

**EMBODYING SPIRITS: VILLAGE ORACLES AND
POSSESSION RITUAL IN LADAKH, NORTH INDIA**

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Abstract

This thesis focuses upon village oracles in Buddhist Ladakh who provide ritual services to clients when they are in trance and possessed by gods. Village oracles are discussed in the context of a customary division made by Ladakhis between the lay and clerical components of their society. They are among the few lay ritual specialists and are consequently accorded less esteem than their monastic counterparts for they are associated with the lower reaches of the pantheon and with inferior ritual techniques. Moreover, Ladakhi village oracles attract suspicion because of the manner in which they are created. They are elected through affliction which is gradually, but only precariously, contained as the spirits responsible are domesticated in their human vessels.

The process of initiation is seen in terms of the transformation of a probable demonic affliction into a capricious divine power. This process is analysed further through rituals associated with witchcraft possession and monastery oracles. Village oracles were once overwhelmed by affliction, like witchcraft victims, and it is never clear that these erstwhile patients have become healers, nor that they have turned their demons into gods. Village oracles are also related to practitioners in the monastery. The gods evoked by monastery oracles were converted to Buddhism in "historical" times and, today, they join the side of religion in the continuing conquest of enemies. The gods embodied by village oracles may also be seen as converts but, by comparison, their conversion is a much more uncertain affair. It is argued that village oracles are best understood in terms of their position in-between affliction in the village and a respected ritual power in the monastery. The analysis suggests similarities with spirit mediums elsewhere who are likewise associated with movements away from affliction towards ritual powers.

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INTRODUCTION

"In the monastery were certain junior monks, chosen by lot, whose special duty was the calling up of spirits. After preparatory fasts and meditation a demon was summoned and was supposed to possess the Lhapa, speak through him and answer whatever questions were asked....

The Lhapas were supposedly possessed by the Lhas as was apparent from their agitated behaviour, vacant stares, and foaming at the mouth, but at first they gave no answer. The two unfortunates seemed to be torn here and there by an unseen power. ..." (Ribbach 1986 (1940):191-2)

"The "Masho Naghrang" takes place about February at the village of Masho. On the day of the festival, two Lamas called "hlooiar" are stripped, and their bodies painted black - after which a devil's face is painted in red on their chests and backs. Other Lamas then surround them and read prayers and incantations, while more Lamas play musical instruments. After a time the "hlooiars" become possessed with devils and begin to shout and leap about and rush over the roofs of the houses of the village. When in this state of excitement they are believed to be endowed with the power of prophecy, and they are consequently much consulted. After a time the "hlooiars" succumb to the excitement and fall down senseless; they are taken away by the Lamas and the Naghrang ceremony is at an end" (Ramsay 1890:44)

1. Oracles

These are among the few historical descriptions of oracles in Ladakh although contemporary accounts are beginning to appear (1). Oracle translates the Ladakhi lha or lhaba (masc., lha pa)/lhamo (fem., lha mo) (2). Sometimes, a distinction is made between this, the trance state, and the human vessel who is known as luya (lus gyar) or "borrowed body". Oracles have been described extensively in other Tibetan speaking areas (see Chapter 4). Some, like those described above, work in monasteries but others appear only in households. All, however, practice a form of trance or possession in which a god is manifest in a human body. These figures are described by different terms in the literature. They are called shamans largely for the purpose of comparison with the Central Asian phenomenon (Berglie 1978). They are

also called mediums (Stein 1972) so as to draw attention to the nature of trance during which the human vessel loses normal consciousness and becomes a vehicle for the gods (3). Sometimes, they are called oracles (Prince Peter 1978, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975, Furer-Haimendorf 1964) (4). This last usage is followed because it is the preferred Ladakhi rendition in English.

This thesis focuses on those who practice possession in households, who are described as village oracles. Village oracles are introduced in Chapter 4 and discussed from the perspective of other possession practices in Chapters 5 and 6. Their everyday work is described in Chapter 7. Zhugshes is glossed below by the English "possession". Ladakhis name three categories of people who practice or suffer zhugshes; first, those who are afflicted in the village by demonic attacks, mainly women; second, those who are initially afflicted but who later learn to contain their suffering within ritual practice, namely, village oracles; third, those who agree to practice a similar trance on the occasion of annual monastic festivals but who are rarely elected through initiatory illness, that is, monastery oracles.

The possession (zhugshes) practiced by oracles is also occasionally glossed below as "ecstatic trance", in keeping with other accounts and also in relation to more prestigious ritual techniques associated with initiate Buddhist practices. These latter techniques are not discussed but they are glossed as meditation or "ascetic trance" for the purpose of comparison and contrast. Moreover, they are mentioned only in the context of monastic practice. An

account of Ladakhi Buddhism might follow local attitudes and point to the solitary yogin as the archetypal ascetic. However, non-monastic Buddhist practices of this kind are not discussed at all because they were not encountered in the course of the study. The term "ascetic" is used to describe religious practices in the monastery from a villager's perspective.

A preliminary account of ritual may be found in Part I of the thesis. Rituals are presented in relation to an important local division between the monastery and the rest of the village, which has also been documented for many other Tibetan speaking groups (Aziz 1978, Ortner 1978a, Samuel 1978). My theme only gradually took shape from more general interests in the rituals of the Ladakhi household. When I was introduced to possession practices, some six months after my arrival, it seemed that these might provide a particular perspective on the household which had not been developed previously. It is precisely because possession practices straddle important local boundaries between sickness and health, male and female and secular and religious life that they throw light on central Ladakhi institutions and on Ladakhi imagery about their society.

Initially, then, possession practices were studied in relation to the Ladakhi household. Later, village relationships with the monastery were included. These two central institutions, household and monastery, are described in Part I of the thesis as background, prior to a discussion of possession. Details are given on the embodiment of spirits in the world, the division of labour among ritual officiants and the structure of the pantheon. Possession practices are

concerned with lower ranking spirits and many of the associated rituals employ an exorcistic idiom which taps the anger of higher ranking gods against troublesome local spirits. My discussion accordingly focuses upon these dimensions, which are presented from the village perspective. It should be emphasised, however, that this material has been selected according to my focus on oracles.

This image of a society divided into two parts provides the framework within which village oracles are discussed. Village oracles can be seen in terms of the movements they make away from affliction and the demonic towards ritual power and gods. They are presented in terms of their position in-between village affliction and a respected ritual power, located in the monastery. A discussion of oracles shows that no firm divisions can be drawn between techniques associated with a prestigious monastic religion on the one hand and a somewhat suspect village ritual practice on the other. The ecstatic is contained in the ascetic and ascetic practices also surround the ecstatic. Nonetheless, possession does form an autonomous domain in the Ladakhi imagination and so I continue to demarcate the three forms of possession from other ritual techniques and experiences once I have shown the difficulties in specifying exactly where the boundaries lie. An attempt is made to characterise qualities associated with zhugshes and, in order to step aside from the ultimately unproductive issues of defining possession, I turn to an alternative perspective which explores its role in dramatising particular images of the process of building a good life in the world. From this perspective, it is argued

that village oracles cannot be fully understood in terms of the customary division between a monastic clergy and a lay society.

A number of writers on Tibetan speaking societies have noted the continuities between possession and initiate religious techniques (Aziz 1976, Paul 1976, Stablein 1976a, Samuel 1975, 1978; see section 2 below and Chapter 4). However, most of these accounts privilege a Buddhist perspective even when they are discussing village practices (see, for example, Brauen 1980a on Ladakh). Rituals, gods and "vessels" (the human bodies) are discussed in terms of (other) Buddhist practices. Possession is described as a ritual technique which is cast in an inferior and dependent role by monastic Buddhism. This perspective is also employed below (Chapters 4-7) although it is emphasised that possession practices create an image of the superior religion practiced in monasteries just as the monastic idiom creates an image of inferior village ritual practices (5). However, an attempt is made to locate possession practice equally in a secular village realm that is delineated initially in Chapters 1 and 2. Thus, the household rituals described in Chapter 2 are shown to be important to an understanding of trance activities while more general images of fertility in the household are related to the possibly beneficial results of oracular possession. In what follows, I attempt to fill in some of the details surrounding possession practices from a village perspective with equal reference both to "religion" and "society" (6).

This thesis explores the ritual position and role of village oracles. It is less concerned with trance practice.

Village oracles extract substances from most of their clients and this is the only activity discussed in detail which does not bear a direct relationship to the subject of possession (zhugshes) (Chapter 7). Trance is not discussed in terms of its internal dynamics; in terms of the techniques employed or the performative aspects. The ritual-medical role of oracles is not fully explored in relation to other ritual-medical practices (see Chapter 4). Islam as well as Buddhism is important to the wider environment but Islam is ignored entirely.

Objections might be raised against the interpretive bias in the first part of the thesis. Recent anthropological commentaries on the nature of ritual have suggested that rituals do not communicate like speech; what is distinctive about ritual is precisely the non-referential aspect (Bloch 1974, 1986; Lewis 1980). Many anthropological interpretations of ritual are therefore seen as a product of the process of writing about a foreign place rather than a convincing approach to the nature of ritual(s) (Lewis 1980, Sperber 1975, Rappaport 1979). The presentation of Ladakhi regular, periodic rituals in Part I of this thesis may seem to ignore these debates in anthropology. Only one substantive justification can be made in its defense although additional, pragmatic reasons are important.

Many of the arguments against interpretation are made in the context of non-literate traditions. Ladakhi approaches to ritual, however, are influenced by the existence of a vast corpus of Buddhist texts and teachings. The literary tradition, I suggest, encourages an interpretive approach to

ritual; Ladakhi villagers and monks alike attribute "meanings" to rituals whether or not these have a textual referent and whether or not the Ladakhi speaker is literate. Accordingly, an interpretive approach to ritual can be justified as an accurate reflection of local practice. Although some of the interpretations given in Chapter 2, for example, are not based directly on local exegesis, I do not feel that they would be incomprehensible or unacceptable to Ladakhis.

If the perspective employed in the first chapters can be justified according to local beliefs and practices, this cannot be said of the selection of one particular theme. Ladakhis accept a great many alternative interpretations (see the discussion of one regular ritual, *gyazhi*, in Chapter 5 for an example). Villagers are likely to refer you to monks for more trustworthy exegesis of rituals based on texts but they produce a range of alternative ways of looking at rituals which are not thought to be based on texts, such as the secular New Year. Monks are likely to conclude a discussion with the comment, there are 84,000 (with variations) ways of doing things. Doctrinal explanations are certainly valued most highly but it is also true that doctrine is adjusted to the appropriate level (*thabs*) so that a given ritual can be associated with a number of alternative and equally valid interpretations. Given the Ladakhi style of interpretation, my selection of a particular theme in Part I of the thesis cannot be justified in relation to local practice.

