Home

RENDERING HOUSES IN LADAKH

Sophie Day

ROUTLEDGE

Rendering Houses in Ladakh

Sophie Day presents houses as critical actors which provide the grounds for citizenship in Ladakh, North India. She explores the life stories of a handful of houses, most of them Buddhist, as they sculpt – or render – their inhabitants. Through collaboration with Ladakhi colleagues – together looking over images and objects, walking plots of land and inspecting old buildings, new developments and emptying villages – Day produces storyboards that combine image and text to show how houses have been imagined, built, repurposed and dismantled since the 1980s. These Ladakhis were pastoralists, nuns, traders and smallholders forty years ago, but now depend largely on the Indian state and tourism for their livelihood. One consequence is the partitioning of houses among families, which evokes earlier partitions involving momentous territorial settlements between post-colonial India, Pakistan and China in the 20th century. Partitioning legacies continue to trouble national, regional and domestic house-plots today. Day's exploration of the intricate relations of personhood between domestic houses and their members provides insight into the anthropology of a region for specialists and non-specialists alike.

Sophie Day is Professor of Anthropology at Goldsmiths University, UK.

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To Tashi Lazom

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Note

1 I have also reworked some of the material in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 for my contribution, 'Non-married women: life stories from four members of an extended family in and around Leh,' to *New Perspectives on Modern Ladakh. Fresh Discoveries and Continuing Conversations in the Indian Himalaya* eds. Rafał Beszterda, John Bray and Elizabeth Williams-Oerberg, Toruń: Toruń University Press, 2021: 95–114.

Spelling

Although Ladakhi differs considerably from Tibetan, I transliterate terms on their first occurrence that may be relevant to the wider Tibetan-speaking world. I follow modified Wylie conventions (Wylie 1959), using primarily the dictionaries of Das (1902), Jäschke (1881) and Ramsay (1890), and indicate where the Ladakhi derives from other languages such as Urdu. Ladakhi is, however, a spoken language and I attempt a phonetic transcription into UK English. I hope the focus on Leh dialects will not prove contentious to those following different regional conventions. A glossary of words used repeatedly will be found at the end of the book.

1 Ladakh's houses

Rendering houses

This book explores house life in Ladakh, North India, during recent decades. Houses across the world sculpt – or render – their inhabitants just as people repair, extend and beautify their homes. Supported by their members, houses also distribute or allocate people and property to reproduce themselves over time. House life in Ladakh is especially prominent, and although I do not intend the house to provide a metonym for the region (Appadurai 1986), I hope to show that houses remain critical actors and citizens in social life. It would be difficult to present the biography of an individual or an ethnography of the region without giving some attention to its houses and, drawing on eight short visits to Ladakh from 2005–2019, I use the term rendering to describe different dimensions of Ladakhi housework: the work of maintenance, payment of dues and translating or performing houses in changing conditions and for other people. I foreground especially the representations that Ladakhi colleagues offered me of their houses in our work together. In recent years, I looked over images and objects with Ladakhis, walked plots of land and inspected old buildings, new developments and emptying villages as my friends told, performed and displayed biographies, portraits and models of houses, individuals and groups of people.

As few of my Ladakhi friends read English readily and as most were more interested in my images than my words, we began by piecing photographs and other materials together with various narratives. Digitised images of mine from the 1980s, originally taken on a single-lens reflex (SLR) film camera (an Olympus OM-2), and occasional sound recordings or old notes initiated processes of 'storyboarding'[1] simple annotated books of words and images. Typically, storyboards devise a plot and key functions or characters ahead of time; they are used widely in film as a tool to find a way into the work proper. I too use the term to refer to techniques of scripting, but in my usage, storyboards are not a prelude to the 'real work.' They are a collaborative, provisional and open-ended technique for scripting a version of the house that interlocutors wanted to tell or show. Ladakhi colleagues

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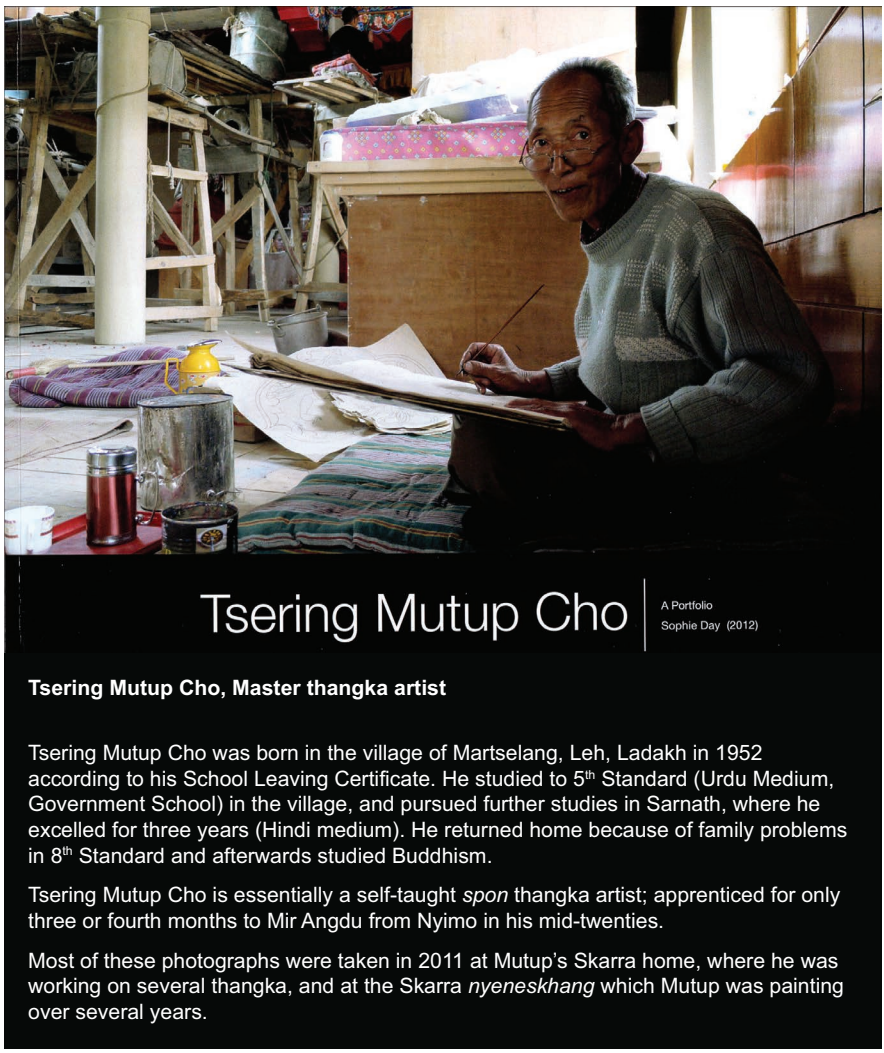
evoked the textures, smells and sounds of wider – as well as interior – histories which we then put together in the form of photobooks to represent aspects of their houses. We often shared these efforts with other people and almost always revised them. The telling, numbering, picturing, writing and editing of houses in this book draws extensively on our conversations as well as my own observations.

Our storyboarding approach built on existing relationships, established in the 1980s. I had learned something of how to behave, how to speak Ladakhi, how to farm and cook, teaching English and learning about house life while conducting doctoral research from 1981–1983 (Day 1989). *Rendering Houses* is informed by this more traditional fieldwork in the Leh area, where



Tsering Mutup Cho, Master thangka artist

Tsering Mutup Cho was born in the village of Martselang, Leh, Ladakh in 1952 according to his School Leaving Certificate. He studied to 5th Standard (Urdu Medium, Government School) in the village, and pursued further studies in Sarnath, where he excelled for three years (Hindi medium). He returned home because of family problems in 8th Standard and afterwards studied Buddhism.

Tsering Mutup Cho is essentially a self-taught *spon* thangka artist; apprenticed for only three or fourth months to Mir Angdu from Nyimo in his mid-twenties.

Most of these photographs were taken in 2011 at Mutup's Skarra home, where he was working on several thangka, and at the Skarra *nyeneskhang* which Mutup was painting over several years.

I lived mostly with Buddhist smallholders. During more recent collaborative work, we understood that I had only limited awareness of life-worlds beyond Leh in the 1980s and knew little about what had happened since. Despite these lacunas, subsequent long absences and forgetfulness, Ladakhi friends and I imputed a shared foundation to our more recent work. I present today's houses in the context of this history and refer to developments during the past forty years that we registered and discussed when we met. This span of time allows me to show how Ladakhis work to sustain houses and – through them – people. I attend to the routine and repetitive working rhythms of the day or month, as well as responses to disasters and anticipation of an unmanageable future. I hope my approach will register the surprise greeting events and developments that were not expected as much as those that were anticipated but never realised.

Natasha Myers' (2015) account of the sensorial in *Rendering Life Molecular* shows how concepts and materials are variously performed, translated and interpreted. Although *Rendering Houses* reproduces none of our photobooks, I hope to show how my interlocutors conveyed lived experiences alongside received accounts of the past in the present as we put together versions of their houses that envisaged both 'better' and 'worse' times. My interlocutors wanted the right versions of their houses to appear, and representational issues posed us with issues and contests about what to include and leave out. We tried to combine images and words into frames or pages that also worked sequentially. In the process of translating these photobooks again on the pages of this book, I have removed most of the images and greatly expanded the text.[2] The remaining images are integral, and not merely illustrative; they constitute narrative devices in themselves and anchor the book in our collaborative efforts to render biographies of houses-and-people on the page. Earlier images are in black and white; the more recent are in colour; and some are remarkably poor quality owing to my skills or the mobile phone I used. Three of the chapters (Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and Chapter 9) are closely based on earlier photobooks.[3]

House-based societies

Rendering Houses builds on Lévi-Strauss' (1983a, 1983b, 1987, 1991) foundational scholarship on 'house' or 'house-based' societies, in which Tibetan-speaking areas such as Ladakh are included (for example, Mills 2006: 98–99). Lévi-Strauss developed an oblique approach to the conceptual and material aspects of houses, for it was while he was exploring the shaping, telling, drawing, colouring and chiselling of Amerindian masks that he arrived at the house. I adopt a similar indirection towards the performance and interpretation of houses in Ladakh, and I dwell on numbering, naming, objects and photographs rather than construction techniques or architectural trends. Three of Lévi-Strauss' contributions provide important background to what follows: houses exist on all levels of social life, they are

the key social persons and they are made in words and numbers, as well as other materials.

Godelier (2018) credits Lévi-Strauss' remarks on indigenous house organisation to his passion for Pacific Northwest art, which drove him to haunt New York's antique dealers after World War Two. The masks and 'coppers' he admired led him to extend his study of Amerindian myth (Bloch 1983). Swaihe or Swaihwé (*Sxwaixwe*) masks with their protuberant eyes and Dzunukwa masks with their sunken orbs delighted him again on a second visit to British Columbia in 1974 and, says Godelier, his concept of the house emerged along the way. The second edition of the *Way of the Masks* (Lévi-Strauss 1983a) included an additional section on Kwakiutl (*Kwakwaka'wakw*) houses.

Lévi-Strauss (1983a: 12) tells us how strange he found these masks,

> Why this unusual shape, so ill-adapted to their function? . . . why the gaping mouth, the flabby lower jaw exhibiting an enormous tongue? Why the bird heads, . . . the protruding eyes . . . the quasi-demonic style resembling nothing else in the neighbouring cultures, or even in the culture that gave it birth?

Bit by bit, Sxwaixwe masks are unravelled in relation to other masks and myths, revealing dialogue among different groups. Lévi-Strauss asks about their composition and, by extension, the doing of houses: the way that masks and houses are shaped, drawn, coloured, chiselled and 'fitted out' with 'appendages,' each a composite of many parts. Subsequently, the concept of house is taken to and tested on every continent (Lévi-Strauss 1987).[4]

Interested in conceptual as well as material properties of Ladakhi houses, I was reminded of the role of masking in Mauss' 1938 essay on the notion of person.[5] A summary of material presented in the 20-page essay concludes in the English edition,

> From a simple masquerade to the mask, from a 'role' (*personnage*) to a 'person' (*personne*), to a name, to an individual; from the latter to a being possessing metaphysical and moral value; from a moral consciousness to a sacred being; from the latter to a fundamental form of thought and action – the course is accomplished.
>
> (Mauss' essay translated in Carrithers, Collins and Luke 1985: 22)

Mauss drew on the Latin *persona*, denoting a theatrical mask that channels relations through a face that you may impersonate or personify – both concealing and revealing, as Lévi-Strauss showed. Lévi-Strauss edited and introduced this essay (Hart 2007: 479) in *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Mauss 1950), which likely informed his view of both masking and housing as forms of personhood. He asked why anthropologists had not offered a concept of house alongside tribe, village, clan and lineage, and turned to medieval

European history to show, "It is not the individuals or the families that act, it is the houses, which are the only subjects of rights and duties" (Lévi-Strauss 1983a: 173). Lévi-Strauss defined this house, after Schmid, as a body,

> holding an estate made up of both material and immaterial wealth, which perpetuates itself through the transmission of its name, its goods, and its titles down a real or imaginary line, considered legitimate as long as this continuity can express itself in the language of kinship or of affinity and, most often, of both.
>
> (1983a: 174)

Revisiting Boas' difficulties with the Kwakwaka'wakw/Kwakiutl *numaym*,[6] Lévi-Strauss emphasised the meshing of political and economic history with kinship relations (1983a: 171, 176) and, in a later piece, explained that immaterial wealth included "names belonging to the houses, legends that also belong to the houses, the exclusive right to perform certain dances or rituals" (Lamaison 1987: 34, cited in and translated by Godelier 2018: 177).

This house is a moral person (*personne morale*), often translated into English as corporate group. A jural (legal-cum-moral) understanding of corporations was important to Anglo-Saxon anthropology at the time but Lévi-Strauss drew on parallel concepts in France, which give comparable attributes to the person. He considered the emphasis on corporations obfuscating insofar as houses became lifeless; anthropologists, he said (1987: 151), have mistaken houses for mere buildings. Moreover, Lévi-Strauss insisted, a house exists only in relation to other houses: competition and ranking constitute a two-fold hierarchy within and between houses that creates a neighbourhood of relations. This rivalry makes it hard to determine what lies inside or between houses, dissolving any clear sense of what is in front, behind, inside or outside a mask.[7]

Lévi-Strauss' contributions are widely acknowledged. For some, it was his brief turn to history that inspired subsequent exploration of European and other houses, including ethnographies and life stories. Themes about houses as palaces of memory and lost childhood treasures resonate with memory studies more broadly.[8] For others, it was the materialisation of a house in the company of other houses and an array of objects (masks) and words (myths) that made his approach so compelling. As Danilyn Rutherford (2016: 63) suggested, Lévi-Strauss inspired,

> ethnographies that approach human belonging as irreducibly mediated: by wood and stone, by sleeping compartments and hearths, by the durable substance of precious metals and the ephemeral beauty of cloth, not to mention the varied potentials of human bodies. In these studies, houses serve as indexical anchor points for 'thens' and 'nows,' 'heres' and 'theres,' orienting social actors in time and space.

Rutherford considers that houses are living embodiments of the distributed personhood of a group. Who, she asks (2016: 64), keeps track? Her answer is the house that recruits members and replaces them, keeping so as to give. Such a house, as Victor Buchli (2013: 145) remarked of Bourdieu's Kabyle ethnography, constitutes a 'supreme algorithm[s]' for synchronising bodies and spaces so as to repeat itself. From the perspective of a house, considered in relation to its many layers and interests, what matters is the recursive nature of an algorithm that produces a 'house line' by folding one iteration and one part into the next, shedding and incorporating new members along the way. Adjustments emerge in the partitions and other boundaries of membership, which are associated with different kinds of houses in Ladakh.

The brevity of Lévi-Strauss' survey and its evolutionary assumptions provoked criticism: his claims were too narrow or too broad, and it is impossible in practice to distinguish house-based from non-house-based societies (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995). Nevertheless, Lévi-Strauss' insights have shaped subsequent work, and I draw on specific contributions in the remainder of this introductory chapter that enrich and complicate my presentation of the 'person' of and in Ladakhi houses. Jane Guyer's (2014, 2016a, 2016b) exploration of the holding of houses frames my account of contested views since the 1980s about what qualifies as a house. Veena Das' (2015) concept of house-plots – that is, double plots with narratives and lives that grow in different plots of land – enables fuller understanding of this house-holding, including the connections between geopolitical and domestic partitioning. Alfred Gell's (1998) understanding of the agency and biographies of houses introduces the life course approach that I adopt.

House-based society in Ladakh

Rendering has a broader and less unitary set of connotations in English than alternatives such as reproduction. I draw on connotations of rendering to describe distinct but interlinked dimensions of Ladakhi housework: rendering as plastering and more generally the work of maintenance, rendering as giving back or paying dues, and rendering as performing or translating, as in the rituals of housework and our collaborative method of storyboarding. Because these several distinct meanings can only be combined awkwardly, rendering allows me to describe house organisation in Ladakh as a patchwork. Ladakhis hope that their work will delay partitioning (house division) – or worse, dissolution and abandonment – but acknowledge that their houses will change in ways they cannot anticipate.

Renewing a house with plaster, as Ladakhis do every year, provides one opportunity to ask what is made visible, tangible and workable. This regular renovation enacts the compromises that successfully cover up other problems, private matters as well as imperfections, in the way Herzfeld (1991: 255–256) suggested of state-mandated preservation in a Cretan town. A palimpsest, annual rendering also combines little by little the contributions from

different individuals, generations and institutions. Some of these contributions attract more attention than others. House and people tend to merge under head of house, typically a man and a father, who puts other people to work. Leslie Sharp (2019) presents extractive aspects of rendering in a dark vein when she asks about the treatment of animals as human proxies for modelling human conditions and frailties. She draws on connotations associated with the processing of dead animals to make materials of value for people, such as fat. A further, possibly distinct set of connotations links rendering to the Latin *reddere*, giving back as in the payment of tax. In Ladakh, the units of taxation were houses, not individuals, but heads of houses drew on junior members to pay most labour dues.

Those who plaster the house pay dues in return for their tenancy. Smallholding and other houses were landholding units, units of production, taxation, and political representation. They used to nest within much grander monastic and secular houses holding significant estates of land under the erstwhile royal house/s, which held theoretical title to all land within their shifting domains. Each of these houses might continue, self-governing in key respects, by returning dues of one kind or another to superordinate landlords and neighbours who offered protection and infrastructure in return. Previously, the many forms of taxation shaded into what could equally be called gifting, co-operative labour, renting and indebtedness, but the most hated was 'free' or 'forced' labour – free to beneficiaries and forced from subjects. Corvée labour for transport as well as other work was known by various terms including *thral* (Tib: *khral*), *res* ('turn'), '*u lag* (a Mongol term, Grist 1994: 265) and *begar* (Urdu). It disrupted lives in especially arbitrary ways, as indicated by Ramsay's 19th-century dictionary,

> The people of Ladák were subject to this *beygár* tax even during the time of the Ladák kings, but they object to the *beygár* system more than to anything else in connection with the Dogra administration. They say that they do not object to the assessment on the land, for though it is heavy, its amount is a fixed one, and the dates for the payment of the several instalments are known to all, while with *beygár* the case is otherwise, there is no limit to it, and no one can be certain for a day that he will not be seized as a *beygári* or "unpaid labourer."
>
> (Ramsay 1890: 47)

Ladakh had become a minor regional power in the 18th century and was conquered by the Dogras from Jammu in the 1830s and 1840s. Pressures from above in the form of tax, tribute and rent discouraged the formation of new units.[9] The larger the number of people in a house, the easier it was to absorb the effect of demands that took men away from the house for significant periods as porters, agricultural labour, miners, messengers and so forth. Furthermore, conservation of labour enabled houses to combine agriculture, animal husbandry, trade and religious service as necessary.

This overall house system of nested rights and obligations disappeared with India's Independence. Most taxes were abolished, some debts were reconciled and land reforms were promised.[10] Even so, houses continue to make obligatory contributions to their local neighbourhoods. Buddhist houses also make 'gifts' and pay 'rent' to monastic landowners in much the same way as they did before Independence. Local dues in labour, cash and goods give access to water for irrigation, grazing on common land, ritual protection and a voice in matters of local government.[11] Rendered equivalent in some respects, houses are also ranked. They receive water for irrigation in turn and their members sit in a 'line' (*tal* or *tral*, Tib: *gral*) or rank order during meetings and social events.

Houses have demanded constant, arduous attention since the 1980s, and Ladakhis have become uncertain about the kind of work that might hold their houses together through radically different circumstances. While I address the familiar and vexed business of continuing a house through some but not all of its people, I hope that rendering captures the durational and differentiated sense of 'thickness' in time that can be lost in more conceptual accounts about the distribution or reproduction of people in and across houses. Jane Guyer (2014, 2016a, 2016b) has asked what in fact constitutes taken-for-granted values and frameworks for living in a house. She recommends that we pay attention to "how the 'house' and the 'holding' are being brought together by multiple parties, as well as the tensions and struggles entailed by these accommodations" (2016a: 332), presenting the 'hold' as relations of interdependency among people. Hold is drawn from the feudal concept of a holding (2016a: 325); that is, the exchange of dues for protection or tenancy noted previously, which has been irrelevant for a considerable period to most American and European – as well as to Ladakhi – houses. But house holdings continue to combine archaic with new materials, contributions and narratives to shape social and economic activities in Ladakh, as I describe in the chapters that follow.

I use the term house rather than household or other terms in the literature such as homestead (Srinivas 1998) in acknowledgement of Lévi-Strauss' inspiration to the study of house-based societies. But 'house' refers only imprecisely to what Ladakhi smallholders, especially Buddhists, distinguish as an estate, a 'big' or main house, a 'small' or offshoot house and other 'still smaller' summer and winter houses. Sometimes, these are all just houses and sometimes they are distinguished and contested in relation to their relative status as parts of a whole. The named, property holding, registered estate often includes several houses. Rights and claims are distributed within this estate according to a few simple principles that inform who works for whom, who can stay with the house and who will have to go. They include differences of generation, gender and birth order, and Buddhists attach more significance than Muslims to where precisely you reside within the overall estate: there are roughly the same numbers of Buddhists and Muslims in Ladakh, alongside minorities who practice other religions.[12] The overall head of house is usually a senior man, and he is identified with the collective.

Named estates (*tronpa*, Tib: *grong pa*) have rights and obligations in settlements which are also named, property-holding units (see Chapter 3). Estate in English derives from the Latin *stare*, to stand, and Kevin Gray emphasises the significance of an ordinal sequence to this standing (Gray 2010: 176–178); while Jane Guyer explores its improvised qualities that emerge through the distribution of resources (Guyer 2004). The Anglo-Saxon anthropology

that Lévi-Strauss considered lifeless probed the nature of this standing, drawing likewise on medieval European histories of houses. Fortes in particular emphasised the importance of succession. It is not, he claimed (1970: 303), the co-existence of "a plurality of persons collected in one body" that makes a group corporate, but their "plurality in succession"; that is, their perpetuity in time. Houses are projected into the past and the future because rules of succession make them effectively immortal: note how it is the young boy in Chapter 2 at a domestic ritual who is chosen to cast his house into the future. For Fortes, referring especially to the Tallensi, 'complete personhood' requires legitimate succession – in due time and order – to office and status.[13]

In some views, Ladakhi domestic houses remain remarkably unchanged despite momentous geopolitical and economic developments following India's Independence in 1947. Similar observations have been made of other Tibetan-speaking areas. Barbara Aziz (1978: 117), for example, reported, "the concept of the household stands out as the keystone around which social relations are articulated" among Tibetan Dingri refugees in Nepal. Dargyay's research with Tibetan refugees showed that households did not change over long periods as the division or merging of farms was usually not allowed (Dargyay 1982: 44). Some Buddhist Ladakhis say that your house name should not change until some impossible event occurs – typically until glaciers melt, lakes dry up, and rivers flow backwards – even as they divide their houses among heirs.

House (and settlement) names render individuals 'addressable' in the way Patrick Joyce (2013) described in the very different context of the British postal

system. Postal developments after 1800, Joyce shows, enabled the British state and its citizens to address individuals, families and houses. Joyce (2013: 89) emphasises how individual identity was folded into a residence and a neighbourhood in the same way as the folded, "literally 'enveloped,' letter."[14] A similar addressability attaches Ladakhi house-and-person internally and subjectively, wrapping state administration, people and houses together through the name. Ladakhis carry their house name rather as English speakers carry a surname, and as Lévi-Strauss has demonstrated, you cannot take on or inherit a house name without living there, caring for its name and participating in the hospitality and rivalry within the community to which this name also belonged.

House names are counted into their settlement, which is known by the sum of its named estates. This settlement, village or neighbourhood is defined by

Map of Ladakh with 2019 borders (not to scale)

both a name and this supposedly fixed number of constituent house units. Named, as it were, twice over, the neighbourhood also constitutes a system of ranking in which houses compete for position. Head of house still represents the local state in relation to neighbourhood affairs and assembles contributions from juniors. But these juniors have been drawn into work outside the house to enjoy increasingly differentiated life chances. Some receive secondary and especially higher education in cities to the south, while others join the army. In fact, the majority of Ladakhis are directly or indirectly employed by the Indian army as soldiers, porters, drivers, producers and in construction. Direct enrolment is so high that there are scarcely any young men to be seen in some villages, and Mona Bhan (2014: 171) reports that 46% of Ladakh is occupied by the army. Some people say that it is impossible to tell from the outside if Ladakh is a borderland organised for defence or a military occupation. Its edges are mutable and disputed, and the map shows only recent adjustments to Ladakh's status in 2019, when it was granted Union Territory (UT) status.

Ladakhis have more individualised shares in their houses as citizens of India. Previously, in 1941, polyandry – a woman married to more than one brother – was prohibited at the instigation of neo-Buddhists while equal inheritance – among male heirs, at least – was mandated in 1943.[15] Many aspects of house life, from the Aadhaar biometric identity card[16] to claims on the Public Distribution System of subsidised goods[17] and legal definitions of State Subjects in the state of Jammu and Kashmir (until 2019),[18] have helped shift state registration towards the enumeration of individuals rather than houses. When I first visited Ladakh, these reforms were beginning to affect house practices, and all Ladakhis typically divide their property now among at least some heirs.

Partitioning Ladakh's houses

As Marilyn Strathern (1996: 531) wrote, 'belonging divides and property [belongings] disowns,' and partitioning permeates my discussion of house rendering. Brothers and sisters divide house property more often than they did in the 1980s, and brothers commonly take larger shares. The property or territory of the wider region has also been divided among three post-colonial nation-states. During the 20th century, Ladakh was extensively partitioned and remains enmeshed in Indian communalist politics – that is, a politics defined by religious community and identity. Recent geopolitical adjustments in 2019 separated Ladakh from the rest of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir but did not alleviate local concerns about the status of existing borders, continuing bordering practices and sovereignty. Begoña Aretxaga's (2003) discussion is relevant to contested belonging/s in Ladakh today. She considered two forms of belonging integral to nation(s) and state(s) and to families, but impossible to either combine or hold apart. Referring to the hyphen in *nation-state*, she suggested that this hyphen joins and separates subject and citizen. Belonging in Ladakh, whether to domestic houses or the

wider region extending across national borders, evokes what Aretxaga describes as "a variety of relations that are ambivalent, ambiguous, hostile, violent, porous . . . in which the nature of the hyphen is more a cipher than a self-evident reality" (Aretxaga 2003: 398).

Soon after Ladakh was subordinated to Jammu and Kashmir under the Dogras in the 1830s, it came under indirect rule of the British to join a buffer zone between British India and the Chinese and Russian empires. The Partition of India and Pakistan created a boundary that was marked by the Ceasefire Line declared by the United Nations on 1 January 1949. This boundary subsequently became the Line of Control proposed under the Simla Accord and signed in 1972 after two further wars. What had been Ladakh *wazarat* – with the government headquarters rotating between Leh and Skardu, each for six months of the year – was divided between Pakistan (Baltistan, Gilgit and Azad Kashmir) and India. In 1962, warfare broke out to the east between India and China after Chinese occupation of the Aksai Chin following the Tibet Uprising, the exile of the Dalai Lama and the closure of Tibet's borders. Relations with China are not framed in the same communalist idiom as relations with Pakistan and among Indian citizens, but they are equally associated with partitioning. Longstanding imperial disputes currently centre on a Line of Actual Control. The largest disputed area is the Aksai Chin, 38,000 km^2 and a corridor between Chinese Tibet and Xinjiang, and anxieties about incursions from China continue to displace concerns about Pakistan at times.

Van Schendel (2007) approached Himalayan and neighbouring borderlands through three categories of what I gloss as partitioning: Radcliffean, or disputes between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh resulting from Partition in 1947; Kashmirian, or disputes associated with merging Kashmir and other princely states into post-colonial India; and McMahonian, or issues resulting from the McMahon Line of 1914 between India and China. All three types of dispute combined during the first twenty years of Independence to divide Ladakh between three post-colonial nation-states, and all three continue to frame houses and house politics. Ladakhis are divided from families and farmland, and some have shifted nation-state with territories won and lost since Independence. Those close to the international borders with China and Pakistan confront the army as the dominant face of the state and describe continuing injuries.[19] Further away, Abdul Ghani Sheikh writes from Leh about separation from his brother in his 2001 essay, 'Two Nations, One Story.' His brother, Deen Mohammed, is on the other side of the Line of Control in Pakistan.

Both Buddhists and Muslims speak of the loss entailed in these partitions and their stories express collective nostalgia about the loss of trading relations and a cosmopolitan entrepôt atmosphere.[20] But memories and post memories of separation are distributed unevenly, and they are highly responsive to other developments. Contemporary struggles to fit into constructions of the Indian nation and state make the pain of separation especially palpable

among Muslims (see Chapter 5). Muslims, not Buddhists, are suspected of disaffection and they feel vulnerable to persecution as though they were criminals who might be surrendered to the authorities. This communalist politics colours the divisions and classifications which have made it impossible for anyone to be 'simply Ladakhi' today (Martijn van Beek 1996, 1997, 2000b, 2001). In 1991, eight Ladakhi groups were given scheduled tribe (ST) status in an oddly heterogeneous categorisation that drew on surveys and census documents from the 19th and 20th centuries. Ladakhis struggled to attach themselves to one 'tribe' or another through muddled-up attributes of region, religion, race, language and social status – and, "It is only the official Scheduled Tribe (ST) Certificate, which states the tribal identify of the holder, that fixes people's identities unambiguously" (Beek 2000b: 173).[21] Practically all Ladakhis were declared STs except for those known as Argon (also Arghon or Arghun), whose Sunni heritage led them to be closely associated with Kashmir even though many traced their families to Xinjiang, the Punjab and other places.[22]

Domestic house values are foundational to this communalism. Buddhists say their houses stay the same while Muslim houses are temporary affairs that multiply because they divide through partible inheritance. To Buddhists, their houses symbolise a real and authentic Ladakh, now as in the past, and a highly valued heritage that is fit for future generations insofar as it is adapted to a fragile ecology. These views are naturalised by appeal to representations from colonial and post-colonial officials, environmentalists and other travellers. Buddhists associate their house values further with a history of encapsulation and longstanding struggles for regional autonomy. They blame Muslims for converting Buddhist women at marriage and consider Muslim houses instruments of conquest.

Veena Das (2015: 22–23) wrote of Delhi neighbourhoods, "I treat the local ecologies in these cases as the plot, both in the sense of a narrative plot and a plot (as in a plot of land) on which a story might grow." This double plot provides a framework for understanding the smaller and larger plots of land and ecological relations that constitute a fastening for people's lives. It is a commonplace in Ladakh, as elsewhere, that you are born into a house that already exists and will continue after you. But it is also recognised that houses are now divided among heirs and carry on through partitioning among Buddhists and Muslims alike. Contested views and experiences of regional (as well as domestic) politics make partitioning a highly charged element of everyday house relations.

In the 1980s, intermarriage between Buddhist and Muslim houses was challenging but common across varied distinctions of status and prospects; today, opposition to intermarriage is formulated as a war against terror. Buddhists sometimes describe themselves as 'insiders' (*nangpa*) and Muslims as 'outsiders' (*chipa*, Tib: *phyi pa*).[23] As communalist divisions hardened periodically, episodes of violence broke out. In 1989, for example, a dispute in Leh involving young Buddhists and Muslims led to three deaths at the hands

of security forces and a 'social boycott' prohibiting normal interaction lasting three years. The boycott was fiercely enforced by the Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA), and in Nubra, to the north of Leh (Srinivas 1997, 1998) and Achinathang to the north-west (Aggarwal 2004), village work groups were re-constituted along religious lines.

Peace was restored by limited devolution to Hill Development Councils (Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, LAHDC) formed in 1995 for Leh and 2003 for Kargil. The LBA, however, continues to campaign against 'Islamization' of Ladakh, maintaining and strengthening links with Hindu groups, including the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) (Beek 2004). In January 2015, the LBA apparently wrote a letter to India's new Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, accusing local Muslims of waging 'Love Jihad': in the words of the LBA secretary Sonam Dawa, 'luring Buddhist girls' and converting them to Islam.[24] A few years previously, the LBA began to organise against family planning in order to boost the size of the Buddhist population, and Sara Smith reports letters to Sonam Norbu Memorial Hospital in Leh in 2007, demanding they cease providing family planning services (Smith 2015).[25] This unsettled situation is aggravated by a wider communalist politics in India, struggles in Kashmir and the aftermath of the Kargil War (1999). At virtually the same time that Ladakh was granted independent UT status in 2019 and Article 370 of the Constitution of India – which had given the state of Jammu and Kashmir some autonomy – was revoked, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party passed a Citizenship Amendment Act in parliament. A National Register of Citizens was proposed, which further discriminates against Muslims and transforms the relationship between religion and citizenship in India. Like elite Buddhists since the 1930s, Muslims in Ladakh now complain of settler colonialism and they dispute the Buddhist house narrative.

There are as many Muslim farmers as Buddhists in Ladakh, the former concentrated in the west around the second town of Kargil. All Ladakhi farmers aspire to keep the house or farming unit intact and, as Cole and Wolf (1974) showed, this aim can be achieved through different inheritance systems. In Shia joint and extended families in western Ladakh, an elder brother works the land while younger brothers contribute wages in the same way as Buddhist smallholders (Grist 1990: 137). Smriti Srinivas (1998) reported that subdivision of land was comparable among Buddhists and Muslims in an area to the north of Leh (Nubra), and she compared the Buddhist *phaspun*, a small group of houses that provide mutual assistance during life crises, with Muslim *iftarspun* (her own neologism), normally an agnatic group.[26] These examples suggest that farmers may have more in common with each other than with co-religionists who live off the land or hold large estates.

Sunni trading houses are mostly urban and linked to families in Lhasa, Yarkand, Srinagar and other cities. Before Independence, they were intimately

involved in the carrying trade to the north (Xinjiang) through Yarkand, Khotan and Kashgar, and to the east along long-established routes to Tibet, as well as to the Valley of Kashmir and southern centres in the Punjab or the Himalayan foothills and beyond. Depending on who and where you were, you might look to Iran or Iraq and aspire to the hajj, or to Tibet, Nepal and elsewhere in India. In many situations, neither Muslim nor Buddhist provides a relevant denotation: are you Sunni, Shia or Nūrbakshī; affiliated to a Geluk, Kagyud or other monastery;[27] in a tent, house, village or city? Religious identity combines with regional affiliation, kin links, exchange relations, occupation and social class to constitute shared as well as distinctive house values and practices.

A double plot fastens lives and narratives in local and international ecologies and foundations. It is possible, for example, that the abolition of the heavy tax and debt burden on domestic houses after Independence was not just a dismantling of extractive colonial systems but also an attempt to foster loyalty to a still-distant state (Wangyal 1997). This reading implies that Ladakhis may be required to defend the international borders marking out the nation-state in return for their domestic house-plots.

House-plots

The following chapters are organised in a roughly chronological order and in relation to the life course of houses-and-people. In addition to concepts of plotting and holding that I have introduced with reference to Veena Das and Jane Guyer, I draw on Alfred Gell's contributions to Lévi-Strauss' presentation of the person of a house. Gell emphasised both the agency of houses and their biographies. He also considered that anthropologists take the life course as their object.

Like their people and things, buildings grow old, and become worn and tattered without care. The annual plastering or whitewashing adds a new layer over the last to keep the surface fresh and disguises blemishes, obliterating and beautifying simultaneously. Alfred Gell (1998: 257) argued that such practices also provide "a sketch towards a series of future houses." Each instance and each new building in this biographical project, Gell suggested, constitutes a holding, plotting or rendering that embodies the promise to build a better version. This better version will continue to carry the memories, relations and material affordances into which you were born. Past, present and future are intermeshed so if one element is modified, all of them shift: retentions of the past and protentions towards the future move together in a temporally extended present (Gell 1992, 1998).

Gell drew on Nicholas Thomas' (1995) work on Maori meeting houses in illustration of these complex artefacts. Above all, he reports (Gell 1998: 252), the house is a body which has entrances and exits and encloses life. Maori meeting houses have strong bones and armoured shells, as well as gaudy and mesmerising skins that contain and protect the living. Eyes peer out through windows and spy holes; voices reverberate through the night (ibid: 253). They

affect people when they come into a house because they are entering the body of an ancestor in the here-and-now, not a trace of the past. Living people, Gell wrote, are just the furnishings who will be absorbed eventually into fixtures after their deaths. It is often impossible to disentangle house and human body since they exist in unstable configurations where it is hard to see clearly where one part ends and another begins. The human body articulates a house just as houses choreograph people and things (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995: 43, see also Bennett 2010; see Chapter 2 and Chapter 9 in this volume).

Gell proposed a specific disciplinary view of the biographical in which anthropology "attempts to replicate the time perspective of [these] agents themselves" (Gell 1998: 10); that is, the lifespan of interconnected people and things. 'The act' is situated in the 'the life' – and so anthropologists, he argued, are necessarily preoccupied with relations among people and things over the life course in distinction from the 'supra-biographical' of sociology and the 'infra-biographical' of psychology. As subsequent chapters suggest, house projects anticipate outcomes which, Gell suggests, makes that effect cause its own cause. The carrying on of a house is thus a kind of aesthetic trap, which demands certain responses from interconnected people and things within their life course.

Gell shows that "history is made in person," as well as other materials and registered in biographical as well as institutional relations (Holland and Lave 2001: 17; Carsten, Day and Stafford 2018). These biographical relations have a variable texture, as Alfred Schütz showed. Schütz emphasised that consociates "growing older together" participate in times made intersubjectively through experience of – and involvement in – each other's lives. Contemporaries by contrast share only an abstract, anonymous time from which strangers are altogether detached. Strangers are "without history" and have no experiences of a common past (Schütz 1964: 97, see also Schütz 1976). Shifting between these different life course relations, I and the people who feature in the following chapters have been observing and reflecting on an unfolding present from different positions adjacent to the process of 'becoming historical' (Rabinow 2008) as we have become middle-aged and older. Interconnecting our varied positions as strangers and friends, contemporaries and consociates, *Rendering Houses* frequently foregrounds our observations and reflections, rendering the ethnography somewhat indirect and a genre that blurs with the biographical.

I present only a handful of Ladakhi houses, precariously attached to their foundations in and around the town of Leh. All but one chapter feature Buddhist houses, whose residents have seen rural homes abandoned and standing derelict while urban districts grow to attract attention from developers and sustained DIY (do-it-yourself) projects. Ladakh was re-opened to visitors in 1974 and ever-greater numbers have been attracted to the Leh area, which also serves as a gateway to the region, by the architecture of the monasteries, castles and palaces that cap each settlement – higher up in all senses of the word – as well as extraordinary Himalayan landscapes and, more recently, sites of war and Bollywood movies further afield.[28]

In addition to tourists, Leh attracts Ladakhi and other migrants to jobs, education, healthcare, dealings with government and an easier life. The city of Leh has over 30,000 residents today but had fewer than 10,000 in the early 1980s. Many Lehpa (-pa is a suffix denoting people) live in more than one place and negotiate with rural homes that consider them dependents. They are relatively prosperous because of subsidies from a military and developmental state with strong interests in the borders connecting and separating India, Pakistan and China.

Chapter 2 and Chapter 9 describe Buddhist houses as kinds of person; people's bodies are also houses. These chapters not only bookend *Rendering Houses* but also the 'ethnographic present' or 'becoming historical' that stretches from my initial doctoral fieldwork (1981–1983) to my most recent visit in 2019.

Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 present key materials out of which Ladakhi houses are built: shrines, pillars, stores, names and numbers. Both chapters contextualise findings from my initial fieldwork in light of subsequent developments. In Chapter 2, I describe the house that was brought to life during regular daily and calendrical performances among Buddhist smallholders in the 1980s, focusing on ritual architecture. I draw on the classic accounts of Alfred Gell and Lévi-Strauss to show that the smallholding house was – and is – an active participant in social life. This version of a house is a living person and consubstantial with its human people, each of whom also and simultaneously occupies a distinct position in the estate.

Chapter 3 describes relations among houses in the Leh area. A 'proper' or 'full' house still has a recognised name that is counted into a named settlement. Houses are recognised as citizens through this name and count, and

their members are obliged to contribute goods and labour to the settlement. However, adjustments have been made in response to developing Indian state laws, changeable borders to Ladakh's identities and territories, a wage economy and environmental insecurities. I explain how the local government, Leh LAHDC (Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council or, simply, Hill Council), began to redistribute land in the later 1990s, allocating common village property recorded in state registers to individual houses belonging to the relevant neighbourhoods. This land redistribution enabled new building and the development of a market in land. It also allowed the settlement I describe to reconfigure its formal relations during the 2000s and reorganise old-style estates into 'simple houses.' Simple houses do not provide the same rubric as old-style houses for counting and naming relations of belonging.

After presenting an introductory sketch of the fabric of Leh houses, I turn to research with images. *Rendering Houses* in general remains tied to our organisation of photographs into series to which we added minimal textual narrative in small photobooks. Chapter 4 describes this process, beginning with an account of how I tested Ladakhi responses in 2009 to a set of photographs from the 1980s. The pictures were of pastoralists known as Kharnakpa and officially classified as Changpa, one of Ladakh's eight official 'identities.' The people I met fleetingly in 1981 have since migrated to Leh, and Chapter 4 follows the threads of one photograph and one name into newly established urban houses.

Chapter 5 is the only chapter featuring a Sunni Muslim history, as Chapter 4 is the only account from pastoralist Ladakhis. It presents storyboarding through significant objects, which Deen Khan and I photographed during a series of conversations from 2013–2017. Some of these objects are represented in this chapter and our conversations are cited extensively to indicate how we discussed Deen's house in the context of family and regional histories. We asked whether Deen Khan could rebuild a home in his place of birth and the place where his parents were born. My enquiry responds to Deen's sense that he no longer enjoys full citizenship. Referring explicitly to the geopolitics of partitioning in Ladakh, this chapter embeds family in wider histories and conjures comparison of rendering with state practices of rendition.

Chapter 6 describes partitioning in a rural Buddhist rather than an urban Sunni house. Farmers have had to adjust to the loss of household labour and new forms of property registration. I look at the consequences of a recent land settlement for estate juniors. Jigmed, a woman from a small or offshoot house, wonders if she still belongs to any part of her village estate after receiving a small portion of the property divided primarily between two brothers. This material suggests that house partitioning today disadvantages juniors, including non-married women, in much the same way as previous practices.

In Chapter 7 and Chapter 8, I explore small or offshoot houses in more detail to ask about the position of non-married women and elders from Leh's 'middling' estates (*mi mangs*), estates on which they had few claims. I draw on concepts of stratified, dispersed or distributed reproduction to explore how marginal positions within and between houses have changed. Both chapters deploy a life course approach to show how previously disadvantaged

non-married women have seized opportunities to live differently. These women expressed delight in the new and unconventional houses they have built as well as deep attachment to their first homes.

Chapter 7 presents a new house, a nunnery, made by women who had previously worked for their domestic estates. I show how these women took advantage of openings to live independently and realise their few assets, and I ask how their nunnery can be sustained into the future.

Angmo, a non-married woman who lives independently, is the subject of Chapter 8. Belonging to a generation that enjoys more individualised claims to property, she tries to 'go it alone' by investing in new plots, attracting her family back home and supplementing her meagre pension with earnings from a small business. Since the value of the asset itself, the land, exceeds that of residents' work in the Leh area, Angmo finds herself in the company of many others speculating in a volatile market. Market conditions incite hopes for eventual security and profit, and anxieties that assets will have to be sold to make ends meet.

Chapter 9 returns to the theme of house-and-person introduced in Chapter 2. It begins with a manual of sorts, a storyboard assembled by Tashi Lazom and me, which presents the construction of a kind of house or body, a *chorten* or stūpa, between 2011 and 2013. Buddhists leave their worldly bodies and houses at death, providing *Rendering Houses* with one limit.

