore, and the prosperous trade routes that passed through the area. Firewood was also easily available here, especially in winter when it was most needed for warmth, and the soil was fertile.



## 9. PHALA KANGZU

At the uppermost level of the Charasa Palace is the altar of the king's protective deity, Phala Kangzu. This is a single room structure with a low doorway, and a bunch of auspicious Juniper branches tied together on the roof. The annual consecration ritual takes place here on the 11th day of the 11th month of the Tibetan calendar, which marks the Losar (New Year) celebrations. It is conducted by the chief caretaker (*lhardag*) of the royal protector (*gurla*). At this time, in the past, the practice of animal sacrifice took place before the altar, it was generally a white goat but this has now been replaced by offering a dough effigy of the animal. The sacrificial animal was donated by the leading families of Charasa, in turn, over the years. Remnants of blood stains from past sacrifices are still visible at the site.

During the ritual, leaves from the Pencil Cedar tree that grows in the Yarma region of Nubra are burned and offered as incense. After the sacrifice has taken place, 12 of the organisers (*lasna pa chugnyis*) of the ritual, would dance around the altar. New ones are also placed at the altar. After this, the meat of the sacrificial goat was distributed amongst the villagers, the most important people got the best parts and the rest was shared amongst the remaining villagers.

Phala Kangzu is the site where preparations for the Losar celebrations begin, this is from the 25th day of the 10th month of the Tibetan calendar. They commence with the lighting of a butter lamp at the courtyard of the palace, as an offering to protector deity Gurla. This is then followed by *lharna* music performed by the *kharmon* (royal musicians). On the 30th day, a fire (*don may*) is lit as an offering to the protector deity Gurla, before the Losar celebrations that take place from the 1st to the 11th month begin. The *lasna pa chugnyis* arrive at the site holding burning torches and perform the *lhashon* dance for the deities in the *chansa chenmo* (large kitchen) below. The *komnyer* performs a ritual called *Zogspa* that marks the beginning of Losar celebrations. The ritual of *don may* begins with a large bonfire lit in the courtyard below and villagers gather here, a goat's head and a piece of bread is hung on a pole in the middle of the fire. This ritual is related to the burning of the mythical tyrant ruler Cho Bongskang-chan by fire; a similar ritual is performed in the village of Tirisha. Fire offerings are made at different points in the Palace and the names of all the protector deities called out. The events end with the *storma* ritual amid loud cries of '*ra go thur la, mi go gyen la*' ('down with the goat head, up goes the human head') and the bonfire is extinguished. Unfortunately, most of these rituals no longer take place.







# BURMA

འབྲུར་མ།

## BURMA

Burma is among the smaller villagers in this belt along the Siachen River, it has 19 households. There are two stories that narrate how the village acquired its name. One talks about a man called Burga, from the Rigsum Gonbo family of Charasa, who took advantage of a large piece of land lying empty below Charasa, he started tilling the land and thereby staked his claim to it. At the Charasa Gyokra celebrations he is said to have danced and proclaimed he had acquired this as his additional land (*bur*). Hence the village is called 'Burma'. He and his sister were the first settlers, later, they were joined by the Labrangpa family. Another interpretation for the name is that it is derived from the colour and texture of the soil (*sa*) found in the village '*sa bur bur marpo*', which is red (*marpo*) and rough (*bur bur*).

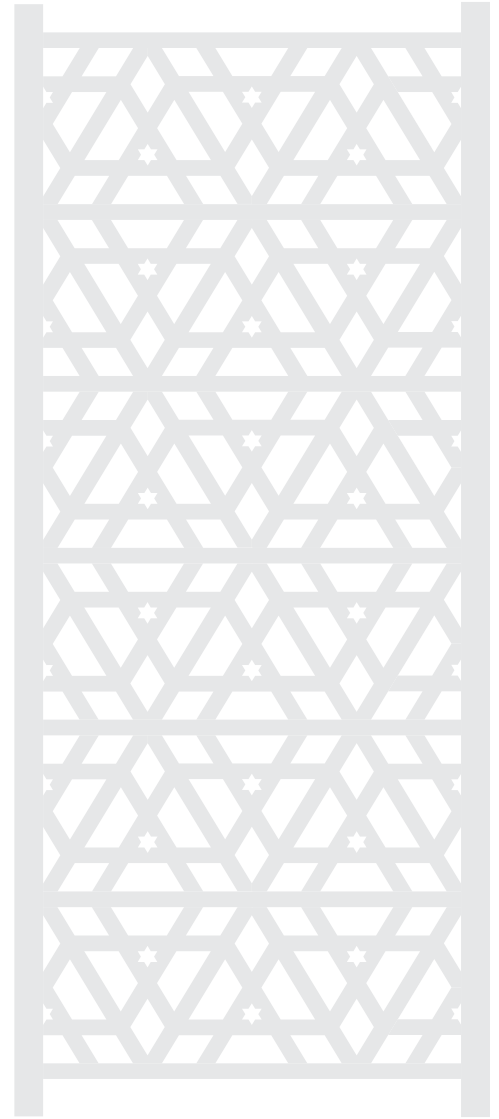
When Burga settled here, water was a problem as there was no stream nearby. He diverted water from the river to the village and for drinking developed an innovative technique of filtering river water using buttermilk and whey. The river is also fairly wide at this point and also rises in the summer. In the absence of a bridge, villagers have to take the longer route of 150 kilometres to reach Sumoor. However, in winter when the water level subsides, they can easily cross the river with a makeshift wooden bridge and reach Sumoor in about 15 minutes.