The first chapters cannot therefore be read as an anthropological account of the nature of ritual nor of

Ladakhi exegesis of their rituals. The account is intended rather to delineate a number of central themes within which possession practices can be situated. As noted above, my presentation is intended to show that oracular possession relates as much to secular ritual as to the monastic Buddhist idiom within which most previous accounts have been situated. Accordingly, Chapter 2 builds upon many earlier accounts of the Ladakhi household (7) without discussing the basis for interpretations that have been made. It is only in the second part of the thesis that some of the questions which have arisen in recent debates are addressed. For example, it will be seen that oracular ritual cannot be said to communicate any coherent meaning and it will also be suggested that a sociological context can help explain certain ritual practices.

I lived in the central area of Ladakh, close to the capital Leh, for 16 months from 1981-3. The Leh region is described, in what follows, as the central area. Stod or Upper Ladakh lies to the east and Sham or Lower Ladakh to the west. Buddhist Ladakhis are concentrated in the district of Leh (and Zangskar tehsil to the south) but number only about half of the total population. The 1981 census reports a total of 68,376 Buddhists in Ladakh as compared with 61,882 Muslims. Most of the Muslim Ladakhis are Shiites but there is an important Sunni minority and a small Christian community.

The village is presented primarily in terms of a single village that I know best which I shall call Gongma while oracles are discussed in terms of the wider Leh area. Gongma cannot be said to be "typical" of the wider area as every

village differs from its neighbours in important respects. Inadequacies in my data and shortage of space prohibit a comparison of different villages in the area. Gongma is sometimes described as a "suburb" or section (chutso) of Leh. It had no village oracles of its own; the closest lived in a neighbouring suburb. Village oracles are generally known by place name, referring either to their village or a part of their village. A few have village duties; for example, they change a collective shrine. They also practice mostly in their own villages. Little detail can be given on the relationship between an oracle and his or her own village. However, oracles draw a clientele from a wide area. They also travel and work in their clients' houses. Consultations of this kind by Gognma villagers provide many of the illustrations in the thesis. Monastery oracles are also generally drawn from the village associated with the monastery performing a drama. They too have particular relationships with the village, some of which are noted in Chapter 6. Their trance appearances draw an audience from a wide area, including Gongma, and the comments and activities of Gongma villagers once more provide illustrative material for my discussion. Possession practices relating to the afflictions suffered mostly by women are discussed primarily within Gongma itself. These are not necessarily representative of the wider area; indeed, as noted in Chapter 5, Gongma may be associated with an unusually high incidence of this type of possession. Data concerning oracles in the larger area does not therefore correspond to the same level as data concerning social organisation and some possession practices in the village.

Once my topic had been selected, a number of methods were used. Oracles were interviewed. Every opportunity was taken to attend trances. For three months, I attempted to gather detailed accounts of all trances practiced by three senior oracles in the area. I obtained descriptions of all the work undertaken by Chanspa oracle but failed to attend even one trance. A comprehensive account was impossible to obtain from Thikse oracle even though I was present at some of his trances and acquired much material through interview. Only my data from Ayu oracle were at all comprehensive. This oracle practices at home most days of the week before a large number of people and I was able to attend at least one trance a week and collect details on other trances that were held. Since this approach yielded few results, it is not reflected in my presentation of village oracles. I rely instead upon material from a range of trances that I was able to attend and upon the great help offered by many oracles in the area who patiently answered questions, told me their life stories and offered me endless cups of tea. It will become apparent that those who attend trances are not welcomed as spectators and, on many occasions, I felt that my presence would be an unwarranted intrusion and stayed away. This is particularly true of possession that involves village affliction, as noted in Chapter 5.

At the same time, I accompanied other specialists in their work: a Gelugpa monk from Sankar monastery (see below for a description of monasteries), an amchi or "local doctor" near Leh and a monk astrologer from Tak Tok monastery based in Leh. Once again, it was not possible to gather detailed

information on the day to day work done by these people nor was it possible to generalise about the wider ritual-medical division of labour from such a restricted sample. My thesis therefore includes little discussion of the wider ritual-medical field although comments are made that derive from these visits.

Finally, my discussion of possession incorporates accounts and opinions drawn from my life with ordinary villagers, visiting ritual specialists and interviews with other central figures such as rinpoche or reincarnate lamas (see below). In what follows, possession practices are related almost exclusively to lay views of Ladakh, drawn primarily from the middle ranking strata known by a variety of terms such as the population (*mi dmangs*) or householders (*grong ba*) in the Leh area.

I have been unable to trace historical material on Ladakhi possession in the village although monastery oracles are part of a history that is written in Tibetan and also discussed in Western accounts. Village oracles are therefore located exclusively in the present day. The third section of this introduction, however, provides historical background to contemporary Ladakh. First, references are made to some of the anthropology of spirit possession that has been important in my analysis. These remarks are accompanied by a preliminary introduction to Ladakhi Buddhism, which is amplified in Part I of the thesis.

2. "Spirit possession" and Buddhism in Ladakh

Three approaches to possession are particularly important to my analysis of Ladakhi oracles, according to which possession is central, peripheral or simply part of the wider religious and moral field. The first is specific to Tibetan Buddhism and draws upon the insights of Eliade and others into the "shamanic" character of religious practice. In this tradition, certain forms of shamanism or possession, such as the journey to rebirth after death or the embodiment of high ranking deities in human form, are recognised as central components of monastic Buddhism. It should be emphasised, however, that the term possession or shamanism in this tradition is not used simply to represent a folk or local category that might be compared with the Ladakhi zhugshes. For example, magical flight is central to Eliade's concept of shamanism (8).

The importance of shamanism to the high prestige religion practised in monasteries can be illustrated with a general introduction to Tibetan Buddhism (9). Tibetan Buddhism is often contrasted to other Buddhist traditions by means of the relative importance of the Bodhisattva tradition. Ladakhis say that southern Buddhists follow the "lesser vehicle", that is, they work for individual salvation while Tibetans follow the "greater vehicle" associated with renunciation by a Bodhisattva who is either on the point of achieving enlightenment or who has actually renounced enlightenment in order to lead others to salvation. Enlightenment refers to the transcendence of this world and its suffering (see also below, Chapters 1-3). This contrast

does not seem to be based upon extensive doctrinal differences. Gombrich, for example, emphasises the importance of Maitrī, the next Buddha whose name means love, among Sri Lankan Buddhists:

"What many scholars, especially the older ones on whom Weber relied, have failed to notice is that for all schools of Buddhism, the samyak sambuddha, who has added love to self-restraint, is infinitely superior to the mere arhat, who does not benefit others after achieving Enlightenment himself." (Gombrich 1971a:320-1)

Lehman has also emphasised similarities between the Bodhisattva ideal and the Theravada ideal of the coming Buddha in Burma (Lehman 1972:379). Gombrich, Samuel and others have pointed to the constant tension between the ideals of teacher motivated by a socially committed compassion and the ascetic, the hermit or forest-dwelling monk who renounces the world in both Mahayana and Theravada variants of Buddhism (Gombrich *ibid*, Samuel 1975, 1978).

In Tibet, Bodhisattvas are uniquely enshrined in tulku or reincarnate lamas. High ranking religious figures, generally monks, are seen as rebirths of their predecessors who are sometimes also seen as emanations of early Buddhist saints and Bodhisattvas. These "Bodhisattvas on earth" stand at the hub of the religious system though, in Ladakh, they hold no formal secular power. In Tibet, by contrast, they used to rule an indivisible realm, comprising religious and secular affairs. Reincarnate lamas are the best teachers and the most powerful ritual specialists. They also provide a field of merit for others. The institutionalisation of Bodhisattva figures describes a key feature of Tibetan Buddhism and it is

suggested in Chapter 3 that these figures can be seen as "embodied gods". From an analytical perspective, a special form of "possession" can be seen to lie at the heart of religious practice and belief. It should be emphasised, however, that Ladakhis would never describe reincarnate lamas in terms of zhugshes (possession).

These comments point to another important contrast between Tibetan Buddhism and Theravada beliefs to the south. A bifurcation has been described between gods and Buddha in the south. Gods belong to the secular world, Buddha to the world of religion. Vows are made to and merit is made for gods in return for assistance in this-worldly secular pursuits (see, for example, Ames 1964, Obeyesekere 1963, 1966, 1977). In Tibet, by contrast, gods are ranked in a single hierarchy according to their distance from Buddha. High ranking gods may be seen as aspects or emanations of Buddhas. Certain categories such as the protective deities may be divided into a number of ranks; the enlightened are seen to be much closer to Buddha than the worldly. The lowest worldly gods can barely be distinguished from demons and other enemies of religion. The rank order to the pantheon is described further below (Chapters 1-3). A number of other distinctions are also noted. For example, the fierce and peaceful aspects of high ranking gods are often distinguished. Many of these gods are unfamiliar to villagers and belong to the realm of initiate religious practice. In some accounts of Tibet, doctrine (*lha chos*) is distinguished from a folk religion (*mi chos*) and different gods are related to the different religious levels. However,

it is not possible to draw the boundaries between "great" and "little" traditions or between the religious and the secular with any clarity.

Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism share the sutras and associated doctrine about karma, sin, merit and rebirth which are described in Chapter 3 but they do not share the tantras. Tibetan Buddhism was much influenced by Indian devotionalist movements and tantric esoteric practices. Crudely, the tantras describe the more magical or mystical component to Buddhism, whereby enlightened beings are evoked in the bodies of officiants and merged with them. Practices are handed down from teacher to pupil through initiations and spiritual lineages. In Ladakh, these practices are located largely in the monastery and so monks too can be seen to practice techniques akin to possession in which enlightened beings are invoked into their human bodies. Once more, it should be noted that Ladakhis would never describe these practices in terms of zhugshes (possession).

The Bodhisattvas and tantric deities depicted in the Tibetan pantheon make it a much greater beast than the pantheon depicted in the south. It is peopled by a bewildering number of figures, often only partially accessible to non-initiates. Descriptions of the Tibetan pantheon often focus upon the higher levels (for a simple example, see Snellgrove and Skorupski 1980) but some describe lower ranking beings who still live in the world in more detail (for example, Samuel 1978). As noted, this thesis is concerned with the village perspective and with gods which still live in the world and so descriptions of the pantheon focus upon the lower levels and not upon initiate accounts of

the landscape of the enlightened. Demons and other spirits are discussed as well although they are not worshipped. They are often described as beings which have not been converted to Buddhism and as enemies of religion; therefore, they are not generally included in the pantheon.