This book asks how Ladakhi houses-and-people are rendered in parcels of land, narratives and other materials. The chapters are relatively self-contained and can therefore be read out of order, although they are organised thematically as well as chronologically. Initially, I prioritise collective views of house projects, which represent most clearly the interests of established men. These render Buddhist smallholdings explicitly as kinds of person who are consubstantial with their members. Only in later chapters do I tease out tensions and struggles entailed in house-holding by exploring the position of marginal house members, non-married women. In anthropology, social reproduction provides a usual, encompassing lens for considering what remains recognisable when houses – along with the many other elements that mediate social life – change in order to carry on. I describe how Ladakhi houses apparently keep going – or reproduce themselves – by holding on to some of their members and disposing of others, seemingly folding each generation into the last by merging them with the house fabric as though they were mere furnishings. If houses have an agency of their own, however, people clearly fashion as well as follow their precepts, and exhibit contradictory and competing interests. I show how differently positioned individuals challenge established values, fight over alternative versions and visions, and abandon their houses. I hope that attention to disagreements and uncertainties about which aspects of houses are capable of lasting in time will help minimise teleological implications to both the Ladakhi house values I describe and to our more general anthropological accounts about the distribution of houses-and-people over time. Ladakhis anticipate many forms of partitioning, but it is impossible to

determine what those who share a name can achieve in and of their house ahead of time. Ladakhis are preoccupied with how and whether to continue their houses through partitioning; how, they ask, can they claim a portion of intersecting materials, histories and relations without undoing the domestic and wider geopolitical estates to which they belong? I hope that *Rendering Houses* will contribute to our understanding of reproducibility by showing how a few Ladakhis experiment with and inhabit the distributive principles of a house otherwise, and how they try to produce better or at least liveable versions. I cannot claim that these versions tell what Das (2015) describes as good stories, with a rhythm, voices, pacing and gaps that remain within the architecture of the story itself, but I hope this small selection may illuminate the rendering of some Ladakhi houses.

Notes

1 With thanks to Kath Weston, who suggested the term.
2 I imagine that these chapters may be 'slightly beside the point' and perhaps 'a bit late' or 'ahead of things' (Rabinow 2008: 50, see also Rabinow and Stavrianakis 2016) and take responsibility for the interpretations and inevitable errors.
3 A selection of images can be found online: see *Leh (1981–2010): The Span of a Generation*, held in Lonpo House, the Himalayan Cultural Heritage Foundation in 2011 at www.flickr.com/photos/sophieday/sets/72157627076033426/ and *Returning Photographs to Ladakh*, held at Goldsmiths, London by Day and Leizaola in 2011 at www.flickr.com/photos/sophieday/albums/72157628189935499. Ladakhis generally preferred the photobooks to online or physical exhibitions and stored them with other keepsakes in the traditional kitchen cabinet to share selectively with visitors.
4 Godelier (2018) considers that *The Way of the Masks* is updated in *Anthropology and Myth* (1987) to sum up Lévi-Strauss' thinking when he finished teaching at the Collège de France. Other contributions include a lecture (1983b) published as 'Histoire et ethnologie' *Annales ESC* 38, no. 6 and a 1987 interview with Pierre Lamaison, published in *Terrain* (1987) as *La notion de maison*. See also Lévi-Strauss (1991).
5 Carrithers, Collins and Luke (1985) published Mauss' essay as 'A category of the human mind: the notion of person; the notion of self.' A complementary essay, 'Techniques of the Body,' was published in 1936 (Mauss 1979).
6 Franz Boas worked in the Northwest Coast between 1885 and 1930 with a local associate, George Hunt. Numaym are property-holding groups or 'houses.'
7 Lévi-Strauss (1983a: 184–185) considered that houses accomplished "a sort of inside-out topological reversal," replacing "an internal duality with an external unity." Evoking the transformation of a maker into the product in *The Jealous Potter* (Lévi-Strauss 1988), Stephen Hugh-Jones (1993: 111) wrote of Amazonian Tukanoan houses,

> A reversible topography, the house is an entity which is at once both an inside and an outside, a contained and a container, a backstage and a front stage, a home and a façade, where we live and where others come to visit us.

While Lévi-Strauss' evolutionary views of kinship and alliance are discredited, his sense of holding two perspectives is significant and resonates with a wide range of ethnographic observations in Ladakh and the Tibetan-speaking region. Examples

include da Col (2012), Dollfus (1989), Huber et al. (2017), Phylactou (1989) and Samuel (1993).

8 For example, Bachelard (1994) probed the many qualities of our memories of that 'first universe,' inside us as we are inside them – a veritable Lévi-Straussian trope.

9 Taxation increased under the Dogras, and Hashmatullah Khan (2014) suggests that dues were increased further under the auspices of British officials, but they were also distributed more equitably. See also Bray (2008) on 19th- and early 20th-century histories of forced labour.

10 The purchase of these reforms was uneven since the Young Men's Buddhist Association and newly established All-Gompa Association (of Buddhist monasteries) successfully lobbied against the expropriation of monastery lands on the grounds that their holdings did not reflect private interests but were for the good of all (Beek 2000a: 533–534; Bertelsen 1996: 173–174; Kaul and Kaul 1992: 188–189).

11 A formal equivalence between houses renders pertinent differences invisible, such as the number of people who can work (Marx 1999).

12 Census figures for the two Districts of Ladakh combined showed a Muslim majority in 2011: 47.40% of the population compared to Buddhists at 45.87%, and Hindus, Sikhs and Christians at 6.22%, 0.31% and 0.17%, respectively (Census of India 2011).

13 Fortes (1970: 303) outlined four steps to complete personhood through marriage, parental achievements, succession to office and a 'good' death. Mauss' (1938) lecture on the notion of person inspired Fortes as well as Lévi-Strauss (see, for example, Fortes 1973: 288) and he wrote extensively on personhood and corporations among the Tallensi (see, for example, Fortes 1987).

14 As Joyce describes, this postal system was exported to and transformed for the 'Raj'; see the 1944 invoice received in Leh in Chapter 5.

15 The Ladakh Buddhist Association was named after the Ladakhi Young Men's Buddhist Association, founded in 1934, which had raised the spectre of Muslim progeny outnumbering Buddhists in the region (Beek 2000a: 533; Bertelsen 1996; Beek and Bertelsen 1997). Theoretically equal shares for female as well as male heirs is a more recent innovation; see Chapter 6.

16 As with colonial practices of fingerprinting (Singha 2000) and photography (Pinney 1997), this state practice is intended in part to mitigate the recurrence and changeability of personal (and house) names; see Das and Copeman (2015).

17 The government is responsible for much of the coordination and transport of essential commodities in Ladakh. It operates a national network of 'ration stores' selling rice, wheat, kerosene and other goods at fixed prices by quota to those with a ration card (allocated to houses on the basis of individuals' 'normal' residence). Prices are lower than in the market.

18 Article 370 of the Constitution of India granted some autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir and enabled the introduction of Article 35A (1954), used to define the state's permanent residents (State Subjects) and their rights, including owning land.

19 Accounts about the effects of Partition include Gutschow (2006) on Zanskar; Aggarwal (2004) and Bhan (2014) on communities around 'the Line' between Kargil and Lower Ladakh (Sham), Gagné (2017) on Sham and Srinivas (1998) on Nubra to the north of Leh. Kaul and Kaul (1992) draw on first-hand experiences of and involvement in political developments since the 1930s, and Aggarwal (2004: 37) draws on eyewitness accounts reported in the Ladakhi journal *Sheeraza Ladakh* 1998–1999 vol. 20 nos. 3–4. Zamindar (2007) and Behera (2000) situate Ladakhi in relation to other South Asian experiences of Partition; the secondary literature also explores how an abiding sense of discrimination inflects culture-building efforts in western Ladakh around Kargil (for example, Gupta 2013a, 2013b, 2014).

20 In Leh, Moravian mission reports of hospital admissions during 1889 included, "38 Ladakhis, 17 Baltis, 8 from Purig, 4 from Yarkand, 2 from Rupshu and Zanskar and one patient each from Tibet, Baghdad and Ireland" (Bray 1983: 86).
21 Balti, for example, denotes a 'tribe' of Shia Muslims to Leh Buddhists or sometimes people from Kargil but, to Purigpa from the Kargil area, it describes a small number of people from Baltistan – on the other side of the Line of Control – who were stuck in Kargil after Partition, distinct from the local Shia majority in Purig and Kargil. Other 'tribes' such as Mon and Beda used to define low-status occupations as musicians and carpenters, at least among Buddhists; Muslim Beda are musicians who live in houses like other people and are of comparable status.
22 Sunni Muslims from Kargil, Suru Valley and Zanskar were, however, eligible for ST status.
23 Conversion to Islam dates to between the late 14th and early 16th centuries, and intermarriage to the 16th or 17th century at latest. The 'Balti' (Shia) settlement of Chushot near Leh includes descendants of the entourage of Gyal Khatun, who married into Ladakh's royal family in the 17th century, as well as refugees originally from Afghanistan fleeing repression. Some have elite status; others have no land (Dollfus 1995).
24 See Noor-Ul-Qamrain (2015). The phrase 'Love Jihad' had featured previously in Indian politics of Hindu-Muslim marriage and has been widely reported (for example, Bruce Bonta [2015] in *Peaceful Societies*, Staff in *The Wire* [2017], M. Saleem Pandit [2017] in *The Times of India*).
25 Gutschow (2006) likewise reports that Ladakhi health teams were forbidden to bring adequate supplies of condoms and intrauterine devices to Zanskar (also spelt Zangskar) in the late 1990s.
26 Grist (1993) describes *phaspun* among Shia and zāt ('patrilineal clans') among Sunni Muslims in Suru. Srinivas (1997, 1998) suggests that Sunni-Shia marriages were as uncommon as marriages between Muslims and Buddhists.
27 Sayyid Mohamed Nur Baksh ('gift of light') was associated with Sufi Islam in Ladakh during the 15th century and the teachings of Sayyid Ali Hamdani, a 14th-century Persian scholar in Kashmir (Bashir 2009; Grist 2005; Sheikh 2010). Ladakh's principal monastic orders are Gelukpa (dge lugs pa) and Kagyudpa (bka' rgyud pa). Tibetan Buddhist schools are variously differentiated but can be grouped into four major orders: Geluk, Kagyud, Sakya and Nyingma, all of which are represented in Ladakh.
28 Domestic tourists began to outnumber international visitors for the first time in 2016, when they reached nearly 200,000 (Dame and Müller 2021).

2 Ritual houses

A ritual arrow planted on the occasion of a birth (2015)

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In the early 1980s, I lived with smallholders near Leh, some of whom farmed while others worked in town or further afield. The house calendar, which I followed closely, integrated agricultural and ritual cycles and I found that house rituals made the agency or person of a house, which I introduced with reference to Lévi-Strauss and Alfred Gell in Chapter 1, especially explicit. This ritualised house is 'alive' and consubstantial with residents in an environment that is equally sentient and animate. In brief, the house acquires a dynamic personhood during rituals that bring the central house pillar, which is also described as an arrow or soul wood, into contact with a storeroom below, represented as a pot or stomach. This arrangement mirrors the anatomy of living people. I summarise and update the description in my PhD thesis (Day 1989) to show how the pillar also joins a house god that lives in a shrine on the roof and in members of the house with earth and water spirits that live in the storeroom and nurture the fertility of the land. Since the 1980s, many residents have abandoned full-time farming and this version of a ritualised house, reflecting the farming year, has been replaced with more religious or doctrinal versions of Buddhist practice. Nevertheless, as described in subsequent chapters, the architecture of 'arrow-and-pot'[1] continues to suffuse Buddhist Ladakhi understandings of life as it is embodied in the world.

Belonging to a house

House organisation differs across the Himalaya and Tibet but the similarity of linguistic terms among Tibetan speakers has led to misleading assumptions about common practices. Buddhist Ladakhis do not trace patrilineal descent through 'bone' like other Tibetan speakers and they do not form descent groups, although they occasionally refer to bone inherited from the father and flesh or blood from the mother. They marry among their own kind, usually numbering one of three sorts (*rigs*) and, in theory, Buddhist Ladakhis avoid marrying relatives up to the 'seventh rib.' As among other Tibetan speakers, g*yud* (Tib: *brgyud*, sometimes *rgyud*; threads, strings or lineages) or 'lineage' describes spiritual as well as family descent; for example, it describes the manifestation of one or more deities in successive incarnate lama (Das 1902). Ladakhis commonly use *gyud* to refer to relationships with senior kin and teachers, but they also speak of 'lineages' associated exclusively with the female line and with the house itself. This sense resonates with ideas about a house line I have described that collects the distributed personhood of a group, and it is relevant to note in this context that very young children were buried in the house walls in some villages to guide their rebirths back to the same dwelling (see Phylactou 1989: 78). Old people, too, return to their previous house when they are reborn, as illustrated by the following story, which I have heard repeatedly since the 1980s. The speaker (2013) emphasises her connections with the protagonist, as in other versions,

> My cousin, Rigzin Angmo had a father who was a great miser. They lived here in [this Leh suburb] in the old house. He even used to pick up

things from the road. His daughter looked after him when he was sick and took him to hospital. Later, he died.

She was away somewhere one time, leaving a helper/relative to look after the old house. This person called her to explain that a couple from Zanskar with a child wanted to stay. It would be closer to the hospital where the child was getting treatment. My cousin said, 'but I have no room' and her relative suggested they could stay in the kitchen. Rigzin Angmo agreed and then the words came out without her having any knowledge of them, 'oh they don't need to pay rent, they can just look after the room.' She did not know why she spoke as she did, and the parents moved in with their son.

When the son arrived, he took his mother to the toilet. He knew where it was.

Then he took them to the offering room, which was dedicated to Dolma (Tara). Apparently, Rigzin Angmo had sponsored a ritual to Dolma after her father's death to help him on his way. There was a statue or painting of Dolma in the offering room.

He, the son, knew everything.

Rigzin Angmo came back to Leh. In brief, the son had her bring him tea every morning as though she were his daughter. Her father's medicine bag was empty, for he had died, and the boy cried and cried when he found that his medicine wasn't in the bag. His old shoes were not in the house because she had bought him a new pair when he was an old man. The boy wanted his old shoes back.

They stayed together for the rest of their lives and Rigzin Angmo was very happy to know that her father was reborn a man even though he had been such a miser and hardly done any religious practice. He used to scavenge from the road. How could it be that he was reborn as a person, and as a man?

The moral of the story relates to judgements about the work (*las*, karma) that an individual Buddhist accomplishes to increase their store of merit and achieve a good rebirth. However, it also points to idioms of continuity manifest in house lines comprising kin, teachers and pupils, and also apparently inert materials.[2]

It is shared residence that gives rise to kinship in a domestic house line, which is secured by the *phaspun*, a cluster of houses, typically four or five, who share a god (*phaslha*). *Phaspun* have been portrayed as idealised households writ large – idealised insofar as they consist of equal brothers who are not ranked by birth order (Phylactou 1989: 159). Kaplanian (2008), by contrast, argues that *phaspun* provide a double to the house and should be understood in terms of uninlineal filiation. In theory, the group is fixed and permanent but, in practice, mobility and disputes lead to occasional changes in membership. In the Leh area, *phaspun* membership is based exclusively on residence and inherited from or transmitted by your house; some people

develop close relations within this group as they do with other kin, including religious kin (*chospun*), and avoid marrying within their *phaspun*.

Despite common residence of men and women in houses and house groups, the ritual house I describe is associated with men and with boys because sisters or daughters generally marry out and become partial outsiders to their natal home. In theory, at least, they leave their own house god (*phaslha*) on marriage to join their husband's. *Phaspun* affairs are for men alone – the word derives from father (*pha*) and siblings (*spun*)[3] – and it is male members who visibly care for their god and constituent houses during life course rituals.

When a house is affected by birth or death, its people avoid contact for a given period with their house numina, the stove, other people and often streams and springs. During this time, they depend entirely on their *phaspun* to cook for them and mediate with the outside world. Because anyone affected by birth or death pollution would inevitably harm their guests, it is *phaspun* who offer hospitality to a wider community at rites of passage, thereby minimising possible harm to other guests, including gods. This is a relatively formal hospitality, often staged in marquees outside the house.[4] *Phaspun* people help their brothers to host memorable birth celebrations, the most lavish funeral feast and the best wedding after 'capturing' a bride for the house. Guests bring a gift larger than the one they received previously from their hosts, and everyone updates their meticulous records of gifts given and received. The pleasures and dangers of hospitality are described further in what follows.

Religious – in contrast to secular – ritual requires specialist expertise and Buddhist smallholders defer to 'religion' (*chos*) under the mediation of monks who also guarantee the integrity of houses. Religious exegesis of elements that I describe in what follows in a ritualised house differ according to the intended audience, and this exegesis tends to differ also from house members' own accounts. From a lay perspective, people work together to make a house, which builds them in turn through interfaces that partition, displace and join different parts. Arrow-and-pot symbolise the making of life in songs, rituals, myths and the daily, annual and life round. This motif inscribes a landscape of work in the fields, care for livestock, melting glacier water and growing crops. It also anticipates the hospitable distribution of all this prosperity when the cycle begins again.

Visiting a house

In 2005, I could not find my way to Taskhan, a house described in more detail in Chapter 3. After a gap of more than fifteen years, canals and footpaths had been re-routed by new building whose walls hid old houses from view. In the 1980s, most people walked to town and back, hailing each other by kin terms. I was asked where I was going and where I had been, and became accustomed to giving the vaguest possible answer, as Ladakhis did – 'there,'

'up,' 'the bazaar.' The questions would continue until I named the village or house where I was staying, which told people who I was.[5] I used to walk the right way, clockwise, round a line of *chorten* (stūpa). In that lower stretch of the journey, a pilgrimage still occurs during the first and most religious month of the year, usually in February, and offerings are left on shrines to the many local protectors. There is a stone on the road where women sometimes stopped to reach in and pull hair out from a hole in the 1980s. Black hair told them they would have a son, white a daughter. An obstacle blocked the spot where a man's wife and child had died. Everyone hurried past. The route was crowded by numina or 'unhumans' (Haraway 1991) as well as people. Past a school, there were two stones reputed to house 'ghosts' (or god-demons, *lhande*, Tib: *lha 'dre*) and, on the opposite side of the road, a spot where 'wild women' – *manmo* – lived. Further up the hill was another village, sometimes described as a blessed, hidden country, either a past or current *bayul* (Tib: *sbas yu*l). I was told it used to be a lake. Today, most travel by car or bus to Leh and the route seems to be less peopled by humans and unhumans alike.

At night, people used to travel in company because, explained a young neighbour,

> When we are young, we're always told that ghosts [*lhande*] are why we are misbehaving or 'witches' [gongmo, Tib: *'gong mo*] when we're depressed. We're told that babies who died have been eaten by witches. That's why we won't go out at night alone. If I'm ever frightened travelling at night, it is not because of people but because of ghosts and 'wild women.'
>
> (Day 1989: 322–323)

These 'people' range from aspects of living neighbours, which I gloss as witches (*gongmo*, *bamo* and others) to more fantastical inhabitants such as 'wild women' (*manmo*, Tib: *ma mo*) who do not have homes of their own. This lack of a house makes spirits dangerous because without a home, they have no food and no proper body.[6]

Strange sights were reported close to Taskhan, including a donkey that most agreed was probably a *lhande* – in this context, a phantom. Dim to the eye at night, floating by, it was liable to cause accidents or death. It is hard to tell unhumans apart since gods also move between their shrines at night. Taskhan grandfather (now deceased) used to see Queen Traltse, one of the village gods, in the shape of a white animal making her way up the hilltop to visit the other village god, King Nezer. He also saw his own house god (*phaslha*) travelling in the shape of a nun. Some of these manifestations followed events such as deaths.

Along the way are many kinds of houses which differ substantially within as well as between settlements and districts. Marco Pallis, among others, wrote of the pleasing proportions and appearance of house like Taskhan. Arriving from Kashmir in the 1930s, he contrasted "a group of mean hovels," most of which were "too low to stand upright in" (1948: 162), with "peasant houses,"

> a never-ending joy throughout Ladak, with their combination of the qualities of amplitude, solidity, classical plan and appropriate detail. A mean or cramped or ill-constructed dwelling was never to be seen, while a fair proportion of the bigger ones made us feel positively envious. Nowhere else have I seen houses to compare, on an average, with those of the Ladakis.
>
> (1948: 169–170).

Upper Ladakh (including Leh), however, also has its 'hovels' and makeshift rooms patched together on marginal land. Pallis acknowledged stylistic variation and considered the interior of "the better" urban houses, "extremely elegant, with spacious chambers bordering on a courtyard, windows with translucent paper in fretwork frames." He was referring to urban Sunni trading houses with Yarkandi, Tibetan and Chinese furnishings and finer workmanship than in "peasant" houses, but sadly marred in some cases by cheap, contemporary imports (ibid: 204–205). Pallis was a disciple of Tibetan Buddhism.

The old-style house looked outwards with its grand façade and screened the interior in darkness. Made of stone at the base and mud brick above, many now incorporate new materials and unfold to the light in the same way as adjoining bungalows. Houses were and are built around a framework of pillars, brackets, joists and beams. Wood and sticks bound with clay make floors and roofs, although corrugated metal sheets are also now used for roofing because they are cheap. Walls often slope inwards as they ascend, limiting the weight of the walls on the upper levels, while the size of windows increases. Roofs in rural areas have parapets, made of bundles of twigs stored with grass around the edge of the roof.[7] The door and some windows are often capped with carved lintels and surrounded by black painted trapezoid frames.

A Buddhist house can be recognised by prayer flags on the roof and often *chorten* or stūpa – typically a set of three built into a recess in the walls or a gateway entrance to the compound. The house is notionally organised on three levels: ground floor stables with stores, the all-important kitchen in the middle, and an offering room at the top. This vertical order is often displaced to a horizontal axis on a single floor where, for example, the offering room is made in an often equally notional east.[8] The tiny apertures that used to keep out some of the weather and keep in most of the smoke from cooking have disappeared with the universal use of glass. Glass rooms – often 'best rooms' – face the winter sun and host visitors, as well as family. Some kitchens have migrated to the edges of the house to funnel warmth and light to the interior. Families no longer choke from dung fires in the kitchen, traditionally found in the middle of the middle floor of the house, since chimneys have replaced holes in the roof. Further details about construction techniques and varieties of vernacular architecture can be found in a substantial literature and so I focus here on a partially distinct, ritual house architecture.[9] In my doctorate, I suggested that the central house pillar symbolically brought gods at the top into association

with *lu* (nāga) – water and earth spirits in the lower world – by connecting their two shrines (Day 1989). Taskhan and most of its neighbours are still organised on three levels: *lu* live with the animals below (*yoklu*), and gods with the offering room above (*stanglha*). People share the middle level (*parsam*) with many others, and the walls of the house are littered with signs and marks prohibiting them entry. *Tsan*, creatures without backs, are deterred by red markings on the corners and, in other districts of Ladakh, by drawings of people, bows, arrows and guns around the house at the middle level.[10] Some devices that were familiar in the 1980s have disappeared or fallen into disrepair, including most of the skulls and thread crosses (*sago namgo*) that used to block doors to the earth and the sky.

The vertical axis in a house organises key dimensions of domestic space and is the only axis emphasised during calendrical, life course and other rites. This vertical structure also mirrors a person's body. As Mills (2003: 306) observes, house ("the house which you were born to") and body ("the house of the body") intermesh conceptually, and so the house metaphorically, "is carried around by individual actors." The hole in a house through which smoke escapes is likened to the hole in the top of the head (Stein 1972). It is through this hole that the spirit enters a foetus and escapes at death (see Chapter 9). It is also at this point in the head that the kings of early Tibetan mythology were linked to heaven by a cord.

Hosts and guests

Sherry Ortner (1975, 1978) placed Nepali Sherpa secular and ritual hospitality on a continuum and emphasised their common features. She describes a hospitality that coerces numina and human guests alike. This coercive hospitality involves inviting gods to sit in their dough 'bodies' and human guests to sit in a line. These guests are enticed to accept food and drink.[11] Hosts, Ortner explained, want something from their guests; they might want help in the fields from human guests or spiritual protection from gods. Importantly, she shows, food and drink are necessarily polluting insofar as they incite activity: hopefully, the 'bad things' will depart, and the gods will satisfy your requests. As Gell (1996) put it in more general terms, house-based hospitality traps guests and gathers and directs their vital energy.

To approach a house is to elicit an invitation, now as in the 1980s. A host will try to usher a visitor into their compound and then inside. Once in the kitchen, visitors will be persuaded closer to the warmth and 'higher up' where they will be warmed by the tray of ashes that is emptied regularly from the stove. Leh houses often now have gas stoves, especially in urban areas, but the principle still stands – persuade a visitor inside, offer them drink and food, do not take no for an answer. Ladakhi hospitality involving people can be a tense affair, as I summarise before describing selected house rituals. Guests are concerned about pollution and hosts worry that they might unintentionally cause harm.

Kinzom (2015)

Yudrol in her new kitchen, built after the 2010 floods (2015)

Offers forced on a guest and eventually, reluctantly, accepted classically reconfigure a kitchen – the centre of a house and the place for informal ('human') hospitality – into a line with all but the closest neighbours or relatives. This line has a head and a tail that constitutes relative rank.[12] In normative terms, the top is at the right of the kitchen oriented towards the wall of shelves displaying copper, china, glass, pots and pans. It works its way clockwise around the kitchen towards the tail at the door. The top has thicker carpets and higher tables on which elders continue to deposit their own cups rather than accept their host's. To sit down, you walk behind everyone in the line, crouching to make yourself as low as you can with your back to the wall. People insist modestly on sitting below others but find themselves moved up the line as everyone shuffles to make space. Separate lines will often form for different categories based on gender, rank or religion but, to constitute any of them, you have to negotiate and recognise relative social positioning.

Seated, back to the wall, feet are tucked underneath or at least pointing away from other people. And then, offers of food and drink are refused repeatedly and vehemently, especially by women. As a long-stay visitor in the 1980s, my hosts tolerated the way I went out on my own or in questionable company, but I was expected to show modesty and restraint while visiting neighbours. I soon learned to eat and drink at the very last minute in these other houses, standing up like Ladakhi visitors to prevent a host from offering me more. Recently, I have seen guests stuff food just served into bags to carry away and share out in safer surroundings just as they did in the 1980s. Everyone is at the mercy of a host who will eventually force them to partake. This hospitality aims for conviviality, which sometimes dismantles all particularistic distinctions between houses, including those of guest and host. But it has further intended outcomes, as noted previously, and sometimes produces unintended results. Hosts are criticised for a bad performance when they allow people to sit in the wrong place or serve them in the wrong order. Guests feel compelled by an often-unspecified obligation ingested in food and drink that materially affects their bodies. They also fear they will be damaged directly if they ingest dirt, gossip, envy or – more seriously – poisoning, witchcraft, and possession with their food and drink.

Hospitality is an enduring topic of discussion. Were any guests damaged rather than simply excited? And, if so, was it the fault of guest or host? People as well as unhumans have a spiritual power that can be measured and adjusted, and hospitality provides a key diagnostic of low spiritual power. It is difficult, however, to attribute the fault. It could be hosts who enabled bad thoughts to travel with their offerings of food and drink; alternatively, guests may have had inadequate defences against the ordinary polluting effects of everyday life, including eating in another house. Secular hospitality is dangerous and pleasurable in equal measure, and both hosts and guests acknowledge that the results are uncertain. Ritual hospitality, in contrast, anticipates only intended consequences. When these do not materialise, reasons are sought retrospectively.

Sustaining a house

Most houses have one central pillar in the kitchen, sometimes capped by a capital or wooden bracket known as a 'pillar-bow' holding a 'pillar-arrow.' The pillar is also known as a 'life wood' or 'soul wood' (Tib: *srog shing*).[13] Seen on a vertical axis, it rests on – and symbolically pierces – the storeroom, stables and shrine to *lu* (*lubang*), connecting earth spirits to gods in a rooftop shrine. The ritual core of rural and some urban houses consists of a rooftop shrine above a central pillar planted on a *lubang*, and it is the pillar that brings gods and *lu* into fertile union. This pillar and a principal mother-beam also support the kitchen. The beam is crossed by smaller joists (crossbeams) known as sons or children (*bu*), suggesting that the house will carry on into the future. Horizontal and vertical axes intersect at the hearth in the heart of the house – that is, the kitchen – conjoining male and female along both axes.[14] The built form emphasises a reproductive complementarity figured through procreative relations – namely, the central marriage of the house in the middle level.

Individuals are made up in the same way, as shown by the ritual planting of arrows during the life course. At birth, marriage and death, the life of a person is firmly lodged in an arrow-and-pot that joins *lha* and *lu*, upper and lower worlds, vital force and food supply, soul and body and – at marriage – husband and wife. Moreover, house gods live in each of their people as well as their shrine while *lu* inhere in food that is stored inside and eaten, making everyone consubstantial.[15] The configuration of arrow-and-pot describes the anatomy or composition of house and members considered both together and separately.

In the 1980s, monk officiants purified their sponsors' houses every month.[16] Monks and other specialists also performed regular rites of the annual and life cycle and responded to unexpected events. *Yanguk*, for example, was performed after the harvest every year. At one *yanguk* in the 1980s, a boy around 8 years old was appointed representative since he was expected to stay at home and become head of house in due course.[17] Seated on a barley swastika[18] in ceremonial dress, he faced the monk with a ritual arrow at his side. This arrow had just been used in the monthly house purification and was dressed in a white scarf, resting on a sealed 'bag of fortune' next to a plate of auspicious materials. I learned that one of the great Tibetan kings had suffered ill fortune and asked Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhāva) what to do. He was told to perform *yanguk* with the stomach of a sheep as the bag of fortune and its kidneys for precious wealth.

The monk had prepared an altar with tiers of dough offerings, organised in serried rows. Offerings were made first to Buddhas, then to the high gods and then to all other beings. Gods were seated or invited into these dough bodies and fed. Some would then be persuaded to act in the world for the benefit of all, as with one offering at *yanguk* that was taken to the roof for religious protectors. Others were cleaned like the house god that was invited

to a small offering, which was also taken to the roof later to raise the god's spiritual power. Worldly beings such as house gods and people have a life force that waxes and wanes, as noted previously, and the higher your spiritual power, the less you are damaged by your surroundings. Still other offerings were thrown away or burnt like one that was placed to the side and then thrown out for 'demons' and 'to get rid of hindrances.'

Next came a list that the monk recited of lucky things, and two members of the house duly collected five kinds of grain, five precious minerals, sweets, coins, medicines, tea leaves, butter, salt and incense as directed. The plate was returned to its original position, further offerings were made and the boy was asked to prostrate himself and take the arrow in his right hand. A bowl of the first, best beer at his right side, the right foreleg of a sheep (for the 'masters of the place' or *sadag* associated with particular territories) to his left, he sat down again as the monk returned to his recital. Every so often, the monk nodded, and the boy responded with a shout, 'victory to the gods,' 'may fortune be collected!' (*yang guk*!). The boy then sprinkled beer and made another prostration. After the offering to demons was thrown, he was told to add the precious materials to the bag. The arrow was put back on top, the monk sealed the bag and, so I was told, added mantra and the eight auspicious signs as prescribed in the text before bag and arrow were returned to the offering room on the roof.[19]

Shortly before *yanguk*, excuses were made to all living beings damaged during the agricultural year. Afterwards, the crops were brought inside and *lu* went into hibernation. Secular New Year takes place close to mid-winter at the end of the tenth Buddhist month, and specific elements of what were in the 1980s an elaborate sequence of events show how the fruits of the year were stored indoors. After days of celebrations, children who had thrown out firebrands came back to their homes with blocks of ice. We heard a boy calling outside, *hepla hep*, a characteristic exclamation when you are carrying a heavy load. His father called from inside, 'What are you bringing?' and the boy replied, 'I have a golden stone.' From the house came a question, 'Where are you taking it?' and the boy replied, 'I am taking it to the storeroom.' The door opened and *Nonole* ('young man')[20] carried his block of ice into the storeroom which held a shrine to *lu*.

The golden stone episode was followed by a ritual salutation. Webb Keane has suggested that houses are discursive as well as material objects; in fact, he approaches words rather as others approach things. He considered the house that emerges in the naming of parts and a semiotic ideology of personification as a privileged value and singular unit (Keane 2003). Ladakhi Buddhist ritual speech acts also lay out a house structure, "decomposed and displayed part by part" (Keane 1995: 106) in words, gestures, activities and materials. *Memele* (grandfather) offered untouched 'stove food' and incense to gods from the top of the mountain behind the house to the city below, one by one, name by name. He forgot to dedicate offerings to the stove god but saluted and offered food to other parts of the kitchen: 'the turquoise capital'

or *kazhu* (the pillar's bow); 'the main beam of gold' (the mother-beam); and 'the sticks of pearl,' small twigs between the 'children' or crossbeams and 'the roof soil of *phemar*' (a sweet butter dough) which covers the twigs on the roof. As he made these offerings, *Memele* commanded them, 'Eat harmoniously together; this is your share for the year.' His eldest son then threw some untouched stove food backwards out of the kitchen door and through the chimney as he declared,

> Oh, large-eyed window, this is for those who listen at the window. This is your share for the year. Oh lock, please do not bring outside things inside nor take inside things out. This is your share for the year.

The rest of the food was shared among members of the house, including animals. Finally that night, a younger brother threw out dough offerings stuffed with 'bad things' and surrounded by pieces of dough (*changbu*) that we had clenched in our fist and passed over our bodies to clean ourselves. The pieces of dough were set on fire and stamped out by the younger brother as he cried out verses to finish bad things in all three worlds, running with a lit torch to throw them far away. Afterwards, we could not leave the house until the following morning. House, stove and pillar become "deictic" centres linking house members and house parts. To greet unhumans as it were face-to-face, you have to talk "across a gap" (Keane 1995: 111), coax numina to present themselves and accept hospitality, unsure if you have their attention, uncertain if they will accept your offerings. This 'spoken' house celebrates the desired results of hospitality. Hopefully, it will keep house members at home and dangerous others outside.

This house changed the shrine to its *phaslha* or 'house god' after welcoming the new moon with dough offerings of varied sorts, including figures of wild animals that were variously taken in and thrown away. On the third day of the 11th month, so I was told, a pure and senior man opened the pot in the base of the god's shrine, read the contents to divine next year's yield and renewed its store of grain and precious minerals.[21] Afterwards, the top of the shrine is changed. Fresh juniper branches tied with white scarves are interspersed with arrows. In the centre is a soul wood resting on the pot below. Finally, the base is whitewashed, and the corners painted red to frighten away *tsan*, the dangerous spirits without backs who live in the middle world with people. Some people said that arrows hold the god while others said that they raise its spiritual power. In some shrines, the soul wood is a spear.

There are shrines on many – but not all – rooftops to the god shared by a *phaspun*. This *phaslha* can refer, too, to other gods associated with parts of a house such as the stove and pillar. Gods associated with larger territories have similar shrines, which are also renewed annually to the same end – that is, to keep gods i*n situ* to nourish and police their territories. As noted, the integrity of a house depends not just on the work of those who live there but also the work of monks sponsored by the house and other people, including neighbours and the *phaspun*.

Shrine to local god (1982)

Lhato have a multitude of arrows, one of which sits above a pot in the interior, but *lubang* take the form of a pot or store alone, usually a square squat white structure in the traditional storeroom. Furer-Haimendorf (1964: 267) described similar Sherpa shrines in Nepal, "A *lu* pot contains various substances symbolising the eyes, hands, heart, liver, kidneys, lungs and intestines of the l*u*, as well as grains of maize, wheat, barley and rice, and pieces of gold, silver and beads." The storeroom is the domain of women who take on the appearance of *lu* when wearing their traditional, turquoise-studded headdress with a tail (*perak*). A house *lubang* is seldom seen by outsiders but

Shrine to *lu* (1982)

other shrines to *lu* litter the landscape around threshing floors or springs, sometimes capped with a spherical stone ball, as in the second photograph.

This summary of aspects of the house calendar shows how ritual hospitality embeds the products of a year's farming inside the house. I have described only a few late autumn and winter events and privileged the perspectives of house residents. I have suggested that a Ladakhi Buddhist house is personified as a planted arrow that collects and contains luck and fertility in a soul wood, pot, house, and body. Whether active agency is accorded to a god along an arrow which pierces a container of food or to the nurturing qualities

of *lu* that constitute an enchanted digestive system (Strathern 2017)[22] depends on positions within the performance and relations between events. Many variations on the theme of union between arrow and pot are staged at other times which draw on and inform domestic ritual. Perhaps the best-known exemplar is the wedding song attributed to Druguma the night before she married Kesar (or Gesar), the great culture hero. This song is widely distributed in print, sung and played over and again on air. It is never omitted from marriage celebrations in the bride's and groom's homes, one of the few occasions when women (as brides) wear a *perak* today. In short, an 'auspicious one' in the wedding party carries a wedding arrow (*dadar*, Tib: *mda' dar*), captures a bride, transports her to her new home and plants her there. Kaplanian (1981: 250) suggested that the clothed arrow embodies the bride and the bride herself comes to represent this arrow as knotted *katag* are added to her headdress like the scarf tied to the arrow. Tashi Rabgyas' (1970: 14) version reads

> Last night I saw a beautiful dream
> On the night of the auspicious day I saw a beautiful dream
> High up in the valley I saw a glacier form
> From above the glacier I saw a lion look down
> On the great lion I saw a turquoise mane spread
> Low down in the valley I saw a turquoise sea unwind
> Swimming in the turquoise sea I saw a fish
> On that fish I saw the waving of skillful fins
> On those skillful fins I saw a piece of ice appear
> Above the piece of ice I saw a clod of earth appear
> From that clod of earth I saw the mother field emerge
> On the mother field I saw all kinds of grain ripen
> With these kinds of grain I saw the granaries fill
> From the granaries I saw the measuring cup overflow
> Above the rim of the overflowing cup I saw the arrow stand
>
> Let no harm befall the notch in the arrow tail
> Let no harm befall the four flights
> Let no harm befall the three sections of the arrow shaft
> Let no impurities spoil the silk white scarf
> Let no rust form on the silver-white mirror
> Let no prosperity be lost from the sheep's knuckle joint
> Let no harm befall the three-sided arrow point
>
> It should not be given into the hands of strangers or youths
> It should be given into the hands of the good father's precious son.[23]

Glaciers melt and irrigate fields, which yield crops that are stored. Gods above in the form of lions, and *lu* below in the form of fish, join in an arrow that is planted in a pot of grain and a married couple. The golden stone at

New Year, it seems, will have melted to irrigate the land by springtime (see Corsín Jiménez and Nahum-Claudel 2019).

This wedding arrow has a point with which to hook the bride, unlike the shrine's soul wood or the main pillar of a house, and its shaft has three sections, which join the worlds and generations together. Precious objects are attached, as shown in the similar birth arrow depicted at the head of this chapter. Five-coloured cloths, a knuckle joint of a sheep or goat, a ring, a mirror and a scarf are sometimes said to 'clothe' the arrow, bringing together two families, as well as the groom and bride, who are joined through their reflections in a single image in the mirror. Many interpretations are offered and a more religious version, perhaps from the monk officiating at *yanguk*, would offer contrasting associations where the knuckle indicated fortune while the cloths were for *kandoma* (Tib: *mkha' 'gro ma*, 'sky-goers,' goddesses of five kinds), the 'wings' of the arrow for the three Buddha families and the point to finish evil. In religious accounts, which are often wrapped around domestic performances, arrows are associated with core Tibetan Buddhist notions of *'dul ba*: conquering, civilising, converting, cultivating and educating. Despite conventional associations between arrows and men, who generally hold them, the three sections of a shaft are also linked with women. These sections connect generations and worlds and hold life once they are planted in pots. The hospitable and educational mission of Tibetan Buddhism may imply capture or conquest and, as Rey Chow (2012: 11) emphasised, a home that captivates you. Men and women, junior and senior, become archetypal insiders at different points in a ritual sequence.

Ritual house-and-person today

In my interpretation, a Ladakhi Buddhist house is a kind of a person in the form of arrow-and-pot. Furthermore, this ritual architecture describes a shifting composition of its component, living parts. Some parts are human and some unhuman – that is, spirit or numina. Each is another whole person, as well as a part of the house. Roy Wagner (1991) likewise observed personhood in Melanesian groups that was neither singular nor plural. Seemingly external relations, he showed, were integral or internal to the person and these fractal qualities prevent differentiation.[24]

Ladakhi houses take on the qualities of corporation as well as person (Chapter 1, pp. 4–5, p. 9), as they do elsewhere, but they are no more inert today than in the past. Residents find it difficult to disavow demands of the house to bring in fertility and prosperity without any damaging pollution. Many Buddhist smallholdings still have three layers, joined by a central pillar, and defended against the outside world. The stove is still turquoise; a store, pot or vase keeps fortune safe; and it continues to host life in association with the pillar, arrow or soul wood. Men of the house and *phaspun* are still considered archetypal insiders, but contemporary houses in urban areas rarely have storerooms or *lubang*, and often no shrines at all. Houses

are less populous. Although some say that numina have not left, they agree that Lehpa have lost opportunities to meet them because they work outside the home and travel by car. There are fewer local monks and those who remain visit less often to purify the house and perform other domestic rituals. Taskhan, for example, no longer sponsors the summer ritual of *sadag dondol* (Tib: *sa bdag gdon 'grol*), which cleans water and *lu*, and promotes the growth of crops. In the 1980s, an 'old sect,' Nyingma monk[25] had a house in the village, but he left, and his lodgings have fallen into disrepair. Practitioners must be brought from their main monastery, two hours away by road, to conduct the relevant 'tantric' (exorcistic) rites, including *yanguk*, which are apparently less popular today. With many now working off the land, there are not enough people to coordinate the ritual house, which in consequence is gradually becoming disembedded from previous seasonal and diurnal rhythms, and concerns of the farming year.

The past changes in tandem with activity in the present (Chapter 1, p. 16) and, although the ritual architecture of arrow-and-pot persists, it is embedded more in the life than the farming cycle. Periodic calendrical rituals no longer constitute a Buddhist house so clearly as cosmos and the environment in which people organise their productive and reproductive lives. Previous ritual and material enactments have been dislodged in favour of religious recitals, which affect the character of a house. Ladakhis put great store today on understanding the words and their religious referents, and both monks and laypeople conduct more frequent and more comprehensible recitals than in the past.[26] Webb Keane has asked how the affordances of an actual or virtual house – even a mat on the ground – change in tandem with ritual speech itself. For self-consciously modern Christians in eastern Indonesia, he concludes (2003: 421),

> ritual speech persists, increasingly as a text understood as carrying traditional wisdom and ethnic identity. The materiality of its poetic form reproduces the structure of the house, but now as the object of reference, rather than as the sequence for a potential real-time unfolding of an encounter with invisible agents.

Representations of past houses and their internal relations elicit a sense of loss and nostalgia among some Ladakhis, as among Sumba Indonesians. As I describe in Chapter 3, this nostalgia equally affects relations of naming and numbering between houses. Today, neighbours do not always know which houses share a name, which differently named houses work together and which formally constitute a neighbourhood or settlement.

Notes

1 I use arrow-and-pot as a shorthand for arrow, arrow shaft, soul or life wood and spear on the one hand, and pot (*bumpa*), vase, bag and other kinds of store on the other.

2 This story about Rigzin Angmo's father and his reincarnation, however, constructs a sense of continuity that is very different from that expressed in incarnation histories of powerful manifestations or emanations of *tulku* (Tib: *sprul sku*), who generally hold high office.
3 *Spun* also means weft, woven together with the stronger, thicker warp or *gyu* (Tib: *rgyu*, apparently related to *gyud*, 'lineage,' thread and line).
4 Large formal occasions are hosted in a series of rooms or marquees. I once asked in Purig to the west of Ladakh why the houses were so large and heard 'we need the space for funerals and weddings. In Leh, they put up marquees outside.' One of Taskhan's neighbours had forty rooms, apparently for the same reason. Note that small or offshoot houses, described in Chapter 3, traditionally have no shrines, no stores and no monthly visits from monks, and they do not host guests formally.
5 Sometimes, passers-by would extract my name and ask if I were Muslim (with the name Sophie or Sophia) or what was my Buddhist name.
6 Most people without houses were demoted to the lowest ranks along with malicious – because homeless – spirits; some, however, were exalted as ascetics and powerful outsiders. See Day (1989: 324–330) on the many characters who lived alongside people in this settlement.
7 In monasteries, bundles of brushwood branches or twigs will be stacked together, reinforced with clay and painted to make a decorative parapet that juts out from the roof.
8 East is higher and west lower if rotated to a horizontal axis.
9 Kaplanian (1981, 2015) provides an illustrated overview of construction techniques and the organisation of domestic space in Upper Ladakh during the late 1970s. He also explores symbolic resonances which amplify the brief descriptions in this chapter and the next. Other accounts from approximately the same period include Brauen (1980), Dollfus (1987, 1989); Maréchaux (1981), Murdoch (1981), Pommaret-Imaeda (1980) and Phylactou (1989). Extensive material on architectural construction and conservation is available online and in publications from International Association for Ladakh Studies meetings; see, for example, André and Catanese (2014), Ferrari (2018), Harrison (2005, 2014, 2016), Herrle and Wozniak (2017) and Sheikh (2005).
10 In contrast to other Tibetan speaking areas, Ladakhis usually described *tsan* (Tib: *btsan*) by reference to movement – they have their own roads, which they travel on horseback – and their shocking lack of a back. Beautiful women from the front, their insides are in full view when seen from behind, and cause illness or death (Day 1989: 324).
11 Although practices for inviting, seating and feeding guests share common features, Buddhist rituals are characterised by highly specialised forms, sequences and aims (Bentor 1996; Beyer 1973; and, on the Gelukpa monastery of Lingshed in Ladakh, Mills 2003).
12 Kaplanian (2015) notes how you sweep the kitchen from 'head' to 'tail.'
13 Ladakhis usually said soul-wood in English; *srog* means both life and soul.
14 Harrison and Ramble (1998: 25) described a similar house template in Nepal.
15 *Lu* are especially vulnerable to pollution. Every day, house members offer juniper incense to house gods and pure 'white and sweet' offerings to *lu*. Sometimes these latter offerings are said to be for all 'who live off smells,' including the recently dead.
16 A monthly purification by the monk complemented daily house offerings in the 1980s. At the time, Goldstein and Tsarong were collecting diaries from three monks in a nearby monastery. In aggregate, more than half their year was spent performing rituals in sponsors' houses or villages (1985: 23–25).