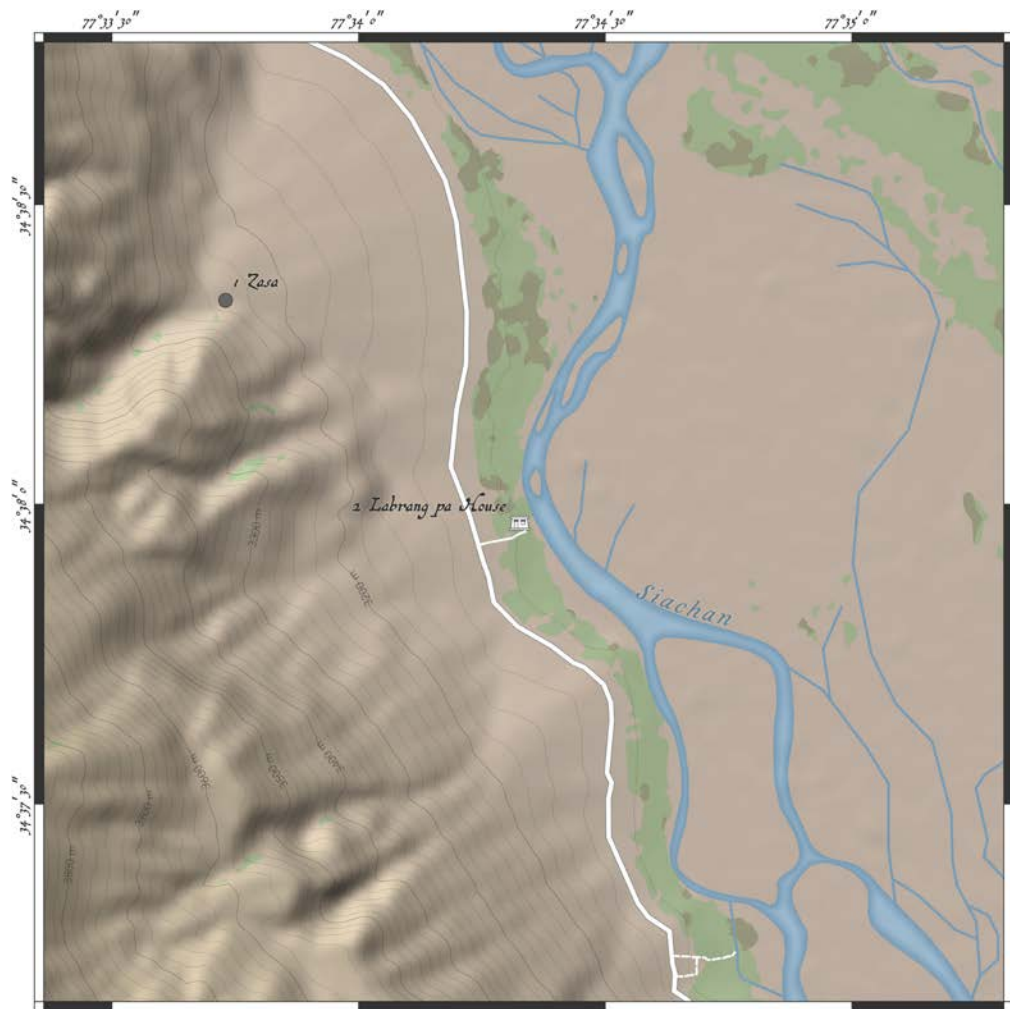
The villagers talk about a mysterious walnut tree in the upper valley, hidden from sight and visible only to some fortunate shepherds. They narrate how once a shepherd found the tree and ate its walnuts, which were delicious, but when he brought them home, they were nothing but empty shells. Other villagers tried to find the tree, one did and snuck some walnuts back to his house in his shoes, but again these were empty when cracked open. Villagers call this hidden tree '*De Starga*' (devil's walnut). More recently, a group of villagers set out to look for the tree, but they were not successful.

# MAP REFERENCE

## BURMA

1. Zasa
2. Labrangpa House





# BURMA

འགྲུལ་མ།



	historic house		river
	historic site other		stream
	road major		forest
	road minor		fields & vegetation
	path/track		contours (20 m.)

*Numbers and names follow Burma walk book listing*



## 1. ZASA

Clay deposits found around Burma are good for making pottery. Every winter, potters from Likir village in the Sham Valley, would travel to Burma to source the clay here and make pots. There was also abundant firewood for their kilns and grass for their pack animals. They would travel with their horses and donkeys, loading the clay on to the animals and take it to the end of the village where they would set up their kilns. Here, they would soak the clay in water, preparing it for the pots they would make. It was considered inauspicious to make their kilns at the top or in the centre of the village as the process left a residue that was considered harmful for agriculture.