The three types of possession (zhugshes) discussed in this account are associated with these worldly beings and with villagers. The general place of low ranking specialists in Ladakhi ritual can only be understood in relation to the high-prestige religion associated with monasteries. Samuel describes monasteries, organised around reincarnate lamas, as storehouses of tantric power (Samuel 1975). These tantric power houses have established a truly hegemonic position in the ritual field. Almost all ritual functions have been incorporated in the monastery whilst, in Burma, Thailand or Sri Lanka, a number of important functions remain outside. In Ladakh, the monkhood was and is ideally permanent, in contrast to southern groups, even though it is not necessarily celibate. Tibetan Buddhism is also associated with a great many initiate practices outside the monastery among yogins and other ascetics but, in Ladakh, most of these functions are incorporated within the monastery.

Samuel contrasts mediums in Tambiah's account, who are located in a field that is separate from Buddhism, with the hierarchical situation in Tibet:

"The deities who speak through these mediums were bound to the service of the Buddha's teachings through the same power that the lamas still employ, and the more serious the problem, the more likely it is that a lama will eventually be consulted." (Samuel 1975:210)

In some contexts, Ladakhi and Tibetan oracles belong to the same set of religious beliefs and practices as reincarnate lamas and monks. Many of them are ranked low and, as shown subsequently, their possession practices are sharply distinguished. However, some are seen as important figures within the monastic system and, in Chapter 4, the single most important oracle to the traditional Tibetan government is described briefly. This is the State Oracle of Nechung (gNas-chung).

Reincarnate lamas are central to Tibetan Buddhism. Monasteries and, in Tibet, states grow around such figures who come to be seen as the source of all important ritual power in the world. This difference helps to explain the small number of lay specialists in Ladakh relative to South East Asia. The importance of reincarnate lamas at the centre of Ladakhi life means that the scope of religion seems to be defined differently. All that is good in the world is religious while all that is bad in the world is anti-religious. There is no separately defined ritual field that can be described in terms of the gods and other spirits as "a field of magical-animism" (Ames 1964) or "a field of the guardian spirits" (Tambiah 1970) associated with inferior but partially independent practitioners. It seems that, relative to Tibet, religion (Buddhism) in South East Asia has limits. Experts in "magic" can be seen as ritual practitioners who are neither bad nor yet incorporated in the monastery. In brief, Tibetan Buddhism seems to give "religion" a much wider scope than Theravada Buddhism and it does not create any sharp break between religious and secular life, as suggested in some accounts of southern Buddhists. While the counterparts

of village oracles in Thailand, Burma or Sri Lanka might be relegated to a separate, inferior spirit cult, described in terms of magic rather than religion, no clear dualism can be established in the Tibetan or Ladakhi case.

A number of other "shamanic" characteristics of Tibetan Buddhism are outlined in the text, such as the journey from one life to the next (Chapter 3). Eliade's approach is discussed further in Chapter 4. At this point, however, it may be useful to relate the above remarks to monastic Buddhism more generally in Ladakh.

The Ladakhi state was not formally a theocratic one but it was based upon a monastic hierarchy which held much of the wealth in land, animals and trade and drew off a substantial but ever-changing proportion of the lay male population. The Ladakhi Chronicles (see below) report that king bkra-shis rnam-rgyal decreed that every family with more than one male child had to send one, but not the eldest, to the monastery in the later sixteenth century (Francke 1907:85, Petech 1977:168). It is not clear how far this was followed but 19th century accounts suggest that about one seventh of the population were monks (10). The nature of monastic institutions is clearly influenced by the type of financial sponsorship from the state and local lay society (M Allen 1973). In Ladakh (and Tibet), monasteries draw their income from different types of endowments and local lay support as well as trading (see also below, Chapter 1).

Buddhism seems to have arrived first from Kashmir, possibly as early as the Kushana period (Petech 1977). In the 8th century and, after the collapse of the central Tibetan

kingdom in the 9th century, Ladakh became increasingly Tibetanised (11). The early 10th and 11th century religious sites are popularly attributed to the great scholar, Rin-chen bzang-po (958-1055) who was sponsored primarily by a religious king of Western Tibet during the "second spread" of Buddhism in Tibet. This early period of Buddhist building is associated with the Kadampa (bKa'-gdams-pa) order, of whom, however, no traces remain in contemporary religious organisation. In the 13th century, the Ladakhi king dNgos-grub-mgon patronised the Tibetan founder of the Drigungpa ('Bri-gung-pa) order which is today represented at the monasteries of Phyang and Lamayuru. Petech comments on a growing spiritual dependency upon Central Tibet (dBus), which is so evident in Ladakh's later history:

"It was perhaps the missionary zeal of the 'Bri-gung-pa that persuaded king dNgos-grub-mgon to lay down for the first time the rule that Ladakhi novices should go to dBus and gTsang (Tibet) for higher studies and ordinations. This rule had a baneful effect in the long run. It meant absolute spiritual dependence from Central Tibet; it hindered the rise of an original philosophic and literary life in Ladakh; it implied the pre-eminence and spiritual overbearing of learned monks from dBus, which often clashed (as even today is the case) with the temporal administration of the monasteries, entrusted to Ladakhi stewards (phyag mdzod). When after 1959 tuition in Central Tibetan monasteries was no longer possible and the cultural source dried up, it tended to cause a lowering of educational level among the Ladakhi monks, and did not favour the establishment of local institutions for upper studies of the clergy." (Petech 1977:166-7) (12)

At the end of the 17th century, the abbot of Thikse was sent directly from Lhasa rather than appointed locally (Petech 1977:84) and Gelugpa (dGe-lugs-pa) institutions in Ladakh were placed under the authority of the chief Gelugpa institution in Tibet (ibid:85). For a short while, Ladakh was subject to Lhasa to the extent that Tibetan texts speak of Ladakhi tax bearers to the Dalai Lama (ibid:87).

Gelugpa influence was apparent soon after the founding of this sect in Tibet by Tsongkhapa (Tshong-kha-pa) (1357-1419). Spituk was the first monastery established and remains the most important Gelugpa institution, under the leadership of Kushok Bakula (see Chapter 3). Gongma village primarily patronises Sankar, which is one of the three branch monasteries under Spituk. Thikse is another Gelugpa monastery in the area, and perhaps the most respected representative of this order is the monastery of Rizong, founded in the 19th century in Lower Ladakh. According to Petech, Gelugpa influence waned after a century only to be re-established in recent times, long after the fall of the monarchy (Petech 1977:169). In the 17th century, Drugpa ('Brug-pa) ascendance was established largely through the activities of sTag-tshang ras-pa. Hemis came to be seen as the royal monastery, which preserved close links with the king until the disbanding of the state in the 1840's. Hemis remains the wealthiest monastery in Ladakh. Other Drugpa institutions in the area are mentioned subsequently; Stakna, Chemre and Shey. The Drugpa are one of two Kagyupa (bKa'-brgyud-pa) sects in Ladakh. The other is the Drigungpa ('Bri-gung-pa). Two further monastic orders are mentioned in the thesis; the Sakyapa (Sa-skya-pa), with a monastery at Matho (which has one branch monastery in the area), probably founded in the later 15th century (Dargyay 1985:63) and the Nyingmapa (rNying-ma-pa), represented at Tak Tok. This latter monastery, which follows the traditions of the "southern treasures" is important to household ritual in

Gongma, as shown in the following chapters. It is sometimes described below as "old sect" in contrast to the Gelugpa who are sometimes called "reformed sect".

It might be noted further than religious figures from Central Tibet also played an important role in Ladakh as arbitrators and peace makers. For example, the Dalai Lama sent a high ranking lama to settle the rules for inheritance in the kingdom during a quarrel between uncle and nephew in the mid-18th century. Primogeniture was confirmed (Petech 1977:101-105, Francke 1926:121, also noted in Carrasco 1959:166). There is no evidence of organised Bon in Ladakh although this term is sometimes also used rather confusingly to describe pre-Buddhist "animist" beliefs (13).

Since the Dogra conquest of Ladakh in the 1830's and 1840's, the political importance of monasteries has declined, a process that has been hastened by the severing of ties with Tibet in the 20th century (14). Even so, Ladakhi boys still join the monastery which still provides the centre of much local activity, be it ceremonial and religious or economic. Moreover, monastic life symbolises Ladakhi cultural tradition to Buddhists and the heads of monasteries continue to play a critical, albeit informal role in political life.

This brief review shows that ritual techniques for embodying gods in the world have been recognised at all levels in Tibetan Buddhism. However, they have not been discussed in relationship to each other. Village practices have generally been relegated to a marginal place where they are often related to underlying illness or pathology. Monastic practices, on the contrary, have been integrated into discussions of religious salvation and state affairs.

If Eliade is seen to epitomise the first approach mentioned above in relation to possession, namely its centrality; then I M Lewis might be cited in relation to the second, namely its marginal status (Lewis 1966, 1967, 1986). Both approaches reflect Ladakhi views of aspects of their religion but Lewis' emphasis on the peripheral nature of possession has the advantage of capturing local usages of the term zhugshes more accurately. Possession (zhugshes) is regarded with ambivalence in most contexts and distinguished sharply from what have just been described as related techniques associated with the embodiment of gods in monastic Buddhism.

Lewis' initial 1966 article explores the epidemiology of possession in societies which are characterised by "peripheral possession cults" (1966:320). Lewis asks who is affected and why. In brief, women are seen as the major practitioners and it is suggested that spirit possession compensates for women's lack of authority in other spheres (ibid:310). Possession provides a means of airing grievances and gaining some satisfaction which is comparable to other modes of mystical retaliation such as witchcraft and sorcery (ibid:314, 318). The relatively low status of women is explored in relation to a number of areas such as marriage practices and religion (ibid:311). This argument is repeated in a more recent publication (Lewis 1986).

Lewis' emphasis on social context provides a useful corrective to Eliade's anatomy of religion which isolates a "shamanic" complex independent of social practice. What I gloss as "witchcraft possession" in Ladakh is accompanied by

local attitudes which, in Lewis' formulation, label both the people and their practices "peripheral" or "marginal". Witchcraft possession is analysed partly in terms of the position of certain categories of women in Chapter 5. Like Lewis, I attempt to provide some explanation of local attitudes by looking at a wider social context associated with religion, the Ladakhi household and, especially, marriage.