17 I was told,

> Usually, it is the father or the eldest son [who takes this role] because the person who does *yanguk* isn't allowed to leave the house. If he leaves . . . if he marries somewhere else, our prosperity will run away. We would lose all our luck and good fortune.
>
> (Day 1989: 151)

18 This (clockwise) swastika is a symbol of auspiciousness and good fortune in many Buddhist rituals.
19 See Day (1989) for a description of this and other house rites.
20 The suffix -le is a mark of politeness. I capitalize kinship terms when they are used like names in reference or address. Single quotation marks represent approximate rather than precise quotations, which are indicated with double quotation marks. An ellipsis . . . represents omissions, while square brackets enclose explanations I have added.
21 Women are rarely included at these events.
22 This rendering of lives by a house's 'enchanted' digestive system also evokes comparison with Sharp's use of the term (Chapter 1, p. 7).
23 See Phylactou (1989: 241), Brauen (1980: 46) and, for a Leh version of the Kesar saga, Tsering Namgyal Mir (2017). The arrow song is also important on other occasions such as planting a village god into a novice oracle (Day 1989: 283–284).
24 Any rock or tree, as well as the cosmos at large, can be personified. As Wagner (1991: 171) argued, fractal qualities are widely but, he says, unhelpfully represented as a shift of scale. He argues instead that persons reproduce only versions of themselves through ('holographic') self-scaling.
25 See note 27, p. 23. The Nyingma (rnying ma) or "old order" are associated with first diffusion of Buddhism in the 8th century, and with Padmasambhāva. Geluk, to which the Dalai Lama is affiliated, are associated with teachings of the 14th century Tsongkhapa and sometimes known as 'yellow hats' in contrast to the other three 'red hat' orders. Kagyud, the 'oral' lineage or the lineage of the Buddha's word, are often associated with the 11th-century teachings of Marpa. Ladakh includes the wealthy and influential Drukpa ('brug pa) Kagyud branch associated with the previous monarchy, and the Drikung ('bri khung), both founded in the 12th century. The Sakyapa are named after the 11th century monastery of Sakya.
26 These include various *chos sil*, 'reading religion,' such as *tsantun* when 'you read texts about Guru Rinpoche all night – his teachings, life histories'; the periodic sponsorship of monks to read all the sacred texts over several days; and the customary '10th day' (*chishu*, Tib: *tshes bcu*) recitals in neighbourhood groups.

3 "If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change"

Lehpa have adjusted relations between their houses, as well as modifying internal arrangements. There are more buildings and new domestic houses tend to be smaller than in the past with less land and fewer animals. Villagers, however, frequently say that nothing has changed. Their houses carry the same names, occupy the same plots of land and co-operate with neighbours as they always have. I explore relations between houses through the naming and numbering practices that signify village membership. Changes to these practices were introduced in Taskhan's settlement during the 2000s but no longer attract any attention.

During visits between 2005 and 2010, I realised that villagers had collectively agreed to recognise a wider range of houses as full village members. This agreement was motivated by the hope of carrying on in the same way as previously, but it also meant that the settlement came to be known by a different house count. After this innovation settled, villagers spoke of house and village as though nothing at all had changed. Evaluating claims that everything is changing yet also staying the same, I argue that these claims are not simply reflections *about* the house but also belong to its very structure, refracted across the decades by one generation after another to become part of the neighbourhood's fabric. I describe how we found ourselves preoccupied by much the same questions of neighbourly housekeeping in the 2000s as in the 1980s, and I suggest that the new is accommodated to the old in a way that reduces its novelty but simultaneously provokes concern about the impending fragmentation of houses and neighbourhoods.

Taskhan, 1982

I knew Taskhan (Tib: *'thag mkhan*) well in the 1980s and visited three times between 2005 and 2010. This house was introduced in Chapter 2 and its name means 'weaver,' suggesting a middling position among the middling people who make up the vast majority of Ladakhis. It indicates a proper name and a house that is counted. To be named and counted into a community is a matter of significance since these are infrastructural properties comparable to house foundations of stone in specific plots of land. Vignettes

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from subsequent visits in 2005 and 2010 reflect the episodic nature of my fieldwork, as well as the difficulties of house life for men and women of different generations.

Taskhan's settlement was sometimes called a village (*yul*, village, region, country) and sometimes a neighbourhood of the city (*chutso*, Tib: *bcu tshogs*, section or 'group of ten'). It practiced a familiar form of collective management in which each named house had rights and duties. Formal rotas then and now distribute work and privileges among named and counted constituents who also co-operate more informally. House members were and are known by their house name, which functions like an English surname. This name is variously combined with village and personal names according to the situation, as in other Tibetan-speaking communities. Jahoda (2017), for example, reported similar practices from Spiti in written records from the second half of the 20th century. Buddhist Ladakhis have two personal names bestowed on them at birth by lama.[1]

The settlement had a count of twenty-eight recognised members, each an estate (*tronpa*) of the kind introduced in Chapter 1. It provided summerhouses and pasturage for the city in the past but became self-governing within the pan-Indian *panchayat* system of local government. Settlements, like houses, are named, territorial units,[2] and residents also know them by this enumeration or count of member houses. The total number of village members provides a standard shorthand that Ladakhis use to describe their own settlements; outsiders will not necessarily know the local count. Many neighbourhoods also remain subject to intersecting and overlapping claims from landlords and neighbouring settlements and, in some areas, mobile pastoral groups. Local monasteries and a high-status family from Leh still owned land in the settlement but less than in the past and little by comparison with other neighbourhoods.[3]

In principle, the unity of a Buddhist house was preserved by restricting marriage to one per generation at home, which enabled the house to be passed intact from one generation to the next with the same holdings of land, livestock, village membership, numina and name. In theory, siblings who stayed at home remained single while those who left married into other reproductive houses or joined 'religious houses,' usually monasteries.[4] Those who left made virtually no property claims. Three generations lived in Taskhan in the 1980s, a single member of both senior ('grandparent') and junior ('grandchild') generations and a middle generation of brothers and sisters, several of whom lived elsewhere for long stretches of time. There were no resident spouses. Wives, as well as in-marrying husbands, sometimes returned to their natal homes after a while or moved elsewhere. Since polyandry was proscribed in the 1940s, it was unclear whether women who had previously married into Taskhan were joining one or more of the brothers (Goldstein 1971a).

Taskhan estate had a single house in the 1980s which is described as the 'big' or main house (*khangchen*), although the grandfather described an

additional offshoot or 'small house' (*khangun*, Tib: *khang chung*) in previous years. In 1982, the settlement had seventeen such offshoots between its twenty-eight members and one estate boasted as many as five small houses in addition to its main house (see Table 3.1). *Khangun* were formed to house retired members of the grandparental generation, unmarried sisters or daughters and, occasionally, junior men. In theory, all offshoots would revert to their parent estates on the death of residents. They might be revived the following generation if siblings chose to stay at home unmarried, but they were not supposed to reproduce directly. In practice, only half the small houses were what you might call traditional *khangun* in 1982; the others housed or anticipated housing children. Moreover, two *khangun* had formally divided from their estate by appeal to laws from the 1940s mandating equal inheritance. A third seemed to have divided but later reintegrated by removing one of the two front doors in use for a while.

Although offshoots continued to share their house name, god and *phaspun*, the majority were unlikely to return to their parental estates. These estates were not large landowners, as the English might connote, but smallholdings of around 2 ha (hectares) that did not meet family needs in the past or today.[5] Previously, farming was combined with employment, herding, small-scale trading, monastic life and other forms of service. In the wage economy of the 1980s, people did not need much cultivable land and they did not depend so heavily on access to collective property and resources for farming. Many of the new houses were built in marginal areas and many of their residents worked in Leh, half an hour's walk downhill and an hour in the other direction. The village, once linked to Leh through the provision of summer pasture, had become a city suburb. In the 1980s, we wondered how the village and its constituent houses would survive these unprecedented economic changes that had far-reaching implications for land and labour.

Taskhan, 2005

In 2005, my first visit in nearly twenty years, I found the village hall restored and the assembly room enlarged. The monk's house was in ruins, but new buildings – co-operatives, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), hotels, schools and government offices, as well as domestic houses – had expanded the settlement. Taskhan leans into the hill towards the bottom of a dense cluster of houses belonging to Buddhists. Because it sits on a slope, the house has shallow foundations. Part of the lower floor is made of stone and the rest of mud brick. Largely rebuilt in the late 1970s when the kitchen collapsed, it has been modified substantially since. In the 2000s, it acquired a complete third storey, as well as a contemporary extension in the garden made of cement and concrete, decorated with wood. This extension was called the 'winter kitchen' because it was warm and provided a well-lit spot with a gas stove and electricity for family life during the cold season. With its superb panoramic views of the valley, it was also expected to yield income from summer rentals to tourists.

Villagers had become accustomed to fewer animals and fields since at least one person in every house worked for a wage or salary and the building boom meant there was no longer enough land for subsistence farming. Barley, the staple crop, was grown on only one side of the road because the other side was used for grazing. Despite the loss of cultivable land, the valley was greener. Vegetables substituted for most cereal crops because of the ready market through co-operatives, direct to the army and in Leh bazaar. Gardens, poly tunnels and extensive tree planting facilitated by government subsidies have changed the landscape and, I often heard, 'if all the soldiers came back to these villages, every field would be green.' Most people still ploughed with *dzo*, a yak-cow cross breed, but threshed and milled by machine. Most houses still partnered with another for some tasks, such as ploughing and a monthly religious recital. Each half of the village – that is, fourteen of the twenty-eight houses – collaborated to fertilise their fields. Village members also donated labour or goods to the collective when requested.

I was told again and again that houses were just the same as in the 1980s and no one ever bought or sold land, nor was there any possibility of clearing new land and eventually claiming ownership so close to Leh. Yes, I was told, the fields – all named – were just the same except for a few. Floods had taken the meadow pasture, destroying Taskhan's mill as well as the field on which the first, ceremonial village ploughing used to take place. But I learned that most of the damage had been repaired and houses carried the same names and belonged to the same neighbourhood counts as they had in the 1980s. Still, they remained undivided each generation. Still, they articulated social relations of affinity and kinship. Nevertheless, as the following vignettes indicate, it was a struggle to keep Taskhan going.

Memele (grandfather) had died in the late 1980s. Taskhan held only four of the original sibling set in the parental generation, now distributed across two houses. Anchuk, one of the younger brothers, had married in the late 1980s and gradually built a new house on the old threshing floor where he lived with his wife and children. His house was thus an offshoot of Taskhan. Anchuk was in his 50s in 2005 and hoping to finish the imposing offering room he had begun nearly twenty years previously. I asked him about the veritable building boom and green landscape. Anchuk thought long and hard and then told me in English, 'Everything is the same, and yet it is very difficult now.' Later he confirmed, 'No, nothing has changed.' And he added, 'It is such hard work.' Despite my protestations, Anchuk insisted, 'No one has sold land, no one has bought land. Nothing has changed; it is all the same.' 'But,' he agreed, in Ladakhi, 'we do have a problem. Nowadays there are seventy *houses* or so. With only the twenty-eight *estates*, there aren't enough people to do all the work.'

Translation is difficult because there is more than one way of figuring houses, which I have distinguished in a preliminary fashion by using the English *house* and *estate*. Anchuk in fact used *tronpa* and *khangchen* interchangeably to refer

to an estate, which is also sometimes also known as 'field and house' or *zhing-khang*. The 'big house' is the principal but not necessarily the only house in an estate. Furthermore, a house can be described generically by the term *khangpa*, a term that Anchuk also used to refer to any kind of house. I was familiar with previous arrangements since Anchuk and I had discussed them many times and Anchuk took it for granted that I would recognise the relevant referent. The number of estates, he was telling me, had remained constant – each with a single big house – but the number of additional houses had grown.

In English, estate has an archaic ring that evokes a sense of something that has passed, which is part of this story. Anchuk described the village as a set of twenty-eight estates with twenty-eight big houses in order to emphasise who worked for and managed the collective. He referred to collective village management by the twenty-eight who decide whether to admit or refuse new members and when to mobilise for common agricultural, ritual and other work. Every year, two men/estates managed the rota for irrigation, two kept animals off the fields, four managed other village affairs, and a further two were responsible for development work as panchayat members. Every month, two estates also hosted *chishu* or '10th day' occasions for reading religious texts and, in the past, drinking beer together. Each of the twenty-eight also sponsors a monastery; twenty-six are closely connected to a local monastery and two sponsor different orders farther away. In the past, they contributed to dues levied by different landlords on the village as well as its constituent houses. Both the pre-Independence tax burden and contemporary village dues, which are comparatively light, involve 'compulsory labour' (*thral* or *res*). Allocations apply to the estate, which was known as *thralpa* or taxpayer in some Tibetan-speaking areas.[6] 'And,' said Anchuk, 'there aren't so many men at home all day; they are in government, in the army, in the town, outside Ladakh.' So it was that Anchuk explained the challenge, juxtaposing a figure of twenty-eight estates who apparently did all the work, against a total of seventy-odd houses.

Most of the additional houses functioned independently, even though their names suggested that they remained within their 'parent' estates. Some still depended on their main house for access to irrigation, family help or ritual protection and happily took turns (*res*) in collective work. The majority, however, relied on wages and salaries and felt little obligation to turn up at village meetings or join rituals and field work. Anchuk was *lorapa* at the time, a village role which gave him responsibility with another man to tether stray animals in the village and fine their owners. Since animals were seldom taken to pasture, there was a lot of work every morning and evening. Anchuk felt that all twenty-eight senior men, one from each estate, struggled to carry out their necessary and formally allocated village roles.[7] He asked, 'What do we do now?' Educated younger brothers (himself excepted) and grandsons in offshoot houses were enjoying membership in the settlement with no responsibilities. Nothing had changed, and yet everything had.

Anchuk's elder sister was in her 70s in Taskhan main house. She had never married and was known as *Anele*, father's sister, a term that is often used to address nuns. She lived at home with two brothers who contributed to collective finances through their wages and took the cows to pasture.[8] Nevertheless, *Anele* complained, 'Everyone has left and so there's just work and no help.' 'I am alone (*chikpo*),' she said, implying that there were no other women to help her. She referred to our conversations in the 1980s when this term was applied to my own situation and suggested a sense of loneliness and anxiety. These three residents of Taskhan's main house were elder siblings who had supported their younger brothers and sisters through the long education that enabled them to get salaried employment and to marry. They had worked hard since the 1980s, only to find themselves in their 70s with no one to help and no one to look after them. In *Anele*'s eyes, so it seemed to me, the house was bereft of life and more like a traditional offshoot than a big house.

Although all of those who share a house name belong together and make up one village unit, people in small houses had to work *for* the main house when asked. Younger offshoot residents often cared for elders living with them, as well as working directly for the main house. They also met village and other labour dues; for example, they were dispatched as estate representatives during exchanges between two houses at ploughing or across half the village when manuring the fields. Anyone from the house could go – but it was often an unmarried sister from the small house who went, sometimes as substitute for an animal or set of tools that would have served, as well. Small houses received water for irrigation from – and after – their main house,[9] which also gave them access to land and the means of production. Support from the main house, including protection from its gods, could require a return of all you had – that is, your labour – and the abject figure of lay 'nuns' – unmarried sisters or aunts who lived at home – stands for the iniquities of this division of labour in some accounts. However, people also embraced *khangun* life because it gave them their own hearth and therefore a measure of independence, even if it also entailed elements of domestic servitude.

Anele, though, was complaining about her life of service in the main house not the small house. Her house had emptied and flattened; life for the three siblings was boring, lonely and hard. Other elders – particularly women – made similar complaints when they were left to work at home on their own, and *Anele* seemed to feel that younger brothers and sisters in *khangun* belonged to their estates only in name. While Anchuk worried about contributions to the village, it was the integrity of estates that preoccupied *Anele*. In her view, members of the house who lived separately no longer contributed labour, although she agreed reluctantly that they sometimes offered cash contributions towards the labour required to cultivate vegetables and the odd field of barley. Farming in peak season was only viable now thanks to seasonal migrants who came from other parts of India or Nepal. *Anele* felt that it was the main house that now held overburdened workers and she

wondered if it was on the verge of extinction as it was abandoned by each younger sibling in turn.

There was at least one person from the next generation who might help. Tashi, *Anele*'s nephew, belonged to a cohort who were educated elsewhere in India and returned to Leh in the early 2000s to find that there were no jobs. Unlike previous cohorts who had been educated 'abroad' in smaller numbers and then employed largely in public service, these young people returned to unemployment in Leh. They wondered if they were doomed to become a lost generation and perhaps also a generation in exile. Tashi's part-time work in 2005 was precarious, but he insisted that now he was in his 30s he would soon marry, 'Everyone keeps saying so. But it is difficult to marry without a job and it will be impossible to stay in Ladakh unless I get one.'

Young educated Ladakhis like Tashi commonly observed that they did not know how to fit in, and they wondered whether to stay away. In 2005, I visited a woman of Tashi's generation in Delhi who told me, 'Usually, the house goes to the one who stays so probably I will only get a field. I won't go back there to live, I never really lived there.' Her generation would enjoy none of the security of government jobs and they did not want to marry Ladakhis either, she added, before concluding, 'I won't go back; it's too small, boring and hypocritical. You know, even in Delhi, we tease each other, "we'll report you to the LBA [Ladakh Buddhist Association]."' Soon after, I learned, she returned to marry in Leh, where she now lives with her young child,[10] and Tashi, too, was able to stay in Leh because he found a better job.

Taskhan, 2010

By 2010, the ennui of waiting for *Anele* and Tashi had lifted. Tashi had a good job and a wife living in Taskhan main house. He expostulated, 'How could I have moved out and left *Anele* alone?' 'Anyway,' he said, 'it's expensive to build a house.' *Anele* no longer complained about being alone because Tashi's wife worked with her in the mornings and evenings on either side of her day job. As Tashi acknowledged diplomatically, 'Yes, it is very difficult to join another house; that's why I work with her [his wife] all the time.' Daughter-in-law, still something of a stranger, Tashi's wife returned to her natal home periodically and I appreciated that the marriage was not yet established. Even so, I could see how *Anele* enjoyed help and how she longed for children in Taskhan.

What I found difficult to understand was why nobody complained any longer about the formal distribution of village work. It was Tashi who explained the obvious, 'Whoever does the work, they are the owner. Before, the *khangchen* made all the donations. They worked at the monasteries. They provided labour dues. They did all the village jobs. That's why the land stayed with them.' Tashi was referring to the specific, highly elaborated, valued and visible forms of male labour that Anchuk had emphasised.

No longer, Tashi emphasised, was the village a group of twenty-eight interconnected estates. He explained,

> Now that the *khangun* have agreed to take part, we are all the same. Maybe there are four or five old-style *khangun* with a retired couple that won't last [that is, they would ultimately revert to the estate], but the rest of us are the same.

We checked more carefully and found that there were, in fact, eight small houses hosting elderly relatives in the way of old-style *khangun*. Tashi continued with one of the many stories about land redistribution. The relevant grants had occurred before 2005 but only turned out to have resolved problems for the village in retrospect. I paraphrase the key point,

> For a long while the people of Leh felt that everything was going to incomers. The pastureland on the backside of Tsemo [the monastery above Leh palace] was not being used and it was this land that was distributed to the people of Leh. The government[11] had to do something. So they took the pasture behind the castle at the top of Leh and gave it to all Leh people. This was for the whole of Leh because the land belonged to Leh people. Everyone in Leh got a plot but it was allocated only to 'full houses.'[12] For us here, we were able then to insist. We *khangchen* told the *khangun* that they couldn't possibly be included in the land redistribution without also joining the village work: 'If you want the land, you have to do some work and become members of the village.' This is when the *khangun* and *khangchen* both really became *khangpa* (simply 'houses'). That's how the *khangchen* got the *khangun* to take on village responsibilities.

Building activity and speculation in land around Leh has been fuelled by government grants since the later 1990s, leading to a growth of domestic houses alongside state and commercial buildings. The Hill Council acknowledges that common land cannot be alienated from settlements except by compulsory purchase, typically for irrigation or other community, government and military projects. However, patterns of land use have changed since there are no sheep and goat in the villages around Leh, and few donkeys, cattle or *dzo*, and so the Hill Council was able to reallocate common land to individual houses that belong to and are counted into their settlements. From Leh to Kharu, 150 km to the north, common land has been divided among village members who previously managed it collectively. Government policies thus confirm the territorial integrity of settlements while recognising economic transformations and perhaps reinforcing the desirability of smaller, nuclear units (Winchill 2017) – that is, 'simple' as much as 'generic' houses known as *khangpa*.[13]

Village counts appear to constitute an argument for equivalence among those named or numbered. Tashi and Anchuk, men from two generations

of Taskhan, both spoke as though named houses were equal in the count of twenty-eight. They implied that affairs of the settlement construct and reaffirm a formal equivalence between named estates through their heads in the main house, almost always senior men. Ordinal rank was and still is relatively insignificant in Taskhan's settlement by comparison with others. Most people jostled in the middle of a loose rank order, appealing to different criteria such as: Was your house higher up or lower down the hill, earlier or later to get water for irrigation? Did you sit above or below in the infamous head-to-door seating lines that are negotiated at every gathering (Chapter 2)? In the early 1980s, two lower status units were counted separately and formal house relations were associated primarily with twenty-six of the twenty-eight members. The two outliers were named in relation to their obligations to supply music and smith work, but both had subsequently refused to continue this service work and the settlement had to hire help from Leh instead. Everyone agreed that these two houses were equal members of the village but they considered that their names still denoted low-status as well as house and village membership. Previously, a further house that stood higher than all the others at the top of the hill was acknowledged to occupy the highest rank. It was also the wealthiest. Taskhan told me that they too were now just the same as everyone else but, when they described its role in collective work, this sense of equivalence was undermined,

> In the spring when we took manure to the fields in co-operative groups, [this house] lent two donkeys to the lower village section and two to the upper section every day.[14] They could requisition all eighty or ninety donkeys in the village for their own work whenever they wanted. [So], in each half of the village, the lottery that determined the order of work left out their name. Nowadays, they still lend their donkeys but half by half to each village section in turn, and so they can only demand forty donkeys at a time to do their own work. Also they have to give a week's warning to make sure that the beer and food can be prepared for the work parties.

No one else could match such a contribution and, in consequence, reap preferential terms for work on their own estate.

There was an 'extra' house in the 1980s. It was never described as an estate but always as the *khache* or Muslim *khangpa* (house). It was not counted with the rest but added on as a further extra in the form of 'twenty-six plus two plus one.' *Memele* said it had always been there, seemingly referring to the 1940s. The family of this Shia or Balti[15] doctor still farmed their land, but episodes of communal violence at the end of the 1980s led them to move to Leh city. Anchuk emphasised that theirs was a very proper house and he hoped that one of the children would return, implying that they would enjoy full and equal membership alongside all the other houses (*khangpa*) recognised after the land redistribution.

Staking claims to plots granted by the Hill Council or bought from others (2011)

Some villagers have kept their new plots as investments or for future family, while others have sold to outsiders at prices that are the subject of everyday conversation. How far is the plot from the road? When will the connecting path become passable by car? How do you get water and electricity, and above all, how can you 'regularise' your purchase – that is, obtain recognition as legal owner? These questions replace probes into relative rank with a view to marriage when you might have asked, 'Is your house close to the castle? Are your fields close to the irrigation pond?' The desert has bloomed, not just with plantations of willow and poplar, but also in stone squares, grids, low standing walls, and heaps of stones that mark out plots where one-storey buildings will appear one day.

Neighbourhoods: main, offshoot and simple houses

Commentaries from the two Taskhan men, Tashi and Anchuk, emphasised formal relations between houses as they explained how resident citizens of the village were able to redraw their house boundaries in relation to the settlement as a whole. Anchuk, however, did not speak as a member of the offshoot he was considered to occupy, at least until its reclassification as a 'simple house.' Although I never heard his home described specifically as Taskhan's offshoot, it was named in the way of *khangun* by attaching the personal name, Anchuk, to the house name, '*Anchuki Taskhan*,' and belonged to Taskhan's *phaspun* under the protection of the main house god. Anchuk did not identify with the picture that he himself had painted of offshoots abandoning their parent houses and taking all they needed. Indeed, all three

Taskhan members implied that offshoots had become parasitic on their main houses and the village in general, for Tashi and *Anele* also claimed that traditional house roles had been inverted. Few and disproportionately older people were left in their main houses struggling to do all the farming and village work, often alongside paid jobs. Amid growing employment and the decline of farming, younger siblings had been able to attract salaries and extend their estates with new buildings. These *khangun* were nothing like the hovels dismissed by Pallis (Chapter 2, pp. 28–29) and also Ramsay (1890: 63),[16] and no longer provided surplus labour to their main house.

The table shows that the overall village population grew by more than a third from 1982–2010. Few villagers had left and there was significant marriage into the settlement, no doubt because it was so close to Leh.[17]

The settlement's houses-and-people from 1982–2010

Population increases by 38% (c. 290–400 residents)	
1982	
55 dwellings	Distributed among: 28 estates with *khangchen* (main house) 26 *khangun* (offshoots) attached to 17 of the estates 1 *khangpa* (house)
2010	
79 dwellings	All are simple houses (*khangpa*) 8 are similar to old-style *khangun*, offshoots

Anchuk would have enjoyed a status commensurate with his contributions to the village if he had stayed in his main house, but it was never clear how far he could represent the estate from his offshoot. It is possible that the recognition of all houses as citizens may have given Anchuk his rightful place among equals in place of an anomalous position in the small house he had built. Anchuk, however, was more preoccupied with the integrity of the settlement than its estates. In his view, neither big nor small houses could exist independently of the village, and he worried that urban life would soon absorb all the village's registered 'customs' and 'laws' (see further Chapter 6).[18] The solution presented by asserting an equivalence between old-style *khangchen* and *khangun* enabled a necessary recalibration in Anchuk's opinion that preserved the territorial and functional integrity of the settlement. He explained that the recent agreement had kept houses together as a set, preserving the settlement through controlling access to new land and the admission of new members. Anchuk stressed once more that no one had sold any land to incomers and explained that he might build for his children on his small market garden, once the house threshing floor, rather than on his new plots behind Leh's Tsemo monastery in order to help keep this set

of houses together in one 'plot.' Most of all, he expressed relief that villagers would share the work more equitably. Neither Anchuk nor anyone else expressed concern about their house names, which were beginning to cause some confusion (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 6).

All three problems that I have described – voiced by Anchuk, *Anele* and Tashi from their individual positions in the estate – receded from view after 2010, all apparently of little interest. Still I heard, 'everything is the same' and 'nothing has changed.' But each of my interlocutors also described cumulative change spanning nigh on a century with the addition of Grandfather's (*Memele*'s) memories. Anchuk's and *Anele*'s father used to tell me in the 1980s that everything was the same, claiming that even the *khache* house had always been there. After asking again and again, *Memele* in fact calculated a total of around thirty houses between the 1930s and 1950s, which he said included both main and offshoot dwellings.

Memele's memory was uncertain, and I have been unable to check names and counts against official records since the suburb is counted officially with another a little further up the valley. I can only speculate that poverty and debt may have prevented houses from expanding in the way they did subsequently, initially within their estates and more recently as independent members of the village. A.N. Sapru observed in 1941 that the burden of debt among householders was impossible to clear because interest was typically charged at a rate of 25% (Sapru 1941: 13, cited in Beek 2000c). Prince Peter suggested that poverty in the 1930s had probably led to a decline in *khangun* – small house – formation since parents could not afford to move out in old age (Prince Peter 1963: 355).[19]

Memele told me how one of his peers worked as a servant and another as a miller, initially grinding flour by hand in a desperate effort to meet the interest on loans. Others sold grain and mortgaged land; a peer of *Memele*'s remembered raising 6 rupees in exchange for a three-year lease on a field – a field that he was never able to reclaim. *Memele* insisted that his settlement was far less indebted than others but almost everyone, he said, owed moneylenders, landlords and especially traders up the valley before Independence: 'We had to give free labour those six months, borrowing grain at 25% interest in the spring for repaying in the autumn.' 'Now,' *Memele* said, 'very few people are in debt or, if they are, it's just for a short period.' He agreed that the number of houses had increased greatly and, in conversation with Anchuk, concurred that nowadays, 'You give land to whoever asks for it in the family.' Daughters rarely asked, but sons did. In other words, longstanding legal developments from the 1940s had come to engage household practices in a way that led sisters to marry out while brothers divided the property among themselves.

House values

This narrative about Taskhan and its neighbours shows that the new was accommodated retrospectively to the old in a way that reduced its novelty.

Shifting patterns of marriage, residence and inheritance have been widely reported, including publications on six families in Leh from the 1930s to the 2000s (Prince Peter 1963; Crook and Shakya 1994; Kaplanian 2017). Kaplanian, for example, suggested that polyandry and what he calls rights of primogeniture have disappeared; he also discerns new practices of sharing land between brothers and evolution towards an undifferentiated inheritance system. During my doctoral research, I worked closely with colleagues, among them Maria Phylactou (1989), who asked about the position of younger brothers enjoined to leave with nothing if they did not stay at home unmarried, and Nicola Grist (1993), who emphasised commonalities among Muslim and Buddhist houses. With Ladakhi colleagues, we asked whether younger siblings were establishing independent houses and marrying in the 1980s, and whether the apparent contrasts that pitted Buddhist non-division against Muslim practices of partition had any empirical foundation. During the 2000s, very similar questions were asked about housekeeping among neighbours. I wonder if the questions we asked in the 1980s and 2000s were also asked in *Memele*'s day and whether we have an answer now. Will Anchuk's or Tashi's children repeat these questions in a few years' time? Had I visited this settlement first in 2011 rather than 1981, would I have ever learned about a village of twenty-eight estates whose names accommodated additional dwellings uneasily for a while alongside the extra house that did not quite fit?

The boundaries to a house or settlement can be drawn in numerous ways which are not easy to align, and Simmel's discussion (1997: 174) suggests that borders control the designation of 'full,' 'half' and 'partial' members. They shape what they border: who will stay and who is likely to leave, who interacts formally with people from other houses and who meets less formally with neighbours (Simmel 1971). Taskhan is 'less than one,' ever incomplete and authorised by other 'houses' – that is, neighbours, neighbourhoods, regions and nation-states. But it is also 'more than one' with reference to its two dwellings and several residents. In the past, it was the main house that was supposed to stay the same while small houses accommodated vagaries of circumstance as they formed and dissolved. In the 1980s, involution occurred inside the estate, and in 1982, one village member consisted of six dwellings sharing a single name and role in village exchanges.[20] Continuity and change were sutured together through the name and the count, privileging idioms of continuity materialised in the big house.

Practices have changed and now involution is occurring inside the village. The twenty-eight estates moved as a set in response to the Hill Council's grant of land to insist that each dwelling take an active role and assume a civic status. All are now simple houses (*khangpa*). It is likely that questions will soon be asked about the shape, scope and resilience of the settlement rather than its component units as the neighbourhood expands behind the town, but for the time being, the village has provided a resting point for its newly individuated houses. As a named house-writ-large, the village embodies the valued

continuity that main houses used to display. Its recently recognised members may come and go like previous offshoots, but they may also multiply until they reach the limit of the new village boundaries. No doubt, residents will find themselves adjusting membership in house and village yet again.

The novelty of this constitutional change elicited concern for two or three years but, by 2017, Tashi's wife was settled in Taskhan with three children. Tashi was in his forties, Anchuk in his 60s and *Anele* in her 80s, struggling with arthritis. The house was full of life and its line seemed secure while the wider settlement had grown to include over eighty houses. One family from Lower Ladakh had managed to purchase land although they were not yet formal members of the village. I was assured that it would be easy for them to join by bringing ceremonial scarves and rum and agreeing to contribute to village work. Maybe, I was told, this 'new house' (*khangser*) will be known as Lharje (doctor) after their parent estate in a different district.

Buddhist Ladakhis have shallow genealogies and Taskhan people could name none beyond *Memele's* parents – that is, their great-grandparents and the houses from which they came. Similarly, settlements rapidly forget which houses have gone and which have joined. The rituals I described in Chapter 2 are mirrored in those performed for the settlement as a whole to care for all its human and unhuman people – animals as well as numina – and land. I described the ritual architecture of a house that also denotes the anatomy of an individual person; it is now apparent that houses also 'scale up' or, as Roy Wagner put it (note 24, p. 42), 'self-scale' in other ways. Wagner described how relations that seem to exist between people are simultaneously internal and integral to the person. This self-scaling applies to relations that constitute Ladakhi settlements out of citizen houses, as well as between house and house members.

Neighbours were all accustomed to values that led their house foundations or plots to grow the same story every generation. These values are reanimated by the constant use of house materials including names, numbers and substances for daily, annual and life course rituals. Tashi's comments about a photobook I was making for Taskhan sum up these values. In 2010, we came across a picture in the book of Tashi's grandfather spinning a prayer wheel in the winter sun when Tashi was still a boy. Tashi sorely missed his grandfather but explained how *Memele* continued to turn this prayer wheel through him, Tashi, today.

To my mind, Tashi was implying that it was not just his living but also his dead relatives who had wanted him home. Indeed, it was not just people but the fabric and objects of the house that called him back. When I saw the wheel in use, I wondered whether Tashi was imagining himself in place of *Memele* as a future head of house, for in the present, it was not he but his seniors – his two fathers or uncles[21] – who turned the wheel. Tashi's thoughts about his grandfather transcend or freeze durational time, and I was reminded of the phrase that Virginia Woolf recorded of Katherine Mansfield's lyric writing: the house, like Mansfield's writing, seemed to seek a 'merging

Memele's prayer wheel (1981)

into things' (Diary Entry, 25 August 1920).[22] In my interpretation, Tashi's reflections suggest that the line of the house is not just a succession from one generation to the next but a merging of one into another. Is it even a person who turns the wheel, or rather the wheel that turns a person, fusing residents and absorbing them into the very fabric of the house?

Developments I have described show how everything could stay the same with the introduction of one key change. Since 2010, Taskhan and its neighbours have reverted to the business of carrying on as they have always done

(Ingold 2009), and the change introduced in the 2000s attracts no attention. No one expressed any concern about the dramatic shift from a settlement of twenty-eight estates to one of seventy-nine simple houses in 2010 and over eighty in 2017. When I argued that relations within and between houses had been fundamentally transformed, they disagreed. They insisted with hindsight, that nothing had really changed, and the government allocation of land had merely triggered collective agreement on the part of senior men representing their estates to innovate so as to preserve their traditional lineaments.

I hope to have shown that the recognition on my part that 'everything had changed' and yet, as far as Taskhan's and other house people were concerned, 'everything also stayed the same' is not simply a value associated with times past. It is, to the contrary, a continuing value denoting a set of practices that keep the house through relations with neighbours. These capacities help to explain the enduring significance of house-based sociality in the region, which I document in subsequent chapters among different Ladakhis as they devised ways to carry on through partitioning. Comparable recalibration of house membership has occurred across urban Ladakh and further afield. Tiwari and Gupta (2008) described a similar reorganisation into 'simple houses' that was ratified in a more urban part of Leh following the government's distribution of land. An earlier example from a village close by involved the main houses boycotting their offshoots in 1998, hoping to persuade them to contribute labour rather than cash to the local monastery (Beek 2000a: 538). Despite mediation, the small houses continued to refuse labour dues as they had only their wages and no surplus people (ibid. 2000a: 556, note 38). The impact in more rural areas is described in Chapter 6 and similar developments have been reported in the wider Tibetan-speaking area.[23]

Members of a house collaborate to carry their house with them and improve it, but their efforts are inflected by differences of interest and relative status. It was Taskhan's men together with representatives from all the village estates who ratified the agreement to admit more members, not *Anele* or other women, whose work was considered internal to the house. This situation evokes the declaration I have borrowed from Tomasi di Lampedusa's Sicilian novel of the Risorgimento: it was the privileged Tancredi, nephew to the Prince, who declares in the English translation (1963: 29), "If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change."

Notes

1 Names often index qualities of the namer. For example, there are many Ladakhi Stanzin (bstan 'dzin) who have been named by Tenzin Gyatso in short, Jetsun Jamphel Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso in full; born Lhamo Dhondup and the present Dalai Lama.
2 Fernanda Pirie (2014: 231) considers that villages in Ladakh are the most clearly bounded of the many and varied units of association.
3 In the past, monasteries owned significant land independently of erstwhile Tibetan monastic centres, but there were fewer secular landlords ('aristocrats' or *skutrag*)

than in Tibet. There are substantial disagreements about whether Tibetan smallholders in the past were 'serfs' (for example, between Melvyn Goldstein and Beatrice Miller in the *Tibet Journal* 1986–1989) but levies on smallholders also varied enormously from one Tibetan-speaking neighbourhood to the next (see Levine 2023). Ladakh smallholders were not tied to large estates (Carrasco 1959; Goldstein 1971b, 1971c) and there were fewer status differences among them than in other Tibetan-speaking areas.

4 This abbreviated sketch applies only to smallholding Buddhists among whom distinctions of status are far less important than other parts of the Tibetan Himalaya. In some Tibetan-speaking communities, younger brothers who left the main unit joined a lower status group with less land and less permanent houses. Classic references from Tibet and Nepal include Barbara Aziz (1974, 1978), Graham Clarke (1983), Eva Dargyay (1982), Melvyn Goldstein (1971a, 1971b, 1971c), Nancy Levine (1988), Charles Ramble (1984, 2001, 2008) and Sidney Schuler (1983, 1987).

5 Between 1980 and 2010, individual holdings ranged from 10–150 *kanal*, but most had between 1.5 and 2.5 ha of land (30–50 *kanal*).

6 Jahoda (2008: 14) describes *khangchenpa* in Spiti as former taxpayers. Ramsay's (1890: 37) dictionary entry considered 'entail' in Ladakh somewhat misleadingly as primogeniture,

> When the son takes possession of the *khangchen*, all the duties attaching to the family land (*zhing*) devolve upon him. The state does not recognize the division of the land and regards him as the owner of the entire holding, and he alone has to pay the land revenue, and supply forced labour, etc, when required by the State.

Some monasteries in Ladakh still have large landholdings and receive 'donations' from domestic houses which can be described either as dues from tenants or as voluntary sponsorship.

7 It was unclear to me why Anchuk, in effect a *khangun* resident, was so involved in work organised by and through the senior men of *khangchen*. No doubt, he was standing in for one of his brothers.

8 Taskhan did not replace their *dzo* but still had a few cows. They have not kept sheep and goat in any number since the 1970s.

9 The times allocated for watering throughout Leh, broadly defined, were introduced in the early 1970s after a period of drought.

10 Ladakhis are often classed with people from the northeast and stigmatised; Sudha Vasan (2017) explains how racism in Delhi and disapproval in Leh affect the young middle classes amidst a scarcity of jobs: "in 2011, there were 6,000 applicants for 300 vacancies at the lowest rungs, or Class IV government jobs. Five thousand of them were young women." See also Elizabeth Williams-Oerberg (2017) on the situation for young elite Ladakhis.

11 Leh's Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council.

12 Tashi used the English 'full houses.'

13 As estates demonstrate a capacity to re-group, this conclusion may be premature.

14 The village has two sections or parts (with fourteen houses notionally in each) which are mobilised today primarily for 'happy-sad' (*skyid dug*) occasions – that is, life cycle rites.

15 In Leh, Balti is synonymous with Shia and *khache* normally refers to Sunni Muslims.

16 Ramsay (1890) translated 'hovel' as *khangoo* (that is, *khangun*), a small and poor house and, under his entry for house, describes *khangoo* as a small hut.

17 This was not a new phenomenon. Nicola Grist found in the 1970s that houses in this settlement had an average of twelve members compared to five and a half

in Matho, which is around 25 km from Leh (Cambridge Undergraduate Ladakh Expedition 1977: 64).

18 As Gudeman (2001: 80) has argued, houses are centrally concerned with maintaining and allotting their communal base. Exchanges among individual units, he claims, are secondary.

19 Ngawang (or Nawang) Tsering Shakspo reported that younger brothers who had married separately used to encounter difficulties feeding their wives and children (1988: 34, cited in Phylactou n.d.).

20 See Badiou (2005) on counts, especially the count-as-one.

21 Tashi called his seniors *aba*, father. A father's younger brother is also called *agu*.

22 Woolf (1980: 61),

> I said how my own character seemed to cut out a shape like a shadow in front of me. This she understood (I give it as an example of her understanding) & proved it by telling me that she thought this bad: one ought to merge [into things].

23 For similar developments in Mustang, see Ramble (2008), and in Spiti, see Jahoda (2008, 2015).

4 Once the wealthiest tent in Kharnak

Looking over and discussing photographs with Kharnakpa in 2009 and subsequently, I found that my records forged new connections. The photobook I gave Tashi (Chapter 3, p. 56) reflected our longstanding familiarity, but I also shared pictures from the 1980s with people I never knew. Documenting the methods introduced in Chapter 1, I describe my accidental Kharnak archive and then the photobook one family and I gradually put together to render an account of their migration to Leh.

Kharnakpa are one of three groups of Changpa, people of the 'northern plain' or Chang Thang, a vast high-altitude plateau extending beyond Ladakh's disputed eastern borders into Tibet. Numbering approximately 1,200 in all, they were largely pastoralists until the 1980s. Since then, over 80% of Kharnakpa have settled bit by bit to urban life, mostly in a 'colony' near Leh known as Kharnakling, 175 km from Kharnak.[1] I focus on the journey of one image and a house name to the Leh area. Considering the indexical qualities of both photographs and names, I suggest that my interlocutors brought traces of life in Kharnak to their peri-urban settlement in Kharnakling. I also ask if these materials – a photograph and a name – point towards a better future (Gell 1998, see Chapter 1, p. 16).

A Leh suburb

In the early 1980s, Kharnakling presented a stark contrast to the suburbs described in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. It was empty of people and buildings, save for *chorten* (stūpa) and a *mane* wall, a stack of stones inscribed or carved with prayers. I used to hear about ghosts and wandering spirits arriving after sunset. A large government building was put up for the Indo-Tibetan Border Police before Changpa arrived: Changpa referred to both Ladakhi and Tibetan migrants from Chang Thang. These 'refugees' were granted use rights to unoccupied land after the Chinese occupation and the Dalai Lama's exile. Little by little, those who came to be known as Tibetan refugees sold plots to people from Kharnak and elsewhere. Kharnakling still had a temporary and makeshift feel in 2009 by comparison with long-established villages. It

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remains vulnerable to landslides and floods, as well as drought, and a serious cloudburst in 2010 caused extensive damage. The land is poor, water is scarce and it is a struggle to grow vegetables and flowers.

Unlike the 'weaver's house,' Taskhan, and Buddhist smallholders in general, pastoralist and Muslim houses are usually known by the names of their senior men, which change every generation. I visited Lundup Tsering's house with my friend, Tashi Lazom (see Chapter 9), in 2009. Her family had multiple ties with Kharnak, including longstanding relationships with *Agule* or Agu Lundup, as we called Lundup Tsering. Tashi had intended to introduce me to *Agule* in his shop, which occupied the front of a two-storey building of mud brick with a large yard on one of Kharnakling's many unpaved roads. But we found that he was away trading, buying horses in Zanskar to sell in Kharnak, so we sat with his daughter-in-law, Jigmed (Lhadrol) and her friend who were weaving in the courtyard.

With Tashi's help, I was able to navigate their sometimes interested and sometimes disapproving responses to my photographs. As I found subsequently, some Kharnakpa were distressed by images of people who had since died while others were merely irritated because the photographs – especially those in black and white – seemed to depict an archaic or remote Ladakh. The two women found my pictures difficult to decipher and could not match them to Kharnak sites, but after scanning the collection for an hour, they deduced that I had met Agu Lundup's family long ago.

I was led to contemplate the fictitious qualities of photographs, fixed in paper as though in time to suggest enduring connections and ways of life.

Although I felt as though I were meeting these people for the first time in 2009, my photographs drew us into conversation as though we had known each other since they were taken. The images played a role in making introductions, witnessing long-forgotten meetings, and eliciting a range of views about photography and the move to Leh. Apparent evidence of a shared moment in the past, they created a foundation for sporadic work between 2009 and 2019 with this family in Kharnakling, as well as their relatives in another Leh village and in Kharnak itself.

Kharnakling is mid-way between Leh and the village of *Agule*'s niece, Sonam Ladon, 10 km away. Sonam Ladon or *Amale* (mother) lived in a much more substantial house and, in 2019 when I last visited, the family were close to finishing two new buildings on their large plot, which hugs the main road. Planned road-widening meant they would receive compensation for the loss of their existing house and so they had begun rebuilding straight away. *Amale* was camping out, she explained, with her children and grandchildren in the soon-to-be-finished, spacious family home that was already hung with prayer flags. A second building was taking shape in the form of a restaurant for one of the children to manage. The garden was producing vegetables and would be screened from the road by the trees they had planted.

Amale spends the summers in Kharnak, usually in the camp known as Spangchen (also called Pang or Pangchen). Kharnakpa break camp between five and ten times a year over an area of around 500 km^2. Stopping for around a month in the summer, they normally move to their next site by truck, first in one direction and then in the other. Spangchen is 60 km east of Dad, a centre with small houses where Kharnakpa stay for up to five of the coldest months of the year. The only monastery[2] is close by, and there are a few rooms for nuns who do not go to Kharnakling in the winter. *Amale*'s husband, Phuntsog Anchuk, and Agu Lundup both made regular trading trips to the area; Phuntsog Anchuk also acted as a community representative, mediating between urban and pastoralist communities. Remote in the 1980s, Kharnak is now in the midst of trekking routes and military infrastructure, not least the road itself. Tents are called 'houses' (*tronpa*) and, although their names – the names of their senior men – change every generation, the community is known by a fixed number of estates in the same way as the village near Leh that I have described. Since personal names make up a small pool, many tents and houses share a name and, on occasion, require specification by reference to an attribute such as occupation or marital status (Dollfus 2012: 84–85; Pina-Cabral 2012). Kharnakpa provide labour and goods to the monastery that they sponsor and from which they obtain religious protection in the same way as settled houses and, if the monastery owns your herds or land, you will pay rent/tax in the same way as others.