Almost every house in Nubra boasts of pottery made by the potters of Likir. They created a variety of containers from the *changza* (wine pot), *zema* (wine barrel), *ngama tabza* (measuring pot), amongst others. They also made cups for drinking tea and oil lamps (*chotkung*) for offerings at the altar. One of the potters from Likir is said to have married a woman from Nubra and settled there, mainly because he had a flourishing business. However, it is interesting to note that this art of pottery was not practiced by anyone from Nubra. Today, the potters from Likir no longer come to Burma.



## 2. LABRANGPA HOUSE

There is no mention of the Labrangpa family in the 1906 revenue records, this probably means that they moved into Burma after the records for the first land settlement were compiled in Ladakh by the Revenue Department during the Dogra regime. Sometime after 1906, Buchung, from the Korpon family of Chamshen village, was assigned as the caretaker of Samstanling monastery's lands in Burma. His descendants continued to serve the monastery and the family was called Labrangpa, as they took care of the monastery's rest house (*labrang*), that was built for Sras Rinpoche there.

The house is a two-storey structure, made of stone and mud bricks, and consists of eight rooms including a spacious kitchen (*chansa*). The temple is located on the second floor and has wall paintings of Gyalwa Tsongkhapa (founder of the Gelugpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism) and Buddha Shakyamuni among other deities.



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

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 Avalokiteshvara, 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	Witch
Serthod	Golden hat	Srubla	Harvest festival
Shak	Plaited twigs plastered with mud	Stangyur	Buddhist text, 225 volumes
		Starga	Walnut
		Ster	Treasure
Sham	Lower Ladakh	Stodthung	Short sleeveless woman's

	jacket	Tsele	Hut of plaited twigs
Sum	Three	Tsemo	Top of a mountain, peak or summit
Surna	Wind instrument		
Tangra	Shed for animals	Tsepo	Basket
Thagsha	Loom	Tso	Lake
Thakpa	Rope	Tsogspa	Association or Society
Thang	Field, open plain	Tsugthul	Blanket, made from wool
Thangka	Scroll painting	Yarkhang	Summer kitchen
Thap	Stove	Yogor	Felt cape
Thigma	Tie-dye design	Yul	Village
Thral	Tax	Yul lha	Village protector
Tibi	Hat	Yundum	Swastika
Tokpo	Stream	Zampa	Bridge
Tsa-tsa	Miniature stupa	Zang	Copper
Tsakhang	Relic house, where miniature stupas are kept	Zhabjes	Foot print
		Zhugthis	Seat or throne
Tsamkhang	Retreat cell	Zimchung	Rinpoche or high Lama's residence
Tsamphuk	Meditation cave		
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 9 (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

Associate 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**

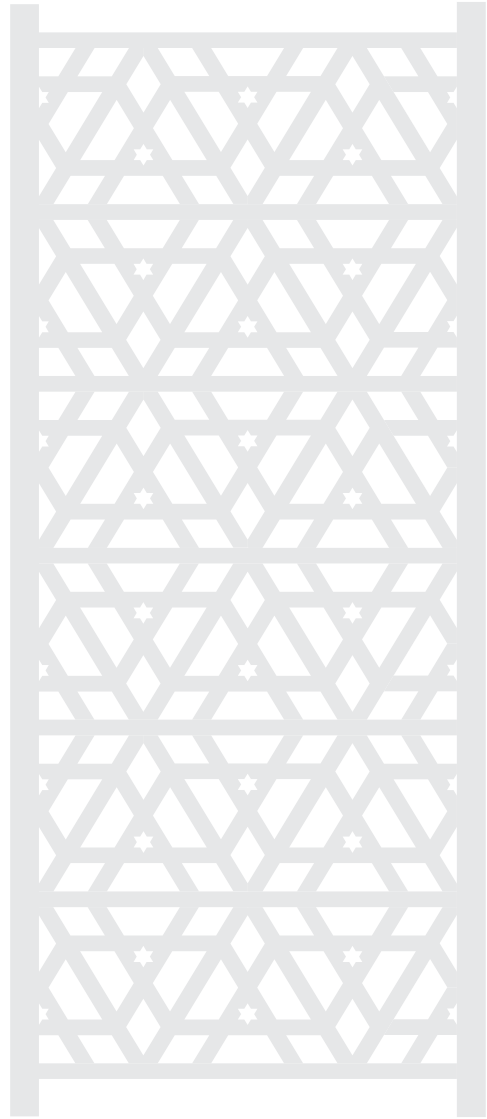
is from Tiger village in Nubra. She has a BA in Arts from Punjab University, along with a diploma in Travel and Tourism. She is working with one of the Self Help Groups (SHG) in the Siachen belt.

“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.”









LADAKH  
ARTS AND MEDIA  
ORGANISATION