Local views of the marginal do not, however, constitute an explanation of spirit possession. Lewis has been criticised largely for his individualism, reductionism and functionalism; for the view of possession as a functional means of alleviating tensions experienced by individuals in disadvantaged categories (see, for example, Stirrat 1977, Lambek 1981, Kapferer 1983). The issue raised in this thesis relates, however, to another question concerning the peripheral nature of spirit possession. In what sense is possession peripheral to the "main moral code" of certain societies (Lewis 1966)? It is argued that possession practices associated with "marginal" women, as with village oracles, are in fact constructed through and, in turn, influence the creation of highly valued social and cultural beliefs and practices. Even though Ladakhis dismiss witchcraft possession as a matter of no importance associated with women, it is argued that this area is in fact central to the wider religious field (15).

This point can be illustrated with reference to the third approach to spirit possession mentioned above, which focuses upon the relations between different aspects of a religious field. One example can be found in Kapferer's

discussion of demonic possession in Sri Lanka. Kapferer demonstrates the centrality of demonic possession to Sri Lankan culture even though possession is suffered mainly by women among the lower classes (Kapferer 1983). An analysis of the cultural imagery of women explains why women are more attractive and vulnerable to demons and also why possession cannot be understood purely in terms of female interests. Kapferer offers a corrective to psychological reductionism by emphasising that illness cannot be conceptualised independently of the demonic. Instead, he analyses demonic possession in Sri Lanka as a building block of culture.

This dynamic view of possession reveals low ranking practices to be central to the construction of unquestioned social and cultural tenets. Similar approaches are apparent in other accounts. Dumont, for example, shows how high-prestige religious practices are built upon Hindu conceptions of the demonic, which may cause possession. Dumont sees possession by gods as "an institutionalized function complementing priesthood" (1959:56):

"While the priest makes offerings to the deities, in turn the deities impart their commands, advice and knowledge through their mouthpiece." (ibid)

and

"The priest's functions co-incide with the ritual of offerings - that is, of gifts to the gods. The functions of the possessed person rest on a reverse movement, so to speak. With the possessed, the god is present and one can question him. The god no longer receives; he gives (oracles, advice, orders)..." (Dumont 1986 (1957):375-6)

Dumont draws a further distinction between types of possession, caused by gods and demons. A demon is an undomesticated spirit; a god is a spirit with a home:

"a demon which becomes the object of a cult becomes a god." (Dumont 1959:58. See also 1986:349)

Meat-eating or black gods are socialised demons (1986:460). Reciprocally, demons are spirits which are not worshipped in temples:

"Often a spirit is malevolent only as long as it lacks a cult; once the cult is provided, it becomes tutelary" (Dumont 1986:449).

This situation is reminiscent of Ladakh. My discussion of local village spirits addresses the attempt made by Ladakhis to distinguish spirits with homes from those without. In the case of village oracles, these ambiguities are sorted out by ensuring that the spirit is properly embodied and thereby given a(nother) home.

As Dumont notes, gods may still be called demons. In other words, their past wandering remains part of their current status (1959:58, fn 11). In Ladakh, local gods with homes belong fully to the world and thereby maintain their links with the demonic (as shown in Chapter 2 and subsequently). They are ranked among themselves according to the status of their "cult". Thus, some are worshipped only by villagers while others are important royal gods and are also worshipped in the monastery. But, in general, worldly gods are contrasted to and ranked below "true" divinities which have left the world behind. Ladakhis also structure their pantheon in terms of the behaviour of spirits, that is, the work they do independently of people.

Dumont's thesis is tied to specifically Hindu conceptions of purity and pollution which are not generalisable to Ladakh. However, his analysis demonstrates that any one category, be it demon, meat-eating god or vegetarian god, can only be understood in relation to the

structure of the pantheon as a whole. Thus:

"there are no meat-eating gods as such, for they would not be gods. There are only meat-eating demons, who are gods only through their association with the vegetarian gods. One could say as much of the vegetarian gods, *mutas mutandis*" (Dumont 1986:410).

It is argued similarly that lower ranking worldly gods which visit oracles in Ladakh can only be understood in relation to the demons below and the gods above. Dumont adds:

"The people believe in demons to the extent that they are a ground for the higher gods; they believe in the higher gods to the extent that they are a ground for the lower." (Dumont 1986:460-1)

Dumont's recognition of the central role of demons, which are incorporated within the pantheon as gods, is relevant to the Ladakhi material. However, I concentrate upon the image of movement that is encoded in the pantheon rather than the purely structural relationships between different supernatural categories.

My approach thus focuses on the dynamics of possession and the analysis attempts to show how seemingly central and marginal practices are mutually referring. The analysis, like Dumont's or Kapferer's, is culturally specific and locates Ladakhi possession within a Ladakhi universe.

Brief references have been made to the history of Ladakhi Buddhism. These are related to other aspects of Ladakh in the remainder of the introduction.

3. Ladakh

Ladakh is the largest and most sparsely populated district in India, occupying the north-eastern area of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The Karakoram range to the north divides Ladakh from China while the Zangskar and Himalaya

ranges divide Ladakh from the rest of India. These mountain ranges run south-east/north-west and settled areas follow the river valleys, which run in the same direction. The heart of the Ladakhi state was found along the Indus which has tributaries to the north, the Nubra and Shyok rivers, and to the south, the Zangskar river. The map attached (Map B) shows that the central area is surrounded by a number of outlying districts which are currently incorporated in Ladakh but which have, in the past, constituted independent kingdoms and which, to this day, have considerable autonomy in local affairs. The capital city, Leh (sLe), provides the administrative and commercial centre. As noted, my field work was based in this central area and I lived in a village or suburb (yul, chutso) just half an hour's walk from the "city", estimated to have a population of 8,718 in the 1981 census (16).

The road arrives from the west, from Kashmir. To the east lies Chinese Tibet, currently closed to travel but fifty years ago the source and destination for many trade goods. Leh provided an important trade depot between Sinkiang and the silk road over the Karakoram passes and India and Pakistan to the south as well as between Tibet and India. Long-distance networks dealt in luxury goods, manufactured products from the 18th century and tea. Local exchanges of grain and dried fruits for wool and salt intersected with these long-distance networks. In the absence of market places apart from Leh itself, Ladakhis traded across ecological zones, in particular, between agricultural areas in the valleys and pastoral areas in the high plateaus (17).

The nature of the terrain and climate, for Ladakh has a very low rainfall indeed, have important consequences for the settlement pattern. First, there is an internal specialisation in agriculture and pastoralism as well as trade. Second, there are few people. Ladakh has the lowest population density in India, variously estimated according to the changing definitions of Ladakh's external boundaries. This population is stratified in various ways and not just by mode of subsistence. Perhaps most important is the Muslim/Buddhist division. Muslim Ladakh is found in the west, Buddhist Ladakh in the east but, in the Leh region, the two populations are more or less equal and the Muslim population includes both Shiites, known as Baltis, and Sunni Muslims, traditionally linked with Sinkiang through trade. Yarkandi and Kashmiri traders were granted rights in Ladakh as part of a trans-Asian trading diaspora. They entered a partnership with Buddhist monks and notables in the organisation of trade for monasteries too formed part of a trans-Tibetan trading network (for example, Petech 1977:132). Thus, the lo phyag mission which was sent to Lhasa every third year and reaffirmed under a treaty of 1684 was headed by a Ladakhi or Tibetan monk of high rank and organised by a Leh merchant (18). The Muslim population is also associated with conquest from the west, which began to affect Ladakh in the 15th century.

The partnership between Muslim and Buddhist traders refers back to another important division in the Buddhist area, between monk and lay person, which has been described above.

In Buddhist Ladakh, irrigated land around the village in the lower-lying area is twinned with mountain pasture in the hinterland and the settlement was generally focused upon a local monastery acting as landlord and central place for banking, storehouse, ritual life and education. Pallis writes:

"Each of them (large villages) has sprung up close to the entrance of a tributary valley, whence issues the torrent that, through its leats allows wide terraces to be irrigated. Every large village thus owns its own hinterland, with a chain of lesser hamlets extending inland from the river.. Usually in each of these districts there is one important monastery, which fills the part of feudal overlord for the valley and receives a contribution of novices from all the leading families around..." (Pallis 1939:223)

Much more will be seen of monasteries but little of the traditional state which was slowly and finally disbanded after the conquests of 1834-1842. However, it should be noted that the monastery often shares its central place with a secular aristocracy. Ladakh still has a royal family at Stok which still intermarries with a local aristocracy. And, in many villages, the monastery is replaced by or shares its monumental position with the khaz or castle. Today, that castle is in ruins but its previous inmates will still be found in the village where they hold land and office and generally act as a fulcrum of local life that links the village microcosm with other areas.

Peasant, pastoralist and trader, Buddhist and Muslim, monk and lay person, aristocrat and villager; these are some of the important divisions in the area where I worked. Others will be encountered subsequently.

Sources for the modern period focus on the wars with China and Pakistan (19). The "traditional state" is

described in 19th century accounts written at the time of the dissolution of the state and in Carrasco's collation of these sources (20). Datta describes the Dogra wars of the 19th century in detail (Datta 1973). There are a number of accounts by Western and Chinese travellers (21). The most important source in Tibetan is the Ladakhi Chronicles and, in English, the commentaries on these provided by Francke and Petech (22). Petech suggests that this was probably compiled in the 17th century (Petech 1977:1). The Chronicles provide virtually the only source on Ladakh prior to the 15th century. Recently, a number of general accounts have been published. Most important are the two volumes on the cultural heritage of Ladakh by Snellgrove and Skorupski (1977, 1980); the collections published from the biennial Ladakhi colloquia (recent research no.1, Kantowsky and Sander eds 1983; recent research no.2, Dendaletche ed 1985; recent research no.3, in press); Brauen's discussion of festivals (1980a) and Kaplanian's more general account (1981). Doctorates on Ladakh include two accounts of Hemis Shukpa Chan and one of the nunnery at Rizong, all in Lower Ladakh (Dollfus 1988, Grimshaw 1983, Phylactou 1989). Other important works include those by Prince Peter on kinship (1956, 1963) and Pallis on Ladakh and its religion (1939). A number of articles have appeared on the Ladakhi household (for example, Murdoch 1981, Pommaret-Imaeda 1978) and village (for example, reports from Cambridge Undergraduate Ladakh Expeditions, 1977 and 1979). In addition, the Cultural Academy at Leh has published many collections of songs, proverbs and folklore as well as historical accounts in Ladakhi (for example, the nine volumes of songs published between 1970 and 1985 and the

annual publication, *Lo 'khor gyi deb*, from 1976). The following historical summary relies primarily upon Petech 1977, which itself incorporates wide-ranging research into Tibetan and Chinese source material.