Pastoralist lifestyles carry an iconic significance for many Ladakhis, whose views are represented in publications about pastoralism such as the anthropological monographs that appeared in the 2000s (Ahmed 2000; Dollfus 2012). All the same, stereotypes are easily reversed and Leh people may

admire the devout Buddhism of Changpa who lived such a hard life in Chang Thang while disapproving of them in Leh. Lehpa often avoid hiring Kharnak 'immigrants' because, they say, they are lazy: 'They are only used to walking with the animals.'[3] Most of Jigmed's generation have never lived in the pastoralist area, now a mere half day's journey from the city. While they visit the plateau occasionally and often reluctantly, their parents and grandparents still come and go routinely.

Traces of a 1981 visit to Kharnak

In the 1980s, I took photographs of people when requested which I was able to print for them because Syed Ali Shah in Leh developed my film. He was one of several renowned photographers who also sold postcards to the tourist market, including images from his significant collection on the historic Yarkand (Xinjiang) trade. However, I was never able to give prints to Kharnakpa or discuss my fifty-odd images with them, as I only visited Chang Thang once. Twenty years later, my colleague Ricardo Leizaola digitised the negatives and we wrote about this accidental archive in the context of changing visual economies (Day and Leizaola 2012). It was not until 2009 that I was able to share the collection with Kharnakpa in their newly digitised form and, by then, my visit to their grazing grounds with a camera had of course been completely forgotten. I, too, had largely forgotten about my visit in the autumn of 1981 and I had since lost my camera, but I found notes recording a walk through the villages of the Markha Valley to the tented plateau, which I summarise,

> On the way, we passed men carrying wood and small amounts of juniper to the Leh market, but the usual trade in livestock was interrupted by an outbreak of foot and mouth. Even so, we passed a Kharnakpa with around two hundred horses on his way to Zanskar. A month earlier, the 'lord' (*lonpo*) of Karsha in Zanskar described to Nicola Grist and me how five hundred Changpa used to bring salt to exchange for barley, wheat and peas in his childhood. Now, he said, only two hundred came and often they bought and sold with cash rather than bartering their goods.

After the Chinese occupation, pastoralists lost access to grazing lands, as well as the salt and borax in western Tibet that they had traded, along with wool, butter and other goods in return for dried fruit, grain, manufactured goods, tea and spices. Borders hardened after roadbuilding through Aksai Chin, warfare in 1962 and an influx of military personnel. Changpa had to adjust access to grass and water among themselves;[4] they also accommodated Tibetan refugee families and discovered a value to *changra* goats

relative to sheep and yak. These goats take a heavy toll on the environment but provide *lena* (cashmere or pashmina) from their undersides, which constitutes virtually the only export good from Ladakh. Kharnak had the very best *lena* because, in addition to the altitude, there are no trees or thorns to damage the wool. Although my notes show that small-scale trading still occurred in the early 1980s,[5] most people had begun to travel by road. With the opening of the Leh–Manali route to civilian traffic in 1991, trade moved almost entirely to trucks, shops, and markets (Ahmed 1999). On arriving in 1981, we were greeted by around seventy tents and a lively wedding. Today, there might be twenty smaller tents, with only a minority made of the traditional dark yak hair.

It was by chance that I first showed digital copies of these images to a man in the waiting room of an *amchi* (Tibetan/Ladakhi doctor) near Kharnakling while my friend received treatment. He wore the distinctive dress and characteristic hairstyle of Kharnakpa so I asked if he wanted to look through the pictures on my phone to pass the time. He scrolled forwards and backwards, enlarging details to compensate for his poor eyesight and, once confident using my phone, returned to the beginning. 'Where was this? Kharnak?' he asked. I explained in my rusty Ladakhi that I did not remember exactly. Two sites provided equally likely candidates since both had buildings like those in the background of the photographs. Most of the people on my phone, he told me, were dead. He returned time and again to one image and said at last that it was a picture of his father, who lived close by.

It was a little later that we visited *Agule*'s shop in Kharnakling, where we found trade goods from the pastoralist community – yak tails by the door. In 2010, we managed to find Agu Lundup at home. Like the man in the clinic, he had bad eyesight, a widespread problem for those who live at altitude. Frustrated by my poor-quality prints, we turned to the images on my phone. *Agule* recognised two men, both dead. He talked a little about them and left for his shop next door. When we went through the pictures again in the shop, enlarging the details, *Agule* recognised most of the men. Many were dead, two had stayed in the pastoralist area and a few were living in Kharnakling. We gathered an audience who enjoyed pictures of weaving and people they recognised but remained mystified about where I had been. Between them, the group in Kharnakling recognised various portraits but disagreed about who they were. Some images were claimed as close relatives while others were relegated to a group of neighbouring pastoralists or to the few Tibetan refugees that the Kharnakpa hosted after the Dalai Lama left Tibet.[6] These two men, for example, were identified as Tibetan ('refugee') cowboys. Later, they were located in Rupshu among pastoralist neighbours. No one was quite sure who they were. I remembered meeting them in the Markha Valley not far from Kharnak collecting wood and loading it on to their donkeys to sell in Leh.

Stripped of familiar coordinates, these images clearly took time to 'see' or identify (Sutherland and Tsering 2011: 16). I offered a few other memories of Kharnak's fierce dogs and a wedding, and I shared images of a wall of saddlebags for sheep that offered some protection against the cold, with men carrying a pair of binoculars and a camera, wearing Wellington boots. Lundup Tsering's attention was drawn to the woven bags used at the time to store and transport flour, while several women argued over different styles of weaving. A woman of my generation told me to note how well this man dressed – pointing to one of the prints – with his outerwear lined and his hat turned up in the proper fashion, unlike the other men depicted. Her husband recalled how he, too, used to wear such a hat with the matching hairstyle, gathered into a pigtail at the back and shaved at the front. It was Jigmed who eventually recognised Agu Lundup's brother on my phone. No, she insisted, it wasn't this man or that; no, it wasn't someone from Rupshu; it was *Agule*'s elder brother, Choldan.

As we were leaving, *Agule* wanted to see two pictures again. I thought he would ask for prints, but he said that he did not want any pictures. They made him sad. Some people, he said, keep pictures of the dead with *katag* – ceremonial scarves – around them, but he had thrown away the picture he had of his brother. At the sight of each dead person, *Agule* recited the ubiquitous prayer, *om mane padme hum*, and touched the phone to his forehead, signalling respect. I had thought and hoped that the lapse in time would mitigate

Choldan (1981)

against the strong feelings evoked by images of the dead, but I soon became used to this touching of the forehead with the phone or a print and the *om mane*, often accompanied by a refrain that I gloss as 'rest in peace' (*digpa dig*).

Working with the collection of photographs

Scholars have shown how photographs need attention (for example, Pinney 2001: 167). This attention allows images to 'speak' to us (Mitchell 1996) and become interlocutors (Edwards 2012). Peirce (1958: 43–44) emphasised the material cause of this effect, as Webb Keane (2003: 413) remarked,

> Peirce criticized Hegel with these words: 'The capital error of Hegel which permeates his whole system . . . is that he almost altogether ignores the Out-ward Clash . . . [This] direct consciousness of hitting and getting hit enters into all cognition and serves to make it mean something real.'

Barthes' (1980) concept of a punctum likewise evokes the touch, piercing or shock that this material – a photograph – can cause. Keane has suggested that we anthropologists are heirs to a tradition in which signs "are merely the clothing" or "garb of meaning" which has to be uncovered. But, as he emphasises approvingly, "the object is not *in principle* eliminated from [Peirce's] semiosis as it is for Saussure" (Keane 2003: 5). Peirce insisted that signs are not just vehicles of meaning but also bring a word, image, trace or token

into the world and present it materially. Moreover, responses, inferences and interpretations depend on what Pape (2008) describes as neighbourhood relations – that is, surrounding and contextual clues. We do not usually notice indicators but, when we are surprised by something, we attend to one part of the world rather than another and select an index closely related to a particular inference. Signs in themselves assert nothing (Peirce 1955: 111): an icon tells you about the qualities of an object but not whether it exists, and an index tells you it exists but not what it is (Keane 2005: 190). Signs must be made apparent or, as Webb Keane puts it, furnished with instructions. The slow process of photo-elicitation triggered responses and memories of varied circumstances in Kharnak. They suggested a range of inferences that carried forward for some but not other people in the present. What were initially fragmentary narratives and memories that the family attached to my collection gradually took the form of a photobook and a print of *Amale*'s father that the senior generation took into their new home. I compare in what follows the role of this print to *Agule*'s adoption of a new house name. The photograph and name rendered both houses, I suggest, by inviting and instigating connections with past homes.

'This may be long, long ago,' *Agule* remarked. I agreed, 'Twenty-nine years, I think' and *Agule* responded, 'Yes, long ago.' He said it would take several days to hear his life story and left. Passing Tashi on his way to the shop, he apparently asked, 'Why is she writing? Doesn't she have a job?' I heard about Agu Lundup's overwhelming melancholy, aggravated by these scenes from the past. His had been the wealthiest tent in Kharnak and he and Choldan the richest of Kharnakpa when I visited in 1981. Subsequently, *Agule* was able to buy three plots in Kharnakling and build a shop as well as two houses; at times, he hosted Jigmed and her friend Yangze's weaving workshop and he also briefly rented out space for a telephone mast. Not that he was rich by Leh standards, since Kharnakpa are at a disadvantage in the local economy and work mostly in construction or small-scale business.[7] Jigmed, for example, was a day labourer but made one foray into business when she established a co-operative shop at a subsidised rent. She planned to sell woven goods with her neighbours, but the group did not last since no one enjoyed sitting all day in the shop: they could neither weave nor register for day labour, and several were anxious about leaving their homes empty. So they began to sort and spin wool together to distribute for weaving independently at home. Jigmed concluded that they would earn little, noting, 'You can only enjoy life here in Kharnakling if you are good at making money.'

Choldan died. Afterwards, his wife was inconsolable, threatened suicide and soon died of grief. A few months later and about ten years after the first tents arrived in Leh, Agu Lundup left for the city. His was a particular story of loss but echoed other accounts. Bad weather, illness and death among people and animals inflected recollections of life on the northern plain. Jigmed described how her father was the first to arrive in Leh; he came because his

wife was sick. A year or two after recovering, Jigmed's mother returned to Kharnak but she soon left again because of a family bereavement and difficult conditions. In unusually heavy snow and with few men in the tents to do the heavy work, it had become almost impossible to move site as the headman[8] directed. Life became so hard that Jigmed's family left for the city with a few relatives and bought the plot opposite her present home, paying a Tibetan who said it belonged to him.[9] After she married, Jigmed and her husband stayed at her parental house for a year before moving in with Agu Lundup, who had arrived in Kharnakling.

I heard different chronologies of migration, but they all told of those who lived, worked and offered rituals together and therefore moved as one to adjoining plots in the new colony. Most urban Kharnakpa said life was easier in Leh because at least one person in every family had a job. Women explained how highly they valued the schools and healthcare.

In 2010, Tashi and I went to Spangchen to meet Choldan's daughter, Sonam Ladon. We passed her Leh house on the way and were surprised to hear Phuntsog Anchuk calling out to tell us to take his tent in our small car. Tashi said, 'But we will stay with your brothers,' only to learn that their tent was too small. A decline in polyandry, the loss of children to school and emigration had combined to create a general downsizing and an acute shortage of labour. On asking, we learned that there were fewer than twenty tents.

Source: © Tashi Lazom

The group arrives at Spangchen in the fourth month, early July in 2010. My images prompted stories and conversations about the many transformations that had occurred and the difficulties of weighing one development against another. Tashi reminded me how we used to wash dishes with dirt in the 1980s and how yak meat was hung by pegs on the line to soften and 'freeze dry.' In the summer of 2010, it was strips of goat hanging, like so many pieces of brightly coloured wool waiting to be turned into clothes or rugs. No one wanted any photographs as keepsakes.

Amale generally arrived to help her family during their stay at Spangchen. Sometimes, she said, it was just her alone in the white tent doing all the work when, in a yak hair tent (*rebo*), there would be eight or ten people together in the day.[10] Sonam Ladon explained, like *Anele* from Taskhan (Chapter 3, p. 48), that she was not lonely but it was difficult, even with her grandson helping during his school holidays. An older unmarried woman in a small, tattered tent agreed that it might be hard for anyone to stay in Kharnak if even one single tent were to leave. She herself would not go to Leh, she added, even if more tents left, since she did not want to work for anyone but herself.

Kharnakpa no longer farmed barley as they had in the 1980s because of the shortage of labour. The lack of labour also restricted animal numbers, although there was plenty of land for grazing. The two fathers/brothers in *Amale*'s tent, for example, were forced to hire shepherds or pool their herds with the men of another tent so that they could separate yak from sheep and goat and still take them all to feed. Isolation, lack of religious and other

personnel, and fear of robbery or predations from snow leopards prompted more and more Kharnakpa to leave for Leh temporarily or permanently in the hope of finding some security.

It was not until we stopped to visit a friend on the way back to Leh that we located the photographs I had taken in 1981 with buildings in the background. This friend used to trade in Chang Thang and recognised the village of Gya between Kharnak and his own settlement. I then remembered two visits to the area: to the grazing lands in October 1981 and to the village of Gya in November where a handful of men were waiting for the pass to clear. They had been to Leh to buy goods for the winter but an early snowfall blocked their route home.

The picture of Choldan was taken at Gya. As one of *Agule*'s nephews pointed out, you could just decipher his name on the bag in front of him, marking out his goods.

Amale's husband, Phutsog Anchuk, was still a trader. He brought goods from his brothers in Kharnak to sell in Leh and took others back from the city in his small truck. He was one of the few who valued my images in relation to his own biography and Kharnak's recent history, and so I made him a photobook, which we discussed in 2011. I also worked through the draft of an article[11] with him and brought a copy of the published version in 2013 with a second photobook incorporating the revisions we had made in 2011. We had gathered in their village house to discuss which words and images to include and which to leave out, paying close attention to a fluctuating sense of public and private, and of etiquette more generally among senior members of the family.

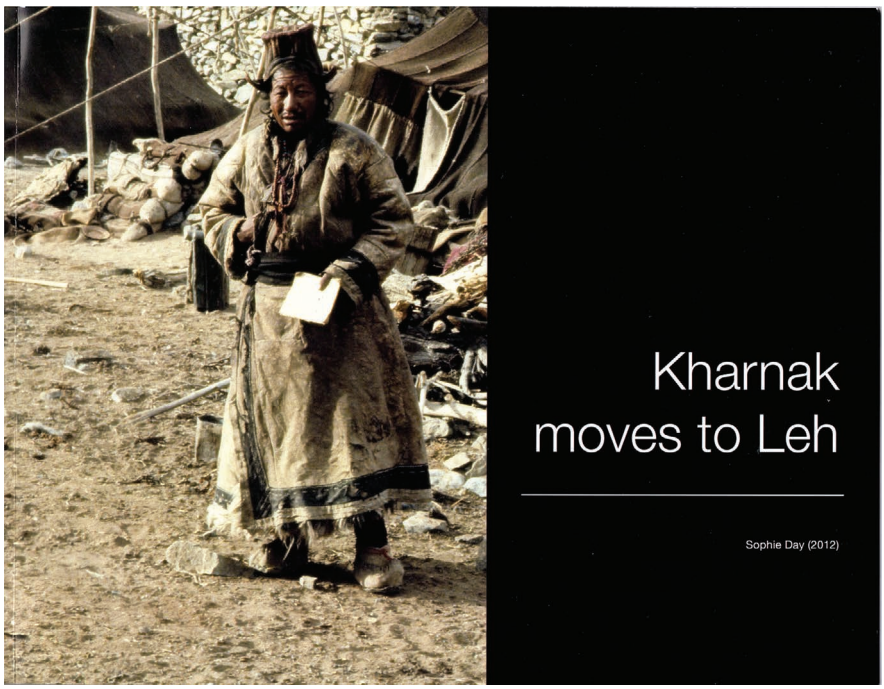
Amale looked at the so-called cowboys, who had been identified by the group in Kharnakling in 2009: apparently either Tibetans or neighbouring Rupshupa. 'No, they really are not Tibetan,' said *Amale*,

> It was just the fashion then to wear your hair in this style; my father did, too. These men are called Sonam Dorje and Konga Norphel, and they are a hundred percent Kharnakpa. They don't live far from *Agu*'s place in Kharnakling.

She said *om mane* over her father's picture and told us how Agu Lundup had explained to her how Tashi Lazom had arrived one day with a picture of his brother. He apparently told her, 'I was very sad to see it.' *Amale* thought differently. 'At first it is too painful [to look at a picture of your recently deceased father], but after a year, it is good to have. You can hang it with *katag* [white scarves].' She apparently told her uncle, 'No, let's have it. Everyone has one nowadays. You can't look at first but, after a year, it is a good memory to keep at home.' She then asked me for a copy of the photograph that I should crop, re-centring and enlarging Choldan so that she would have a decent portrait to keep.

In 2013, I met Phuntsog Anchuk but not his wife and we visited another Kharnak site called Zara where the community spends around a month after Spangchen. In the midst of shearing, goats wandered clean at the neck and shaggy on their trunks. There were two additional tents, apparently making twenty-two in all.[12] Two brothers had returned to a pastoralist way of life, and I met the younger, Paljor, in 2017. I had also met his father, I learned as I

shared my images, for he occupied the front cover of our photobook. Meme Anjur was headman in 1981 when I visited Dad, and also Paljor's father.



The steep decline in tent numbers had paused and reversed fractionally, and Paljor thought that this return migration might continue. He liked Leh; it was easy and he was happy but concerned for the future. 'Now that Leh has grown so much,' he said, 'it will be difficult to make a life in the city.' Leaving his school-aged children in Kharnakling, he bought more sheep and goats to add to those he had kept with his relatives and returned to the northern plain. Paljor's elder brother also came back. He had been in Leh for many years, arriving in Kharnakling with the second group of migrant families, but he had never made a good living. Jigmed, who was a relative of his, said that he had gone back to Kharnak because it would be more enjoyable to walk with the animals. Paljor imagined that they might live like Phuntsog Anchuk between two bases, trading in Leh from their tent in Kharnak and increasing their herds little by little. Maybe, Paljor said, more people will come back now since there was no land left in Kharnakling and plots further from the city were ever more expensive. In 2019, when I last visited, no further migration from the pastoralist area to the city had occurred.

Back in Leh, Phuntsog Anchuk confirmed what others had said, 'It was not the habit before; I had no pictures of my own'; 'it made the sadness come and we would just throw the picture on the ground.' But he then explained how he had recognised a tiny image of his own father in a group portrait that

a tourist shared. He was able to copy that part of the photograph and enlarge it to depict his father alone. When I saw the couple in 2015, they had me take a photograph of husband and wife together, holding this picture of Phuntsog Anchuk's father.

Both had lost their fathers young. *Amale* did not remember how old she was at the time, but Phuntsog Anchuk said that he was 19 when his father died in his 50s. *Amale* reiterated, 'We didn't like photographs in Kharnak,' in the same words that others used, and she continued, 'Now though and since the deaths happened a long time ago, we are interested rather than sad . . . .'; 'No, it's true,' she agreed, 'not Agu Lundup.'

It was not until 2019 that I realised Choldan was not with the other family photographs. I had imagined that the two fathers would be sitting side by side surrounded by other significant objects such as prayer beads and prayer wheels, photographs of religious figures and other members of the family. But *Amale* explained that the copy I had made was too small. With only a low-resolution image on my laptop, I could not make as large a print as Sonam Ladon had wanted without compromising the quality. In 2019, I had a picture library with me and located a version that would produce a reasonable 10-inch by 12-inch copy. We cropped the photograph as before and I lightened Choldan's face as instructed. I made two copies, one for *Amale* and one for her brother in Kharnakling. Sonam Ladon was delighted, and her daughter, visiting from Bangalore, cried as she recalled her last sight of her grandfather at the age of 5 years.

Amale and her family were staying in their new house, which was set back further from the road than the old one because of the imminent road-widening scheme. I found the family's collection of photographs temporarily but carefully displayed in the hallway. Choldan's picture had joined that of Phuntsog Anchuk's father, various Drukpa dignitaries and a son, a monk in Sikkim. Certificates and medals that the children had won over the years surrounded these images, and mother and daughter apologised for the lack of a frame around Choldan which they said they would resolve as soon as they could escape their building site.

Kharnak in Leh: Choldan's picture and a house name

Photographs can carry a 'certificate of presence' and suggest a likeness to Ladakhis as to Europeans. Clare Harris (2016) explained that photographers in Tibet could produce exact copies (*par*) in the same way that other craftspeople and practitioners produced copies of religious texts, statues, or paintings according to detailed instructions about the order of work, its form and appearance. In making a copy of a religious figure, the camera allows an artist to 'bite' or catch (*gyap*) at the subject without entering the dangerous process of copying from life.[13] This bite of the camera enabled the same indirection as previous copies via reflections in water or imprints in cloth (Harris 2004: 142). A photograph of a religious figure is never, Harris emphasised, a mere copy – but rather a faithful iteration.

Given Buddhist precepts, it is reasonable to assume that appropriate respect – keeping images clean, surrounding them with ceremonial scarves and butter lamps, offering prostrations and prayers – will bring merit to donor and recipient. Photographs elicit spiritual devotion which helps to activate the aura associated with religious figures in the same way as paintings or statues. Harris describes religious copies as 'power objects' or *rten* – that is, an active presence (Belting 1994) of a spiritual referent. By contrast, a mundane form that Harris calls a likeness is considered a faithful presentation of something or someone that cannot be brought into the here-and-now but might function as a *memento mori*. Harris thus contrasts secular and religious images, and suggests two forms of Tibetan Buddhist photography, both requiring exact reproduction.

Rten means support in reference to the religious role of representations of Buddha's body, speech or mind; for example, a *chorten* (Tib: *mchod rten*) or stūpa supports religious offerings and merit-making. *Rten* has the sense both of a visible representation, as in a statue, and what we might translate into English as a holding, as in the foundations of a house, which can be felt or sensed without being seen. A picture of a lama can substitute for his person, both holding and presenting him when placed on a throne during a ceremony, often in a triptych that positions him alongside a previous incarnation and an image of the relevant Buddha. But this practice of substitution also applies to mundane images. As Harris notes elsewhere (Harris 2001,

2004) and as I have implied, the line between sacred and secular is indistinct, and both types of image can trigger inferences of likeness alongside presence. Here is an ancient picture of me, by no means an accurate resemblance in 2012 when this picture of the picture was presented. I had been unable to attend the consecration of a *chorten* and so I was brought in the person of my niece, who kindly travelled from Kashmir (see Chapter 9), and in this photograph. Commonly, it is the iconic qualities – the likeness – of images that attract attention, but this image was intended as a material connection and tied to the structure. Similarly, the photographs of the two fathers that were incorporated in Phuntsog Anchuk's and Sonam Ladon's collection can be viewed as icons, but they also index routes between the city and the northern plains. It is these indexical relations of contiguity or proximity between Kharnak and Kharnakling that I emphasise in relation to a story of mobility and migration even though, as Keane argued, indexicals are commonly naturalised – that is, they are misrecognised as icons expressing what already exists (Keane 2003, 2006, 2018).[14]

Source: © Tashi Lazom

It was not straightforward to tell who or what my 1981 pictures from Kharnak (re)presented. It took time to establish the relevant criteria for establishing connections between photographic depictions and individual Kharnakpa, places and objects. Both Webb Keane and Alfred Gell emphasised that recognition of resemblance is underdetermined since you have to

refer to some features, values and authorities rather than others. For example, red might be joined to the shape and nature of an apple; it becomes manifest only as it is embodied and bound to other qualities (Keane 2003: 414; Gell 1998: 36–37). The bundling of these criteria shifts from one situation to another – and so, signs remain contingent and often composite. The sign of Choldan was initially unrecognised. Once recognised, he/it had to be cropped, repositioned, lightened and appropriately sized to join one but not the other branch of his family in Leh. In a newly built home, Choldan joined a collection that elicited varied responses from the family.

Peirce tended to see a proper name as a conventional index but emphasised again the composite – and processual – character of signs in use,

> A proper name, when one meets with it for the first time, is existentially connected with some percept or other equivalent individual knowledge of the individual it names. It is then, and then only, a genuine Index. The next time one meets with it, one regards it as an Icon of that Index. The habitual acquaintance with it having been acquired, it becomes a Symbol whose Interpretant represents it as an Icon of an Index of the Individual named.
>
> (cited in Pietarinen 2010: 342)

Peirce equivocated on the peculiar mixture of generality and individuality in proper names, but more importantly, he showed that names are objects of acquaintance and habit that flow through life and shift conditions. They often resonate in different ways for the one naming and the one named (Das and Copeman 2015), and they point to specific histories, places and people. Ladakhi proper names, for example, are incarnated in individuals or houses. They are recognised and respected in much the same way as other materials and supports. Lamas manifest in the world through compassion are attached to names that index previous and continuing manifestations of their being. Sometimes stories circulate about laypeople responding to or offering names that turn out to tell of 'ordinary reincarnations.' In recent years, I heard about laypeople who were reminded of previous lives which, unlike lama, they could not remember. For example, a Buddhist schoolboy was somehow led to give a Muslim name one day at school roll. Based on various inferences and connections, it was agreed that he had been a Muslim girl in his last life. The circumstances provoked more interest than similar events because, as a Buddhist friend said, 'Muslims don't believe in rebirth as much as we do.'

Agu Lundup did not want a photograph of his brother in his Kharnakling house, but he did bring a name from Kharnak. During those hours in 2010 with *Agule* – when many of the images were identified, and Yangze and Jigmed both recognised their fathers – someone said (and I think it was *Agule*), 'That's Magpa Anchuk; he died long ago.' *Magpa* means husband and, used to denote an individual, means in-marrying husband. This Anchuk had married into Kharnak and Agu Lundup, or maybe one of the others

explained for my benefit, 'We don't have house names there.' Kharnakling had only new houses and these were known by the names they would have carried in Kharnak – that is, the name of the current head of house. But, in 2017, Jigmed told me how they had all been collected by the headman to register their land with the government. She explained that half the people visited the Kharnakling Rinpoche to get house names for this registration and their names combined the epithet, 'new house' (*khangser*) with a prefix indicating the name of the current head. Jigmed explained that it was all mixed up because half the houses were still named after a person, as in Kharnak, while half had registered permanent names. Her marital house took the name Tantse after the fields they owned at Spangchen. When the family had visited in 2016 to join a reception for an important lama, they could not even recognise their fields: 'Everything had gone; it was just rocks and earth.' It was their place (*sa khyad*), their farmland (*zhing*), Jigmed said.[15] Agu Lundup's house is now known officially as Rabstan Tantse, combining the name of his nephew with his ruined Kharnak fields. As there is only one man in the junior generation, there is no need to use both names, and Jigmed confirmed, 'Tantse will remain forever as our [house] name.'

Kharnakling has joined official records and its houses are now legally identified. At regular intervals, any change in ownership will be registered. The colony is regularised, as Ladakhis say, with about a hundred units under a single headman who acts for a year, provided by each house in turn. The headman or other representatives call everyone for community work (*thral*)

in the same way as in Chang Thang. Jigmed confirmed that fifty-seven of the one hundred houses were from Kharnak by counting her prayer beads; 'There are no problems really between the different sections [different pastoralist groups], but now that Leh has reached the Indus Valley, there is no more land.' She paused and reflected, 'Even if there were more land, there is no more money; we cannot expand.'

Past and future in the present

I have singled out one image from my old photographs and offered a truncated account of the stories that it attracted and initiated. Choldan was father, brother and grandfather to the family I met. His photograph sits in *Amale*'s hallway for now. It is dusted and, as it is handled, provokes conversations about his standing in Kharnak, a place that several younger members of the family have never visited. It will be framed, hung with white scarves and, perhaps, blessings (*srunga*) when the collection is moved to a more appropriate position, most likely in the best room. The house name adopted by the other branch of the family attracted less commentary. Names rapidly become conventional designations, and few of *Agule*'s neighbours would recognise or respond to a connection with the family's one-time fields in Kharnak even as it baptises an urban house that was built on illegally acquired land but is now officially registered. Nevertheless, *Agule*'s choice of a new name can be compared to *Amale*'s embrace of the old photograph insofar as both signs point to and are motivated by materials and experiences in previous homes.

The conventional migration story distinguishes sending and receiving communities, but some Kharnakpa continue to move between these two sites. Paljor has stretched his house/tent to encompass a pastoralist way of life, as well as urban schooling, joined through a traffic in goods and people. Ama Sonam, Phuntsog Anchuk and Agu Lundup, who are senior to Paljor, come and go between their homes as they always have, living next to family in Leh as they do in Kharnak. You might imagine that Kharnakpa have simply enlarged their transhumant circuit – truncated severely when the borders shut – to include new sites that offer important amenities of education and healthcare within and beyond Ladakh. But this would be a wilful reading in the light of generational differences whose members bundle signs in different ways.

In Agu Lundup's house name, Tantse, and Ama Sonam's print of her father, Choldan, Kharnak has been brought to Leh in specific materials for some individuals. The digital copy I shared in 2010 may even have carried the entailments for the future which Silverstein (2003) noted. Drawing on Silverstein's suggestion, Webb Keane (2003) emphasises how signs mediate future possibilities, as well as traces from the past. I had made a new print, ridding it of inessentials which distracted from the presence and likeness of Choldan and fixed them to a specific historical era when those bags were still made and the road had not yet opened. Alfred Gell might have asked

how this print would affect people once it was taken into the house. Would it provide a 'perch' or material affordance for biographical projects carrying memories and relations towards a 'better' version of the house (Chapter 1, p. 16)?

I approached Agu Lundup in 2019 about a photograph I had taken in 2010, anxious about reproducing it here since he was so uncomfortable in my company and in the presence of my 1980s photographs. On this occasion, he laughed and pointed to an image under the Buddha high on his shop wall, a photocopied print of the very same picture of *Agule* and his grandson. I felt better about the high-resolution print of Choldan I had given to his nephew in Tantse and wondered whether a copy of Choldan's picture would join *Agule*'s collection of significant objects and his house name, expanding this sense of indexical contiguity. Perhaps, both name and picture anticipate the support that a new generation will need to carry on, the possibilities of pastoralism, wage labour and business between Kharnak and Leh, and greater inclusion and prosperity for Kharnakpa in the city.

Notes

1 In the early 2000s, Goodall reported a decline from eighty to forty pastoral Kharnak households over two decades (2004a: 224), and Dollfus (2004) an annual rate of emigration ranging from 1–10 families over the previous decade. Goodall came across one case of return migration in her survey (2004b: 197, note 7).
2 The Kharnak monastery at Dad is Drukpa Kagyud, under Ladakh's main monastery of Hemis. This is the wealthiest monastic order in Ladakh.
3 Younger Kharnakpa often commented on the stigma they felt in Leh.
4 Kharnakpa had to make only minor adjustments to their migration cycle in comparison with the other groups.
5 See Grist (1985) for a discussion of this trade based in part on our visits that year, and Rizvi (1985, 1999, 2005) for excellent overviews that integrate the secondary literature with oral histories. Rizvi (1996: 112) reports caravans of sheep with salt from Rupshu until the mid-1980s.

6 Hagalia (2004) reports that Kharnakpa were allocated twelve families of Tibetan refugees with their livestock; I heard of four or five in 2010.
7 Younger generations educated in Leh and outside Ladakh can earn at least twice as much as their parents in seasonal work as tour guides and in permanent positions.
8 *Goba* (Tib: *'go pa*) is traditionally translated into English as headman but the position does not necessarily hold great authority. It is often allotted by turn or lottery rather than customary entitlement.
9 In theory, Tibetan refugees held only use rights, which precluded the legal, registered exchange of plots.
10 Dollfus (2004) noted only yak hair tents on a visit to Spangchen in 1995. Following a terrible winter in 1998–1999, an aid organisation donated the white cotton tents, which predominated on her return visit in 2002 and on my visit in 2010.
11 Day and Leizaola (2012) includes further details on my 2010 trip to Kharnak, as well as a short account of my initial visit.
12 I doubt the unit-count of Kharnak tents reported at Spangchen had grown by more than two over this short period, but locals, officials and visitors came up with different numbers.
13 A friend told me of the terror she felt when her first portrait was taken: 'They used to say that photographs steal *yang* (luck), but it wasn't that I felt. It was as though someone was shooting me. I was shaking; I remember every detail.'
14 Irvine and Gal argue that indexical relations are prior to other sign relations because people notice, rationalise or justify linguistic pointers to social identities and make ideological inferences – about type or culture or morality. They suggest, "In these ideological constructions, indexical relationships become the ground on which other sign relationships are built" (2000: 37).
15 Kharnakpa often had fields in more than one area and most of this family's land was at another site called Yargang. Kharnakpa used to farm as well as herd, and most likely combined these activities over the last century. The evidence is discussed by Pascale Dollfus in her excellent 2012 monograph (see also Dollfus 2009, 2013).

5 Making a photobook with Deen Khan

M. Deen Khan and I created an account of the house, Khan Manzil, in a photobook between 2013 and 2017. We had met thirty-five years previously but, unlike the Kharnakpa I have introduced, we kept in touch directly, as well as through mutual friends and colleagues. Accordingly, we found ourselves talking constantly about past events and anticipating what the future might hold for Khan Manzil as we put together versions of Deen's house. The small picture book we made reflected Deen's intensely personal reflections about the loss of his family home: Khan is the family name and Manzil means house. In 2013, he showed me objects that expressed this sense of loss. We arranged goods that Deen had retrieved from his several stores in the city with other belongings that were still in everyday use, and I photographed a selection of kitchen goods and hats that Deen modelled. Later we added further images of a cardboard model that Deen had made of one of his family's two *serai*,[1] pages from his photo albums and family papers. I put some of the photographs together with extracts from our conversations and a single taped life history (2013) in a sequence that we edited again in 2015, building on Deen's familiarity with not only spoken but also written English. We settled with the subsequent version after further discussion in 2017. This chapter includes a few images and pages from the 2017 photobook with a simplified storyline that situates Deen's prominent position in the cultural and political landscape alongside the losses he and his family suffered in the partitioning of the sub-continent and the challenges of living as a Muslim in Ladakh today. The Partition of India and Pakistan, and related geopolitical events, affected all Ladakh's houses, but Deen privileges their effects on Sunni urban trading and family networks in which his old house was embedded. I also draw attention to Deen's 'sketch of a better version' (Chapter 1) of Khan Manzil, which challenges dominant Ladakhi stereotypes about Muslim and Buddhist houses.

I had known the Khan Manzil built by Deen's grandfather and great-grandfather in Zangsti, a historic area of Leh city where many Sunni Muslims live. Enlarged and embellished over the years, it was famous locally for its size, carved wooden screens and hospitality. I remember visiting Deen in the early 1980s when he lived and worked between his mother and his brother's family in the main house and, separated by a partition, Save the Children Fund

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offices. Women and servants entered the house from the east, men and guests from the north. Deen had agreed reluctantly to build three new Khan Manzil in the footprint of the old house. Muslims are expected to divide the house each generation, while Buddhists have only recently acknowledged that they too have adopted the practice, and the old house was demolished after Deen's mother died in the 1980s.[2] Two sisters who live outside Ladakh share one new house, while Deen and his elder brother each have their own house-hotel.

Deen's *Khan Manzil* from above (2011)

Deen missed the old house where his father always sat by one of the pillars in the 'two-pillar kitchen' and his grandfather in a particular corner seat; where everyone found themselves "not only in places, but of them" (Joyce 2014: 66). He wished that he and his brother had shared the old house between them rather than built anew, and he expressed a desire to recuperate elements of the past. I hope that this description of our slow efforts to position images of Deen's belongings – Deen had an unusual and passionate interest in the stuff of his house – alongside his own and sometimes other people's words will make this work of recuperation or repair visible. I foreground our conversational to and fro alongside images of the things we were talking about because Deen's words, which occupy as much of this chapter as my own, evoke what Walter Benjamin captured in his well-known comments on storytelling, "traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel" (Benjamin 2019: 36). Throughout, Deen deliberated his various responsibilities to family, co-religionists and friends as he sought the right story to share, and we revised decisions about what to keep and what to exclude until agreeing on the 2017 edition.

Deen's reflections about the loss of his old home had little place in Leh public culture at the time and so it was a surprise to both of us to find subsequently that his version of Khan Manzil resonated with other stories from Muslim, urban, elite and cosmopolitan men. As we were rendering Khan Manzil on paper, a more public story about Ladakh's position in Central Asia began to emerge in Zangsti's Central Asian Museum. Deen and a colleague were put in charge of the collection and, by 2017, the two men were recognised as key custodians of Ladakh's history and culture. When I last visited in 2019, Deen was widely acknowledged and appreciated for his role in collecting, documenting and displaying materials about Ladakh's position in Central as well as South Asia. A storyteller who loves literary Urdu, a devoted friend to many Lehpa and a graduate with a history of NGO and public service, Deen found that he could share this small book and even integrate it – along with a previous photobook we had made – in the museum.

Deen's mother in her kitchen (1970s)

Source: © M. Deen Khan

Working with biographical objects[3]

It was while we were looking through Deen's albums in the house of a mutual friend in 2013 that we paused over a photograph of Deen's mother from the 1970s in the old house. Deen inspected the image and said that he still had several of the pots surrounding her, and 'Come to my house tomorrow, and you will see this [the pot in which they still made *pilau*].'

I was long accustomed to the anticipation of meeting some precious object only to learn that Deen would have to re-organise the store so that he could find it. I had been complaining yet again that Deen had not shown me the turban his father wore to his wedding or any of his Yarkandi heirlooms from today's Xinjiang. On this occasion, however, Deen suggested we photograph some of his favourite things in the kitchen along with a few packed-away memories that he had managed to retrieve from one of his stores. Perhaps, this novel direction to our conversations can be attributed to a small book of images that I had brought for Deen, a selection of his own slides digitised by Ricardo Leizaola and re-assembled in London (2010–2011). Deen is an accomplished photographer and he still has two thousand slides from his time as Tourist Officer in the 1970s when Ladakh's borders were re-opened.

The day after our conversation, we met in Deen's kitchen where the old pots were arranged with the new, dusted every day by Deen's wife and used regularly. They came from Yarkand, Kashmir and Ladakh. As I took photographs, Deen explained, 'This here, the plate with the cover, is what we used to take food to our neighbours. Still we do this do at Ramadan during *iftar* [the evening meal]'; 'this *momo* [dumpling] pot, I got that but later my brother wanted it. This is an exact copy that I had made in Kashmir.'

The new Central Asian Museum was slowly taking shape in Zangsti, the neighbourhood where most of Deen's people, Hor, had lived.[4] Deen was irritated by constant requests for information and exhibits, such as a black cap decorated with what he called white fish that his father and then he himself wore when they went to pray. Now Deen only wore it for *Eid* – the holiday marking the end of Ramadan – since the 'museum people' kept asking him to give it to them.

Deen collected hats and showed me several from Yarkand and Afghanistan as he explained their significance and modelled his favourites. We agreed that the embroidered letters on one unworn hat suggested it came from Russia; it had belonged to Deen's great-grandmother.

Our conversation in the presence of these objects led Deen to talk about his family. His grandfather had been *aqsaqual* (Persian, 'white beard'), a minor political post representing trade interests, for the government of Khotan in Leh during the later 19th century. We admired his fur hat in a box 'with flaps to keep your ears warm . . . it's so precious that I don't use it.' Our conversation meandered over members of the family who had a role in the trade between Leh and Khotan, and I found early 20th-century accounts that confirmed Deen's family had joined the handful of big traders in Leh dealing with Chinese Central Asia, Tibet and Kashmir. Eve Orme, for example, described Deen's grandfather on a 1926 visit,

> On the non-official side there was a very charming Mohammedan called Bahr-ud-Deen-Khan [or Bahuaddin Khan], who was lord of the

> Yarkandi Serai, and through whose hands passed most if not all of the trade from Turkestan. While sipping his scented China tea out of elaborate cups made in Moscow, we heard all the gossip of the bazaars from Kashgar to Khotan.
>
> (Orme 1945: 30)

These two cups, Deen said, belonged to his grandfather.

A network of paths connected Central Asia, South Asia and Tibet through Leh, "an entrepôt for the exchange of goods produced and consumed hundreds of miles away," and Ladakh, which was "at best a staging-post between the Punjab and Sinkiang" (Rizvi 1997: 379). This trade intersected with short-distance exchanges for subsistence goods such as grain, wool and fruit within Ladakh. Major transit routes led to the towns of Kashgar, Khotan and Yarkand, and Deen described how his grandfather Bahauddin Khan arrived from Khotan in the second half of the 19th century, when he was about 15 years old, with his father. It was another ten years before he was stationed in Leh for the purpose of business. Bahauddin Khan's brother, Omaruddin Khan, established himself in Lahore at more or less the same time and their uncle became governor of Khotan. Regularly disrupted and then interrupted more severely as China consolidated rule over the region at the end of the 1940s, the transit trade reached its height in the first decades of 20th century during the period covered by Jacqueline Fewkes' *Khan Archives*, a wonderful account of the family's trading position (Fewkes 2009, 2012; see also Fewkes and Khan 2005, 2016).

By comparison with the Partition between Pakistan and India, the borders to the east closed more gradually and were not sealed completely until the 1950s. Political turbulence frequently interfered with trading, as Pallis reported of the 1930s (Pallis 1948: 207), and at least two waves of refugees travelled through Ladakh the following decade. Among the many memories of these refugees, I recalled those that Abdul Ghani Sheikh, another friend and prominent scholar from Leh, shared. He had told me that the Tungan came first in the 1940s from 'Urumchi side': 'They were armed and had been fighting Communists . . . [and] would sell a goat to a Ladakhi for three

breads but soon left for Srinagar [the capital of Kashmir]' (personal communication, 1982). A friend reminded me when I was discussing this photobook project how frightened her mother had been of those she called Hor, who had come to Ladakh during 'the Chinese war.' I then remembered how her mother used to talk about Tungan robberies in almost the same breath as describing how they would give you a silver coin for a loaf of bread. Abdul Ghani Sheikh explained that it was Xinjiang civilians who arrived later in 1949, 'A few settled in Leh and Srinagar, married to Ladakhi women, but most preferred Turkey and settled in Ankara or Istanbul.'[5]

Deen told me how his grandfather joined a local elite who competed in sports, hospitality and consumer goods. I heard how Bahauddin Khan brought the first petrol lamp while 'Peter Sahib'[6] brought the first radio, the two friends constantly trying to upstage each other. It was not until the next generation that Deen's family joined Leh's small Argon community when his father married into a Buddhist family which had recently converted to Christianity. Ladakhi 'identities' can be – and are – infinitely typed and subtyped by combining apparent ethnicity with religion, region and occupation (Chapter 1). Argon connotes a shifting set of cosmopolitan associations with long-distance trading of the past, a Sunni Muslim identity and a Buddhist heritage. Like other Argon, Deen has family connections across the subcontinent's cities, as well as in Europe and the Middle East. Sunni Muslims are known locally as *khache*, which also means Kashmiri and, when ST status was granted to most Ladakhis in 1989, Argon were excepted because of their assumed privileges vis-à-vis government in Kashmir.[7] Deen's mother soon became a devout Muslim but her sister, who still lives with Deen, remained a Christian and belongs to a dwindling generation of congregants at the Moravian church in Leh. Like many residents of Leh and Ladakh as a whole, Deen has relatives who practice different religions.

Deen's father died in the 1970s and his mother a decade later. How lucky I am, said Deen,

> Both parents, I myself put them with this hand into the grave . . . and I feel very lucky in that way that I was able to put them to rest, wash and dress them. Myself, I put them in the grave and put the first earth on.[8]

Looking at and talking about these objects led Deen back to his childhood in the aftermath of Partition. In Leh, Muslims sheltered Buddhists during the first invasion by Gilgit Scouts, who had been organised by the British for defending against Russian incursions. These troops were defeated just short of Leh before an irregular defence force arrived. This second 'invasion' had more serious consequences for Muslims, who now stayed with their Buddhist neighbours. As Deen told me,

> That time, a lot of problems happened in Leh, especially to Muslims. That time, Buddhist people gave shelter to Muslims and protected

> everybody. . . . Especially one of my neighbours, just across the street, the family hid there and here for a few months. They did everything until the regular army came and took control. . . . There was not much killing in Leh, but there was a lot of looting . . . Oh yes, we lost everything. They just came and took away everything.

Deen's account resonates with others that tell of fear and uncertainties as well as co-operation between Buddhists and Muslims. Only when Indian troops drove the Gilgit Scouts out of most of Ladakh in May 1948 did Ladakhis realise that they were to join India rather than Pakistan, and the Scouts swore allegiance to Pakistan in November 1948.

Deen spoke of his mother as he discussed this period,

> She was really extraordinary. If she hadn't been there, I don't know what would have happened. My father was totally broken: no relatives, nothing at all. She rebuilt the house, totally from nothing. We lost everything. Only one thing was left, my mother's jewellery. Abi [grandmother] Amin was there from Chushot [a nearby settlement of 'Balti' or Shia Muslims, among others]. She took that jewellery and dropped it into the toilet, so something was left, and of my great-grandmother, too.

Deen remembered vaguely an elderly woman sitting in the sun on the roof and playing with them as children. He had asked his mother why she disappeared suddenly when he was 6 or 7 years old. He learned that she was Abi Amin, who had lived with them until her death. I had heard this story several times. Jewellery generally travels between women's hands, and I was unsure if Deen knew where it was, although I had been told that his sister still had the box. It was perhaps 12 or 18 inches long, its ivory surface patterned and inlaid with gold. Inside was a locket in the form of a golden butterfly that came with their great-grandmother from Yarkand.

Abi Amin's role in the family belonged to a set of stories, two of which I found particularly moving. The first told of another servant, a Yarkandi who had lost his legs through frostbite crossing to Leh. In consequence, he became a gatekeeper for one of the family's two *serai* and apparently challenged the irregular soldiers who arrived at the gate. He was shot dead after insisting, 'You can't come in, there are only women here.' Afterwards, reported Deen, "They just came and took away everything. My father was not in Ladakh, he had gone for some work to India . . . . He couldn't reach here. There were only a few women, and servants."

Deen listed in loving detail the trade goods that were taken from their warehouse on the ground floor of Khan Manzil: carpets, cloth of a particular cotton, which Ladakhis liked because it was thick and very soft, dried fruit and more, before concluding,

> That's what I am told. . . . My father was not there. Everything collapsed. Then, [this was the] biggest crisis for my family. We were at the bottom; nothing was left. My father had to re-start. My father and my mother.

The third family story about this period told how Deen's father stopped riding when he returned to Leh. I heard one version when we met with our project a few days after the photography session in Deen's kitchen. On this occasion, Deen had brought a model he had made of one of the family *serai* which he put on the table between us,

> Even my father's horses were taken away. He had five or six horses you know for playing polo, and for going to Srinagar. . . . He used to be a good hunter also and he had quite a good collection of guns. Those were taken . . . and he never rode again, well, except for that one time . . . This was a year before I was born but my mother told me, suddenly one day out of the blue, his favourite white horse reached home alone. It had run away from wherever, we don't know. When he reached here – his stable was here [pointing at the model on the table between us] on the ground floor – he couldn't get in. He just fell down in the courtyard and died there. That's when my father stopped riding except for that one visit by Pandit Nehru.[9]

Nehru's visit to Ladakh soon after Independence apparently prompted Deen's father to ride a borrowed racehorse in a polo match held in honour of the occasion. As Deen explained, 'My father had to agree, and he played for just fifteen minutes. That was the last time.'

The white horse, the amputee and Abi Amin wound their way regularly through Deen's stories, often without explicit reference to Partition. Hearing these stories again, I was struck by the fact that Deen was yet to be born when these events occurred. Marianne Hirsch (1997: 40) has defined postmemory as "a past that will neither fade away nor be integrated into the present" for subsequent generations. Originally used to describe the relationship between the children of Holocaust survivors and the memories of their parents, the term has come to describe how we know and relate to our predecessors' traumatic experiences through varied cultural practices, especially images. Events, themes, people and objects in Deen's Khan Manzil have receded and drawn near over the years. It seemed to me that Partition was as remote to Deen as to myself in the early 1980s but it is much more vivid today. For Deen, this 'unfinished business' with its "long shadow"[10] incorporates otherwise distinct geopolitical issues. For him, the line drawn between India and Pakistan is mirrored in the frontier created between India and China, which sealed many Ladakhis inside Tibet and Xinjiang.

After Partition, Deen's mother began to earn a little money by growing vegetables, knitting and embroidering until her husband secured a government job. Deen remembered how he and his sister would sit in the bazaar after school selling her pickles, returning home with 3 or 4 rupees. His family, who had come from Khotan to assist with the carrying trade, were unable to visit their relatives after the 1950s.[11]

The cardboard model of the family's upper *serai* set on the table during these conversations reminded Deen that theirs was the last of the *serai* to be demolished. It had stood around the corner from his house until the mid-1980s,

> It was so beautiful, made of clay, not pure white, with the water down here from the canal. The camels stayed here but not for more than a day or two and they were used for riding or for the caravan chiefs. . . . That's why we had that huge gate so that the camels could come right through to the back where they could get to the stream. Until Class 5 or 6, we used to play there; and we'd come away with our pockets stuffed full of dried fruit and nuts. Some children stayed; they came with the caravans and maybe they went to Kashmir or on the hajj.

Deen had enjoyed a conversation with members of the last caravan. Two Yarkandis who had travelled with this caravan in 1957–1958 told Deen that the smallest had at least one hundred and thirty camels, seventy horses and

mules, and fifty donkeys.[12] There would be four caravans at a time crossing one way or the other according to their own calendars. Talk of the networks of caravans and *serai* returned Deen to the transit goods they stored in their two *serai*, which he listed further in equally loving detail,

> The traders brought felt that measured twenty feet by twenty or by twelve, pearls, coral, silk, brocade, dried fruit – raisins, nuts. They loved the big sheep's meat and, in particular, the tail, a delicacy because of the fat. They brought camel wool; it is so warm, we used it for everything.

When I asked about their lifespan, Deen thought they had the *serai* for two full generations. Both were built after his father's father's father came to Leh in the 19th century. Trading with present-day Xinjiang expanded for a while but diminished even before the borders were closed. At that point, Deen explained, they were no longer 'pure Turkic' since his father and uncle had married Ladakhis.

Deen began to match his memories and knowledge with local collections of photographs and historic images that I had brought from the British Library along with a school history book. Pointing to one photograph, he explained,

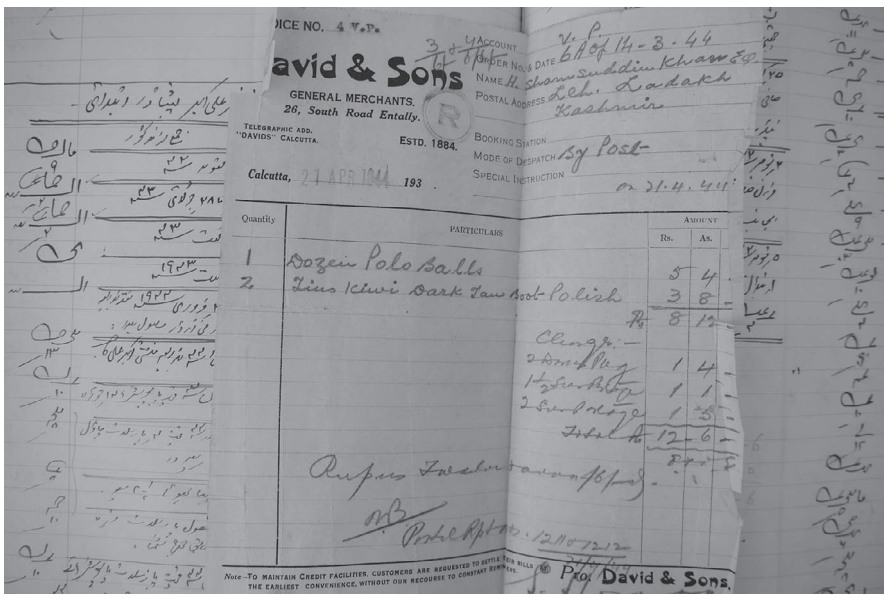
> The tax gate was there: see these people and look here is the tax gate, and here are all the traders from all over: these are Punjabi; these are Yarkandi. A man sat there, and he would close the gate until the goods and duties had been checked. They would come to the *serai* and look at everything and compare with the records and then they [the trading group] could come in here, or by the beautiful gate at the bottom of town. The *serai* were there, the *godowns*, everything was there then.

Ladakhis who grew up in Zangsti mixed with all these people, shared lodgings and stables or, in Deen's case, played in the street with Yarkandi. Today, Zangsti has an association of eighteen formally recognised houses, most of them headed by women. As Deen mentioned their names, I found that I could not transcribe them by ear for the language was Turkic. The women were Yarkandi who had been stranded in Leh when the borders closed. Although many have since died, those still alive in the 21st century considered Zangsti a blessed area because, Deen reported, 'Zangsti is not crowded, we have our own sources of water, and it was the trade centre to Central Asia. Also, there were bakeries that you found nowhere else in Ladakh.' Yarkandi breads and other food, including the famed *pilau* of Sadir Arqon, only disappeared after 2000 and were sorely missed, especially at funerals. But with the passage of time and the influx of newcomers, Deen said, he no longer heard the 'sweet language' that Hor spoke as he went about the bazaar. He had made the model of the *serai* for his children because, 'They don't know about the past, how we all played there and what a perfect place it was for football. The children grew up playing in Zangsti but not in the *serai* there.'

The cardboard model between us on yet another occasion, Deen recalled a further *serai* in Kashmir, currently hosting Tibetans but previously the home of Yarkandi refugees. Deen used to visit his 'milk sister' (*oma cig*, 'fed at the same breast') at this *serai* when he was studying in Srinagar. She married another Yarkandi after her family accepted the offer of citizenship in Turkey and the couple moved to Iraq. All Yarkandi were offered citizenship in Turkey, but Deen's family decided to stay in Leh. Some of them attend family events in the diaspora and our conversation reminded Deen that he had promised to visit his milk sister and the holy sites on Umrah.[13] As he emphasised so often, it was more difficult to visit family in today's China and Pakistan. In the 1980s, Deen's grandfather's brother was still alive and head of house in Lahore. He had reinvested the family's trading wealth in textiles and cars, and Deen was able to meet him in London at the age of 98, 'a proper Pathan, with his beard down to here [pointing to his chest] and traditional full robes and turban.' Deen declined to take over the business since he could not travel to Pakistan with any confidence about re-entry to India, and so the Lahore family's extensive property reverted to the state when this man died.

It may have been our project that reminded Deen to begin a more systematic exploration and documentation of his papers, images and objects. Looking over family documents together in 2015, Deen recalled working with Jacqueline Fewkes, who discusses personal and business papers of Deen's family from 1904–1948, consisting of "approximately 1,000 loose pages, including personal memos, personal and business letters, registered letter envelopes, money order receipts, export permits, telegrams, account books, and telegram receipts" (Fewkes 2012: 323). The documents concern dyes, medicines, drugs, weaponry and household items, as well as other manufactured goods, carpets, cloths and jewellery. They deal with purchases, transport, taxation and the sale of goods, and Fewkes demonstrates the international dimensions of trade, focusing particularly on the 1930s via documents in Tibetan, Urdu, Persian, Uighur and English, as well as languages not yet identified. The archive provides evidence of connections throughout the region and, indirectly, with Europe, the Americas and Japan.

As we looked through a ledger of documents from 1934–1944, Deen paused at the sight of an invoice for his father from Calcutta for polo balls and shoe polish, exclaiming at the waste of money and recalling the boots that his father always kept immaculately clean.



By 2017, I found that Deen had catalogued half of his two and a half boxes, documenting papers back to 1914.

Siddiq Wahid considers that the consequences of partitions for the borderlands have been overlooked (Wahid 2015). These areas, he suggests, were affected more radically over a longer period than the central regions. Wahid focuses on the transformation of the frontier with Tibet and claims that Ladakh has more divided families than Kashmir Valley.[14] Deen, however, merged distinct events to emphasise the transformation of all Ladakh's borders within and across families and individuals as well as territories. His stories and objects share common ground with other local narratives that circulate about the loss of regional self-sufficiency and autonomy following Partition and the 1962 war between India and China, but they privilege a Ladakhi Muslim – and a Sunni – history. Partitioning indicated the dire situation of Deen's parents when he was young, recollected and amplified in the present by contemporary troubles with Xinjiang border regimes and India's communalist politics. As Deen concluded, "My father and mother were very lonely; everyone was in Kashgar or Lahore. . . . The family fortunes were lost with Partition. Worse, though, it was not possible to travel to the paternal home." Deen presented house and family wrapped into wider histories of multiple partitions across the sub-continent that created a cataclysm for his family and for Kashmir, Xinjiang and Ladakh. From Deen's perspective,

these events not only shut Ladakh's borders permanently; they also divided his family, impoverished its Ladakhi branch and left him an outsider at home. He spoke almost simultaneously of the division of home and country, conveying a sense of occupying an edge himself in relation to the general impossibility nowadays – and especially for Muslims – of 'being Ladakhi.'

Looking over the photobook

In 2015, I brought Deen the photobook I had assembled in London. 'Oh my god,' he said as he took it away, explaining that we would talk after Ramadan. We postponed discussion several times as Deen's family took the book to show their friends, leaving Deen unable to read it himself. I heard that Deen's son was puzzled because, 'There is nothing about your life, your work, your contributions.' Later, though, he grew attached to the small book and became interested in his father's collection, promising to help sort the stores. Deen's opinions of the still-to-be-completed Central Asian Museum had changed, I discovered. He was less concerned that the images of hats and the model of the *serai* remain private – and he even planned to loan the museum some of his precious goods.

Eventually, we sat with the book in Dolma's kitchen. Dolma is a Buddhist and an ex-colleague of Deen's of much the same age. I had also brought her a photobook, and they swapped books as we talked. Puzzled that objects had taken the place of people, Dolma began to tease Deen. 'That's very common,' she said of a teapot from Kashmir and a set of plates. Heated discussion led Dolma to concede that she recognised many of the objects from the house of her mother's sister, who had converted to Islam and lived for a long time with her trader husband in Kashmir. Turning the pages of the book, Dolma stopped again to exclaim, 'Look at you in that hat, how much of a Hor you seem.'

Noting the calligraphy at the end of the book, Dolma was reminded of a plaque outside the mosque in the main bazaar, which we had admired for

its skill of execution. Both pieces were by Deen's sister, the sister with the jewellery box. The calligraphy and the model of the *serai* completed the photobook.

Discussing the different but connected histories of Muslim and Buddhist Ladakh, we turned inevitably to the conflict that erupted in 1989, the so-called agitation and subsequent boycott. These troubles were associated with political manoeuvring for autonomy from Kashmir and affected relations among neighbours in Leh and villages alike. In the settlement described in Chapter 3, the Muslim house left after harassment and stone throwing. In the village described in Chapter 6, neighbours initially protected Muslim houses and stood guard by turn, but tensions grew so acute that they persuaded the Muslim families to live elsewhere for a while. Two decades on, these Muslim neighbours have not returned and the 'customs' listed at the end of the official settlement records note that 'it is no longer allowed' to bury Muslims in the (untended) graveyard. Suspicion and segregation continue to inflect relations, notably around intermarriage, and they are regularly exacerbated by events in Kashmir and nationally.

Dolma reminded me that her own family, like many others, had members of different faiths, which they sometimes changed. She referred to her Muslim aunt, who had adopted one relative after another when she was widowed because she had no children of her own. The adoptions went badly, and all the girls left. Some remained Muslim but, after marriage, set up home independently; others were encouraged to convert back to Buddhism. Dolma herself was adopted informally but her mother took her home almost immediately, and ultimately, it was Dolma's nephew who was 'adopted' to take care of his aunt without however moving into her home or converting to Islam. Sadly, her last days were coloured by the boycott. In summary and drawing on various versions of events,

> There was a ban. Buddhists could have nothing to do with Muslims but Tsewang, Dolma's nephew, had to buy his aunt meat and all the butchers are Muslim. Each time, he was fined and called to account by the Buddhist Association. But he carried on and tried to explain how he had to look after his 'mother.' . . . When she died, it was very difficult. Tsewang went to the Muslim Association to ask them to come to the house, but they said, 'No, it will cause problems for you [with the Ladakh Buddhist Association]. Bring her to the mosque.' Tsewang would not do that. To him, it would be shameful not to bury your relative from her own home. As Tsewang was so adamant, the Muslim Association eventually agreed to come to the house to bathe her and afterwards they went to the mosque. 'Of *masi*'s[15] [Buddhist] relatives only Angmo and I came, no one else.'

Deen explained that it would have been better to hold the whole funeral in the mosque because the last prayer should come from as many people

as possible, for the good of the living as well as the dead. The two friends agreed that the situation had eased, and Dolma summarised the present state of affairs,

> Now, it is no problem at death; Muslims and Buddhists can mix easily at funerals . . . but, if a Buddhist and Muslim marry, they will be separated or they will have to leave Ladakh. Now, though, there are no big problems like before.

Deen appreciated colleagues who had protected him at work across the region during these troubles. Recalling how he used to eat from the same plate as his close Buddhist friends, he acknowledged the hardening of lines between Ladakh's communities, 'For me, now that my Buddhist friends will no longer eat from the same plate, it makes me feel that I am somehow unacceptable' (see also Smith 2013). These days, he rarely visits the capital because he feels uncomfortable as a Muslim in Delhi. Dolma, perhaps to ease the pain, emphasised their common ground, saying, 'We are like migrant birds. Muslims go on hajj in the winter; we go on pilgrimage. We all work in the summer.' Both Dolma and Deen have Buddhist and Muslim relatives and Deen also has Christian family, including his beloved mother's sister in Khan Manzil.

As we looked at Dolma's book, Deen also started teasing. When Dolma could not find the juniper she needed for an important event at short notice, it was Deen who brought her 5 kg within a day. 'How did you get that?' asked Dolma. Deen would not say but conceded gracefully that no one had told her what to prepare. Apparently, he also told Dolma that I had taped his life story in 2013, 'but she didn't ask me any questions, so I just gave my personal story.'

With some further editing, Deen and I settled on the version of the photobook that I brought in 2017. It was and is a multiply worked object, and this chapter reflects the pride of place Deen gave to the objects he made, wore and handled. They all carry traces of his family, and they all enrolled Deen performatively. Objects often escape language, and many of the treasures that Deen showed me during our photography sessions held memories of events and relations that Deen never experienced first-hand (Bloch 1998; Miller 2008). Modelling hats or handling cups and plates, Deen assumed alternative standpoints within his family, along with their gestures and memories. We examined photograph albums, jewellery and a model of the *serai* that evoked for Deen the taste and smell of his own childhood. Some of these things, such as the documents, have grown fragile with time but others, like the *momo* pot, were brand new replicas. A father's father's brother (now deceased) in Lahore, unease in Delhi and the line drawn down the middle of old Khan Manzil inflected the way Deen told and displayed the old house in his own and other kitchens and generated thoughts about a new house, which I describe in what follows. Objects, images and words thus positioned Deen in

relation to his father and mother, their forebears and the places from which they came, conjuring Khan Manzil at the intersection of Yarkand and Leh to convey a sense of the deferred and displaced effects of all kinds of partition.

Our method of working made the affective qualities of houses and the effects of different partitions on Khan Manzil apparent in all their ambivalence, nostalgia and – at times – indecipherability. Showing and telling his house, Deen connected the demise of old Khan Manzil and its partition between two brothers in the 1980s with earlier geopolitical partitions between post-colonial states and the subsequent social boycott in 1989 between Ladakhi Muslims and Buddhists. This material suggests common territory relating to longing and loss among those who stay and those who leave. It draws attention to non-territorial concepts of home since Khan Manzil was constituted previously through a family network, whose members interacted as they moved with the goods they exchanged. Deen is not in exile, and he is not a refugee in any usual sense of the term, but his family are gone. In 2015, he reiterated,

> There are none of my father's people in Ladakh. . . . It is a big loss for me, as for my father. At least if you can say "they are from my father's side," you feel a little comfortable. But now there are no Yarkandis, . . . and no one speaks Yarkandi as they did when I grew up.

His sense of loss is acute at home in the place where he and his parents were born and raised.

A proxy house and a new 'old' Khan Manzil

The Greek arkhē (government; beginning, origin, first place) gives us *arkheion*, a house or residence of superior magistrates like a town hall, the English archaic, and archives. Deen was committed to our project and shared the small book reflecting his version of Khan Manzil with his children, other relatives and friends. Deen's wife, aunt, son or daughter would have rendered their home differently on the page, and so Deen's version inevitably raises questions about house precedence and procedure.[16] As Elizabeth Povinelli (2011: 149) asked, "When we evoke the archive, what are we conjuring by way of inclusion and exclusion?" She asked this question while exploring differences between an archivist, a collector and a hoarder. Deen, I imagine, would see himself in all three roles, but by 2017 he was celebrated locally as an archivist who, Povinelli (2011: 151) suggests, is charged to find "lost objects, subjugated knowledges, and excluded socialities."

I found Deen in pride of place at the entrance to the Central Asian Museum in Zangsti, welcoming visiting officials and explaining the wealth of exhibits. The Chief Minister opened the museum at the end of 2016, a decade after the Munshi Aziz Bhatt Museum for Silk Route and Central Asian Trade was established in Kargil.[17] The architectural style of the Leh museum

suggests a Yarkandi tower or fortress, and its fine woodwork – much of it executed by craftsmen from Lower Ladakh – is lit internally by natural light. Walking around the building, Deen's son echoed his father's words as he explained how the site had been their playground: in his childhood, the 17th century mosque, Tsa Soma or Masjid Sharif, around which the museum was designed was 'just open space, full of rubbish' and it was strange to see how it had been transformed.

This museum has given Deen a second home. He and a colleague became the 'trusted people' in charge after difficulties and tragedies with the project, whose leading architect André Alexander died in 2012. They were entrusted by Leh's Sunni Muslim Association, Anjuman Moin-ul-Islam, to stock, manage and care for the museum. In the space of six months, they completed the collection and filled the building with Buddhist and Muslim scriptures, trade items, carpets and goods in everyday use: clay samovars, leather water bottles, currencies, manuscripts of the Quran and genealogies of important prophets. The Muslim Association was restoring the main mosque in the bazaar and lent its fine Yarkandi carpets, manuscripts and other valuables to the museum. They had planned to sell their collection of kitchen equipment for the mosque's charities, but agreed to loan them to the museum, where they were displayed in an outbuilding. Deen told me that it took ten of them to wash a big carpet from the mosque, which they did over and over again in the hope of preventing damage from moths. He and his colleague had called

house to house all winter soliciting goods and financial contributions. Almost all the museum's objects were loaned through legal agreements that commit the museum to return them if and when requested. Deen said that he insisted on formal agreements; "No, you can't give this to us, you can make a loan with this court paper, signed with one copy each." Subsequently, however, some people left goods to the museum permanently in their wills. Because of these six months of work, less was spent on acquisitions than anticipated and a sum remained for professional installation and constructing places for visitors to rest.

This photograph shows Deen at the museum identifying members of a previous generation in an old image on top of our first (2011) photobook. He also had the second (2017) photobook with him. His signet ring is visible, a gift from his father who received it from his father. Deen was familiar with its imprint on family papers, although he could not read the script.

Our small books interested other people as they circulated within and beyond Khan Manzil. Members of family, friends and museum visitors recalled experiences and family stories that touched on the quandaries and events the photobooks described. It was not only these artefacts that had moved from a personal to a public arena. Several of Deen's treasures were also in the museum, and I was delighted to set eyes on a – to me – mythical set of family saddle bags, cases with sturdy locks, the key missing once again, joined by

two metal chains so that they could be slung over the back of a camel. The model of one of Khan Manzil's *serai* that I knew so well was also on display, even more tattered and missing one of its walls. My questions led Deen to explain that the model had aged poorly but he would make another in wood along with a second model of the lower *serai*. He would bring his papers, too, since a guest was expected who could translate some of them; moreover, his documents would be better preserved in museum conditions than in his stores. Deen's stores, I imagine, will empty gradually since the museum has become an extension of Khan Manzil and a position from which his house can be deciphered and displayed, recognised and appreciated.

Although the Central Asian Museum has been dwarfed by subsequent buildings, it still stands tall above Zangsti as a monument to Yarkand with a view of the mountains behind Leh. Deen's goods in the museum participate in what Susan Stewart (1993) described as practices of miniaturising and monumentalising, which she considers as a matter of scale vis-à-vis the (human) body. Some dimensions of the external world are exaggerated, claimed Stewart, particularly in the form of the sublime and a natural landscape, while others are miniaturised in a longing for intimacy, possession or control that creates an interior temporality (Stewart 1993: 69). However, miniatures and monuments also address practices of living in, making and refashioning houses. If the portable books and model *serai* express a form of miniaturisation, they also provide Deen with a mnemonic of the past in the present, a way of piecing together the fragments he had heard and learned as he thought about his own life in relation to others. Considering how, in Patrick Joyce's words, "I lived what they survived, at least a part of it" (Joyce 2014: 67), we can ask of first houses as of first languages, "Is it more a question of the past speaking us than we speaking them?" (Joyce 2014: 89). These miniature objects are also 'things that talk' (Daston 2007), which Corsín Jiménez (2014: 383) considers in the form of prototypes, "inscriptive objects in their own right: objects that hold within various biographical, techno-scientific and cultural lines of flight." They model possible trajectories that can be grasped, extended and transformed. As Bachelard (1994: 150) emphasised, values become condensed and enriched in miniature form to engage us with possible as well as actual worlds.

In 2015, Deen told me, 'If I build another house, I will make the old one in miniature' and he explained that he would not need much land; 'You are leaving? Tomorrow, I will bring sketches of the other *serai* and the house. It will be a rough sketch, but you will get the idea. I can draw a plan.' Deen has one small plot of land where he was hoping to make a replica of the old Khan Manzil on a smaller scale. This future house will acknowledge new conditions, such as the shrinking of the family domain, and it will speak to dominant stereotypes about the rendering of Ladakh's different houses.

According to Deen, the 'capture' and redistributions of land began with the devolution of some aspects of government to the Leh Hill Council in

1995. As we were surveying new houses one day across the city's landscape, Deen emphasised the dissolution of the conventionally accepted Buddhist house form,

> Around Leh at least, almost everyone separates in Buddhist families, partly because it's so easy to do. You put some bricks and a marker down wherever and then the Hill Council will encourage you; they want your vote. Today, it's the Buddhists who divide and the Muslims who stay together. We Muslims live in joint households; one brother upstairs and one downstairs.

In my view, Deen was disputing negative evaluations of Muslim as compared to Buddhist houses. Acknowledging that his new 'old' home would be defined in territorial terms that aligned with national borders, he also claimed that Muslim houses are no more temporary or makeshift than their Buddhist equivalents. Together, Deen's new houses – a small Khan Manzil in the old style taking shape, at least in the imagination, and a monumental museum housing most of his treasures – would or will produce material and visible evidence to passers-by of the value of Muslim as well as Buddhist Ladakhi houses, histories and ways of life.

Notes

1 A *serai* or *sarai* provided accommodation for travellers, their animals and goods when they visited Ladakh on pilgrimage or business.
2 In principle, partible inheritance is enjoined throughout India.
3 See Hoskins (1998).
4 Hor are described as Yarkandi (also Yarkendi), Turki (Turkic-speaking) and northern people. Yarkand is a city and region of contemporary Xinjiang, but Ladakhis often use the term somewhat vaguely in reference to trade with Kashgar, Khotan, Yarkand (see map in Chapter 1, p. 11) and other 'Silk Road' centres.
5 There are many alternative accounts of these refugees. Prince Peter (1963: 377) described the first wave, noting how children were threatened,

> with being carried off by Tungan robbers (these were Chinese Moslems from Sinkiang who, in 1938, had just been chased out of Turkestan by Soviet troops, and had escaped Southwards, over the Karakorum pass; they stayed in Leh for some time before being repatriated by sea to China by the Government of India).

Joldan (2018: 63) suggests that most of the people that Ladakhis called Tungan, approximately three hundred in all, were Turki soldiers who arrived in 1935. A *National Geographic* article (Clark 1954: 621–644) describes the later wave of civilian refugees as a Kazakh exodus from Xinjiang in 1950 who travelled to Turkey via Ladakh and Srinagar in Kashmir. Another *National Geographic* article (LaFugie 1949) features a 1946 image of trading showing porters unloading 'giant American-made tires, two per beast.' As Jonathan Deng (2010: 16–17) commented, Indian soldiers did not come to Ladakh until October 1947, a year later than soldiers from the national Chinese Army (see also Dollfus 1995: 47). There is an extensive literature on the Xinjiang trade and its Ladakhi

dimensions (for example, Rizvi 1994, 1997; Fewkes 2009; Joldan 1985; Sheikh 1997; Warikoo 1995).

6 Deen described F.E. Peter (Friedrich Eugen Peter) as Leh's Moravian pastor. Peter served in the Himalaya from 1898–1936 and was ordained in 1927, the first and only bishop of the then West Himalayan Province of the Moravian Church (Bray 1985: 39; see also Beszterda 2014).

7 'Kashmiri' or 'Tibetan' Muslims index political and cultural as well as regional affiliations; Bhutia (2018) has discussed a sense of belonging in movement among *khache* across the Himalaya in relation to religious migration (*hijrat*) (see also Gellner 2013).

8 Double quotation marks indicate transcribed passages from Deen's life story that I taped in 2013 (see note 20, p. 42). With the passage of time, I cannot always be sure which words in my other records were Deen's and which interpolations of mine and summarise conversations where attribution is a problem.

9 This was a Badakshan horse (Badakshan is a province in Northeast Afghanistan today) that was stolen before Deen's father arrived from Amritsar. Badakshan horses were famed for their speed over and above racehorses from Yarkand that were used in polo at the time. After Partition, small local horses were used instead.

10 *Partition: The Long Shadow* is the title of an excellent collection edited by Butalia (2015) in which post memory is a key theme.

11 Deen had to travel to Europe to meet family from Lahore and Khotan; Fewkes (2009: 142) reports that many Ladakhi families had to wait until the 1980s to hear news of relatives in Tibet.

12 The Karakoram route closed in 1949 but some caravans came later to Ladakh; Rizvi suggests the last was in 1953 (Rizvi 1996: 112).

13 *Al-Umrat al mufradah* can be performed separately from the hajj and is sometimes described as a lesser pilgrimage.

14 Wahid describes colonial manoeuvring from the early 19th century onwards, culminating in the several partitions that occurred pre- and post-Independence between 1940 and 1950.

15 *Masi*, mother's sister, from the Hindi *mausī.'*

16 Derrida (1996) emphasised the links made between "the order of commencement" and "the order of commandment" by reference to the Greek. Among key discussions of archival practices, see Garcia (2016), Sekula (1986) and Steedman (2001, 2002).

17 See the illustrations from Kargil reproduced in Fewkes and Khan (2016).

6 An empty house?

Legal initiatives have encouraged the recognition of small houses (*khangun*) as citizens in their settlements rather than temporary offshoots of the main house. In Chapter 3, I described the impact of local state developments, and in this chapter, I discuss national initiatives. Both programmes challenge accepted practices that suggest those who share a house name belong to a single household and, as I show in what follows, junior women are less likely to benefit from developments than junior men. It will become clear that Jigmed, a woman from an offshoot house in a rural settlement, exercised few formal claims on her childhood home compared with both her brothers. Like Deen Khan, Jigmed was devoted to her first, natal home, and she contemplated returning there to live and improve it. But her rights were marginalised during a modernisation initiative, and she felt at times that she had been excluded altogether.

This modernisation initiative was known as a land settlement. In the village I introduce, the settlement took place between 2008 and 2010, provoking extensive negotiations about property claims and obligations. The registration of property ratified many changes that had occurred, but also caused confusion, and the estate I describe struggled to establish who had a claim to what, who belonged where, and how members might maintain their position in the village through their acknowledged house name and formal village membership. The disambiguation of property claims led to the registration of simple houses (*khangpa*), but previous views of house and village continued to resonate. With time, members of the estate I describe started to congregate once more under their common name and it is unclear how their newly registered ownership in the estate's two simple houses will affect their sense of family and place in the longer term.

As Jane Guyer has shown, an archaic form of the household "still lives, thrives, gets protected and projected forward, within the ongoing platforms of economic and social life" (Guyer 2014: 19). Guyer's exploration of the continuing purchase of highly anachronistic images of a hearth or property-holding taxpayer subject to a feudal lord resonates with this material from Ladakh. The archaic house is still with us, Guyer suggests, even though it is not recognised as a model from the past or a likely horizon for the future. In

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the circumstances of routine property division, I am interested in why and how this archaic house form still matters in Ladakh. For how long can a house include members who have moved to the city? How do people manage to stay in two places at once? How is an apparently empty house animated? While the following narrative about partitioning resonates with practices in the peri-urban settlement described in Chapter 3, it is the position of junior household members and the gendered division of labour that I explore in this chapter.

Jigmed, Onpo house and the village

On holiday in Ladakh in 2013, one of my sons asked, 'What is this doubling here? Why do they have two houses next door to each other which are exactly the same, and why do they leave one empty?' He had noticed this phenomenon in several villages but my response specifically concerns Jigmed, a middle-aged woman from an offshoot who lived mostly in Leh. Throughout my visits during the 2000s, Jigmed lavished care and attention on her apparently empty offshoot, two hours' drive from the city, which exacted significant demands on both her purse and her time. She stayed a night or two in her rural home every month, driving 40 km from Leh along difficult roads to dust and clean the small house, burn incense, clear irrigation channels, water fields, visit the elder of her two brothers in the main house, solve problems with neighbours and reminisce. She treasured the feel of her *khangun* and the memories it evoked of her childhood when they moved there after the birth of her brother's first child,

> we had only one goat and one *dzomo* [half yak, half cow] that we took with us but still I was very happy. I don't know why. My mother used to tease me. She would say, Jigmed, if you don't like it, we will go back to the *khangchen* [main house]. But I didn't want to go, I just loved my *khangun*.

Jigmed recalled the freedom she had enjoyed when they decamped every summer to the high pastures. Ladakh is a high-altitude desert cut off by road from neighbouring areas during long and bitter winters, and residents used to move between valley and hillside according to the seasons. On the way, they interacted with 'owners of the land' on mountain tops, apologising for disturbing them as they watched the glaciers to gauge the depth of cold and next season's irrigation supply. None of the village had taken their animals to their high pastures since the early 2000s and Jigmed's estate, Onpo, gave their several ageing yak to friends in a nearby village who kept the produce while Onpo met regular veterinary bills rather than putting their animals to death.

Onpo (*dbon po*) means astrologer. I have chosen the pseudonym to suggest a high rank, since astrologers belonged with other respected occupations such as doctors (*lharje*) or lords (*lonpo*) who were not only exempt from conventional tax dues but also benefited from the 'free' help of lower-ranking neighbours. Onpo belongs to a village with abundant land whose houses are scattered across the cultivated area. Water is sometimes scarce, and access to irrigation was managed by formal turn-taking within the several village sections. The estate rights and duties described in Chapter 3 were much the same in this more rural settlement, and subsistence practices likewise depended on wages. However, there were few local employment opportunities other than a handful of government jobs and commercial work in a neighbouring settlement. This nearby centre occupies a favourable position on a long-distance truck route from the plains and sits between several local villages next to a large military post. Most village houses still grew cereal crops which they subsidised through direct or indirect employment of house people in the army, but they have all abandoned animal husbandry because of an acute shortage of domestic labour.

In 1890, the Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh reported twenty houses in the village, "some very substantial." Since the 1980s, the village has lost cultivated land to a housing boom. Three times as many houses are registered than in the 1980s; official records suggest 300–350 people living in some sixty households.[1] State records suggest that the loss of cultivable land has been redressed by clearing wasteland and planting woodland, and the 2010 land settlement registered 100 ha of cultivable land compared with less than 70 ha recorded in the 1981 census.[2] The population has grown in step but official records document births, not residence. Most of those registered live elsewhere, and the new land and housing is managed by fewer full-time residents. In addition, more of the land than in other villages belongs to a nearby monastery which entails further obligations on the part of villagers.

No one had lived in Onpo *khangun* since the 1990s. It was then home to Jigmed's mother and sister, and when Jigmed's mother died, her daughter moved to live with other family. The house was subsequently filled only with memories and ghosts. One time, as I came through the *khangun* door, Jigmed asked if I remembered a fire twenty-five years previously. We had been sleeping in the main house, and a kerosene lamp fell over in the small house where Jigmed's mother and sister lived. It was ghosts (*lhande*), they said, or some bad thing (*nodpa*). Another time, when we slept on the roof since it was too dusty inside the house, she repeated what she had learned as a child from her father about the histories of the stars above us. Every time we visited, she would tour the two rooms her father had built at the very beginning. So, when I came with my son in 2013, she explained again how her father built that kitchen, now a store for dung (pictured at the beginning of this section). She proudly presented her stove, designed by the local smith with her help and copied throughout the village. As she cleaned the house and watered the fields, she explained to my son that she had to keep house properly in tribute to her mother and sister who had worked so hard for so long. As far as she was concerned, her house was a repository of memory and family history, but it was not merely a heritage, and it certainly was not empty.

Jigmed fulfilled her village duties during these regular visits, and she also sent remittances from Leh. Village houses had been adapted since the 1980s with new amenities such as gas stoves or running water, achieved by building new rooms or dwellings next to the old. Often, the old – apparently empty – houses provided storage and sheltered shrines, as well as the occasional family visitor, but sometimes, they afforded the wherewithal for materials to extend and beautify the main family house. Jigmed worried that people from the main house might demolish the offshoot if she did not fulfil her small house role adequately. Perhaps they would use it, she said, to enlarge the main house or to wall their fields. She did not want her childhood home to be reincorporated in traditional fashion within the wider estate any more than she wanted to become a household drudge in the village. On the assumption that her children would never return, Jigmed directed her energies largely to her city home and, when one of the grandchildren wanted to repair the village house, Jigmed demurred, 'No we won't do it now . . . not again until someone lives here; then we can whitewash it, too.' Although Lehpa are generally attached to their natal homes and villages, Jigmed refused to indulge a fantasy on this occasion to invest in a home that was, if not empty, sparsely occupied. Weighing the burden against the joy this small house gave her, she continued to calculate carefully how much to send home and how often to stay in the offshoot.

It seemed clear to me that the main house was in no position to better itself by incorporating materials from its offshoot. Jigmed's brother, Mutup, was head of house. He and his equally elderly wife with one young relative/helper worked hard but still had to hire labour to keep their land viable. If my son had asked Mutup about the apparently empty house next to his, he

would probably have answered with another question: why would you spend money pulling a house down unless you have to? Mutup had no further people to house since his children had moved to Leh, and no spare capacity to improve the estate. Indeed, the main house itself might soon empty in the same way as its offshoot. At the time, in 2013, the elderly couple were in their 80s and their young relative planned to marry. She did not want to bring in a husband because of the heavy workload, which was exacerbated by additional dues to the monastery, but hoped to set up shop in the commercial centre nearby. Mutup's son would not return because of business interests in the city but he might be persuaded to release his own son, Mutup's grandson, to come back to care for the family name and his grandparents.

Most of the family known as Onpo had married out or moved to Leh, but none of them had registered individual claims on the estate. In consequence, they were able to sustain an undifferentiated sense of belonging to the land and family. 'We are one,' I heard, and 'As a house/estate, we don't quarrel because we all live separately.' Even so, Onpo included two effectively independent units whose overlapping claims occasionally clashed. In 2009, for example, there were signs of unexpected visitors to the small house in the remains of a cooking fire on the front steps and what may have been a theft of firewood. It became clear through a conversation on our arrival that the main house had also borrowed the offshoot's threshing floor for brickmaking. Jigmed explained that her brother had no need to ask permission 'since we are one,' but her expression suggested a different story and she soon reminded me how her father had created the small house. Around 1960 or a little earlier, 'He cleared all the land and none of this except for one or two fields has anything to do with the *khangchen*.' Jigmed agreed, however, that the house was her elder brother's in the sense that he had stayed at home in the village throughout, and one of the grandchildren offered much the same view when they explained that of course Mutup expected to inherit the entire estate because he was the only resident son. It was a surprise for Mutup to find that his sister continued to visit, thereby registering rival claims on the *khangun* without alleviating the *khangchen's* workload. Signs of occupation in the offshoot turned out to indicate one solution to the main house's burden. They had hosted migrant workers in the *khangun* when they were unable to find villagers to help at the right time. Lodgings for migrant 'helpers,' the small house had been claimed at least temporarily by the main house after all, but in an unexpected fashion, as Jigmed surmised. She said sourly, 'Who knows? Perhaps a Nepali or Bihari will move in.'

One house in some respects, two in others. Although tensions occasionally surfaced, members of the large family spread across the region asked more often how they could help their rural childhood home. Could the *khangchen* last until they managed to persuade someone from a junior generation to return? Could the offshoot, which had been empty for so long, carry on without new life in the main house? What to do?

The land settlement (2008–2010)

Why and how Onpo still mattered to Jigmed and other members of her family became more explicit during and especially after the state-mandated land settlement between 2008 and 2010. The registration process crystallised contestation about the standing of a 'proper' or 'full' house; it revealed and intensified conflicts about how to align individuals and component units. In principle, state law recognises claims from all residents equally, while – as I have shown – local practice differentiates rights within and between citizen houses. Onpo people were unclear how to achieve a formal distribution of people, land and other belongings between the main and small house while simultaneously preserving a single name that configured their kinship relations, local routines and history. In the process of disambiguating claims and registering ownership, it became difficult for Jigmed to shift flexibly between her status as part of the estate, manager of a largely independent offshoot and a householder in the city.

Ultimately, both parts of Onpo estate became simple houses (*khangpa*). The property was divided principally between two brothers in the same way as Khan Manzil, but Jigmed continued to care for her offshoot after accepting a few small fields and trees. Like Deen Khan, she found that her sense of identity and belonging were diminished through partitioning, but she attributed this disadvantage to her gender and position in the small house rather than geopolitical bordering practices. Jigmed still considers Onpo her home at the time of writing, but she has found herself sharing the offshoot with a brother who had previously avoided village life and scarcely visited for decades.

Villagers were accustomed to yearly and four-yearly surveys when they could update their property records with the local land officer or *patwari*, but the 2008–2010 settlement assumed an entirely different scale. A National Land Records Modernization Programme (NLRMP) was designed to replace the formula regularised in 1908 with a uniform process for registering land across the whole of India. The initiative was not expected to generate revenue from taxation in Ladakh, but it might disambiguate property claims within families or between villages in state records. According to the *Daily Excelsior* (Editorial 2014), a digitised land record promised a much-needed solution for courts that had been overburdened by archaic and cumbersome requirements in responding to various legislative reforms. Progress was slow and outsourcing plans that promised computerisation of Leh records by 2018 during the second phase of the programme (Excelsior Correspondent 2015) proved optimistic.[3]

The *patwari* who was responsible for surveying and agreeing accounts in this village confirmed that it was the first regular settlement since British times and emphasised that he was preparing the second settlement ever made for the village.[4] Looking through his large ledger in 2013, I learned how it was before and how it was now. He showed me what villagers wanted to have documented about their 'customs' at the end of the book. There were no

recorded sales of land but a new prohibition against 'outsiders' clearing any land within village boundaries.[5] Turning to the front of the book, the *patwari* translated symbols that traced 20th-century changes in property rights. Until 1970, only the name of the eldest brother/son was recorded, but after 1970, every name in a sibling set was entered. As this *patwari* explained, this development did not mean that siblings enjoyed the same rights,

> Before, when there were a few children in a family, the eldest brother was recorded as owner. Some children would migrate, leave or become monks; some would die; some would stay with their eldest brother. . . . This system has completely changed. Your name remains there even if you have married into another family. Now you cannot remove names. Before 1970, your names were removed from the records leaving only the eldest brother there. After 1970, you kept all brothers' and sisters' names. Sisters could claim a share of property up to 25%. Equal division was made law in 2004–2005 and, since then, you keep all the names and property rights listed. It is up to the sisters themselves if they claim their full share.

The heightened atmosphere that greeted the settlement process involved endless rumours and simmering disputes. Villagers struggled to understand the rules. I was told that it was no longer viable to have a relative cultivating land in return for an appropriate share of the produce. One person explained, 'If I don't farm my land but ask my neighbours to look after it, maybe with the alfalfa and watering, then they can say it's theirs after three years.' Another explained that you could not leave your land bare, 'If you don't cultivate your land for six years or so, then the government will reclaim it.' City residents were also in a quandary. Most thought that they had to register membership in village homes by contributing labour and began to protect their claims by helping in the village.

The land settlement reversed the usual direction of movement. In the 1980s, Lehpa had sent cash to the village and received labour in return. Villagers were happy to visit urban kin where they could benefit from opportunities for studying and waged work, but they also had to earn their keep. The urban domestic economy at that time was based on agriculture and husbandry as well as employment and so Leh houses required family labour in the same way as rural houses. Many rural visitors stayed in Leh permanently and their village houses emptied. One urban member of Onpo explained what had changed,

> For those of us who come and go, who work in the city, we lose our land. It is captured by others. So, we have to think, what is more profitable? It is a shame and dishonourable to leave our grandparents' place. We should not allow the trees to die. But I can pay labour and I can

> bring a machine to cultivate my land so I should not sell it. Nowadays, the government says that they will take back land that is not cultivated and, if other people take your land, you can take them to court. . . . Even so, court cases can last your whole life, it is better to do *phedpa*, to give half away [that is, cultivator and owner divide the produce between them].

After the property registration had finished in 2011, I came across Leh commuters watering and cultivating alongside rural kin, repairing land and buildings and delivering dues to the monastery and village.

No one knew who worked for whom or how to hold on to what they considered their own. Rural and urban members of Onpo alike were unsure how to register claims that had been a web of customary and formal rights attached to one family but associated with two houses and numerous siblings. This web attracted varied understandings of belonging and belongings and Jigmed introduced her own ideas – short-lived, as it turned out – which I heard about from a relative. She had invited a Nepali family to stay in the offshoot; they would have half the proceeds from the farmland and carry out labour obligations to the village. As this relative said, 'They will get half the yield and do all the work,' and, she added, 'They were so strong they also made money by working for other villagers charging 300 rupees per day.' She imagined that they might grow vegetables and keep animals and send their children to the local school. In their role as landlords, it was suggested that Jigmed's family would offer to educate one child privately. Soon afterwards, however, village representatives met and prohibited villagers from hiring other people to meet their customary labour contributions. Anyone housing migrant labour for more than a week was to be fined. This decision was intended as a riposte to non-residents who were visiting so much more often during and after the land settlement, but it caused as much offence to permanent residents. One elderly couple who were housing two Nepali workers, for example, were fined 50 rupees for each. They refused to pay, claiming, 'We look after them; we sent them to school. Who will bring our water? Will you? We won't pay.'