The Tibetan expansion in the 8th century involved Ladakh in conflict with the Chinese. However, Ladakh was not extensively Tibetanised until after the collapse of the central Tibetan monarchy in the middle of the 9th century, as noted above. The Ladakhi monarchy has always seen itself as a continuation of the great Tibetan Srong-btsan sgam-po's rule. The first Ladakhi dynasty was established by the descendants of the murdered gLang-dar-ma who founded a new state in Western Tibet in the early 10th century. It was from Western Tibet that dPal-gyi-mgon founded Ladakh in the mid-10th century (23). Few of the kings of the first dynasty listed in the Chronicles are known from other accounts.

By the 15th century, Ladakh was faced by Muslim states to the west which made periodic incursions into Ladakh. The last king of the first dynasty was deposed and Ladakh was unified by a side-branch of the family from Basgo. There seem to have been a number of "capitals"; Shey and Leh in Upper Ladakh, Basgo and Timosgam in Lower Ladakh. Shey continued to provide a royal residence in later years for children to the king were born there. The kingdom was gradually concentrated in Leh during the rule of the first kings of the second dynasty. The first great king of the second dynasty, bKra-shis rnam-rgyal, built the castle in Leh and extended the boundaries of his kingdom into Western Tibet. His elder brother seems to have been left in charge

of Lower Ladakh at Basgo. The Portugese merchant d'Almeida seems to have visited Ladakh during this period and he described a rich country with its capital at Basgo.

Seng-ge rnam-rgyal was born of a marriage between his father and a Balti princess, daughter of Ali Mir who had conquered Ladakh and held the king captive. Seng-ge succeeded to the throne in 1616. He is one of the most popular historical figures in Ladakh, regarded as an incarnation (sprul sku) whose close contacts with the Drugpa missionary, sTag-tshang ras-pa, and military exploits are often recounted. Under the influence of sTag-tshang, the royal house was converted to the Drugpa sect and Hemis became the royal monastery in Ladakh. Accounts of conflict with Guge to the West are found in letters of the Portugese Jesuit de Andrade. sTag-tshang seems to have played an important role as a mediator in this conflict. Zangskar and Upper Lahul to the south were annexed. However, to the east, Seng-ge seems to have been worsted in conflicts with powers under the new Moghul empire. The king retaliated by prohibiting commercial traffic from Kashmir which had a devastating effect on the Ladakhi economy. The Portugese Jesuit, de Azevedo, visited Ladakh in 1631 and received an audience with the king on his way to Tsaparang.

Eventually, Seng-ge's three sons were consecrated as kings with the eldest, bDe-ldan, as paramount ruler. The two younger brothers were given Guge, Zangskar and Spiti. Moghul sovereignty was formally acknowledged on Aurangzeb's visit to Kashmir and, later, the king was forced to lay foundations for a mosque in Leh, send tribute and promise to spread Islam in Ladakh. From the 1650's, disputes with Central Tibet

developed over the treatment of the Gelugpa in Ladakh and the Drugpa in the dominions of the Dalai Lama, who had emerged as ruler in 1642 under Mongol sponsorship. These were to culminate in the war that ended Ladakh's position as a powerful and independent state. From the late 1670's, bDe-ldan ruled with his eldest son, bDe-legs, who together involved Ladakh in a three-cornered conflict with Tibet and the Moghul empire. Ladakh had championed Bhutanese interests (also Drugpa) and prompted an invasion by a Tibetan-Mongol army. Help was sought from Moghul Kashmir which put the occupying army to flight in 1683. Subsequent treaties fixed conditions for trade in favour of a Kashmiri monopoly on shawl wool, defined terms for the annual tribute to the Moghuls which had previously been paid only sporadically (1683); returned Guge and Purang to Tibet and specified conditions for trade and missions with Central Tibet (1684) (Petech *ibid*:74-79).

Ladakh was to suffer another invasion in the 19th century from the Hindu rulers of Jammu. The intervening reigns saw the continuation of close links with Tibet and the patronage of monasteries, flourishing trade with Kashmir under the Moghuls and, after 1751, the Afghans, witnessed by the Jesuits Desideri and Freyre in 1715, and endless border disputes. Petech notes a deepening hereditary character to state appointments in the 18th century, for example, with the ministers of Sabu and Gya, the latter being the only autonomous feudatory within Ladakh itself (*ibid*:55, 93-95). Internal problems are also noted in some reigns. Three revolts against Tshe-dbang rnam-rgyal, who ruled from 1753-

1782, are recorded. The last led to his retirement at Matho. Rebellion had been prompted by the king's marriage to a low status Muslim girl, his leaning towards Islam and his severe taxation of the country which was necessary, it is said, for the upkeep of his Central Asian horses (Petech *ibid*:115). During this period, a member of the royal family was recognised as the sprul sku (incarnate) of Hemis and he acted as regent for a short time (Petech *ibid*: 106-8, 118-21, 123) (24).

In 1819, the Sikh Ranjit Singh conquered Kashmir and soon began to exact the customary tribute from Ladakh. Moorcroft's intercession on behalf of Ladakh for British protection in the 1820's was foiled by Ranjit Singh's protests. The Dogra ruler of Jammu, Gulab Singh, sent an army to Ladakh under Zorowar Singh in 1834, with the blessings of his Sikh overlords. Ladakh was defeated and placed within the orbit of Ranjit Singh who received tribute and presents from Ladakh in 1838 (Datta 1973:114-115). Vigne's account suggests that Ladakh was a vassal state at this time (Vigne 1842:352-8). The Ladakhi army was enrolled in Zorowar Singh's conquest of Baltistan and his invasion of Western Tibet in 1841. Zorowar Singh was killed on this latter campaign and his Dogra army wiped out. The Ladakhis revolted once more, with Tibetan support, but were again defeated by a Dogra army arriving from Kashmir. The 1842 treaty confirmed the existing border and previous trade agreements (Petech *ibid*:151); Gulab Singh was declared Maharajah of Kashmir in 1846, under British protection. Ladakh was incorporated in Kashmir but Lahul and Spiti were placed under direct British control. The British stationed a resident joint commissioner

in Leh during the summer months from 1870 to supervise "trade". The Ladakhi monarchy was abolished; the king was given the estate of Stok and his younger brother was given Matho. Both remain in the royal family to this day. The nobility was deprived of power but the monasteries managed to preserve most of their lands as well as extensive freedom from taxation (but see Cunningham 1977 (1854):273, Ramsay 1890:83).

Many accounts of the structure of the Ladakhi state derive from this period. In brief, Ladakh is described as a semi-feudal state centred on a lay monarchy in which the clergy had no formal role. Sometimes, the king ruled together with the heir-apparent or with his brothers. The king was surrounded by a court and officials under a prime minister and treasurer. Government was variably in the hands of king (for example, Seng-ge rnam-gyal) or prime minister (for example, during Moorcroft's visits (Moorcroft & Trebeck I 1971 (1837):332-5) and in the reign of Nyi-ma rnam-rgyal who ruled in the early 18th century (Petech 1977:94)). At the time of the Dogra invasion, there were eight local feudatories or "kings" (rygal po) (Petech *ibid*:155). The territory directly under royal control was divided among estates under hereditary tenure. Some land was held "tax-free" in return for service but some was subject to certain duties (Moorcroft & Trebeck I 1971:425, Carrasco 1959:173-5). Rights and privileges granted by the king may, however, have been confirmed upon accession (Petech *ibid*:122). They were also, on occasion, rescinded (*ibid*:102, Francke 1926:226-7). Petech lists documents issued by Ladakhi kings that

illustrate the kinds of grants made (see, for example, Feteach 1977:81-2, 111-2, 126-7, 144). Secular estates were subdivided with village headmen at the lowest level who played some role in collecting taxation from named households. In theory, all land was held by the king and the only proof of property ownership consisted in documents issued by the king (Feteach *ibid*:158). Taxation on households was mostly levied in kind and in labour. Forced labour included portering and military service (Moorcroft & Trebeck 1971:320-1, Ramsay 1890:47). There are some indications that full households paid in kind as "hand-doers" while poorer houses gave only labour as "foot-goers" (for example, Cunningham 1977:269). However, it is not clear whether this distinction applied solely to households or to houses within a single household (see Chapter 1 on differentiation within the household). Larger and richer households were known as grong chen while the lesser and poorer were known as grong chung (see also Carrasco 1959:169-70). However, to this day, the poorer parts of a household, namely the small houses, often make contributions in labour while the richer parts, namely the main house, pay in goods or cash (25). Accordingly, this distinction may apply to internal arrangements within a household related to taxation. Taxation may also have been based on water rights (Izzet Ullah 1843:290). Tax obligations on the household as a whole promoted non-division as well as attempts to conserve a large domestic labour force through a number of strategies concerning reproduction and internal differentiation. Fraternal polyandry has been traditionally and somewhat misleadingly singled out as the most important of these strategies.

Cunningham suggested that 4,000 households were alienated for the support of monasteries and 2,000 for the crown in the early 19th century. Government income was also drawn from taxation on trade and trade on the king's behalf (Cunningham 1977:268-275). Ladakh's trade is described in detail in a number of accounts (see fn 17), which all suggest that the economy depended as much on the carrying trade as subsistence agriculture.

After the Dogra invasion, government was placed in the hands of a minister who collected revenue from tehsildars and usually acted as one of the Joint Commissioners. Ladakh was divided into three tehsils which are now part of Kargil and Leh Districts. Only the village headmen under the traditional government seem to have maintained their office at the lower levels of the new hierarchy. A standing army was established and Urdu was introduced as the official language. As noted above, the monasteries managed to keep most of their lands and escape heavy taxation. However, the growing importance of Urdu and alternative education must have affected their position. Internal stability was maintained by British rule within the wider domain of great power rivalry that dominated later 19th century relations along the borders between Russia, China and British India.

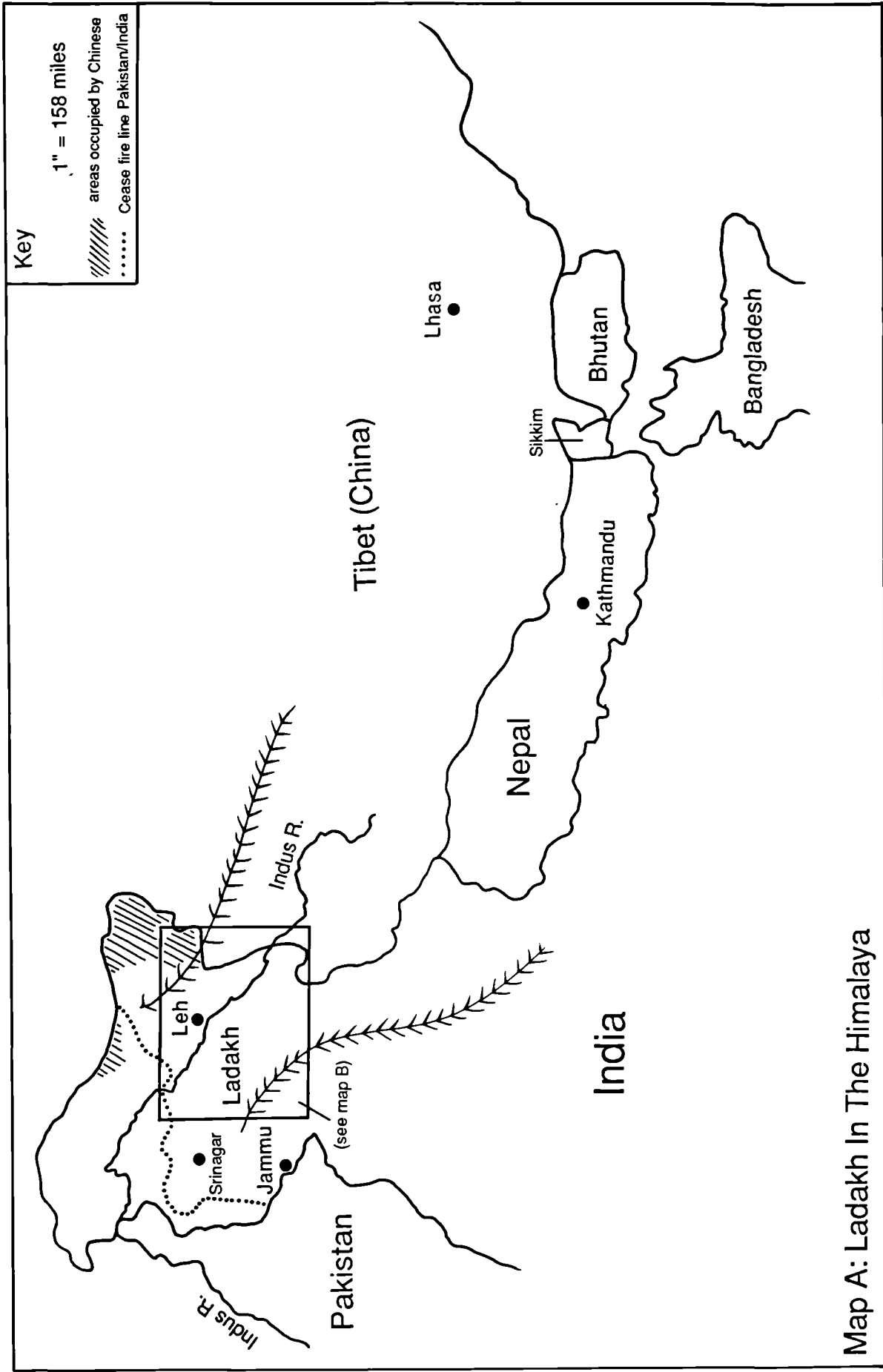
Decolonisation and partition led to clashes between India and Pakistan; Leh itself was threatened at one point. There have been various and generally minor alterations to the ceasefire line arranged under the auspices of the United Nations in 1949. When China took over Tibet in 1950, Ladakh came under a new threat from the east and border areas were

again lost. The road built across the Aksai Chin was used by the Chinese to quell the Lhasa revolt of 1959 and the insurrection in Eastern Tibet and then the whole border with India from Ladakh to Darjeeling came under dispute. Warfare broke out between China and India in 1962. By this time, the road from Srinagar to Leh had been completed and an air strip had been in use for some years (since Partition). These were central to communications between what was now a heavily militarised area and the rest of India. Ladakh has been increasingly incorporated in the wider Indian polity with these developments which also involved the closure of all previously important trade routes in the area. Ladakh is part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, under the Chief Minister. Internal affairs are the responsibility of a Development cum Deputy Commissioner in Leh. Three important Indian legislative changes might be noted. The 1941 Buddhist Polyandrous Marriages Prohibition Act has rendered formal polyandry illegal. An act of 1949 has enabled younger siblings to claim an inheritance from the household according to the principle of equal inheritance. An act of 1950 legislated against large landholdings (above 23 acres) but opposition led to a revision in 1955 and this act does not seem to have greatly affected the monasteries in spite of further limits being issued (Erdmann 1983:158).

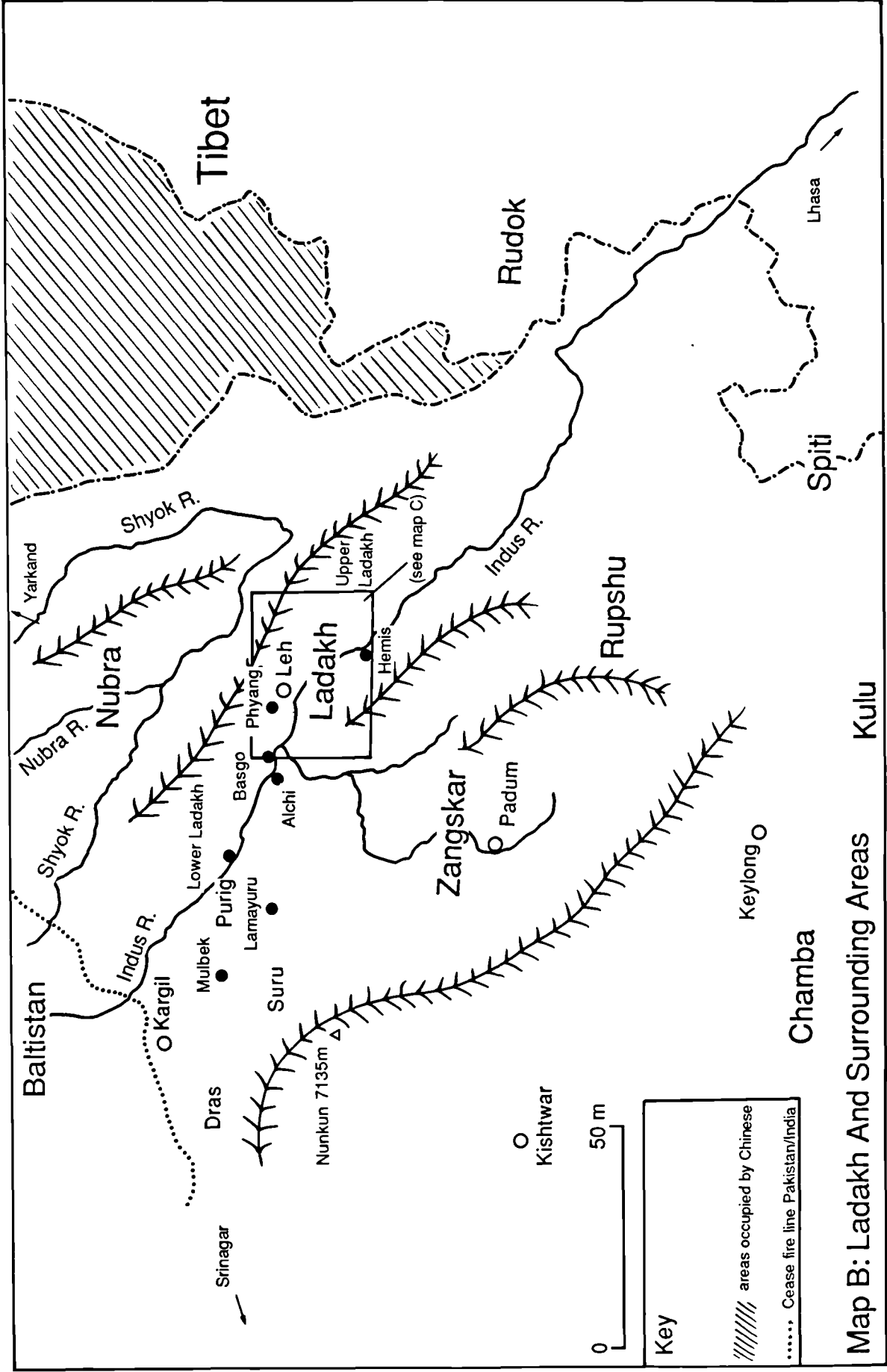
Ladakh is an area of great strategic importance between (the rest of) India, Pakistan and China. Most employment comes from government and army today. The army provide employment for Ladakhis as soldiers and as part of a service economy; it also acts as a development agency and brings huge subsidies into the area. Other Indians together with very

popular Hindu cultural baggage such as the film industry have been introduced to Ladakh with these developments. The contemporary economy rests in large part upon a military infrastructure and other recent developments cannot be discussed independently. Two of them are particularly important to contemporary Buddhist life. First, there is mass tourism. The contemporary tourist tradition might be traced to 19th century travellers from Kashmir, who helped fashion a reinterpretation of Tibetan Buddhism as an exotic but also ideally philosophical religion. By the 1920's travel had escalated into a tourist boom (Gompertz 1928:172) that was soon halted for political and military reasons, to be opened again in 1974. Currently, thousands of tourists are attracted to Ladakh every year (26). They promote the cultural hegemony of Buddhism and provide employment for food producers, those who market Buddhist commodities in the summer months from shops and stalls, hoteliers in the capital as well as porters, guides and villagers who turn their homes into guest houses every summer.