Even though the formal process was scarcely mentioned in Onpo, it became clear that Jigmed's younger brother had begun to register his claims on the offshoot. When I visited in 2011, the small house was decidedly more animated than the main house, and Jigmed explained, 'We'll sleep inside. Don't worry, it's all different. Our turn to water is on Wednesday and now my [younger] brother comes every week.' He came from Leh to water the fields in proof of ownership, as Jigmed had done previously. Like Jigmed, he also busied himself defending offshoot land against the surreptitious, small boundary shifts that occurred daily as villagers cleared irrigation channels. Still, no one lived in Onpo offshoot, but the kitchen was clean and there was a new storage system to provision visitors. Water threatening the house foundations had been re-routed, and there was no dust.

Jigmed did not know how to evaluate claims that she and her brother had on the small house but understood that she would have to wall and plant what she considered her own fields to maintain possession. The expense would be prohibitive, and she decided that her visits were pointless, 'What do you expect if you never go, and no one lives there? Perhaps the *khangun* will pass to one of Mutup's sons, or perhaps a Nepali working in the village.' At much the same time, one of the grandchildren explained Onpo's predicament in terms of an ending for all of them,

> Someone will have to go back, or we will lose it, and our identity. The parents aren't interested; the daughters aren't so interested either. I might go back one day since we will lose both our houses and all our village identity if no one returns. . . . Maybe I could farm but how? All the fields are small and spread out; each would need a stone wall. Even that would take three or four years to recoup the cost. . . . If we stay here, how are we going to live? How are we to get money? . . . There is no one to take care of children in the village any longer. It costs more to farm than what you get from your produce. Ladakh is finished. . . . Maybe all cultivation . . . will stop.

She considered it impossible to sustain the smallholding way of life, and in her view, when Ladakhis abandoned their rural houses, they would lose their heritage, memories and sense of self.

Looking back after the settlement: dividing lands and meeting dues

Ladakhi smallholdings have been formed by landlords and governments as well as through local practices of domestic and village life, but most forms of state taxation ended in the second half of the 20th century. Houses in this village used to pay tax (*bap*, Tib: *'bab*), rent (*shas*, Tib: *shas*, a part) and labour (*thral*, Tib*: khral*) to local and regional superiors. Contributions were calculated in theory according to the number of named houses that constituted a settlement, adjusted according to their individual landholdings and other property, such as animals. In Jigmed's father's time, for example, named and counted estates had to send a man to work for the government one month a year in the Puga borax and sulphur mines. This obligation was often redistributed, however, within or between houses according to relations of debt and status. Obligatory labour for the government was hugely resented, but villagers were happy to contribute whatever work was required to the monastery since it generated religious merit.

Independence had led to the abolition of taxes, the reconciliation of debts and land reform in Ladakh. Corvée labour (*thral*) was formally abolished by Jammu and Kashmir in 1950 and taxes (*bap*) were reduced to a trivial sum. However, monasteries benefited from local lobbying against the expropriation of their land because, so it was claimed, monastery holdings did not

represent merely private interests but were managed for the good of all (see note 10, p. 21). Substantial tracts of the village were owned by a nearby monastery and Onpo along with other villagers contributed rent (*shas*) to the monastery as well as labour (*thral*); they also contributed labour to collective village and local government projects. None of the village houses still paid tax (*bap*). Since terms for these dues, contributions or taxes are used variously across the region and among Tibetan speakers, the protracted negotiations about each and every field in the formal division of Onpo estate provides an opportunity to elucidate local understandings at the time.

I gradually understood that the lands held both jointly and separately for many years had been distributed formally between the two Onpo houses and primarily between two brothers. Some Onpo fields were classified as 'free' or 'captured' land, and others as 'ancestral' or 'family' (*abi meme* or grandmother-grandfather) land. The former category is called *shas* or rented land that has been conferred on the person/house who cleared and cultivated it on either a temporary or permanent basis. *Shas* is a multivalent term and members of this village 'donate' to and 'rent' from the nearby monastery at the equivalent of around 15% of yield. *Shas* land can be sold and inherited by the next generation but no one in Onpo had formally registered the land cleared by Jigmed's father, and so it remained a 'temporary' grant (*shas*) from the local monastery rather than a permanent, heritable and alienable acquisition. Although it should have been straightforward to register this land since it had been cultivated for so long by the family, Onpo was forced to return portions that they had farmed for forty years from both the main and small house. Partly because of local disputes, the monastery then rented these fields to a neighbour. The two Onpo houses would need to register their remaining fields held in this temporary fashion with the *tehsil* office – the local government office which holds land records.

A villager explained that monastery land was more difficult to cultivate than government land: 'It's much better to get ("take") land from the government because you only have to pay *bap*. As long as the government doesn't reclaim the land before you have planted it for three years, it is yours.' This man was referring to insignificant monetary dues based on land and other property, reminding me of conversations with the village headman in the 1980s when he itemised the tax or *bap* for each house. He had shown me a list recording a tax of 9.57 rupees for a holding of around thirty *kanal* (1.5 ha) – or what was more often described as four or five days' land, the time it took to plough – and no tax at all for another much larger holding because it was registered under several different names.[6] The headman passed about three quarters of this tax to the local government and kept a quarter in lieu of salary. As the figures suggest, the monetary amounts were trivial for houses with a wage, but in the past, they caused debt and dispossession, as I was reminded by the *patwari* and a member of Onpo in 2013. They recalled a small group of village houses when we were talking about

the recent land settlement who were so poor in cash that they lost their land. They gave their land on rent (*shas*) to wealthy neighbours, keeping half the produce on the fields that they continued to work. The poor houses had to persuade 'the rich to pay rent' but, with time, the richer houses were able to claim ownership. The *patwari* explained that land did not even attract the highest sums: 'vehicles' carried enormous dues at 2 rupees per horse per annum, for example.

Despite different understandings of government practice, it was agreed that there had been no *bap* at all for some years. According to one *patwari*, there had been none since 2010, while according to another, the tax was abolished in 2002 or 2003. In Ladakh, *bap* can describe all manner of dues while *thral* describes contributions in labour specifically, but distinctions between these levies are blurred, especially when they involve monasteries. All village houses continued to contribute labour to both village and monastery.[7] As the young relative in Onpo *khangchen* suggested when she explained that she would prefer to marry outside the village, dues to the local monastery were high. Jigmed calculated that she gave about 15% of the yield her land would have produced were it cultivated – but, she emphasised, she and everyone else gave rent (*shas*) and labour (*thral*) freely to the monastery at the time of ploughing and harvesting, cutting wood and watering monastic holdings in the village. If you did not, she said, the monks would not conduct your funeral, which was unthinkable. Moreover, 'the monastery is very necessary to our lives,' and improper behaviour would lead to madness, sickness or some other serious trouble from the monastery's protector gods. While the *patwari* insisted that it was illegal for monasteries to request payments or otherwise construed contributions in goods and labour, he said it was it up to villagers how they interpreted the rules.

Despite the loss of a few fields, the two brothers were able to share the rest of their rented land between them. The small house gave half their *shas* land to the main house in return for half the estate's family land. Division of this 'ancestral' property proved very difficult because it is much more highly valued than land held on rent, and it also supported claims to a State Subject record.[8] The two brothers were ultimately left with approximately the same amount of family land, which they will be unable to sell without the consent of every member of their now separate, simple houses. Jigmed was also allotted 'shares' in the small house. She received a little land: 'They gave me a field that is not very big and not very good, but I shouldn't complain, should I? It is fine and I myself said I needed nothing.' It turned out that she had formally accepted a field of family land in 2010 when her brothers insisted that she have something for her children and grandchildren's 'sense of identity.' On another occasion, she told me,

> The only thing I said was, "I don't care how much I get but it should be from the land of my great-grandfather. It was you two brothers who said I had to have something for my children. I don't want anything".

Some people considered that her brother, as 'owner' of the small house, should have been given this family land, but Jigmed insisted she could have taken more: 'This is my blood and my roots; I am very attached [to the house].' All in all, she had six *kanal*, a tiny amount compared to her small house brother: two fields in addition to her family land, some meadowland, and a patch of woodland. She said that she took the woodland because trees grew slowly and would therefore benefit her children and grandchildren.

This land settlement framed explicitly longstanding issues about the unity of a house, as well as the circumstances in which it can be divided. The process created friction in families that normally lived with uncertainties between formal and customary law, law and practice, and different views of the best way forward. Although *patwari* insisted that they merely ratified existing practices and agreed family and village settlements, they also said that claimants invariably won if they took a case to court because Indian legislation allocates all members equal rights. Women can claim equal shares, but they do not.[9] Men in the village, however, began to claim equal shares based on a headcount of residents. For example, one estate that was formally partitioned during the land settlement redistributed agricultural land from the main to a small house proportional to the number of men in each. Women were not counted. From the perspective of Ladakhi house-based society, it makes no sense to give a populous but temporary small house the lion's share of property since the estate will then become vulnerable. Moreover, shares do not simply ratify partition but anticipate and entail further divisions of property in the following generation. Individual shares are thus staked out in advance, even though you do not know who will stay and who will leave or how you will redistribute shares to those who end up living in and caring for a house.

After the settlement, a young Onpo woman who lived outside Ladakh told me how she had always planned to return. She had spent her childhood between the small and big houses. Everyone, she said, 'loved me so much' that she had not grasped the relevance of distinctions of birth order, the house unit to which you are affiliated and gender. She now appreciated that these differences in the estate of her childhood meant that Onpo was never going to remain her home; its name was not her name. It only dawned on her after the settlement that she could never have built a life at either Onpo house under previous or current arrangements because she had no legitimate claims: the children of her uncles took precedence in both houses and she herself had married elsewhere. Were she to return, she said, she could no doubt claim a small share, but she would never be able to assume her previous place within the crosscutting, conflictual but also capacious and flexible ties that used to make Onpo a single name and a single estate. In fact, she concluded, she did not feel that she belonged at all any longer.

Limits to division

The doubling that struck my son when he visited Ladakh represents one view of Onpo with its small house, uninhabited since the end of the 20th century

along with two or three other such houses in the village. Villagers did not consider that their houses were doubled or empty and, to most local eyes, the land settlement simply ratified a *de facto* division of Onpo and other estates. Onpo *khangun* might have reverted to the main house after Jigmed's mother died but Mutup made no claims, so Jigmed and, latterly, the younger of her brothers continued to visit and cultivate some land. From Jigmed's perspective, her offshoot remained part of the estate, not least through their common name, a name that was threatened by the land settlement but still important to the family, in the village and beyond.

Onpo people in general expressed a sense of belonging that is epitomised in the name, which is supposed to last forever. The spectre of losing this name resonated in the village and elsewhere. As a villager explained patiently what I should have known already,

> Look, a *khangun* means that when you have your first child or first children, then the grandmother and grandfather move to a small house with the younger children. They just move. They don't divide anything. Maybe they take some property, maybe 20% or 25%, but it is not a division. Nowadays, we make a division, and we call this shares.

My interlocutor continued with the issue that troubled her most of all,

> Look, before there was just the main house and the *khangun*, there were just two. Now my brother has taken [another] equal share. We now have to call each house by the name of their head, and everyone will lose direction. They might use the name of the land, or the name of the person, and no one knows which is the main house. You lose the family history.

She was suggesting that it is impossible to allocate shares in a name even if you could divide other parts of a house into shares, including stakes in family land.

A similar quandary was expressed by a mother and daughter from a different part of the village who were trying to answer my question about a newly completed house, which I did not recognise.[10] The older woman said she thought it was an offshoot and explained, 'Everyone is confused about the proper naming today: we don't even know which village section it occupies. We even ask, "What is my own *khangun* called? And what if my child takes another share, what then?"' She concluded, 'Some people don't want to lose their identity,' and her daughter elaborated, 'There will be so many divisions even in the *khangun* that there will be a different name every generation.'

This name carries family histories. Jigmed agreed with another young Onpo woman that life in the city had promoted sentimental attachment to childhood homes. This young woman explained that in town, 'It's like metro now. You have one or two houses in the village and that is where you get your identity from. Then, in town, it is just you. No brothers and sisters.' Jigmed amplified,

> The *tehsildar* [tax or revenue officer, head of the *tehsil* office] has a record book where we can see the sort of map and then we can get our history. I have seen my grandfather's grandfather also in the records. Really. I have kept that record in my home.

She wondered again about her attachment,

> I always thought I would come back to the village when I retired. It is good to have elders at home but now my mother has passed away, I have little interest in returning . . . . Perhaps subsequent generations . . . Who knows how all the children will get on?

On this occasion (2013), she hoped that she would be able to keep the two rooms her father had made if the offshoot itself divided, as it probably would when her brother's children married, and reflected, 'I used to think that I was the owner because my brother never visited except at harvest time.'

You might hold on to your house name with appropriate qualifiers when property was divided over one or two generations, but it was hard to imagine how names would remain recognisable in subsequent generations. This dilemma has several facets. Names that change every generation suggest to these and other Buddhist villagers a morass with no habitual paths to follow since they no longer function as 'addresses' (Chapter 1) or designate the units that are counted into full village membership. Nor would they serve as archives, or as villagers put it, identities that denote the singular and enduring properties of belonging to a named house. As Peirce recognised (Chapter 4), names are objects of acquaintance and habit that flow through life and shift conditions. Singly or in combination with village and personal names, and resonating in diverse ways as they circulate, house names join specific histories, places and people. If names do not fold into residents, will these people lose an aspect of their personhood?

House names also register positions in a rank order. Onpo had a high status within the village and beyond; its name signified a long history of service to village, monastery and government, and significant holdings of material and immaterial 'ancestral' property. Other names have grown more recently. For example, one family arrived two or three generations ago and came to be known by a nickname pointing to the 'northern plains'; that is, Chang Thang. As new houses must, they petitioned the village for membership and began to contribute labour and goods. They also married well. Accordingly, they enjoyed reciprocal rights in village meetings, rituals and irrigation rotas, and their nickname not only stuck but acquired a good reputation. According to Jigmed, it took two or more generations to gain or lose status, and Onpo would now be unable to augment its standing because its name no longer demonstrated an enduring relation between people and place. Her point gained credence when her small house brother stopped using his house name in Leh after the settlement. He also left Onpo's *phaspun*, the group

of several houses that share a god, to join his wife's, which made it appear retrospectively as though he were an in-marrying husband, suggesting a loss of status to Ladakhis. Jigmed could no longer rely on her brother to attend *phaspun* events on behalf of their small house when she was away. Moreover, she worried that her brother would become ill, citing the case of another *phaspun* member from a neighbouring village who had begged to return to the group when he became seriously ill after joining a group closer to his home. As the referent of the house name became less secure, Jigmed believed that their reputation was at risk and their influence diminishing. Family from both houses were especially concerned about who would attend their life events and help change their shrine each year in the main house.

The viability of Onpo was interrogated during the settlement process but preoccupied the family before and after this modernising initiative. I have shown that Onpo people asked first if their small and then if their main house were finished. They wondered who – if anyone – would go back to live in either. The standing of both houses was buttressed through contributions from non-resident members who had married into or established homes elsewhere. These non-resident members responded to the memories, relations and reputation of their common name with the requisite care. By and large, they worked both independently and collaboratively through makeshift improvisations to sustain the estate over this period of thirty years: commuting, hiring and housing migrant labour, bringing in poor relatives as helpers, and pooling and diversifying local production. Such skilled improvisation was not a new phenomenon, even though Onpo people spoke as though the integrity of the house had never before been called into question. In fact, they had suffered serious setbacks the previous generation when Jigmed's father, the youngest of many brothers, became head of house. When he moved to the small house on the birth of his first grandchild, he continued to work hard clearing and planting land and extending the plot. Despite this history, Jigmed generally implied that the offshoot had always been there.

The previous 'doubling' of *khangun* and *khangchen* was bracketed by a single name and a recognised position in a formal village system, which used to act as a brake on division. Time will tell whether or not this recent Onpo family settlement is workable. House members are likely to maintain the virtuoso improvisation that currently sustains two 'simple houses' despite and perhaps because of competing interests. Jigmed continued to pick up the keys to the small house from her brother on her way to the village in 2019. At least some members of Onpo simultaneously demonstrated that they still belonged to a single estate. In 2019, two generations of Jigmed's small house family spent New Year in the main house for the first time this century. The family celebration suggested that the consequences of adjusting house membership to state codes a few years ago were receding from view, and that longstanding conventions of naming, counting and ranking houses in the village were resuming, albeit in new configurations.

An empty house?

Opening this chapter with Jane Guyer's question about archaic house forms, I have questioned whether Onpo offshoot remained empty since the end of the 20th century and if it will stay empty as a simple house (*khangpa*). Estates are still modelled on a template of property-holding taxpayers or subjects, but they have acquired many new attributes. For Jigmed, at least, her childhood home is not just a separate hearth within the larger estate but also a store of value, a material resource, somewhere to stay, a house of memory, a site of work and care for migrant labourers and family members, and much else. Jigmed might have asked with Guyer (2014: 20) if one or both houses would become "shelter-services, pools of invested human capital, station-stops for sojourners, platforms for innovation, parking lots for 'stuff' (so, inventories), *et cetera*?" Guyer wondered how we could make use of a range of concepts in the anthropological record to understand better what is happening. She drew attention to Nancy Munn's (1986) analysis of the role of fame or reputation, Annette Weiner's (1992) exploration of the value and paradox of 'keeping-while-giving' in reference to inalienable possessions, and her own and Belinga's work (Guyer & Belinga 1995) on the importance of wealth-in-people. To these concepts, I contribute the notion of rendering to show how Onpo and other estates were fitted to evolving state codes *inter alia*. It often seems that these houses represent a historical and geographical legacy that is fixed, but they clearly also carry forward into what appears at times to be an entirely new world of speculation.[11]

In dialogue with the filmmaker Laura Poitras on the topic of information-gathering, Hito Steyerl discussed the role of editing in her art practice. She described digital editing using the Adobe product, *After Effects*,

> there is hardly any real-time play back. So much information is being processed, it might take two hours or longer before you see the result. So editing is replaced by rendering. Rendering, rendering, staring at the render bar. It feels like I'm being rendered all the time.
>
> What do you do if you don't really see what you edit while you're doing it? You speculate. It's speculative editing. You try to guess what it's going to look like if you put key frames here and here and here.
>
> (Steyerl and Poitras 2015: 312)[12]

Rendering Onpo involved comparable efforts of guesswork, editing and speculation that might hold together the 'elastic rubber sheeting' of an estate and its two houses as they assume variable shapes and sizes, one apparently standing empty but extending great distances at times to connect people and property that carry its name. The reference is to E.R. Leach, who wrote,

> [if] I then start stretching the rubber about, I can change the manifest shape of my original geometrical figure out of all recognition and yet clearly there is a sense in which it is the *same* figure all the time.
>
> (1961: 7, emphasis in original)

He considered the geometry of this sheeting to argue that shape, size or distance is less significant than what holds 'things' (variables) together – that is, how they are connected or related. I hope that I have shown that the abstract relationships depicted by Leach are equally stratified, embodied and material house relations. As these change over time, some hold and others do not. No one can say whether simple houses – previous offshoots and principal houses of an estate alike – will last in the holding of so few, ageing residents.

Notes

1 The counting of houses in official records (Govt. of India 1974 [1890]; Gani 1985) does not necessarily reflect local reckoning of estates (*tronpa*).
2 By 2013, government, monastery and villagers had also collaborated in a public action to plant a further 500 *kanal* (25 ha) with trees.
3 Updates were posted by the *Daily Excelsior* on 24 March 2016, for example (Editorial 2016), and in *Early Times* on 14 December 2016 (Azad 2016) long after this particular village registration, and have continued since. By 2020, what is now called the Digital India Land Records Modernization Program (DILRMP) remained incomplete. Older records were lost when one of the two offices holding them burnt down, and where records have been digitised, they are often out of date.
4 The *patwari* for this village kindly spent an hour and a half translating the Urdu from the documents for me and discussing developments in 2013. Any errors of reporting remain my own. Another *patwari* dated the only previous comprehensive documentation to 1903 but he was most likely referring to the 1908 Preliminary Regular Settlement (Mohammad 1908). Thanks to John Bray for providing me with a copy.
5 Many houses, including Onpo, had previously cleared substantial amounts of agricultural land in the village. House plots had also been exchanged between those leaving and joining the village in the previous two generations, though sales may not have been officially registered.
6 Sums were also calibrated to the quality of land.
7 In other Tibetan-speaking areas, *thral* may refer to all taxes in labour, goods and money. Local usage of these and cognate terms varies; see Hovden (2013) for a discussion of Limi villages in Nepal, and Shakya, Rabgyas and Crook (1994), and Osmaston (1994) on sTongde, Zanskar. The monastic holdings in Zanskar in 1980 were described differently than in this village, closer to Leh: *khral.zhing* is described as land that was 'rented' from the monastery in return for a fixed amount of produce and *sag.zhing or sas.zhing* as land that was loaned on a short-term basis by the monastery's chief administrator, again in return for produce. In addition, *grva.shing* was specifically mentioned, land that a family cultivated on behalf of a monk relative, which also occurs in several villagers around Leh.
8 The *patwari* witnessed birth records back to your father's father's father for a State Subject record.

9 See also Beek (1996: 107–110) on Ladakhi settlements. It is possible that developing gender and class norms discouraged women from making claims since etiquette increasingly encourages modesty, deference and domesticity, but it should also be appreciated that formal equity has little purchase without the resources that are concentrated largely in the hands of main houses and men.
10 I have reported this conversation in Day (2015).
11 Settlements, of course, incite speculation in themselves, as the Settlement Officer for the neighbouring area of Gilgit reported in his 1917 Assessment Report. The *wazir-i-wazarat* added a note to remind contributors, 'At the time of Settlement some increase in litigation, particularly land litigation of speculative kind is natural' (Thakur Singh 1917: 168).
12 See also Day and Lury (2017).

7 Nyarma

The nuns' house

Tashi Chenzom and Tashi Dolma, Nyarma nunnery (2011)

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In this chapter and the next, I explore the lives of non-married women from *khangun*, offshoot or small houses, who became adults in the 1970s. Although house life then and now disadvantages junior members, I show how some individuals have transformed their position through the speculative rendering of new and unconventional houses. I ask how they have simultaneously and partially reconfigured relations between various parts of the traditional estate across rural and urban as well as small and main houses. Their initiatives challenge conventional hierarchies, and their new-style houses are celebrated by many Ladakhis.

Scholars have long explored the stratification of life chances. Michelle Murphy, for example, proposes to replace neutral references to populations with the concept of distributed reproduction. Murphy suggests that reproductive processes interact to build on and generate uneven conditions in the world. She shows that they are entangled with, but not subsumed to, relations of production and bodies with reference to the economisation of life and chemical exposure (Murphy 2011, 2017). Murphy considers that distributed reproduction "exists at macrological (not merely micrological and bodily) registers and . . . is extensive geographically in space and historically in time. I will call this the distributed ontology of reproduction, or more succinctly, distributed reproduction." (Murphy 2011: 24) She relates her approach to other feminist accounts of stratified (Shellee Colen 1995) and dispersed (Marilyn Strathern 2005) reproduction, which have captured the mediating role of houses and many other forms of property, knowledge production, technological developments and kinship. For example, kin relations have long been considered as hierarchies that are structured by race, sex and class such that "some categories of people are empowered to nurture and reproduce, while others are disempowered" (Ginsburg and Rapp 1995: 3). Offshoot women in Ladakh had fewer claims to their homes than their offshoot brothers (Chapter 6). Non-married women, who usually lived in the offshoot rather than the main house, had the most work and fewest rights in an estate. However, as I have shown, the effects of dividing property on the reproduction of Ladakhi houses are hard to anticipate.

Tashi Chenzom, Tashi Dolma and the nunnery of Nyarma

Tashi Chenzom and Tashi Dolma[1] have built a home for themselves and left behind the old with all its work. I took their photograph in a courtyard full of flowers (Tashi Chenzom to the left) as a keepsake of what the two women described as 'their dream come true.' These women are cousins, widely credited with the development pictured in the background known as Nyarma nunnery where they have lived for over fifteen years at the time of writing.

Nyarma is an auspicious spot. Its ancient monastic foundations are attributed to the great Tibetan translator, Rinchen Zangpo (10th–11th centuries), although most likely built later (Kozicz 2014). It stands on the outskirts of Thikse village, 20 km from Leh. Nyarma *chome gompa*, 'the nuns' monastery

at Nyarma,'[2] is a unique retirement home established by a small group of village nuns over a period of years that has attracted extensive publicity and interest, including the film *Autumn in the Himalayas* (dir., Małgorzata Skiba 2008). The living quarters and communal spaces were completed in 2004 and a guesthouse by 2008, a year before I visited. However, Nyarma remains a construction site and, as with any house, alterations and additions were apparent every time I visited.

According to the family, we had met before but, in my recollection, it was not until 2009 that I was introduced to the inseparable cousins, who were generally known as elder Tashi (Tashi Chenzom) and younger Tashi (Tashi Dolma). By then, the two women had spent seven or eight years together in elder Tashi's *khangun*, four years in a welcome but inadequate room below Thikse monastery and five years at Nyarma. Since they were almost always together and virtually spoke as one, I have produced a composite history of their new house.

The two nuns told me about their lives, interrupting each other to dispute or add a detail. They had lived in their respective *khangchen* in Thikse, struggling towards relative independence in separate living quarters. Tashi Chenzom's small house was occupied for years by her father's sister, while Tashi herself looked after her younger brother in the main house since her mother had died. When he joined the army, Tashi then cared for her brother's children, and subsequently, her ageing father. She waited years for her younger brother to return home with a pension. Eventually, the time came when Tashi Chenzom was no longer needed, and she asked her brother, "Why will I stay my whole life? Now you are retired, you have to look after everything with your wife. And my nephew also, he got married. Now I don't want to stay."[3] Tashi Chenzom left for the *khangun* and Tashi Dolma soon joined her.

In the 1970s, when these women were in their teens, it was common to keep one or more daughters at home unmarried as 'lay nuns' to help with what remained a labour-intensive economy.[4] Both cousins said that they themselves chose to stay unmarried at home; their parents, uncles or brothers did not choose for them. They explained that they just decided to cut their hair. Then as now, many teenagers said that they wanted their independence and they would add, with a glint in the eye, that they could never live as a servant to their husband. True, they agreed, you worked for your elderly parents, but this was really a blessing since it helped repay the debt you owed your mother in perpetuity.

Elder Tashi said that her father and brother agreed to take her to the Rinpoche to receive her vows. She then gave her turquoise-studded headdress, which she had inherited from her mother, to her sister-in-law. This headdress signifies a married status and often passes from a mother to her eldest daughter on marriage. Both women were expected to stay for the rest of their lives at home where, like most Nyarma nuns, they would look after their parents or grandparents and then the children of siblings as they worked in the fields and house. Some women wondered who would remain,

as one generation after another left. Would they be left on their own? Several conspired and aspired to relative autonomy in their estate *khangun*, which had been occupied by other people, waiting for their turn.

It may have been when someone in the family subsequently wanted the small house for themselves that Tashi Chenzom and Tashi Dolma began to organise other village nuns more actively to realise their dream. They raised money all over Ladakh and, after three years' collecting alms, they approached Thikse's Khanpo Rinpoche[5] to request an assembly room. To their delight, the Rinpoche gave them a room, initially towards the top of the monastery and, later, a dark and dingy room below.

The village nuns met there for the next four years; they also looked after the monastery animals and took them to pasture. As I learned, the women still,

> wanted a place . . . to make a nunnery where we all can stay together. The Rinpoche thought that was not a good idea [because] he's very intelligent. "This will make problems in the future," he said. "Right now, you people are old enough; it will be like an old-age home. But in the future, you may be having young nuns . . . and we have a school for young monks here. It doesn't look good together, nearby. No, I will think and I will give."

In the early days below Thikse monastery, the nuns studied with Geshe Tsultrim Tharchin. This monk-scholar taught the assembled nuns every day, and for most of them, these were the first classes they had ever attended. They felt blessed to be able to study, but with little previous education, it was not easy to learn. Without education, it was not easy to earn money, either. As they explained, their families were not wealthy enough to support them and they needed funds for their religious education. Little by little, they began to earn sufficient sums by working as labourers on the roads to sponsor rituals that they considered central to their education, and to join pilgrimages. I heard,

> Out of their earnings, the two cousins went to India, to sites such as Bodh Gaya and Sarnath. They visited India three times on pilgrimage. At the time they were working on the roads, they just cut their hair like lay nuns. They were not allowed to wear the robes of novices, just ordinary clothes but with their hair cut and no jewellery.[6]

As Tashi Chenzom and Tashi Dolma travelled, they realised that they had to do something with their lives,

> We saw other nuns, different groups. Then we said, really, tears came from us, "What is our life?" That's when it came to our minds that we must do something and we requested the Rinpoche, who allowed us to have this land.

Thikse Rinpoche had apparently asked them again what would happen if young nuns joined. Although they were adequately housed at the time in the shabby building below the monastery – pointing to 'that one, with just a few windows' – he said that it would be better to live at a distance from the monastic assembly when younger nuns arrived. The Rinpoche gave them Nyarma, once the site of the monastery itself. And so, the project started with three or four nuns who, as the cousins explained, went for alms all over the region: 'We asked people for help everywhere from Zanskar to Sham, Chang Thang and Nubra.'

Local efforts to improve the position of Ladakhi nuns were galvanised by the 4th International Conference of Buddhist Women, which was held in Leh soon afterwards in 1995. Getsulma Palmo[7] and the head of Timasgam nunnery led a discussion during the annual prayers (*smonlam*) in Leh and, in 1996, the Ladakh Nuns Association (LNA) was registered. Rizong (Sras) Rinpoche was a founder member and became patron, while Getsulma Palmo became president. The Association was also supported by the head of Timasgam nunnery, the Rinpoche of Stakna monastery, the director of the Mahabodhi Centre in Leh and the president of the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, and it began to attract help and funds from Ladakh and

beyond for training and the support of nunneries. At Nyarma, the pioneering leadership of elder and younger Tashi attracted support from a retired Thikse teacher, Mr Ishe, and Geshe Tsultrim Tharchin, as well as the LNA. The LNA sponsored regular teachings and subsequently the ordination of nine Nyarma nuns alongside five or six younger nuns from the Association. With their teaching affirmed by Khanpo Rinpoche and shaved once more, the two cousins became formal novices (*getsulma*) around 2002.[8] Unlike many of the nuns at Nyarma, both could now read and write.

As we met periodically, other nuns would come and go from the small room that elder and younger Tashi shared at Nyarma. Dolma, one of the first Nyarma nuns, confirmed,

> For three years, we raised funds. We went all over Ladakh, to Nyoma, Nubra for three years. Then Thikse Rinpoche helped us and gave us all this land. We worked on the roads and in the Beacon programme[9] as labourers.

My friend, who was also a relative of these women, interjected with a mixture of embarrassment and outrage,

> They are not educated; they can't do anything, so they went for labour. I asked elder Tashi, I requested, "Please don't go. Stay with me and, whenever there is a *puja*,[10] you go and I will buy everything you need. Also, I will pay for your pilgrimage; you stay with me." Didn't I?

And she continued, 'I was so ashamed . . . .' My friend had a salary and felt she could and should support her relatives – but, she acknowledged, her cousins savoured their independence and did not want anything from her.

Dolma, Tashi Chenzom and Tashi Dolma continued with their story, which I paraphrase,

> Two other nuns came to help after we had started, and one of them did the cooking. We made the whole of one building and the foundations. We built three rooms and then the big hall. . . . No [in response to a question of mine], we didn't do this on our own; we brought skilled labour and villagers sometimes came to help. We three went to all our relatives and to other villagers and sort of begged for help. It's all in the film. Haven't you seen it?

With further help from what became the Dutch Foundation for Ladakhi Nuns, these first nuns made ten rooms. More women joined and, by 2009, seventeen of them lived at Nyarma.

Nyarma finally installed its own senior teacher in the hope of fulfilling a long-held and fervent wish among residents to attract a younger generation, who would need instruction. In 2015, we waited in the smart new house that had been built for this *geshe*, but he had since been sent to Leh to act as school principal. Although he offered to teach the nuns every evening, Tashi Chenzom said they declined: 'We cannot come and go like that. We just go to Leh on Sunday mornings [to study with the *geshe*], and that is enough for us.'

By 2015, two out of every three Thikse village nuns – that is, non-married women living at home – had moved to Nyarma. The cousins could not have been happier,

> Life is very good; now, we are not afraid to die. Nowadays, we don't have to work as we did when we lived at home. We are never asked back to work although we visit our families sometimes, and they send us gifts of food.

In 2013, when I taped a version of their life history, I transcribed similar comments,

> How could we study at home? We were helping our families. We could only memorise things. Now we are very thankful to 'god' (*konjok*, Tib: *dkon mchog*) to have had the opportunity to study. Otherwise, we would only have memorised, not studied, the texts. It will be easier for young people today.

Even more gratifying, relatives of several Nyarma nuns had followed their example to become monks or nuns themselves, in keeping with precepts of withdrawal among elderly Buddhists.

I never caught a personal or autobiographical timbre to the stories told by the two cousins, despite our growing ease together. Personal stories may have been irrelevant to these women as they looked forward to the serious business of dying rather than reminiscing. It was only in the presence of their relative that I heard news about everyday matters such as the building work and the wider family spread up and down the valley. And so it was by chance that I heard about a serious accident: Tashi Dolma had been hit by a motorbike as she was walking in the village with her aunt. I paraphrase what I learned,

> After the collision, the older woman caught the driver and said, "You have killed my niece." He ran away. Tashi Dolma was taken to hospital where she lay unconscious for many days. Her nephew told Tashi Chenzom not to visit, implying that it was already too late since her cousin would soon be dead. Elder Tashi cries and cries; she was not witness to the accident as circumstances had led her to travel to town alone earlier that day. The culprit was a monk, but Tashi Dolma said nothing afterwards to the police, 'I am alive, what is the point?' However, she acknowledged in 2015 that she had been unwell and still suffered problems with eating and with her memory. Now, she said, nothing hurt any longer.

Both women confirmed that all was well; they were extremely happy and eating properly. Younger Tashi, however, was not yet strong enough, two years after the accident, to join a planned pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya. Her relative said that she had the will to live but not the strength.

Nyarma had more flowers and a new greenhouse by 2015, but there was little evidence of the hoped-for self-sufficiency. The women were unsure how they were supported. The guesthouse yielded some funds and additional support from other countries came via the LNA and Thikse monastery. It was not easy, they said, to generate funds by performing rituals or reciting texts for householders because they had not received permission to do much more than recite Dolma – the twenty-one praises of Tara, the principal feminine Bodhisattva – and a few other practices in their assembly room. They had earned a little cash from selling buckthorn until a Rinpoche advised them to stop because they were killing insects, and they continued to receive donations at collective rituals, which helped with personal expenses. Unlike monks, however, who benefit from monastic holdings and direct returns for calendrical and other household rites, Nyarma nuns had few avenues to pursue beyond their families.

Nuns and monks

Buddhist Ladakhis emphasise the interdependence of religious and secular houses, and both monks and nuns contribute to the wellbeing of their natal

house.[11] Nuns are known as *chomo*, referring both to lay or household nuns (Tib: *grong pa'i jo mo*)[12] and to those who live in nunneries. All nuns cut their hair or shave their heads with the permission of a lama, and take five vows: not to kill, steal, lie, commit sexual misconduct or take intoxicants. They can all be addressed by the honorific *getsulma* (Tib: *dge tshul ma*), which is also used for ordained novices who wear the full robes and make a permanent commitment to the relevant precepts. Should an ordained novice decide to leave her calling, she cannot re-join during her lifetime. Apprentice nuns in religious houses are known as *genyen* (Tib: *dge bsnyen ma*), but this term can also be used of laypeople who take a small number of vows or abstentions for a period. There are no fully ordained nuns (*gelongma*) in Ladakh.

Few women chose the vocation themselves at the time these two cousins became nuns. Most were dedicated by their families because of illness or misfortune, for other religious reasons or in response to the need for labour at home. There were fewer nuns in the Leh area than other regions such as Sham (Grimshaw 1992) or Zanskar (Gutschow 2004). The village described in Chapter 6, for example, had four nuns. One had been dedicated to save her from further illness and another to save the house as a whole from 'bad things' (*nodpa*). The third chose for herself and persuaded reluctant parents to agree when she offered up her hair and convinced her grandparents to make her suitable clothing. I never knew the history of the fourth who worked as a labourer. Thikse was unusual in the local area, with twenty or more lay nuns in the 1980s (see too Reis 1983).

Wherever they lived, all nuns worked constantly for their family or the monastery to which they were attached. Anna Grimshaw entitled her account of nunnery life in the late 1970s, *Servants of the Buddha*, drawing attention both to religious service and to a relentless round of manual labour (Grimshaw 1992). She described nuns working incessantly in the monastery kitchen and fields and looking after monastery animals, their food and other resources tightly rationed. Nuns at home were treated as dependants if not servants, and the figure of the nun came to stand for continuing gender inequalities or to signify a generally abject status.[13] Even so, nuns like Tashi Chenzom and Tashi Dolma found solace in their small houses where they had an offering room or altar and a hearth of their own. Maria Phylactou (1989) reported that Hemis Shukpa Chen villagers similarly aspired to a 'room of their own' that they could tend however they wanted in an offshoot house, unmediated by the authority of either senior men in their natal home or senior monks who directed the neighbouring nunnery of Chulichen described by Grimshaw (1992).

While some *chomo* live in offshoots at home, others live in cells built with the help of their families or religious institutions. Mills has argued that the celibate's cell is a variant of the secular *khangun* (Mills 2003; see also Gutschow 2004: 155–156) and suggests that monks also remain partially embedded within their territorially defined natal homes in which, however, they lose influence (2003: 73; Mills 2000).[14] In parts of Ladakh, monks and nuns both

retain a field or are given one by their religious institution that is worked by relatives. Disputes can develop around these fields as with other property, and when I visited elder Tashi in her village home in 2017, she insisted that her niece could not have her field for a new house. She expostulated with some vehemence, 'My family can have the field when I die!'

If the nun figured an abject status, monks elicited a respect that was heightened by education in religion and often business or statecraft, which were and are provided by monastic estates. There are many more monks than nuns in Ladakh, and they earn an income from ritual work in their sponsors' houses, as well as from monastic property. Inequalities in exchanges of personnel, goods and services between – as well as within – religious and secular houses led Kim Gutschow (in Chapter 4 of her 2004 monograph, 'The Buddhist Traffic in Women,' pp. 123–167) to claim that the 'woman question' in Ladakh is best understood through norms of alliance that had women working for one house or another according to exchange relationships established between men in monasteries and households. However, it is also kinship relations or relations of reciprocal dependence that are exchanged (Viveiros de Castro 2009: 257). This exchange embodies anticipated outcomes in the way of other ritual performances, including the house ritual described in Chapter 2.[15] The wellbeing of any Ladakhi house/estate depends on and anticipates successful outcomes from continual exchange with its secular and religious neighbours. Such exchange was the responsibility of main house units; offshoots did not have independent exchange relations (see Chapter 3) and those that act as units of exchange today will likely be considered simple – independent – houses.

A retirement home with problems of succession

Tashi Chenzom and Tashi Dolma pioneered the making of a new house, but it may not last. Like offshoots in general, Nyarma may come to an end as its elderly nuns leave one by one to die at home.[16] Between 2011 and 2013, three of the older nuns died. Two more passed away before my next visit in 2015, including younger Tashi's 'real *machung*' ('small mother'; that is, mother's younger sister) who we had met several times. The older cohort was half the size it had been in 2009, and only four of the eldest remained. The nuns were not sad: 'There was not too much suffering; they were all easy deaths. We are none of us frightened to die because we have received the teachings that allow us to go peacefully and properly.'

Nyarma was as much a retirement home[17] as a nunnery, as Thikse Rinpoche had observed. A senior nun also explained that Nyarma residents needed 'rest and looking after now, not study.' We were discussing issues among elders in Ladakh, and she continued, 'A hospice would mean that nuns could join . . . and stop working in the home and on the roads.' All parties to the conversation agreed about the positive example that Nyarma

provided but, on further discussion, decided Ladakh needed retirement homes for laypeople, too. Most *chomo*, they thought, looked after elderly parents at home until their death, and so it would only be possible to free nuns from caring responsibilities if there were lay as well as religious retirement homes.

Chamba, the only young nun at Nyarma for many years (2015)

A constant refrain interrupted all the stories I heard during this period of six years: 'We are mostly old . . . . We need young nuns though or the nunnery will not survive' (2009); 'We are mostly old except for our manager and one young girl, Chamba. . . . Unless young nuns come and unless they stay, this place will die with us!' (2011); 'The Rinpoche may say that we need rest and looking after, not study, but if we do not have a teacher, we will not be able to attract and keep a younger generation' (2013). Nyarma, they feared, would soon be a memory. Without help, the nuns could not sustain their incipient movement for the respite so urgently needed by elders. Without young recruits, they could not sustain the nunnery, either.

Nyarma had been unable to keep the few young nuns who arrived because young women preferred to study with resident teachers who could access far-flung connections for further training. Renewed hope was therefore attached to the arrival of five young women from Zanskar in September 2013. These Zanskarma began to attend a local secular school, the youngest at 7 years of age in upper kindergarten.

The house grew once more to include a total of eighteen residents and Chamba, previously the youngest resident, was delighted. She originally joined Nyarma to care for an elderly charge, her 'aunt,' who became Nyarma's oldest inhabitant. When her charge could not manage to light the candles or look after herself, Chamba – the daughter of her previous house 'helper' – was asked to assist. Chamba arrived and soon the 'old lady's colour changed' and she began to recover. Chamba was too old to go to school and so she joined the others for Sunday lessons and studied morning and evening with Dechen, a niece of Thikse Rinpoche, Nyarma's manager and a schoolteacher in Leh. Dechen helped them all to memorise religious texts. Chamba hugely enjoyed caring for the young arrivals, as she could look after them when they fell ill unlike the elderly nuns, who all went to their village homes when they were sick. She shrugged when I asked about the future: 'Who can say whether they will stay or what will happen? I cannot say for others, but for myself, I would like to stay. I hope I can stay.' Chamba elaborated,

> Elder and younger Tashi are an inspiration to us. They have set an example to follow. I would like to be able to stay so that I can look after them when they are old, and so I can do as well as they have. They are so calm, focused and so difficult to distract. But, as for the young ones, I cannot say. I try to avoid distractions by copying Tashi Chenzom and Tashi Dolma.

Nyarma nuns asked if they were to look after their new recruits as they had mothered their siblings' children in the past. How were they to teach them when they were still largely unable to read and write themselves? I was reminded of an evening with Amchi T. Palmo in her Leh Association, where she was looking after around twenty *chomo* between 12 and 16 years of age. These young women also attended local schools so that their religious training was integrated with a 'modern education.' Over supper in 2015, Getsulma Palmo discussed the respect that nuns were attracting and asked how they would be able to learn all they needed for modern life, as well as acquiring the necessary religious permissions to practice. She was concerned about the interest that this younger generation of nuns attracted, since it was impossible to predict whether they would remain nuns, how they would support themselves, and where they would live? She was troubled: 'How to turn myself into a mother? . . . If we don't bring these nuns through, it will all be finished with us. . . . Will the young girls make it?' The young women in her care were still apprentices subscribing to the five precepts. Although they could become novices at 18 years of age, Getsulma Palmo thought it would be better to wait longer: 'It is not very good to take back your vows and, at eighteen, you are too young to be able to make such a big decision.'

My companion Norzin and I learned of two suicides and a pregnancy in Ladakh during the past year. It was rumoured that the mother of the pregnant

nun's partner, a monk, had threatened to commit suicide if he brought home a nun as bride. The couple decided to disrobe and escape the attendant shame by moving to Manali. Despite growing tolerance towards those who disrobe – as a friend put it, 'for we say at least they learned some religion which will be helpful' – there is still a stigma, especially when two celibates disrobe and marry. I was told their children would be even more seriously affected, and no one would take them in. The ex-monk went to Manali and suggested his partner join him later, but she did not know where to find him.

During this conversation, we realised that Getsulma Palmo had a plan: we must go and tell the girls about their growing bodies and how to deal with them. Refusal was not an option, and Norzin and I were called into a room where twenty young women sat waiting politely. We were introduced and started to talk about hormonal changes, premenstrual tension and sexually transmitted infections. The young women told us that they knew all this from school and the community. Sensing their restlessness, we then raised issues about maintaining an appropriate distance from other people. Feeling her way, Norzin launched into stories about 'being clever' while remaining demure and looking down modestly. She explained that you do not want to get angry with other people, as they will make your life difficult: 'You are very attractive to men. Not only are nuns beautiful; their purity is also a great challenge and a magnet. But you can't turn back if you go that way [as a nun].' In effect, Norzin was explaining that you had to recognise the serious consequences 'if you did not say no' and ensure that problems would not arise 'when you did say no.' One of Norzin's stories told how she was the only woman sleeping in a room of men during a work trip. Feeling a foot on her sleeping bag, she invented a mouse. She made herself appear very stupid, asked what it was doing and where it could be. The mouse stopped and none of the men were shamed. The young nuns laughed.

Getsulma Palmo took on the baton by describing how she visited government offices most days, shaking hands with officials. She found these men blinking – that is, fluttering their eyes and 'trying it on.' 'Even though,' Getsulma Palmo explained with a laugh, 'I am middle-aged and large, nuns are beautiful to men because they are pure.' She continued, 'Ladakhis say that it is only Europeans who want virginal women, but Ladakhi men seem to find the attractions of nuns considerable too.' 'How disgusting it is,' she told the girls, 'and how I smile; I don't get angry.'