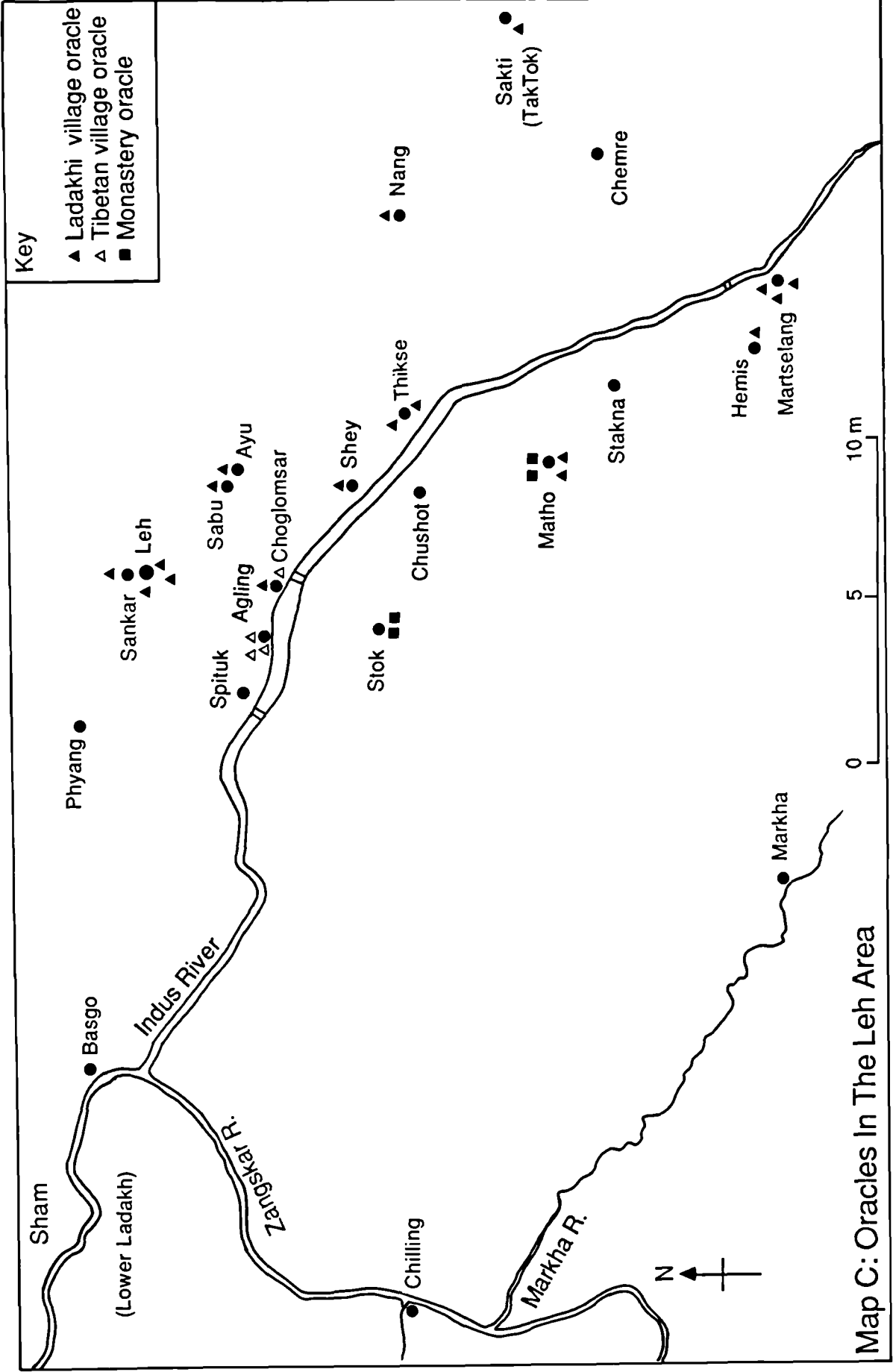
Second, Ladakh has become a home for Tibetan refugees who have helped shape contemporary Buddhism. Tibetan exile organisations are important to local education and monastic supervision as well as the training of Ladakhi novices in other parts of India. Reincarnate lamas who are described subsequently by their Ladakhi term, rinpoche or precious jewel (27), now run a number of Ladakhi monasteries as exiles from Tibet. Ladakhi Buddhism thus continues to orient itself towards Tibet, though Tibet itself as an independent Buddhist political entity has disappeared.



Map A: Ladakh In The Himalaya



Map B: Ladakh And Surrounding Areas Kulu



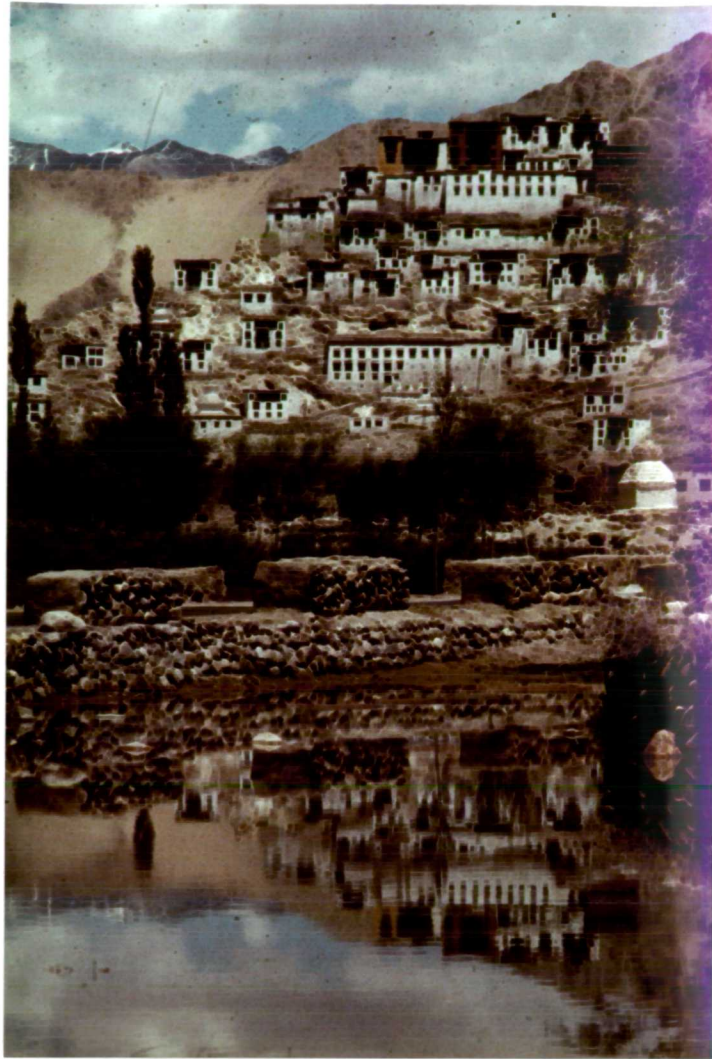
PART I: RITUAL

CHAPTER 1

GODS ABOVE



Plate 1 Leh bazaar



**Plates 2 & 3 Thikse monastery and threshing floors
in the village below**



Plates 4 & 5 Ladakhi houses

1.1 Gods and mountains

If you arrive by plane, all that can be seen are mountains; peaks that nearly touch the wings, glaciers sliding through the clouds, a rock face exposed to the sun. European travellers have left descriptions of the many intersecting mountain ranges and plateaus that encircle Ladakh. One view from the "top of the world" reads:

"All around appeared mountain ranges, none of which were less than 20,000 feet high, whilst to the west rose two peaks of much greater height; yet in the distance they seemed below us, for the land around sloped away down on all sides. In whichever direction we looked the sky appeared below us and the world slunk out of sight. In fact we felt as if we had risen above the world and were now descending to it in front of us. The Karakoram left behind us appeared like a mere crest on the undulating surface of the country and the mountain ranges in front and on all sides seemed to struggle up from below to reach our level." (the Depsang plateau described by Dr. Bellew in 1874 IN Keay 1981:183)

If you arrive by bus, then, after a long climb out of the valley of Kashmir, the rocky desert appears on all sides, dwarfing the few patches of green, that is, the few settled places, and cut off from the sun by mountains that tower upwards on all sides into the white of the snow caps and the white of the clouds. Numerous travellers have written with awe of the scale of this landscape where all sense of perspective disappears into the shadows cast by one mountain on to another:

"Nothing I had read or imagined prepared me for the splendour and majesty of the mountains that first day; that was the first gift Ladakh gave me, a silence before that phantasmagoria of stone, those vast wind-palaces of red and ochre and purple rock, those rock faces the wind and snow had worked over thousands of years into shapes so unexpected and fantastical the eye could hardly believe them, a silence so truly stunned and wondering that words of description emerge from it very slowly, and at first only in broken images - a river glimpsed there, a thousand feet below the road, its waters sparkling in the shifting storm-light, the path below on the bare rocky surface moving with sheep whose wool glittered in the sunlight,

small flowers nodding in the crevasses of the vast rocks that lined the road, rocks tortured in as many thousand ways as the mountains they are torn from, sudden glimpses of ravines pierced and shattered by the light that broke down from the mountains, of the far peaks of the mountains themselves, secreted in shadow, or illumined suddenly, blindingly, by passing winds of light." (Harvey 1983:14)

Ladakhis orient themselves first and foremost towards a vertical space and it is hard not to see in this a push from the landscape itself; mountains and snow above, bright ribbons of water falling into the valleys, irrigating small patches of green alongside, desert all around. Gods live above in those frozen wastes. Their homes are sometimes visible in the landscape. A distant path over a wild mountain will suddenly focus upon a heap of stones or some bright coloured cloth fluttering in the wind, perhaps a shrine decked in flags, scarves and the horns of wild animals. Lu, spirits of the lower world, live in the water below and the fertile earth around. Their homes can also be seen in some villages, less conspicuous affairs, white blocks of stone adjacent to the village threshing floors. People sit between gods and lu in their man-made buildings, defended from the desert with walls of stone.

Life comes from the gods above, from the mountains and the annual melt as described in one of the most famous of Ladakhi songs, the dadar or "wedding arrow" song. Here is one version sung one evening by a group of men while drinking:

"The sun melts ice on the high mountains. Water flows downhill to make an irrigation pond. From that pond appears an irrigation canal. The canal waters a mother field. Barley appears in that field. The barley is collected in a wooden pot with a dadar ("wedding arrow") standing in the middle. This arrow can be handed over to none other than the precious son of a noble father. May there be peace."

A more literary version has been published by Hanlon:

"Sung at wedding when presenting arrow encircled with scarf of blessing:

"Hail! may the happy blessing be accomplished! (repeated three times). May the head of our valley be like the blessing-bearing snow-mountain! May the small gold (i.e. the sun) rise up to melt the snow-mountain! May the pure snow waters flow into a sea of blessings! May this sea form into straight and unbroken channels! May these channels completely flood even the largest fields! May all the fields be clothed with verdure! May this verdure be grain of all sorts ripening together like brothers and sisters! May this ripe grain fill up the corn measures! Let the arrow encircled with scarf of blessing be planted in the filled-up measure of corn! (this is the joyful symbol of a splendid harvest). The fire-coloured flag on the arrow is our friends and relations. The ankle-bones (1) and finger-rings are our brothers and sisters. All other men and women, young and old, are not to be touched with the blessed arrow, but only the darling son of the good father and mother.