Amchi T. Palmo had broken the ice and the young women responded to her warmth and charisma. One nun mentioned a school friend who simply laughed or smiled when approached, but her behaviour simply encouraged her male peers to continue their advances. The young nuns agreed that they needed to look out for each other. Between Ladakhi and English, the assembly decided to draft a petition or statement for school subscription on 'anti-bullying' which would attach sanctions to inappropriate behaviour, including all forms of sexual harassment.

The nuns needed to sleep. As we were leaving, *Getsulmale* explained that she had talked to the girls on several occasions, but it was much more effective to have outsiders lead a discussion. She asked again, 'How to turn myself into a mother? What if something happens?' She wondered if the nun's movement in Ladakh would finish with her generation – senior women who had fought for the same status as male celibates, insisted on their religious worth and right to education, and who continued to campaign internationally for the full ordination of nuns. These elders continually drew attention to the importance of their socially reproductive work, which they wanted to see distributed otherwise.

Small and big, domestic and religious houses

Nyarma marked a new beginning for its residents and for Ladakh. The nuns' house provided a perfect home for Tashi Chenzom and Tashi Dolma after leaving their *khangchen*, living together in the *khangun*, and laboriously constructing a place where they could grow old, practice religion and learn about dying. Over the span of their lives, the status of nuns has changed, and improvements are commonly attributed to a reforming Buddhism. Religious reform has been conceived as a Protestant Buddhism after Gombrich and Obeyesekere's (1988) discussion of Sri Lanka and, in Ladakh, the end of 'blood sacrifice' or 'beer drinking' that represents a turn towards a more textually based or monastic practice, associated with proselytising outreach by the LBA (see, for example Bertelsen 1997).[18] But the interdependence of Ladakh's religious and secular houses suggests a more complex picture.

Today, lay Ladakhis receive religious education in the vernacular and nuns are increasingly recognised alongside monks. Many people applaud the elevated pursuit of 'religion' (*chos*) in nunneries by contrast with previous lives of unskilled labour. They date these 'real' nunneries (*chomoling* or *chome gompa*) to the late 1990s and the inspiration of the 1995 Conference in Leh. As a Leh Buddhist told me in 2010,

> Nuns have been getting an education for maybe the last fifteen years [since around 1995] in proper schools, all over Nepal for example. This is a big development that makes the nun's life much easier. She can become a novice and, if she doesn't like the life, she can change back. . . . As I recall, Drukchen Rinpoche [of the Drukpa Kagyud lineage at Hemis monastery] was the first to start the Shey school and nunnery and it wasn't long then until Rizong caught up and the nuns became real nuns rather than servants to the monastery.

Some people, such as this layperson from Leh, attributed opportunities for nuns to the arrival of refugee Tibetans,

> When Tibet ended, it was good for us in one way – that Tibet was captured by China – because everyone ran away to India and so they

> gave more attention to us because they didn't have their own monasteries any longer and we have, and we are building more. So, we Ladakhis have had more of a chance to learn from them [the Tibetan refugees]. They teach us all the spiritual things . . . When we understand about our religion, then consciously many women choose and decide to become nuns themselves even if they are educated. Some uneducated women choose, too.

The positive role attributed to Buddhism and negative views about gruelling agricultural and domestic work in the past imply that nuns were rescued from their low-status position in secular estates and old-style nunneries by a reforming religion. The difference that religion makes, however, is equally a difference in the rest of society. Village houses have less need of labour today, and both main and offshoot houses have emptied in many areas. Some villages further from Leh have been stripped of their resident men. For example, Hemis Shukpa Chen in Lower Ladakh no longer has any permanently resident men between the ages of sixteen and sixty and houses only seventeen schoolchildren (Pascale Dollfus, personal communication, 2017). Village men were in the army; village teenagers studied or worked away from home, and even their parents had moved to urban settings. For the remaining women in the village, one of the happier additions to their workload was tuition in written Tibetan so that they could recite the necessary rituals in lieu of the usual officiants. Karine Gagné (2015: 256) has reported that elders repeatedly complained that there were only old people left in a village near Hemis Shukpa Chen, and their relatives only visited at key points of the agrarian cycle – during apricot season, for instance. Main houses in these areas have become increasingly nuclear and more private, feminised spaces, and both main and offshoot houses have been widely reorganised into simple houses or *khangpa*.

It is younger – not older – women who are considered beneficiaries of the new nunneries that have developed since the end of the 20th century. There are currently about thirty nunneries where young women pursue a religious education under the guidance of scholars, continuing their studies at centres of higher learning in India, Nepal and other countries in the same way as monks. These young nuns are associated with desirable futures and contrasted with older women who have stayed at home in their main or offshoot houses. Is it a happy coincidence that sisters or daughters want to leave and study at the new nunneries since their natal estates might struggle to support them? Is it an unhappy coincidence that their 'aunts' and 'grandmothers' feel abandoned as they wait and hope for a younger generation to return and continue the house? It is difficult to determine the relative importance of factors that push individuals out of (secular) homes and pull them into (religious) nunneries.

Elderly and young nuns during annual prayers (*smonlam*), Leh (2013)

In the past, an estate or its *khangchen* could at least theoretically last intact forever by shedding parts in a centrifugal pattern. Although small houses can now be inherited, they used to emerge and dissolve every generation, or as the need arose. The short lifespan of a small house enabled its main house – standing for the estate overall – to appear fixed and permanent. Monks, often kin, contributed to this sense of stability through regular domestic ritual practices, but their number is dwindling. Some say that monks are less interested in traditional relations of sponsorship with village houses, while others explain that everyone can marry today and claim a house share so fewer men become monks. Nuns are poised to take over their work, but it is unclear what ritual work is required with so few people at home during the day and so few still farming. House members are as likely to join a textual recital outside the house as they are to sponsor a rite associated with the agrarian calendar at home.

An elaborate *pas de deux* joins together and disengages the lives of houses in an estate, together with their families and individuals. In my interpretation, Nyarma was more like a traditional *khangun* than a *khangchen*. It was associated with the principal house of Thikse monastery, and it was expected to disappear with its elderly residents. Elder and younger Tashi thus played a key role in establishing a kind of retirement home. Nyarma nuns are not stuck at home like other seniors, but neither are they incorporated within today's literate and scholarly assemblies. Settled in the house they established at Nyarma, the nuns learned that they had no need of a teacher; they needed

only to rest. It was too late for them to become 'real' nuns since they were in the process of leaving the world – and its houses – behind.

But house relations have changed. Secular offshoots and *khangchen* have all become simple houses – and Nyarma, too, is changing. The young girls from Zanskar were dedicated by their families. If they are parented well, they may stay to grow old in this nun's house, but they will fundamentally change its nature as they carry it on. I heard in 2017 that two elderly Thikse village nuns were turned down when they asked to join the community, as there was space only for young nuns – and volunteers to generate an income. If elders are rejected in favour of juniors at Nyarma, it is possible that the retirement home, with its *khangun* connotations, will gradually disappear even as the nunnery is sustained. Nyarma may last and even become as grand as neighbouring institutions. Some of the nunneries that have sprung up across Ladakh are developing into multi-generational institutions. A few centres of learning will no doubt be recognised as colleges or universities.

For the time being, Tashi Chenzom and Tashi Dolma enjoy their house and the 'daughters' who have joined them. Despite expectations that they would stay at home unmarried to look after house, fields, animals and people, they did not. Whether or not their reduced entitlements propelled them to a new beginning on a new path, wider developments have contributed to their success. No doubt, both cousins would be pleased if their achievements at Nyarma were continued by a new generation, but their attention is absorbed by what they consider to be the most crucial step in their lives – that is, learning to leave their bodies and houses for another life (Chapter 9). It is to be hoped that today's elders in desolate rural homes will not come to inhabit the abject status previously associated with nuns. Will retirement homes multiply to care for them even though Nyarma cannot, or will we see constantly commuting relatives, a new paid economy of care and more frequent shifts of residence?

Notes

1 Tashi Chenzom and Tashi Dolma chose to use their usual names rather than pseudonyms.
2 This is what residents call their nunnery. It is registered officially as Galden Legshed Ling.
3 Double quotation marks indicate transcribed passages, as in previous chapters (see note 20, p. 42). I taped Tashi Chenzom and Tashi Dolma's histories in 2013.
4 See Chapter 3 for an account of who belonged to Buddhist smallholdings and how in the 1980s.
5 I use Khanpo and Thikse Rinpoche interchangeably for Kushok Ngawang Chamba Stanzin.
6 Ladakhis of their age often talked about visiting India when they left Ladakh.
7 Also known as Amchi T. Palmo, as she is a doctor of Tibetan medicine.
8 The two cousins were given the names of Lobzang Dolkar and Lobzang Dolma when they offered their hair to become *getsulma*.

9 Part of the Border Roads Organisation, which is responsible for constructing and maintaining roads in the area.
10 She used the Hindi word for ritual.
11 Classic accounts by scholars such as Tucci also emphasise a common symbolic template to religious and secular houses,

> The sacred character of the house, its homologizing, as reproduction or projection, with the universe, man's desire to enclose himself within the invulnerable security offered by the house, and almost as it were to become a god within it – all this is reflected also in the structure of religious communities; these are conceived of after the manner of a house, and the masters of this house are described, according to their greater or lesser importance, as pillar, beam and so on, all this with the aim of reinforcing anew the scheme or archetype of an order beyond time ruling within such an institution.
>
> (Tucci 1980: 189; note and Tibetan terms omitted)

12 When I was in Ladakh in the early 1980s, they were often called 'nuns who wear the *lokpa,*' in reference to the goatskin shawl which laywomen then wore outside.
13 Sidney Schuler (1987: 154) described non-married women – around 25% of all women – in Chumik, Northwest Nepal (Mustang),

> Propertyless, always at the call of others but often alone, and with nothing but the charity of others to see her through illness and old age, the low status unmarried woman in Tibetan society is not a figure to romanticize.

As in some Tibetan-speaking areas but not Ladakh, junior brothers and sisters often had to leave home and join lower social strata (see note 4, p. 59).
14 Mills contrasts the position of monks with that of incarnate lamas in Lingshed, a Geluk monastery. Rinpoche recognised as manifestation bodies (*tulku,* Tib: *sprul sku*) often accumulate significant estates, *labrang*, over a series of lives.
15 Gell (1992, 1998) described this as the aesthetic trap of the gift economy or a technology of intentionality, and Marilyn Strathern (1988: 221) considers a positive marriage rule as the kinship terminological inscription of the "aesthetic of the anticipated outcome."
16 The funerals of Nyarma nuns were sponsored through their natal homes.
17 I knew of one other such home for Ladakhis that was established by the Mahabodhi organisation in Leh in 1995, and one for Tibetans in Choglomsar, established in 1976. Rinchen Angmo Chumikchan (2016) reported that eighty-four senior citizens in total were living in these retirement homes at the time.
18 The terms are unfortunate since they suggest responses to external influences, but a wide variety of developments are bundled under the rubric of 'protestant,' 'secular' and 'modernising' Buddhism; see, for example, Mills (2005), Williams-Oerberg (2020) and, with reference to the new status of nuns, Willis (2004). Similar trends are reported among Ladakhi Muslims in, for example, Sijapati and Fewkes (2018) and Rehman (2020). Developments in both Buddhism and Islam speak to the importance of women's specialist religious practice, leadership and education.

8 Going it alone

Angmo's Leh house

Sonam Norten and Skarma Yanzom, two 'single' (non-married) friends, Leh bazaar (2019)

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Angmo came from a rural offshoot like Tashi Chenzom and Tashi Dolma, the Nyarma nuns, and she too took advantage of opportunities to live differently. In her late 60s at the time of writing, Angmo stayed separately from her peers and her family in a 'simple house' (*khangpa*) in Leh that she had built gradually over the course of a decade. This town house also provided her with an income.

Ladakhi houses and holdings are mutually implicated but, as I have shown, their contours shift according to the position an individual occupies in the estate, and over time. In Chapter 6, I described how Jigmed struggled to maintain claims to her highly valued house name and position in the village, with all their historic connotations. She was disadvantaged compared to both her offshoot and main house brothers. I probed the composite character of houses and drew on Jane Guyer's discussion of archaic house forms layered within contemporary versions to explain how Ladakhi smallholders in general continued to belong to named estates while simultaneously partitioning into simple houses. Simple houses have qualities of previous offshoots and, in Chapter 7, I asked if the nunnery would finish with its elderly residents as though it were a traditional *khangun*. Angmo's town house carries elements of a gendered offshoot status, but in this chapter, I ask about the kind of person implicated by her unusual home.

Jane Guyer (2016a) argues that vernacular households implicate different kinds of person through distinct values. She describes four relevant benchmarks that have developed historically: status, labour value, citizenship and asset. One-time units of production and taxation, Ladakhi houses still index relative status through their land and other property, and Guyer considers these archaic qualities internationally relevant to contemporary infrastructures in the computation of state measurements such as gross domestic product (GDP) and consumer price index (CPI). Subsequently, Guyer suggests, houses came to index labour value and then entitlements to welfare and citizenship in the 'modern' times of many nation-states, including India. Most recently, she argues, a fourth benchmark has created houses in the form of assets, which must be managed. These house-assets emerged in the United States during the 1970s and in Ladakh during the 1990s, when a market in land expanded in response to the local government initiatives described in Chapter 3.

These four indices are bundled in different ways, but Guyer considers that the asset-value equation is likely to upstage the other three indices in a cascade of historical legacies for 'Indexing People to Money' (the title of Chapter 9 in her 2016 book, *Legacies, Logics, Logistics*)[1] through their houses. As she notes in illustration, the valuation of 'shelter services' since the 1970s in many countries refers as much to the sheltering of capital assets and taxation requirements as to a roof over your head. Importantly for understanding Angmo's novel position, Guyer asks about the personhood implicated by the distributed reproduction of house-based society (Murphy 2011, Chapter 7, p. 124) when "all our most durable qualities are now being spliced out in a

different fashion from simple "reproduction," and amplified and financialized" (Guyer 2016b: 196).

Angmo came from a high-status family; she was once married but her children lived elsewhere, and she had retired from formal employment. We first met in 1981 when Angmo was living in a cousin's city home and cooking for herself in a makeshift bedsit on the ground floor while her children boarded at a school outside Ladakh. Accustomed to the standard display of modesty or shyness (*zangs*) which led women to defer, decline hospitality and appear in public only with relatives or friends, I was surprised by Angmo's independence and autonomy. She was happy to manage her own affairs, initiate conversations with strangers and work across Ladakh, protected by her family background, her education and a feminism that led her to work on behalf of women. She was aware of the effects of renewed and nation-wide pronatalism that limited the autonomy of women (Aengst 2013; Smith 2009, 2014), as well as the positive respect that associations of religious women had begun to attract in Ladakh (note 18, p. 141) and the transformations in Ladakh's house-based society.

While Angmo might find discussion of the four house values described by Guyer remote from her everyday life, she would appreciate the relevance of distinct dimensions of value to her calculations about the future. She asked how house values would develop, and how she might influence their valuation. Angmo remained part of her village home, for which she worked; she enjoyed welfare and citizenship through both her village and city homes, and she had acquired new plots as assets. Like Tashi Chenzom and Tashi Dolma, Angmo was also becoming an elder and wondered if she would be able to continue independently. Could she sustain her Leh house? Would she become a dependant of the one in which she grew up spoilt during the 1970s? Should she move into an 'old-age home' or to another part of the country where life was easier? New kinds of house render and join values uncertainly in Ladakh, and Angmo became preoccupied with these questions, as I describe. I ask how the values indexed by houses are registered, combined and contested.

Angmo makes her own guesthouse

Unlike Tashi Chenzom and Tashi Dolma, Angmo learned to read and write as a child. She grew up in a village that was then remote, and determinedly followed the older boys to village school day after day. Ultimately, she was allowed to attend school with her father's support, and she told me that she was the only one of the correct age in her class. She was also the only girl in school. She insisted, 'If I had done what my mother wanted, I would have been married in a village with at least four or five children like my sisters.' As Angmo compared herself to her village sisters, she continued,

> If I'd done as I was told, I wouldn't have gone to school, and I would have learned all my mother wanted. She could not teach me all the

> things a bride should know but, if she had, I would have gone as daughter-in-law like them.

She told me how she learned to write on stone tablets,

> First you put on smoke and then you polished it a lot with a stone. Then you made lines with a sort of thread you pulled through from a pouch you carried with you. Then you usually wrote with clay, which you also had to thin and prepare. It was much better with ink blocks. You would rub out the ink every day and write on the same background again the next day, but it was difficult to buy ink. I never had a ballpoint pen until Class 6, and pencils arrived after that.[2]

Angmo was allowed to lodge with a relative in Leh to continue her education, which led to further professional training outside Ladakh. An early marriage ended in divorce, and she took up a government job. She was then expected to remarry as she was still in her 20s, and her family was approached with several offers. Angmo was unsure about giving her children a stepfather who might not treat them as he would his own children, and so she declined her suitors.

It was difficult to remain single at the time except as a nun, so Angmo began to make tentative arrangements to take her vows. She gave away her rings, her gold jewellery and other belongings in preparation for training in Dharamsala. But her uncle intervened, asking how Angmo would fund her studies, and how she would continue to pay for her children's education. Did she want sponsorship, and if so, did she understand that any merit earned would go to the sponsor as well as herself? This uncle, a monk, told Angmo that her ties to the world would make it hard to cultivate the necessary detachment. He felt that she would always respond to her children in the way of a mother, and as a mother rightly should. Angmo took his advice reluctantly and began to forge a new course.

With her small salary and a few years' savings, Angmo obtained rooms in Leh's Housing Colony, one of the first settlements established through government grants of small building plots. With further savings a few years later, she was able to buy a slightly bigger plot of land in another part of town. After several more years, she had sufficient funds to begin building her current house. She started with two rooms that she could rent out while she herself slept in the kitchen and, from this base, she expanded little by little, year on year. Her guesthouse now has eight rooms, six with bathrooms.

I visited Angmo's home and guesthouse in 2005 after it had been standing for a decade. I had not been in Leh for many years and found the piped water, televisions with scheduled Ladakhi programmes and gas hobs inside as puzzling as the vistas of new buildings outside. Angmo was away visiting her children and grandchildren, who lived outside Ladakh. A village relative was looking after the house while she finished high school and welcomed me

to the three-storey building one cold, grey day in a summer of incessant rain. The parapet and windows had the customary strips of colour, but there were no apotropaic markings such as the *tsandos* that ward off numina without backs or the 'watchdog' *sago namgo* guarding the doors to the earth and sky, and there were no shrines to *lha* or *lu* (see Chapter 2): these remained with Angmo's village home. But there was a small, immaculate vegetable garden, prayer flags and a miniature offering room in a kitchen alcove with the usual offerings, religious texts, family photographs and important documents kept separately from the standard array of pots and china on kitchen shelves. There was a best and a glass room, stores and, of course, amenities for tourists.

This house was a *khangpa*, a simple house whose residents were not full citizens of the city. As I learned on a subsequent visit, newcomers had 'captured' land in Leh. Angmo explained how "we refugees" (*kyampo*, Tib: *'gyam po*) cleared, rented and eventually bought and acquired legal title to land before the people of Leh realised: 'they were sleeping.' Old-time residents, she explained, did not like 'incomers' (*hamsaya*), and when they awoke, excluded them from the neighbourhood associations that are so critical to house life. The existing association was restricted to full houses (*tronpa*) and their long-time Leh residents. Incomers were corralled into a second, smaller neighbourhood association of twenty-five members. The 'newcomers' association' had to request increased contributions from members in labour and money to buy their own marquee and equipment, and to host and sponsor members' life events, such as consecrating a house or celebrating a birth. Angmo had been living in the neighbourhood for over a decade but suddenly felt unwelcome. She and her neighbours in the new association reported an unpleasant sense of marginalisation.

In her first summer in the new house, Angmo would set off to the irrigation pond by car at 6 p.m. every evening with a helper or friend to get water. On their return, they had to fill the tank and distribute water around the house to as many as ten guests at a time. Dealing with water alone might take from 6 p.m. until midnight, and Angmo reflected, 'However hard it is now, it's nothing like when I was building.' Pipes for water arrived after a few years along with neighbours, who began to build on adjacent plots. Later, Angmo commissioned a borehole with further savings so she could draw water from the well and she began to heat the house with pumps and a boiler. In this way, she gradually managed to achieve the independence that she wanted so passionately, and she worked hard to sustain it.

Angmo retired a few years ago to spend most of her time at home. In high season, she rose at 4.30 a.m. to fire the hot water, a job that takes an hour – ideally after praying, lighting lamps and taking incense in and out of the house. Although she refused to cook for guests, she invariably agreed to make a simple breakfast and responded to endless requests for tea or snacks. By the time government offices opened at 10 a.m., Angmo would be cajoling officials to mend the electricity, the telephone or internet, and

resolve legal issues; she might also visit offices to help with permits and travel arrangements for her guests. Later, she brought heavy pots of water into the house or washed clothes outside, tended the garden and prepared tea. Since I have known the guesthouse, Angmo has relied financially on the short tourist season to supplement a meagre pension, hosting Indian and non-Indian tourists, some of whom became friends and almost family. In the past, she received rent by the year from government officials posted to Leh. Relatives also visited and sometimes stayed for weeks at a time. On occasion, Angmo managed to keep a relative as helper for months or years as they finished their studies and worked in the house, and she also enjoyed the company of non-family helpers from distant areas of Ladakh. Today, help is not easy to find within Ladakh and so Angmo employed waged labour from other parts of the sub-continent to help run the guesthouse. To date, arrangements have been unsatisfactory since those who worked with Angmo were soon poached by other people offering higher salaries. Angmo often found herself running the guesthouse single-handed in high season. In response, she has tried but failed to lease out the entire guesthouse to younger Lehpa in return for either a portion of the proceeds or a fixed rent.

Like other newcomers, Angmo remained part of her natal home and contributed to the village estate as she kept house in Leh and ran her own business. Dame and Müller (2021) conducted household surveys in 312 Leh houses from 2015–2016, and their results provide context to Angmo's position. Sixty-one per cent of respondents were not born in the house where they were surveyed, although many (42%) had been living there for twenty-five years or longer. Twenty-nine per cent had 'second homes,' which I have described as 'first,' natal or childhood houses, and almost three-quarters of this group said that they visited to help their families during peak agricultural periods. These second – or first – homes provide food for Leh relatives in the form of fresh milk or vegetables, which arrive in the city on a weekly basis, and Leh houses send back goods by return. City houses host rural relatives who need to visit doctors and officials or attend school and they support village homes more extensively than in the past because of widespread rural emigration. Rural and city houses were sometimes grouped into a single named family unit, and Angmo's Leh home was often seen as part of her village estate, as indeed were those of her children in other Indian cities.

Angmo also acquired and lost further property periodically, including a flat outside Ladakh that she later sold, plots near Leh and, currently, a stake in one of her children's flats in an Indian city. These she considered speculative investments and potential assets, possibly also sites of future homes for her immediate family. As Dame and Müller note, many Ladakhis have forged tight interconnections between Leh, rural Ladakh and larger Indian cities, and they moved between the Indian lowlands, as well as within Ladakh.

Living alone

Angmo loved her Leh house which constantly called for attention and improvement: a tough but beautiful stair runner for the top stairs, woven by a much loved and now deceased pastoralist friend; a deeper well; a better system for heating the water; repairs; an extension. While there were none to help, there was no one to interfere, either, and Angmo relished her position as a free agent. She could organise her mini-*chodkhang* and offerings and enjoy her meals and soap operas as she pleased, welcoming the company of neighbours when she had time.

On occasion though, Angmo complained bitterly about being on her own (*chikpo*, Tib: *gcig po*). *Chik* means 'one' and the term *chikpo* generally applies to everyday situations in which you are alone and so cannot help other people or get their help. Sometimes, however, this term refers to highly troubling existential conditions of perceived abandonment. The implicit contradiction in complaining about a situation to which she always aspired made it difficult for Angmo to find the words she needed. She would explain that she was not complaining of loneliness, simply of being alone in a house that demanded too much of her. She also used the word *tsherka* (Tib: '*tsher ka*), which suggests anxiety or sadness. During my first winter in Ladakh in 1981, I was often asked if I did not mind being on my own (*chikpo*, Chapter 3, p. 48); was I not bored (*sunpa*) or suffering from anxiety (*tsherka*)? These and cognate terms speak to problems from spending too much time on your own, low spiritual power or poor interpersonal relations, situations that are widely associated with women. In the sense of sorrow, *tsherka* is conventionally associated with a bride's lament at marriage, a genre of women's poetry that Aggarwal (2004) suggested embodies a history of coping with separation that is passed down the generations in Sham, Lower Ladakh. Aggarwal refers to Robert Desjarlais' account of Yolmo (Nepal) where *tsherka* conveys a sense of "isolation, a depressive melancholy, an unwelcome pensiveness, and an inability to relate the trials of the heart to others" (Desjarlais 1992: 103) among men, as well as women. Yolmo, Desjarlais wrote, consider that *tsherka* refers to the pain of absence as a daughter leaves home at marriage, as a son leaves for the city or the plains to work and as children mourn the death of parents.[3] Around Leh, these terms suggest worrying feelings that may lead to depression or ill health. They typically evoke prospects of moving house at marriage and thus attach to women, rather than men, who may become 'unsettled' (*mirdeches*, Tib: *mi bde-*).[4]

Women still stereotypically bear the negative connotations of mobility associated with marriage exchanges and an informal sociability that occurs in-between houses on the road, by the water pump and in the fields, which is far more likely to cause problems than the orderly hospitality offered inside a house. When women are denigrated, their mobility signifies a troubling lack of boundaries; they are compared to the numina mingling with people that were mentioned in Chapter 2: those without backs (*tsan*), found in the

shadows thrown by others ('witches' or *gongmo*), in the troubles caused by talking too much (*mikha*) or showing excessive modesty. *Yanguk* (see Chapter 2, pp. 33–34) is performed at marriage, as well as after harvesting: one *yanguk* occurs when a bride leaves home to make sure that she does not take its prosperity with her, and another before she goes into her house of marriage to ensure that no damage penetrates the interior.

As a bride, Angmo would normally have bid farewell to her offering room, house god and *phaspun*, the small group of houses sharing a single god. She would have joined those of her marital home, and she would have expected to be cremated after death in their funerary oven. But the marriage was brief and Angmo remained with her own village house. She sang what she remembered of a bride's lament (*bag ngus*) as she recalled what might have happened:

> To eat someone else's food, you need teeth of metal
> To wear someone else's dress, we need sleeves made of wire.
> My brother is like a tiger, please don't forget your poor sister but make sure to visit her.
> My mother is like an ocean, *ju*
> My father. . . . Oh, I've forgotten.

Escaping such a fate, Angmo had also avoided life as a household nun working for the estate in the village offshoot. Although she sometimes regretted that she had not trained as a 'real nun,' she was proud of her career, her earnings and her city home.

As a single person in her town house, Angmo faced additional demands. Ladakh has fewer non-married individuals than in the past, and even though more and more young women said that they did not want to marry or stay at home (Chapter 7), few of them lived alone. Angmo kept house in Leh and the village and complained that she was even busier off-season when she was 'on call' for her extensive and widely dispersed family. She might be in Delhi with a grandchild during school holidays, only to find herself summoned to a hospital nearby where a cousin was undergoing surgery. She could be called to work at her village house or to help an elderly relative in a neighbouring settlement, and she was expected to attend family celebrations. Angmo objected to the money, time and effort these activities required, 'We can't bring help from there [the village]. In fact, we have to go and work for the main house or to fulfil our village and monastery duties as well as looking after our own property.' The young were nowhere to be found.[5]

Even though Angmo managed to employ helpers from the sub-continent, they could not substitute for family in village work. Should helpers agree to leave town at all, they would not know how to behave appropriately in and around a village house. Since Angmo had no family members to send on her behalf, she usually provided money or goods to compensate for her absence, which therefore required continuing and even expanding business

involvement. Angmo was caught in a cycle of earning for and spending on her family.

A lone householder in the city, it was also difficult for Angmo to offer and receive hospitality. The worst part of living alone, Angmo often said, was the endless round of visiting and gifting. She had not hosted marriage celebrations for her children or birth celebrations for her grandchildren, apart from the eldest. There was no point, as her family could not possibly visit these guests with return gifts in response: usually a gift in Ladakh elicits a return gift from relatives of the initial recipient. Competitive gifting also meant that a 20-rupee gift had become 100–200 rupees since you always had to give more, typically in the form of biscuits and juices. This cycle of exchange meant that the few houses that Angmo still visited did not make return gifts because there was no one in her house to perpetuate the cycle with a further visit. She explained, 'When I die, lots of people will stay away. Only my relatives will come because there is no one here to visit them.' Angmo decided to restrict her visits to close family, and her children could then make return trips with a *katag* and 500 rupees when they were in Ladakh. She concluded, 'If my family come back to live here, we will probably start again. I will only go to funerals in the meantime and, it is important, attend my own society [neighbourhood association].'

To achieve her own house, Angmo had incurred debts and obligations. Her family paid for her education and looked after her children when she was working. Members from her natal house lent her money to pay school fees, buy land and build on it. As the first woman of the family with an education, Angmo benefited from earnings commensurate with her skilled work over the years and necessarily returned this support. The ledger of costs and benefits was never clear, however, and Angmo felt that she repaid her debts at high interest. She might feed and house a young relative-helper and send her to school only to be accused of exploitation by a family member who thought she was working the young girl too hard. Sometimes, Angmo considered herself trapped by her single status.

In her late 60s, Angmo still had to work and did not know how to manage her homes, business, village and city duties. One day, I found her upset with her son after a phone call. She explained, 'I don't want to be alone when I am old. I never get bored and hardly ever do I feel lonely, but who will look after me?' She worried that her arthritis would make life impossible in Leh and wondered whether she should sell up and buy a small plot in the plains or even outside India. The local doctor (*amchi*) had told her not to use cold water, but it was expensive to heat a house for one person during the long Ladakhi winter. 'Truly,' she concluded, 'if I were not so strong, I would have gone mad.' This was an allusion to another relative who had suffered with dementia,

> Do you know what *Ache* (elder sister) used to say to her mother before she died? Grandmother had forgotten her present life. She could only remember how, when she was young, she always used to try to run

> home. That is, as a new wife, she was homesick and wanted to go back home. Now an old woman, this is all she remembered, and she would keep leaving and trying to run home.

We had been talking about the social boycott in Leh and arbitrary policing in times of trouble, and Angmo continued, '*Ache* used to tell her that the police would come and get her. That's how *Ache* kept her at home. Then she wouldn't go out at all. It was very bad; it was very sad.'

A further relative, a lay nun, had given what little she had after a lifetime in her rural home to a brother. He sold the *khangun* animals and goods to assume the responsibility of caring for his sister in his city house. In her later years, this woman felt that she lived as a guest who was of little use to her family since she worked so slowly. At times, she found her sister-in-law and the children neglectful, and at times she complained that everyone ignored her. She would then pack a bag to stay with relatives in nearby villages, often setting off on foot and getting lost, only to be rescued by a passing car. She would stay until her mood lifted or concerns about the wellbeing of her family's animals drew her back. Relatives, including Angmo, would say, 'Work less, rest more; ask for what you want.' Angmo would then ask me as we drove or walked home, 'Who will look after me in my old age?'

A few of Angmo's friends had managed to make rooms or houses of their own – and they, too, wondered how to maintain their independence. A slightly younger, professional friend never married because, I was told, her father had wanted her help at home as the eldest child and the only one earning. He suggested she bring in a husband, and found her a much older man to marry, who she refused. She and Angmo joked about meeting weekly 'while we still can.' Other friends and family conceded a measure of independence. Ache Chorol, for example, sold vegetables in the bazaar most evenings and we often found her avoiding her adult children in case they tried to take her home. Ache Chorol had left an unhappy marriage to live on her own, but as she became less active, she agreed to live in two ground floor rooms of a daughter's house in one of the new Leh suburbs. Her children had successfully persuaded her to stop her sociable beer business a few years previously and her daughter cooked dinner every day, constantly begging her mother to come home earlier in the evening from the bazaar, 'No one ever knows where she is; she is out and about all day.'

Angmo did not plan to move into a relative's house, and when we visited the new Leh crematorium, she declared bluntly, 'That's the place for me.' The crematorium was a recent civic initiative on the part of a Rinpoche to provide funerals for immigrants and tourists, who had no family in Ladakh. Drawing on public discourse associating contemporary life with a lack of respect and support for elders, Angmo thought she too might die alone.[6] She calculated from her ailments and age that she would be unable to work in a decade's time. One of her children also acknowledged, 'However independent and

busy my mother is, she is not as strong as before and she can't do everything on her own; she feels lonely.'

In 2019, Angmo and I were discussing the sense of presence (Chapter 4) in my Kharnak photographs and Angmo described her dilemma now that she was, 'an old woman in Leh,' her children in the plains. She made analogies with Buddhist notions as she searched for the right words: 'There is no soul [in photographs], but they are there [present].' Later, she amplified, 'If a picture talks to you or startles you, it is because there was some connection in a previous lifetime – if that person was otherwise unknown to you.' We agreed that pictures might be brought to life through our memories, and Angmo felt these memories concerned largely 'the good and the bad they did and what they would think of the good and bad I am doing.' Other people might feel differently, she said, but she really felt that the people depicted in these photographs were present in person, and so it was important to show them respect. Angmo finally arrived at her dilemma: she could not throw her photographs away with the household rubbish as she felt even now that she 'had to keep their trust' – but neither could she repair and keep them for someone else to throw away after she died.

Many of Angmo's pictures were organised into albums which together told her life story. As we looked through them, she reflected, 'I am satisfied when I see this trajectory from the beginning in little knowledge.' Even so, Angmo concluded, 'I cannot care for these photos. How can you get rid of them? I have so many.' She decided to burn them in the stove: 'It was difficult. If you tear one, you find an eye staring at you or a single ear.' Angmo experimented and began to take the film off its backing, crumple the images up without looking at them, and feed them into her stove. This she did with all the photographs she could not identify: 'I didn't like that the eye looked at me, but I don't want these pictures to fall in the hands of disrespectful outsiders who may treat them badly.' She decided to take no more photographs and to get rid of those her family would not keep properly,

> Otherwise, they may fall into hands of other people who won't respect them. Maybe they will tread on them. It is important that they are handled with respect. It is much easier with digital images. You just have to press delete but, with photographs, it is difficult.

Angmo was uneasy about the vocabulary we were using and explained that photographs provide supports for those depicted as well as for those who look at the images, but in her view, these supports were not at all comparable to religious supports such as *chorten* or statues: 'There is no ritual with the photos. It is not like you call their name and say [as you would in a particular exorcistic ceremony], "you must leave these people."' Nonetheless, they needed respect and, since Angmo could no longer care for her pictures, she had to dispose of them appropriately. Familiar with my own image work from the 1980s and the photobooks I had been making, Angmo

perceived the need for a photography museum: 'I would happily give all mine to such a place.'

Soon after our visit to the crematorium, I teased Angmo in the company of a mutual friend, saying that she always complained about being on her own. The friend protested, 'How could she when we are with her all the time, albeit invisible?' Embarrassed at the implication that she did not recognise or value her friendships sufficiently, Angmo explained that she was not lonely; she just had too much work. This friend was highly educated in textual Buddhism and her comment implied that Angmo should develop the detachment appropriate to her years. Angmo, too, suggested one day when she was complaining bitterly about her absent children, 'I could have been in the old-age home now with the Nyarma nuns, as happy as I have ever been.' At the time, Nyarma had the beginnings of a younger generation who would soon be able to help their elderly co-residents prepare to leave their old bodies for a new and hopefully better life.

A nun's life in older age

If Angmo has dwelt on the difficulties of lone house-holding in recent years, she has since reconsidered her position. She began to find her situation enviable as she attached herself to the religious category of elders. Living alone, she could concentrate on the devotions that would enable her to detach from worldly life and shed her house and body. Elders are in the winter of their lives and take advantage of opportunities to make merit, practice religion and, they hope, influence their responses to the intermediate state after death so as to incarnate once more as a person next time round. Winter is also the customary time for more intense religious practice.[7] I often found a circle of visitors in Angmo's 'glass room,' which stayed warm by trapping the sun. Angmo was usually the youngest and enjoyed these visits from her relatives. In Leh, they would tell and count their beads, drink tea and laugh as they recounted visits to doctors, opticians, *amchi*, lama, *lha*[8] and pharmacists in the hope of addressing symptoms of age. They would discuss their endless rounds with government papers and share family news for hours as they spun wool or sorted dried vegetables, pulses and rice. Accompanying the evident pleasure that these older women took in each other's company was an equal devotion to religious practice. In-between the gossip, hands free, they returned to counting their beads and reciting their *om mane*. Indeed, they encouraged each other and, in consequence, combined the repetitive sorting of foodstuff and materials sociably with repetitive meditations on the future.

Those who could accompanied each other to religious teachings, pilgrimages and fasts. Some of Angmo's peers took the vows of nuns or monks, and some joined her for Sunday teachings in Leh and for the annual fast (*nyenes*, Tib: *bsnyen gnas*).[9] In 2017, Angmo planned to join the longer rather than two-day version of this fast because, 'I might not be able to attend next year,' words that we unpicked in terms of the unpredictability of ageing. Like other

Lehpa cited in Chapter 7, she considered that people with little formal religious education were benefiting from contemporary Buddhist teaching in the vernacular at public-facing events alongside nuns and monks, 'Nowadays there are so many more Rinpoche preaching and we householders and laypeople understand so much more that we decide now where to go and how to be educated.'

As an elder, Angmo considered living alone a special boon. She had the autonomy and independence to practice her religion early in the morning, to join her peers for Sunday teachings, to attend a longer spring ascetic practice, to abstain from certain foods, to join local and distant pilgrimages and practice assiduously the teachings she had received, all of which would help her soul leave her body in the proper fashion when the time came. Perhaps she was a *chomo* (nun) after all? She had turned towards religion; she had remained single since her early divorce; and she had kept her hair short. Neighbours often referred to her, even dismissively, as *chomo*.

A Ladakhi might translate *chomo* as 'a woman without a husband' as well as nun to imply that the woman was somehow incomplete or deficient. Single men can elicit similar responses as they do in Bourdieu's (1962) evocative account of deprivation among Béarnais bachelors in France. The social connotations in Ladakhi and English usage overlap more closely, however, with respect to single women than men, who are variously attributed roles or characteristics of 'man-stealer,' 'celibate,' 'outsider' and 'servant.' In certain hands, *chomo* constitutes a veiled denigration comparable to the use of spinster in English, implying that this woman cannot attract a man.

Catherine Allerton (2007) suggested that European stereotypes typify the spinster as an icon of loneliness and showed in contrast that it was an unproblematic choice for Manggarai women in Indonesia to live a single – and sociable – life. Any woman or man is of course single insofar as they exist as an individual, who remains distinct and connected to others.[10] Some of the offshoot women I have cited were never married; some were celibate; and others were divorced or widowed. All of them expressed strong attachments to both their present and natal homes, but they also felt marginalised. Ladakhis continue to say with some equivocation that whoever lives at home belongs with the house. Individuals who have divorced or whose partners have died, as well as nuns and monks, retain a sense of belonging to their first homes and can return.[11] But these offshoot women thought they would become outsiders to their natal homes since they could not conceive of making formal claims on the house (see Chapter 6). Most judged that they lived with the same disproportionate workloads as they had previously. Overall, however, Angmo, the Nyarma nuns and their peers considered themselves fortunate, with more to celebrate than regret. Their narratives suggest skilful navigation of historically determined contingencies. Still working hard, still at the beck and call of their families, they have adjusted to and initiated new ways of life. The women I have described made their own houses and lives by drawing on both well-established and emerging opportunities. They

challenged assumptions that they were lonely by emphasising the vitality of their houses, and Angmo would have ignored any disparaging connotations of the word *chomo* in favour of its positive association with religion in general and her own devotions in particular.

A 'simple house'?

Angmo is one of the few elders I knew who went 'singly' to live on her own, but her city home was by no means a 'simple house' (*khangpa*). On the one hand, it represented a business which included other investments, and on the other, it belonged with or to an estate centring on the main house in a village a few hours from Leh.

Despite the demands of two houses several hours' drive apart, Angmo had acquired further house-plots near Leh. Investing the money she could spare, she bought two parcels of land for sale on the market which had been distributed to individual village houses through Hill Council government grants. She also bought a third plot outside Ladakh. Speculating on market trends and government commitments to infrastructure, Angmo hoped that the value of her plots would increase when they were connected to roads and piped water and she imagined that she might reap a profit if and when she sold. She hedged this possible future with a gamble on her family, hoping that at least some of them might be tempted to return to Ladakh and build a home on one of her plots.

These potential assets also made demands on Angmo. She had to wall her land to secure the boundaries against encroachments from neighbours. Ideally, she should also build at least one room. One of her plots near Leh was subject to a dispute between those who bought land and members of the village which originally held title to the area. Both parties had a case. If Angmo and other incomers had documents to prove that their land was registered with the *tehsil* office, their rights would be upheld. If they did not, the rights of the community that originally held this land in common for the use of all villagers would be supported. A court case could prove costly. Angmo found that her assets took more money and time than she could muster and soon sold her flat outside Ladakh, as well as half of one of the plots near Leh. She reinvested funds by contributing to the purchase of another flat for one of her children in an Indian city, which also gave Angmo a roof over her head when she visited in the winter.

As Angmo responded to and promoted new practices, she was able to achieve and maintain an unusual autonomy within an extensive social network. During her adult years, she combined and shifted between house values associated with status, the reproduction of labour, entitlements to state distributions and assets. These values were and continue to be distributed across several plots in addition to her natal and city homes but their realisation in either monetary terms or family projects has been limited by 'going it alone.' Life alone was both a boon and a burden, and the balance changed

over time. In the past decade, Angmo found that the difficulties of living as a lone householder initially outweighed the advantages as she developed arthritis and found herself unable to hire domestic help. Lately, however, Angmo considered herself an elder in the enviable position of being able to practice religion seriously and prepare for death.

Her simple house faces as uncertain a future as Nyarma. I suggested that Nyarma is more likely to last as a nunnery than a retirement home because the elderly nuns had managed to attract young recruits from a remote hinterland even though they had no scholar to teach them. If these girls stay, Nyarma may establish itself as a celibate house among others. If not, Nyarma will die with its elderly residents like traditional offshoots when their occupants pass away. Angmo wanted to become *chomo* but could not; neighbours consider her a *chomo* in some respects but not others since she runs a business; and the home she has rendered remains from some perspectives a mere *khangun*. No one knows whether a new generation will arrive to carry on her home or whether it will lie abandoned after Angmo dies to be cannibalised for other buildings or to fashion offshoots among the wider family.

Few have proved as well-resourced and enterprising as Angmo, but she still felt as though she were treated as a junior daughter or sister, indelibly fixed to her natal position in her offshoot. While she *has* relatives for whom she works, she does not receive reciprocal care, and longed to *be* a relative who attracted comparable attention. It is in this sense that she can be considered somehow incomplete like an English spinster or Béarnais bachelor, with clear limits to navigate. While Angmo has established and enjoyed values of status and entitlements to welfare or citizenship, she has struggled to establish the reproductive and asset value of her holdings. It seems likely that one or more of her immediate family – children or grandchildren – will join Angmo in Ladakh to help her navigate the several house staircases, the heavy water and the biting cold. If they do, Angmo may be able to realise house values associated both with the reproduction of labour and assets, passing on her main holding in Leh to some members of the family and selling other plots to generate the wherewithal for second or third family homes. Angmo and her home may then come to be recognised and valued through acts of reciprocity, with relatives visiting her as often as Angmo attends to her family. Her town house may carry on for a while without, as it were, lacking a husband, shrines or village histories.

Notes

1 Guyer's principal example is the CPI, an index of human value expressed in monetary terms (Guyer 2016b: 182). The CPI measures the cost of living through a standard 'basket of goods'; from the mid-20th century, it became an important instrument for international economic monitoring after standardisation of national measures.
2 Double quotation marks indicate transcribed passages, as in previous chapters.

3 Smriti Srinivas considered that the bride's farewell in Nubra, to the north of Leh,

> usually has a deeply personalized form and refers to places and persons dear to the bride. The word which might be used to convey this weariness of the soul, the homesick ache, and the feeling of wandering among strangers is called *sunpa*. Many such songs also express resistance against disinheritance from natal homes.
>
> (Srinivas 1998: 156)

In his dictionary, Das (1902) defines the Tibetan *sum pa* as 'to weep, lament' and *sun pa* as 'to be out of humour, tired of, . . . annoyed,' etc. In Ladakh, at least, it can also suggest boredom.

4 The word *bde-* has many connotations and here means being unhappy, unsafe or miserable.

5 This shortage of family labour is not a new phenomenon, even though it has intensified; see, for example, the story about Dolma's Muslim aunt (Chapter 5), the widow who adopted one relative after another in an effort to find some care during her twilight years.

6 This discourse implies that co-resident families cared for their elders in the past but aged relatives were also ignored at times, given work they found difficult, fed last and often least.

7 As Bourdieu wrote, "The cycle of the rites of passage is in fact subordinated to the agrarian calendar, which is itself nothing other than the succession of the rites of passage" (1977: 153).

8 *Lhaba, lhamo* (entranced) or *luyar* (human vessel, Tib: *lus gyar*) are equally common terms for these specialists who house or embody gods in trance (Day 1989).

9 In other regions, *nyenes* is for nuns and it is known as the 'nuns' fast.'

10 As Raymond Williams (1976: 155–156) noted in relation to the etymology of the word, 'individual' originally meant 'the one indivisible from the whole' but, in the 17th century, the individual became distinct from the group: "'individual' stresses a distinction from others; 'indivisible' a necessary connection."

11 Allerton (2007) observed that Manggarai orphans and those without brothers were far more likely to feel lonely than non-married women. In Ladakh, orphans are normally adopted by relatives. Couples without children were likely to adopt from both their families to create a marriage in the next generation. Houses without brothers brought in husbands for one or more sisters. Perhaps the closest analogy in Ladakh would be to those boycotted or 'excommunicated' by the neighbourhood, which creates serious existential loneliness and practical problems, somewhat comparable to the problems Angmo and her immigrant neighbours faced when they were excluded from their existing neighbourhood association.

9 The Skarra *chorten*

In this final chapter, I return to the theme of house as person, which I presented in Chapter 2. *Chorten* (stūpa) are religious memorials, not domestic houses, and they are commonly described as the body or three bodies of Buddha. They are represented as animated bodies that are also houses and supports for offerings.[1] I foreground the marked continuities between *chorten* and domestic houses through the instructions that we assembled for making our Skarra memorial. Tashi Lazom and I sponsored the building project between 2011 and 2013, which had been prompted by the passing of Tashi's mother, *Amale*, more than a decade previously. Tashi's brother, Mutup,[2] and my niece, Maddy Hubbard, are mentioned by name but the building enrolled widespread support and expertise and carries traces of many living and dead relatives. The first part of this chapter mirrors our manual of instructions or storyboard, and I hope to convey a sense of people coming together to make merit and commemorate their dead rather than associated specialist practices for assembling and consecrating religious houses/bodies, which require specific permissions.[3] Some of the people involved were schooled in monasteries, but others had little understanding of the texts or esoteric practices. Returning to my initial questions about storyboarding houses, I intend to gather in an 'ethnographic present' or 'becoming historical' that stretched from my initial doctoral fieldwork (1981–1983), described in Chapter 2, to recent visits involving the *chorten* from 2009–2019. Since Buddhists leave their worldly bodies and houses at death, this chapter provides *Rendering Houses* with one limit or ending by way of conclusion.

The building project also concludes my discussion of the life course, with the passing of my friend's mother that was commemorated in the Skarra *chorten*. *Amale* was a generation older than the women I have already introduced but, like many of them, spent years in an offshoot. I have emphasised both that offshoot residents – structural 'juniors' to the house – had fewer claims on their estate and that non-married offshoot women, with the fewest rights, have turned this disadvantage to profit by making more liveable, unconventional houses and winning greater recognition. In preparations for death, Buddhists foreground notions of impermanence and flux; they no longer see their houses as fixed frameworks for living. On the part of lay

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Buddhists at least, both body and house are to be left behind; lifeless, they will disappear. In the second part of the chapter, I tease out implications from *Amale*'s passing to suggest that the negative implications of mobility among women may be tempered during their move from one life to the next.

Finally, I discuss the location of the *chorten*. I have presented an isomorphism between the person of individual humans and houses, as well as salient differences among them. In Chapter 2, I drew on Roy Wagner's observations that a person is both a whole and a part, and neither singular nor plural. Relations that can appear to be external to an individual are in fact integral to personhood such that an individual carries their house with them as a house carries its people. Nevertheless, differential belonging/s are equally significant since each part is also a distinctive whole: woman or man, principal or offshoot house, junior or senior, of higher or lower status. The positioning of the Skarra *chorten* prompts reflections on relations among the family's houses in the context of urbanisation, partitioning and generational differences. I ask if and how these were reconfigured by the building project in a time of pervasive and radical uncertainty about the possibilities for life and livelihoods in Ladakh.

Making a new house

In 2009, a decade after her mother died, Tashi Lazom and I began to look for suitable building sites. Tashi wanted to build a *chorten* in Zhabzhe, a section of her village, where the footstep of the great meditator (Gyalwa Gotsangpa, 1189–1258) lay hidden under the dirt in a ruined *chorten*. Zhabzhe (Tib: *zhabs rjes*) means footprint and this imprint was described as the third of four steps that the great meditator took from Chemre to Gotsang.[4]

On reflection, Zhabzhe seemed too remote and, by 2011, we were investigating an alternative site in Skarra, a suburb of Leh within walking distance of family who could look after a *chorten*, and in the midst of passers-by who would circle the memorial, making merit for all life forms. There was space to build next to an existing *nyeneskhang*, where Tashi joined the annual fast and where, at the time, her brother was painting the interior. I suggested we make the *chorten* for my father (d. 2006), as well as Tashi's mother.

We consulted a lama who explained that no one (human or spirit) should live above or below the site proposed for the *chorten*. The young Skarra headman, whose community offered support, also consulted a monk and learned that you cannot let a *chorten*'s shadow, as it moves with the course of the sun, fall on any house for fear of causing poverty. We had to petition Skarra to move surrounding trees, some dead and some still standing, which housed various spirits. Ultimately, the *chorten* could be properly positioned with just enough room for visitors to pass without having to also move an old shrine to *lu* or to demolish a room adjoining the *nyeneskhang*.

It was Stakna Rinpoche who recommended we approach Meme Tsering Tundup, the only lay master builder in the area. *Memele* would know what size *chorten* would fit the site and what materials we would need. As

Tashi Lazom at Zhabzhe, a possible site in her village for a *chorten* (2009)

Stakna Rinpoche explained in 2009, it depended on our wealth what blessings to add, and we should request Rinpoche for appropriate items. He also suggested we buy the correct woodblock prints in the bazaar and collect a 'symbol' or representation of very clean grains and pulses, and all sorts of precious stones. Tashi had been preparing. She had already collected soil and rock from Nepal, Orissa, Bhopal, Bhutan, Nalanda, Ajanta and Bodh Gaya in Bihar, where Buddha meditated under a Bo tree. She had soil from a meditation site in Ladakh, a blessing of rice from the Dalai Lama and ashes from a fire offering. But she had forgotten to collect from the meditation site at Gotsang and two local monasteries, mistakes that she soon corrected.

Tashi had also requested and received blessings from Togdan and Stakna Rinpcohe as well as relics, *tsa tsa*, that were painted gold and red, and stamped with miniature *chorten*. Stakna Rinpoche explained that we would need a meditator or skilled practitioner to ensure that the 'insides' (*zungs*, Tib: *gzungs*) were correct, and recommended one of the Gotsang meditators adjoining the monastery of Hemis. He also advised us to obtain the correct life or soul wood (*srogshing*) of juniper or sandalwood, which would have to be brought from Karnataka.

At last, we were ready to approach Meme Tundup, who we found working above Leh on the response to the 2010 flash floods, which had led to nearly three hundred deaths and left thousands homeless.[5] A ring of thirteen *chorten* were planned around the urban flood plain, apparently on the instructions of the Tibetan state oracle, as well as revelations from a local oracle (*lhaba* or spirit medium) in Nubra. This ring was intended to protect residents by preventing earthquakes that might follow the floods.[6] The key religious ritual had been completed and, in the summer of 2011, we observed part of this powerful exorcism, known as *sri non* (Tib: *sri non*, *sri gnen*), in which 'demons' were pinned, stabbed, tied and buried in a hole under the *chorten*.[7] It was directed by the renowned dharma master, Togdan Rinpoche, based at Phyang monastery near Leh. He was joined by two other Drikung meditators and a Tibetan 'abbot' who looked after the Tibetan state oracle.

The *sri non* cemented and buried under further rocks, *Memele* was able to supervise construction of a *chorten* above. He asked us to come back later and visit him at home, where he told Tashi that he would visit the site to see if it was suitable, and if it were, estimate how many bricks and how many days' labour we would need. Tashi and *Memele* were long acquainted, as he acknowledged by saying, 'How can I say no to you? At any cost, I will do this for you. When we have the site, I will make the plan.' We looked through his books and chose a simple model of medium size, a *changchubi chorten* (Tib: *byang chub mchod rten*), the enlightenment *chorten* and one of the eight basic types, although Tashi later settled on a slightly different Nepali design. Meme Tsering suggested we bring the soul wood from Ladakh itself, from an area west of Leh. This 'spine' would be the most difficult thing, as it would need to extend perhaps 8 feet to reach into the moon and sun at the

top. Of course, we could not use sandalwood, he agreed, not just because of the expense but also because it is protected.[8] Meme Tsering remained busy, the weather was inclement, and it was only after I returned to the UK that I heard that the ritual clearing of the ground had begun.

The entire story, to our untutored eyes, constituted a set of instructions for making a body and a house. I heard about the building from a distance during the summer of 2012 when my niece Maddy Hubbard kindly visited in my place and came back with a wonderful photographic record. When I returned in 2013, we looked through the photographs that Maddy and Tashi had taken, to which I added more of my own, including pictures of our subsequent, smaller 'return consecration.' With this archive, we collected accounts about the building process from Tashi's brother (depicted on p. 2 and p. 167 to the right of the image) and other people, including his apprentice from Lingshed. I summarise what we learned.

Mutup explained,

> You need to begin with a very clean and pure heart. It takes some work. You have to select a clean plot of land. You need someone with knowledge of the measurements and formulae for building. You also have to get a pure lama or Rinpoche who will request permission from the earth; you know every piece of land has an owner, visible or invisible, good or bad spirits.

This request for permission and the ritual clearing are a prelude to all house building and to other ritual projects. Once completed, a plan of the *chorten* was drawn on the ground and the building work began.[9]

Source: © Maddy Hubbard

Source: © Maddy Hubbard

'You have to collect so many things,' Mutup said. 'It is our job to collect the insides, whatever we use in the world and precious or semi-precious things, not costly but holy, like the statue.' Statues differ from one *chorten* to another; ours was a Chenrezig. As Mutup continued,

> The eyes are wrapped at first so as not to cause impurity. You take off the scarf and then paint the eyes and so on. The Chenrezig goes inside

> what is like a special offering room (*chodkhang*) in the chorten, with a butter lamp and offerings at the level of the heart. You make the inside like a room, with different compartments which you can't mix.

The offering bowls were wrapped and filled with salt instead of water so that they would last for ever.

Tashi had bought in Leh a second Śākyamuni Buddha statue, which was required for this type of *chorten*, and her brother painted it gold. This Buddha was placed on the outside of the *chorten*, and we did not add a grille since you have to trust people to respect religious monuments.

Tashi explained, 'In a big *chorten*, you would put in real ploughs, but we put in toy knives, spades, every kind of food, grains, flour.' Her village blacksmith was busy, so she asked one from her niece's village to make a model plough and a shovel. She also had a miniature rake and basket made; in fact, 'models of everything we use normally.' They went in the base of the 'throne,' in the big 'room' underneath the 'body.'

As Mutup explained,

> We put in holy sand, mud and stone from everywhere. If you can find holy relics, you add them, too . . . . When you add the insides, you have

Source: © Tashi Lazom

Source: © Tashi Lazom

> to fill it right up even with rice or dal, cinnamon, cardamom, saffron, with holy earth and rocks, stone and wood from everywhere.

I heard about the sacred words or mantra (*ngaks*, Skt: dhāraṇī) that were described as pages of holy books for vision, speech and so on. These are assembled to make the body,

> There are mantra of countless protectors, Buddhas, great lama and teachers; you can't add the whole book, just the single holy words that stand for the whole. You get these words from special places like the meditation centre at Gotsang.

Such mantra are likewise inscribed on the back of two-dimensional images such as *thangka*.

Had I not seen the pictures I was sent? Tashi said that there was a great deal of work for the *druba*, a meditator from Gotsang, because every page had to be washed in saffron to purify them: 'They hung them on the rocks to dry and then rolled them up very small and tied them.'

> It is with these words that we give the soul wood life; we put one for the eye, ear, throat and so on. Special monks wrap the words, written

Source: © Maddy Hubbard

Source: © Maddy Hubbard

Source: © Tashi Lazom

> on paper, into bundles and fix them on the wood in the right place. You give the soul wood five senses as you do for a statue. To give it life, you have to worship, to be full of homage.

Mutup explained that the instructions tell you how to build a house somewhat like an offering room (*chodkhang*) or monastery assembly room (*dukhang*). You proceed from bottom to top, base to crown: 'The ground is where the ammunition goes; food and what is good for human needs. The square box goes here, which is one kind of pot (*bumpa*).' This pot contained four further pots; different kinds of wealth for everyone, dried fruit in a jar, barley flour and holy texts, among other items. Higher up,

> is the square room where you put the pot with all the more precious and holy things. Then there is the roof and, on top, the soul wood. You count the four steps from your knees to your waist for the sacred words, and the "second pot" is like the heart with holy things around the soul wood. There are pots for long life, for good health, for wealth, for earth, wind, fire and water.
>
> Above the *chorten*'s heart pot is the head in two parts and thirteen circles stretching up like a hat to the hair. There are many names for what goes above the hair or topknot: the downwards-facing flower, the sun and moon, the umbrella on top.

The *chorten* is a body and a house that take shape as you move above the throne, counting four steps from your knees to your waist – the "soul of wood has to be inserted on the fourth step" (Tucci 1988: 121, 130). As you reach upwards, the insides become more precious and more auspicious, so that medicines or blessings are placed above foods. The powerful words (*ngaks*) wrapped around the spine position the body's senses, which will be animated on consecration (*rabnes*, Tib: rab gnas).[10] Afterwards, the soul wood can be inserted into its support. The *chorten* will become alive and an emanation of Buddha when this soul wood is planted in the body, house and shrine that has been filled with the items described and sealed.

Alongside this skilled religious work, Meme Tsering directed and helped with construction. 'Sherpa Nepalis' completed the embossed design, and a meditator with three or four assistants painted the *chorten* with the best available materials in Leh, each group staying five days. Tashi brought provisions and cooked for them. Her family, friends and neighbours helped, sponsoring teas and meals, as well as providing labour and materials. Nevertheless, Tashi was frustrated by the inevitable delays as people were called away, and as she learned of missing items she had to find and bring.

Source: © Tashi Lazom

Source: © Tashi Lazom

Mutup's summary finished with the consecration,

> We consecrate the *chorten* on a good, auspicious day and request that there should be no damage until the world ends. At this point, it has become a holy place. It's best to make a *chorten* before you die for the good of all, living and dead.

The ceremony had to occur in the year of construction, and it was directed by the senior *druba*. Unable to visit myself, I was present through a photograph from the 1980s (see Chapter 4) and my niece, Maddy Hubbard. The chosen day was perfect, the first without wind and also the eighth of the fourth month, Buddha's birthday. It was so beautiful that Tashi was reconciled to the delays and expense. There were around fifty people for lunch, including the Skarra headman and residents. Tashi was thanked and honoured, and she told me on the phone that when I (finally) came, she would add our names to the base. She said that the *chorten* 'is not big and it is not small; I am very happy with the Nepali design.'

It took the whole 2012 summer season to complete what we had hoped to finish in 2011. Afterwards, Tashi had to water the *chorten* three times a day as it dried to prevent the plaster from cracking. It will most likely need re-painting every two years.

The following year, I came with two of my children for a return consecration (2013) when, like other sponsors, we dedicated the memorial to the benefit of all sentient beings.

The Skarra *chorten* holds further memories of *Amale*'s eldest son and grandson, who passed away subsequently, and of Meme Tsering Tundup, master builder or *Tsamskhangpa*, who died in 2014 at the age of 90. According to reports, he had built 207 *chorten* in Ladakh. This house also holds traces of other people and places, living and dead; it draws paths between

this life and the next, living generations, and Asia, Europe and the Americas.[11] In 2011, we had looked through the Tupperware box stuffed full of knotted plastic bags containing Tashi's collections from previous trips: relics, a medicine wrapped in leaves and more that would go inside the *chorten*. The medicine came from rocks high in the mountains: once boiled in milk, it was used to treat fractures. Later that year, when Tashi visited me in London, we added traces from the UK, Canada and elsewhere as, with Tashi's help, I selected somewhat precious or life-enhancing tokens connected with my father and various family houses. There was a fossil and a stone in the shape of a heart, pieces of silk, borlotti and green beans, sugar, the corner of an old family chest, a leaf, seeds, old coins, religious texts and blessings from Tibetan practitioners in London, and jewellery from my own and my husband's family. Tashi took these take back to Leh and her family added a locket from her mother's headdress, a ring and bracelet of her mother's and a sea pearl and coral from other members of the family. There was an old block of Lhasa tea from Tashi's mother's stores, along with butter, ghee and prayer beads, more Buddhist medicines, embalming salt, and cloth. By the time of building, Stakna Rinpoche had died and additional *tsa tsa* from his cremation were added; they were made of clay, ground up bones and ashes moulded into miniature *chorten*. Often, 108 of these small reliquaries are put inside a *chorten*.

Tashi reminded me how she wanted to keep her promise but could not since the little money she earned was already earmarked. As a monk told her

after we took concrete steps towards funding the work in Skarra, 'When the way is clear, everything will happen according to plan.' It was he who found a Nepali to design our memorial and Gotsang monks agreed to perform the skilled religious work, even cooking for themselves when Tashi could not.

House and body

Aspects of our manual followed closely the template for other houses. A big storeroom in the base of the throne holds all the implements used in everyday life: ploughs, knives, spades and baskets. The stomach pots hold clean foods of all kinds, supplemented by holy earth and minerals, above which, in the region of the heart, is the statue of Chenrezig. The soul wood is stamped with 'writing' that 'fixes it in the ground' in the same way as the central house pillar and the arrows planted at birth and weddings.

Tucci emphasised that the proportions established from the vertical line of the *chorten*, which corresponds to the vertebral column, provide an axis to the entire design (1988: 18). As Lokesh Chandra noted in an editorial comment, all the rest is just an 'envelope' for this axial pillar of wood. Niels Gutschow (1990: 13) likewise described *chorten* in Humla "reduced to its bare function as a support for the tree of life [srogshing]," simple cubes which

Source: © Tashi Lazom

generally held sacred things. Mutup called the *srogshing* a spine for the body. As with other houses, the life force that is channelled through a pillar or arrow depends on its 'stomach.' Mumford (1989: 96–98), following the construction of a *chorten* in Gyasumdo in northern Nepal, suggested that the lower treasury or pot for human needs might also represent or feed *lu*. This house is also a body and, as Stein emphasised,

> the representation of the universe, like that of the human body, was modelled on the dwelling house. Conversely, the human body, the house and the local environment are so many microcosms, nested one inside the other, but of equal validity.
>
> (Stein 1972: 204)

Our project revealed homologies and partial correspondences between making a *chorten* and other houses that combine body and soul, *lu* and god. Food and body are brought to life and renew life. However, it should be appreciated that this is not an orthodox reading of *chorten*-making. The exegesis offered Tashi and me by monks or religiously educated participants reflected not only their own backgrounds but also their judgements about what was appropriate. They adjusted what they knew to their assessments

of what I and Tashi might know or believe, and what we wanted – and had permission – to learn.

The very close correspondence of house and body that is built in a *chorten* figures a particular moment of the life course: people's bodies are houses that decay. In religious, by contrast with secular practices and values, lay Buddhists consider that houses have lifespans. Ladakhi accounts resonate with reflections among other Tibetan-speaking Buddhists such as those cited in Desjarlais' nuanced life stories of old age and dying among Hyolmo (previously known as Yolmo) Nepalis. Hyolmo leave their bodies "like a broken house" and a lama explains,

> Our soul goes outside, it goes everywhere, but our body remains. It doesn't go. Our body's here, in this way. At the time of dying, the soul separates from the body. Soul and body separate. Our soul is like the wind, it flies out of the body. Without the *sem* and the *rnam-she* in the body, the body decays. It's like a house: if there's no one living in the house, then what happens to it? It decays.[12]
>
> (cited in Desjarlais 2003: 212)

Desjarlais also cites a Tibetan ritual of caring for the dead, which reads:

> O child, the end of collecting is dispersal,
> the end of building is disintegration,
> the end of meeting is separation,
> and the end of birth is death
> (ibid: 256, citing Mullin 1998: 210).

Amale had passed more than a decade previously at the age of 92, conscious to the last but paralysed down one side. Accounts about her demise show how this memorial echoes, complements and transforms views of Buddhist smallholdings presented in previous chapters.

A death in the family

In her later and more devout years, *Amale* used to say that everything she did would expand or diminish her store of merit since we all live in constant flux. She hoped to make her journey easier by developing powers of concentration with her *om mane* and practising how to close the door to an undesirable rebirth, but she would only know how well she had lived and how well she had learned when faced by *bardo* visions and the lord of death's judgement. *Bardo* (Tib: *bar do thos sgrol*) translates as the intermediate state in English, which is described in a text that also offers practical advice called variously *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, *Liberation Upon Hearing* or *Liberation in the Intermediate State*. *Amale* had not benefited directly from the many commentaries and teachings provided for laypeople through sequential

instruction (*trid*; Tib: *khrid*), permission (*lung*) and empowerment (*wang*; Tib: *dban*g) that would enable students to control their breath so that the soul departed from the head. Her daughter Tashi, however, passed on what she had learned and also read her Sogyal Rinpoche's *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (1992), a simpler account of the transition from one birth to the next.

Amale prayed to be reborn as a human and as a man. She feared rebirth even in the realm of gods, who enjoy long and pleasant lives as depicted in the Wheel of Life but forget religion and therefore face an inevitable downward spiral. The 'hungry ghosts' (*yidags*, Tib: *yi dwags*) in the Wheel seemed to cause Ladakhis greatest anxiety. These creatures have huge stomachs and tiny throats so that they can never eat or drink enough, and their desires remain thwarted. They seem to signify the host of greedy and jealous creatures who live among and prey on people (Chapter 2). Deformed, without proper bodies or houses, their appetites for food, possessions, dwellings and sex are voracious, and some said that they were stuck between one life and another, unable to achieve rebirth in a body and home at all.

Winter is the time for death and a period of cold that the elderly might not survive. In winter, you can keep a body inside for a week and take it to be cremated without fear of polluting *lu*, who are hibernating. Families can isolate themselves for the prescribed period without missing important agricultural work. Winter used to be the time for weddings, as well as funerals and religious practice, and for storytelling, spinning and feasting. Everyone was acquainted with the terrifying figures on the road after death from monastery festivals, which they also attended in the winter months. These festivals, *cham* (Tib: *'cham*), are thought to enact the *bardo* text and offer a foretaste of the journey to come. At their conclusion, gods depicted by masked monks dispatch an enemy, expel evil and assist in the difficult transformation you will undergo at death. Some describe the enemy that is destroyed as their own future corpse on the way towards rebirth. An elderly villager at one festival told me in the 1980s, "the skeleton dancers are those who take life and when they cut the enemy and take out its insides, it is just how they take your soul after you die" (cited in Day 1989: 392).[13] Once destroyed, the effigy becomes food for gods.

Tashi told me that she knew her mother was going to die,

> *Amale* told me, "Today I am going; you must do these things for the others, for the *chorten*." *Amale* had repeated, 'Tashi, I cannot trust anyone. If you can, please make the *chorten*; it will be good for all living beings and for all of us who are dead or alive. Take my hand. Will you do this?

Amale had two other pressing concerns: would one of her sons arrive in time, and how was she to give her religious brother (*chospun*) the wool cloth that would help him avoid future troubles? No one knew where he

was. Soon, when one of *Amale*'s sons arrived, Tashi said 'her soul was half gone and she just looked at him with her eyes so wide open, the biggest eyes I have ever seen.' Tashi remained strong and steadfast, sending her family out of the room so that her mother could concentrate on dying: 'It is good to die when no one is there because it means you have no desire [worldly attachment] and so it is easier to go.' A messenger went straight away to fetch the Rinpoche to take her soul or life out of her head (*phoa tabches*, Tib: *'pho ba 'debs-*) before anyone touched the body. It so happened that *Amale*'s religious brother was with the Rinpoche and, hearing who had died, exclaimed: 'Oh, she is my *chospun*. I will come to help.' 'It was amazing,' said Tashi. 'Everything was ready; we didn't have to prepare anything. Nothing except for just one thing: we needed more flour for the cakes that you give everyone after the funeral.'

Death rituals vary substantially but are considered more orthodox than in the past. All Buddhist funerals require at least one high-status monk or lama to channel the life properly out of a body, and as many as you can afford for the rituals that start the following day. Members of the *phaspun* – the group of houses that share a god – orchestrate everything. The deceased is normally taken to the house offering room where monks recite texts to guide the deceased on their journey, which can last up to 49 days.

I heard how the Rinpoche arrived and forced or coaxed *Amale*'s life back into her body and then through the channel from her stomach to a hole in the crown of her head to avoid defilement. As one Geluk monk told me in the 1980s, 'The lama makes prayers, collects the breath, brings the person to life and then transfers the soul to a good life.' This soul is normally called *sems* rather than *srog* and suggests a consciousness more than a life force.[14] *Amale's* rites, *choga*, lasted a week; each day, monks purified and sent her soul on its way again.[15] Each day, the family also called and fed *Amale*, and visitors came to pay their respects.

Aspects of death rites also involve arrows. In the 1980s, Geluk monks explained to me that they called the soul into two distinct bodies with their prayers. One was the corpse and one a paper body or *linga*, a printed image of a man or woman, as appropriate, with their name. I was told,

> You put an arrow in the paper body and it becomes the person themselves. Then, you perform an empowerment (*wang*) and put special clothes on the corpse. The corpse is in the middle of the monks and it is also empowered. You have to do this *choga wang* at least once, but it is better to do it every day. Then, you burn the piece of paper over a candle and take the clothes off the corpse.
>
> (cited in Day 1989: 206)

When I repeated this account to *Amale*'s family twenty years later, they said that the corpse was not revived in any way during *choga* but agreed that pollution was symbolically burnt with the paper.

As far as I understood, the corpse is then cremated, dressed for empowerment or initiation (Tib: *dbang rdzas*) for a peaceful fire offering (Tib: *sbyin sreg*) when, as one monk put it, "We don't think of it as a corpse but as our tutelary deity" (Tib: *yi dam*). According to a Sherpa lama, a body became a god before cremation and an offering afterwards (Ortner 1978: 107). The three 'sins' – desires or forms of worldly attachment in the Wheel of Life – are burnt with the corpse.[16] There was another day's *choga* afterwards, astrological readings, dispersal of the ashes and the making of *tsa tsa* (offerings, relics), weekly recitals until the 49th day when the consciousness of the deceased will have been reborn and a large funeral feast for everyone. Mourning among the closest relatives, especially after an unexpected death, may continue for a year.

Amale was cremated from her marital home. Some seventy years previously, she had learned that this move would not be easy. She was marrying the youngest brother of a family that was poor though of high status in a nearby village. Tashi told me she had to work all the time and,

> The *druba* [her mother's uncle, a great meditator] said – he loved her – he said "I can do one thing. It is difficult for me to prepare a shrine for *lu* (*lubang*) as it takes months to perform the ritual. Which do you prefer?" He offered her a choice; she could wish for long life for her new family or for wealth. *Amale* thought long and hard and decided that without life, wealth was of no use but, with a long life, you could always make money. So she wished for long life. The *druba* went into meditation, I don't know exactly for how long, but it was over a month, reading. Then he prepared the materials, and he built a small room in our own store so that no outsiders would enter; it would be very safe and only insiders could reach it. There he made this shrine and within the *lubang* he placed a pot of sacred materials, the wealth and blessings. Maybe he made five or six *lubang* in all.[17]

Thereafter, offerings were made every year to keep this wish alive and the shrines were whitewashed annually. With time, *Amale* grew into her new house where Tashi's father died young but older than any previous members of his family. At the time of *Amale*'s death, their eldest son was more than 80 years of age.

Kathryn March (1997, 1998) has shown that the pain of separation schools all Tamang about worldly life. It runs through the songs she discussed as "parturition (from one's birth mother), as parting (from a beloved), as partition (among brothers of the family estate), and, ultimately, of course, as death." (March 1998: 226). This pain is understood to derive from attachments that cause suffering and rebirth within the Wheel. Nevertheless, the pains and dangers of separation are also gendered, at least in Ladakh. As I have noted, Ladakhi Buddhist women are 'in-between' and conventionally associated with the negative aspects of exchange among houses. Yet, there

are hints that this mobility is evaluated in more positive terms at death than at marriage – despite *Amale*'s fervent prayers to be reborn as a man. Desjarlais, for example, described how Hyolmo in Nepal consider women better equipped than men to separate from worldly attachments because their lives are characterised by a series of movements (Desjarlais 2003: 322). One Hyolmo reader amplified,

> women have to face many new situations and relationships in their lives, from moving to new homes and forming ties with their husbands' mothers to later forming relationships with their sons' wives. Men, in contrast, who tend to stay put . . . are therefore less used to facing new situations.
>
> (ibid: 373 n 14)

Amale was much admired for her planning and preparations for death. For example, she insisted on leaving from the home she had made in the offshoot and so her body was taken to the cremation ground from her *khangun* rather than the offering room of the main house, despite the tensions it might cause. Her wishes were observed because her skills in exchange and boundary crossing were construed in more positive terms at the time of death than when she joined her marital home a lifetime ago. *Amale*'s last move evoked and also reworked her arrival as a bride.

A house among other houses

Those without proper bodies and houses are cast as failed rebirths in mortuary ritual; monstrous, ghostly and demonic. By contrast, the Skarra *chorten* commemorates or anticipates a successful journey on the part of Tashi's mother in the form of a soul or arrow nourished once more by a house, body and store of food. This Skarra house/body mixed numerous traces of the sacred and the secular, including signs of *Amale* in her marital and natal homes and several of her children's and grandchildren's houses. It marked *Amale's* journey to a new life, echoing her earlier move at marriage when different kinds of shrines to *lu* were built to promote life and wellbeing.

The 'elastic rubber sheeting' (Chapter 6) of *Amale*'s house has a different geometry of relations according to family position. Some of the family located themselves within a single estate across several villages and extending to Leh. Others lived independently of their village house name, rights and duties, even as they valued close relations with particular relatives. Decisions about a site for the *chorten* had to be made between their different claims and interests. Ultimately, the *chorten* joined a mixed Leh neighbourhood where *Amale*'s children considered themselves largely independent of the village estate. *Amale*'s memorial both reflected the existing configuration among her family's houses and further reconfigured relations. The importance of city in contrast to rural homes is recognised in the attention that the *chorten*

attracts, attention that was previously devoted to village *lubang* and other rural sites. The old shrines to *lu* built for *Amale* were in fact abandoned after the Skarra *chorten* was consecrated when the main village house was rebuilt. No one mentioned that *Amale*'s grandson subsequently died at the relatively young age of 60, only a few months after his father's death and before he could move into his renovated village house.

This shift to the city and from one kind of shrine to another would not resonate with most urban visitors, who will neither have known nor heard about *Amale*. Furthermore, urban houses have little need for stores, and at a 2017 academic meeting, several young Ladakhis responded with surprise to my comments about storeroom shrines to *lu*. One explained that her old, abandoned house behind the new one had a shrine to gods. She wondered if her mother-in-law's natal house, half an hour up the hill from Leh, still had a shrine to *lu*. She did not know what they looked like. Younger people were more familiar with the process of making *chorten* and their religious significance as representations of Buddha than with house shrines, agriculture and the domestic ritual calendar. Tashi was incredulous when I told her about this episode and pointed to the many *lubang* littering the Leh landscape, even as she recognised that this younger generation compose and occupy a different landscape.

Webb Keane (2003: 420) argued that the concreteness of the unified house "as a repeatable, relatively stable, and intertextually rich representation" derived in part from talking about and to it in a way that brought different elements, including spirits, into relation (see Chapter 2). Our Skarra *chorten* likely presents aspects of house life to some people while inviting acts of piety from others. For the former, the process of making a *chorten* will evoke more secular rituals of the life cycle and the rhythms of a farming year, which used to interlock. For the latter, themes of arrow-and-pot will be disembedded from the course of a house and aligned more closely with oral or written religious instruction about flux and rebirth in the Wheel of Life. They have learned that ethical conduct and religious practice may enable transcendence of the Wheel altogether, commonly in a distinctive appeal to a future moment when all life – including every last blade of grass – shall reach enlightenment together. Developments in religious – as well as smallholding – Buddhist practices have enabled a partial shift from a house project to alternative life projects, but readings co-exist, and urban *chorten* generate merit through varied correspondences and connections that visitors make.

The 2010 cloudburst mentioned towards the beginning of this chapter elicited rituals and monuments to prevent further damage in and around Leh. New houses of rural-to-urban and other migrants were disproportionately damaged, including the village/suburb of Choglomsar described in Chapter 4, since they had been built in streambeds and on hillsides subject to mudslides.[18] Our Skarra *chorten* stands a half hour's walk from the *sri non chorten*, both built after the cloudburst. The *sri non chorten* was intended to materialise supports for houses in the urban flood plain while our Skarra *chorten* supports a more quotidian merit-making. Despite these additional supports in the form of *chorten*, residents do not know if their foundations

will hold against further floods even as their deep boreholes run dry of water. The seasons do not repeat as they did: glacier cover in the western Himalaya has reduced by almost 20% and Ladakh has seen less snowfall and more rain in the last twenty years.

The present is saturated with uncertainties about the legacies and attributes of houses. Houses have too much or too little water from receding glaciers, and little food in their remaining stores. More and more old-style rural houses stand abandoned while new Buddhist monuments and *chorten* create edges between Leh communities, reflected in competitive monumentalism between Sikh, Shia, Sunni and Christian – as well as Buddhist – building projects. No doubt, this landscape prompts residents to wonder about the consequences of their UT status, granted in 2019 and separating Ladakh from Jammu and Kashmir. A widespread sense of injury and grievance has developed towards the State of India, Jammu and Kashmir, and the local Hill Councils that have been unable to address problems or plan for what may turn out to be a radically different future, still dependent on state subsidies and military infrastructure but with no water.

If the near future is in question, its further reaches sometimes appear positively dystopian. Military lives and lines reconfigure house-based sociality around a border that runs through every house and every person. New wars threaten, and Tashi considers that Ladakh will most likely hold within India for a while but eventually fall to China. She reasoned that China is much stronger than Pakistan or India, and Chinese interests point towards the consolidation of access to Himalayan water and transport routes to the coast. Tashi wondered if she should move house while she still could.

Tashi identified with the women described in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8, as well as her mother, their senior. Like them, she grew up mostly in an offshoot of her main village home where she had to work hard for an estate to which she did not fully belong. Religious practice has refocused her attention on an approaching move that she hopes will leave her body an appropriate fire offering. As we talked, Tashi told and counted her prayer beads, and reminded me: 'You can never repay your mother, but I will have the satisfaction for the rest of my life that I have done something in making a *chorten*.'

Her beads came from *Amale*, and Tashi had added some coral and other pieces in her memory, explaining, 'My mother moves the beads through me.' She said that she could feel her mother praying through and with her, reminding me of another Tashi's comments about his grandfather's prayer wheel, which I described in Chapter 3. Telling and counting her prayer beads while she talked about the recent past, Tashi Lazom marks out a future that will be lived otherwise. She voiced overwhelming uncertainties about carrying on her house among neighbours according to the seasons, and distilled her only sure knowledge with striking clarity from these reflections: about death and rebirth.

Notes

1 There are many commentaries, including A.H. Francke's (1914) and more recent art historical and archaeological contributions in, for example, *Recent Research on Ladakh* publications. Tibetan texts and commentaries can be found in Beyer (1973) and Tucci's *Indo-Tibetica* (1988) which includes translations of Tibetan texts on and related to stūpa, and descriptions of Ladakhi *chorten* and temples. Bentor (1996) analyses Gelukpa texts, manuals and rituals for the consecration of *chorten* and images.
2 Erberto Lo Bue (2017: 4) presents a biography of Mutup that begins, "Tshe ring dngos grub is the oldest and greatest of all the former pupils of Tshe ring dbang 'dus, the most famous of contemporary Ladakhi painters . . . [and] also a proficient astrologer (dbon po)."
3 Shorthand for instruction, permission and empowerment; see p. 175–6.
4 Ladakh is littered with imprints of holy figures and culture heroes. Gyalwa Gotsangpa (1189–1258) was a spiritual master with many disciples who founded a place for meditation near Hemis and is revered as the founder of the 'upper' Drukpa Kagyud sect.
5 Yudrol (photographed in her kitchen, Chapter 2) was one of the homeless. She lost her house and almost all her land and took shelter in a tent. In the winter, she moved to the village schoolhouse while her new 'bungalow in the desert' slowly began to take shape.
6 Butcher (2013) also discusses this response to the 2010 floods.
7 *Sri* are a species of demons or devils which are said to live underground, and *non* or *gnen* means to conquer or suppress (Tucci 1980: 186). Mumford (1989: 147) describes *sri gnen* as a powerful exorcism in which 'demons' are pinned, stabbed, tied and buried in a hole – under a *chorten* in the present case.

8 Ultimately, Tashi told me, *Memele* brought the soul wood himself, perhaps from Himachal Pradesh.
9 Sometimes, these early stages are described as building the base or groundwork (Tib: *gzhi*) after which you can make the support (Tib: *rten*), evoking the sense I developed of a plot of land in which the foundations you make may support a narrative (see Chapter 1).
10 Ngulphu (2009) translates *rabnes* as 'abide well' or 'abide for long' and Tucci says, "[it] is not the blessing of a sacred object, it is the insertion into an object of a divine spirit" (Tucci 1999 [1949], vol. 1: 313). *Rabnes* is a necessary step for the completion of any kind of house, image or statue. Sometimes, trees or wells are consecrated, too.
11 The collection evokes the goods described in Chapter 5, and Yael Bentor (2003: 29) refers to 'odd objects' found in *chorten* such as a red European pencil.
12 Strictly, you have another body on your travels to a new life; Mills reports that Ladakhis told him consciousness departs the body "like leaving a broken house" and travels to a new body through a "womb-door" (Mills 2003: 273).
13 *Cham* have other benefits; I heard, for example, that they can ensure an easy birth. More generally, they enact the civilising mission of Buddhism by binding worldly beings to oath ('*dul*-, Chapter 2, p. 39).
14 The distinctions are vague and the *sems* is often said to sit, like your *srog*, in the heart where it may be calm or troubled. Consciousness is often rendered textually as *rnam shes*.
15 I have never attended, and would not have been welcomed to, this religious ritual or ritual method (*choga*).
16 Desjarlais described the ritual burning of Hyolmo (previously, Yolmo) name cards, like the printed papers in Ladakh, which stand for or embody the deceased after cremation (Chapter 4 in Desjarlais 2016). Kim Gutschow (2019) suggested that these name cards be considered in relation to the abstract doctrine of dependent origination and, no doubt, Ladakhi prints could also be accommodated to this framework as appropriate to the circumstances of, and audience for, a teaching.
17 On another occasion, I was told that he spent four months making the pot or vase (*bumpa*) for long life in that 'huge, huge *lubang*' but also made a small vase for wealth in another *lubang* by the threshing floor.
18 See too Demenge (2010) on the dangers that migrants face building roads in Ladakh.

Glossary of frequently used words

Ladakhi (Leh dialect) is Anglicised using an English alphabet, transliterated into Tibetan in parentheses and glossed in English.

Bap (***'bab***)**:** house tax, dues
Begar (***Urdu***)**:** forced labour, synonym for *thral*
Bumpa (***bum pa***)**:** also ***bum gter***: ritual pot or vase; treasure vase
Cham (***'cham***)**:** annual monastery festivals and dramas
Chikpo (***gcig po***)**:** alone, the one
Chishu (***tshes bcu***)**:** the tenth day of the month celebrated by neighbourhood groups or single houses, associated with Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhāva)
Chodkhang (***mchod khang***)**:** offering room
Chomo (***jo mo***)**:** nun; non-married woman, usually shaven or with short hair
Chorten (***mchod rten***)**:** stūpa, support for offerings, memorial
Chos (***chos***)**:** (Buddhist) religion, scriptures
Chutso (***bcu tshogs***)**:** section of a village; neighbourhood group of houses (lit., group of ten)
Dadar (***mda' dar***)**:** wedding arrow
Dul- (***'dul ba***)**:** to convert (in Buddhism), civilise, cultivate, educate
Dzo/dzomo (***dzo/dzo mo***)**:** a yak/cow hybrid
Goba (***'go ba***)**:** 'headman'; settlement representative
Gompa (***dgon pa***)**:** monastery; religious community
Gongmo (***'gong mo***)**;** **masc.** ***gongpo*****:** aspects of people or spirits that can cause ill health or possession, comparable to witches
Gyud (***brgyud***)**:** spiritual, teaching or kinship transmission; descent; descent group
Hajj (***Arabic***)**:** pilgrimage to Mecca
Kanal (***Urdu***)**:** one-eighth of an acre; there are approximately twenty *kanal* to the hectare
Katag (***kha btags***)**:** white scarf, offered as a sign of respect
Khangchen (***khang chen***)**:** main or principal house in an estate; lit., big house; sometimes used synonymously with *tronpa*
Khangpa (***khang pa***)**:** house; 'simple house' that has no sub-units

Khangser (***khang gsar***)**:** new house
Khangun or khangchung (***khang chung***)**:** offshoot, lit., small house that provides temporary residence for a 'retired,' senior generation and/or their unmarried children
Lama (***bla ma***)**:** monk; spiritual teacher
Las (***las***)**:** work; karma
Lha (***lha***)**:** god; also refers to spirit mediums
Lhato (***lha tho***)**:** shrine to gods
Lu (***klu***)**:** water or earth spirit, often translated as *nāga* (Sanskrit)
Lubang (***klu dbang***)**:** shrine to *lu*
Magpa (***mag pa***)**:** husband, groom; indicating uxorilocal marriage, that is, an in-marrying husband
Mane (***ma ni***)**:** mantra, prayer, skilled tantric words, prayer wheel, prayer wall
Mikha (***mi kha***)**:** gossip, jealousy
Nyeneskhang (***bsnyen gnas khang***)**:** fasting room or house, used in annual retreat on the part of nuns (*nyenes*, the nuns' fast) and other women
Patwari (**Urdu; also** ***patawari***)**:** local government official responsible for land assessments and land records
Phaslha (***pha lha***)**:** god of the house and of the *phaspun*, a ritual grouping of several houses
Phaspun (***pha spun***)**:** a residential group of (Buddhist) houses (lit., 'father and his siblings') which shares a god and provides mutual assistance during life crises
Res (***res***)**:** turn, rota; used as a synonym for *thral*
Rigs (***rigs***)**:** kind, type, social strata
Rinpoche (***rin po che***)**:** lit., precious; religious master or important emanation (*tulku*)
Rten (***rten***)**:** support, hold, seat, container (and thus in Buddhism, a visible or material representation of the sacred)
Sems (***sems***)**:** soul, consciousness, mind
Shas (***shas***)**:** part; rent, house dues on land that belongs to monasteries or other landlords
Srog (***srog***)**:** lifeforce, soul
Srogshing (***srog shing***)**:** soul or life wood, 'tree of life'
Tehsil (**Urdu**)**:** an office of local government under the *tehsildar*, tax or revenue officer
Thral (***khral***)**:** house dues, tax and especially obligatory labour (thus *thralpa*, tax payers); refers today largely to obligatory labour by members for their settlement
Tral **or** ***tal*** (***gral***)**:** line; rank order as in a seating hierarchy
Tronpa (***grong pa***)**:** jural and social category of the named estate, sometimes used interchangeably with *khangchen*, 'big' or principal house (or tent)
Tsan (***btsan***)**:** spirits without backs who share the middle world with people
Tsherka (***'tsher ka***)**:** anxious, sad

***Tulku* (*sprul sku*):** emanation body, incarnation body of a god or religious master
***Ulag* (*'u lag*):** obligatory or forced labour; synonymous with *begar* (Urdu) and *khral* (Tib.)
***Yanguk* (*gyang 'gugs*):** ritual to collect fortune, luck or prosperity
***Yul* (*yul*):** village, place, region or country
***Zangs* (*mdzangs*):** modesty, shyness, politeness
***Zhingkhang* (*zhing khang*):** house and fields, can be used interchangeably with *tronpa*, estate

Suffixes

-le: used widely to be polite
-pa: people as in Lehpa, the people of Leh, or Kharnakpa, the people of Kharnak

Kin terms

Used in address

Abi (*a phyi*): grandmother
Ache (*a che*): elder sister, wife
Acho (*a jo*): elder brother, husband
Agu (*a khu*): father's younger brother
Ama (*a ma*): mother
Ane or *ani* (*a ne*): father's sister, nun
Aba (*a ba*, *a pha*): father
Azhang (*a zhang*): mother's brother
Machung (*ma chung*): mother's younger sister
Meme (*mes mes*): grandfather, senior man, monk
Nono or *no* (*no no*): younger brother, son, boy
Nomo (*no mo*): younger sister, daughter, girl

Generally used in reference

Magpa (mag pa): husband
Nama (*mna' ma*): wife, daughter-in-law

Areas/people of Ladakh

Balti: people from Baltistan; also used, especially in Leh, to refer to Shia Muslims
Changpa: people from Chang Thang, 'the northern plains' to the east of Ladakh

Hor: the North; people from the north may be called Horpa, Turkic or Yarkandi *inter alia*
Khache: Sunni Muslim; Kashmiri
Kharnak: part of Ladakh's Chang Thang where Kharnakpa are one of three pastoralist groups
Nubra: region in the north of Ladakh
Purig: region in the west of Ladakh with Ladakh's second town, Kargil
Sham: Lower Ladakh (between Leh and Purig)
Stod: Upper Ladakh, including the Leh area
Zanskar (also Zangskar): region in the south of Ladakh

Abbreviations

LAHDC: Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, or simply Hill Council
LBA: Ladakh Buddhist Association
LNA: Ladakh Nuns Association
ST: Scheduled Tribe
UT: Union Territory

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