(1) Ankle-bones being the boy's common toy, stand as boys' insignia; the ring for girls; similarly the arrow for youths, and the white scarf of blessing for maidens...." (Hanlon 1892, song 97, p.625)

The song recounts the promise held in the glaciers. As ice is touched by the sun, it is set in motion and brought down to the valleys in the form of water where it brings life to the land. This image also provides a metaphor for the life-giving movement of gods from the mountain tops down to the valleys. However, gods are not left to descend naturally in the snow melt; they are also brought down by people. Nature is controlled through ritual, as shown in the following chapter.

Ladakhi myth also traces the beginnings of human life to the gods who came down from the mountains and brought life with them. Perhaps the most famous stories of this kind relate to culture heroes in later "history", to Kesar who came down from heaven to be king of Ling and civilise the world or to Guru Rinpoche, the most popular of "Buddhas", who

civilised the barbarian land of Tibet. But many "origin myths" tell the same story:

"People lived in the high pastures and they mixed with many gods and goddesses. But their hearts became bad and so the gods and goddesses left. Life became very hard. They planted crops but these did not grow because of the rocks. They could only grind the little grain that they produced with great difficulty because they had no mills; they had to grind the corn on rocks. ... These people, left in the high pastures at Da, did not know where to go. So, they shot an arrow and where it fell in the valley, they made the village at Da, and they grew crops and life became easier ..." (Yongs-'dzin dkon-mchog bod rnam from his book, La-dwags dgon-pa rnam kyi lo-rgyus pad-ma'i 'phreng-ba; my underlining (1))

The word "god" translates the Ladakhi lha which itself refers to a wide range of spirits. Most often, the term is used to describe these spirits of the mountains, who are also seen to inhabit stanglha, the top-most world of a three-tiered cosmos. However, gods may have left the mountains behind them, just as they did at the beginnings of civilisation and just as they do every year. Gods are domesticated and they are found at the summits of human habitations. There are gods of castles, gods of monasteries, gods of the village, gods of the village section, gods of the household. Everywhere, gods can be found at the top and shrines are made, offerings left and prayer flags hung at all these miniaturised mountain tops. These spirits are regularly honoured and propitiated in ritual and approaches to them are described in the next chapter. Briefly, they are seen as guardians and protectors of their particular territories and as bringers of life to the land and to society. Gods who have been brought into the human world are not, in essence, different from those outside it on the mountain tops and in stanglha. Much of what follows shows,

to the contrary, how the powers of gods on high may be tapped through a process of domestication and, how, once they have been lowered too far, their powers wane and they must be returned to the top.

The Ladakhi term, lha, refers primarily to these gods in the upper reaches of the world who form an integral part of village life and ritual cycles. Yet, the word lha may be used in an even more inclusive sense, to refer to all gods that sit above, even those that have left the mountains and this whole world behind. Such gods are not found on mountain-tops. They are not generally found in this world at all although an elaborate religious iconography and ritual creates places that they may, at times, be persuaded to visit. When the term lha is used to include these latter figures, then they are ranked. First come gods from outside the world, which occupy the pinnacle of the religious order. Worldly gods rank relatively low in this much expanded pantheon. There are many Tibetan classifications of the gods. For example, protective gods which have reached enlightenment are sometimes ranked as inner and secret protectors (*nang ba'i chos skyong* and *gsang ba'i chos skyong*) in contrast to worldly "outer" protectors (*phyi ba'i chos skyong*) (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975:4). Alternatively, enlightened protectors are known as those which have left the world, *'jig rten las 'das pa'i srung ma*, in contrast to those remaining in the world, *'jig rten pa'i srung ma*. This latter distinction between the enlightened or "other-worldly" and the worldly is used frequently below as a kind of shorthand referring to the distinctions made by villagers between different parts of the divine hierarchy. Villagers also

often divide this hierarchy in terms of the lower ranking gods that they worship in the village (worldly gods), monastery gods including many of the tantric deities about which they know little, and the highest Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, some of whom are also worshipped directly by villagers.

Much of this thesis attempts to tease out the various significations of Ladakhi lha, some of which visit people who fall into trance and work as oracles. These few words should be seen only as an introduction. However, it is noteworthy that, with my very first words, I come up against what to Ladakhis forms an important basis to their society, its division into two parts; monastery and village, which is described in the next section (1.2).

Other-worldly, religious gods are approached especially through the monastery; this-worldly, place gods can be approached from the village. Although lha can be divided into two classes and associated with two very different visions of the world; religion and enlightenment on the one hand, village and social reproduction on the other; the use of the same term for all gods points to important continuities. Ladakhis are well aware that these two settings, which are associated with partially distinct cosmologies still to be described, also form a single hierarchy. It is the hierarchical picture that is explored in this thesis and the extent to which images of hierarchy dissolve the categorical differences between classes of gods, their respective cosmologies and social referents. In this chapter, the cosmology that is more closely associated with

worldly gods is described. Religious cosmology will not be addressed until Chapter 3. It is important, therefore, to appreciate this tension from the beginning. All gods (lha) are gods but some are more god-like than others and accordingly fall into a partially separate sphere of religion, defined from the monastery and from textual and oral teaching traditions.

To summarise these differences, the symbol of the mountain top should be recalled. Mountain summits stand for height, inaccessibility and the kind of fixed permanence seen in pure ice as well as a promise of life that will come in the annual melt just as it has done since the beginnings of time. Gods in mountains therefore signify the highest, life-giving beings in our world or in the top-most world of stanglha, which nonetheless interpenetrates our world. Yet, there is another important dimension which removes spirituality from the world altogether and thus dissociates it from mountain tops. Fixity, life, purity and power come from another world, perhaps better described as a non-world. Accordingly, gods are ranked by their other-worldly qualities and thus, gods in mountains come to be encompassed by the great religious figures who have reached enlightenment.

If the important division between Ladakhi gods who live in the world and those who have left it behind is momentarily ignored, then gods in their mountains might be described thus: they are more or less fixed in the frozen summits but they have a tendency to float out of the world altogether, a tendency which is balanced out by assiduous attempts to domesticate the gods and bring them further into the world.

Lha at the top of the world, in stanglha, are associated with two lower worlds, the world of lu below, yoklu, and the world of people in the middle, in parsam. Lu are found in water and in fertile, green, warm ground. They correspond to the Sanskrit naga. Although elaborate tales are told of lu kingdoms, of good and bad, male and female lu; these creatures are especially seen in the form of fish, snakes and lizards. At times, they are also associated with women wearing their traditional perag, the lu-like head-dress that is passed from mother to daughter at marriage. This has a long tail that tapers from the forehead down a woman's back, studded with rows of turquoise.

Two important points emerge from this brief characterisation, contrasting gods above and lu below. First, lu are imaged in terms of their bodies, in the form of fish or snakes or lizards. Gods have no bodies, at least none that can be seen with the normal eye. They may be glimpsed as phantoms in the night. Gods associated with the monastery may be constructed bit by bit to the inner eye of the meditator. By and large, however, gods are like the wind; indeed, they may exist simultaneously in many places, freed from a body that anchors them to just one spot. Lu, however, are seen especially in terms of their bodies, be these fish, lizards or the cultivated earth more generally.

Second, lu are built into the natural flux of the seasons. The earth is only cultivated for half the year. Water flows for only half the year. In the winter, when land and water freeze, lu sleep. They belong to the annual cycle of renewal, growth, depletion and death; each spring they wake and each winter they hibernate. Shrines to lu are found

at threshing floors in some villages and in storerooms elsewhere suggesting that lu are built into the cycle of food production that leads from the earth and water to threshing floors and grain stores in houses.

Gods are polluted when they are "brought low", as noted above. As shown subsequently, they acquire characteristics of the "demonic". Indeed, it is a religious axiom that all who live in the world are inevitably compromised by it. Lu, however, are notably vulnerable to dirt and pollution because they live low down and in water which is cleansing but also easily dirtied. Their offerings must be especially pure, "white and sweet".

Such ideas about fertility are general to other Tibetan-speaking areas. Paul, for example, writes of Sherpa symbolism:

"The universe consists of three tiers, man occupying the middle level. Over him is the sky, associated with maleness, potency, eternity and purity, and the "reservoir" of Life in its pure un-lived state. Below man is the earth and the primordial waters, associated with the female, with impurity, and with the cycles of birth, growth, death, and decay that characterize life as it is lived in a material vehicle. The life of the earth, of which "natural" vegetable life is an example, is ultimately derived from the sky and, in living, works its way back up to the sky to renew the store of absolute life there." (Paul 1979:298)

Although lu occupy a rather different place in Sherpa cosmology, they are equally equated with land, food and water, with snakes particularly, and they are, Paul suggests, symbolically inseminated from above (2).

These few remarks begin to point towards a self-reproducing cosmos which will be seen in greater detail through the household (section 1.3) and its rituals (Chapter 2). People sit between these supernatural beings, gods above

and lu below. Turning towards this middle world, the opening description of a natural mountain landscape might be focused in finer detail on the valleys lower down.

1.2 Buildings

Monasteries and castles have been mentioned in passing. If the visitor looks down from the mountains towards the settled places, certain buildings stand framed by the desert. A little closer and these fall into two groups; the one, ruins which turn out to have been castles; the other, well kept, painted, decorated with flags and colours which often divide into a number of buildings closer up. From that distance, this complex can be seen to tower over small patches of cultivated land and tiny buildings clustered together close to the river or dispersed in the fields. The monumental pieces of architecture are monasteries, the tiny structures are houses and the odd government office. The monastery is large, imposing and very conspicuous; it stands apart from the rest of the village, often at some distance even from water, and it stands above. Monumental, the monastery is seen in all its permanence; apart, it is distanced from lay society and especially from agriculture; above, it is higher, that is, for Ladakhis, closer to the gods and to enlightenment, pure and powerful.

The visitor soon appreciates a number of further distinctions made between those who live in monasteries and those who live in houses. The former are men. Reference will be made to Ladakhi nuns who may live in nunneries which are small, inconspicuous buildings below monasteries. Most, however, stay at home as unmarried daughters. Apart from

their shaved heads, they appear to the visitor just like other Ladakhi women. They are called "nuns who wear the lokpa (goatskin shawl)".

Monks all wear special clothes and their heads are generally shaven, indicating to Ladakhis that such people have taken the cloth. This uniform calls forth a certain deference from the others, apparent in the way they greet a monk, seat him and offer him hospitality. For Ladakhis, it is the uniform that elicits respect as the cloth of Buddha and a visiting monk is always placed higher than all laymen. So too, it is apparent to the visitor that monks lead a different life. Inside the monastery, the community is gathered in ritual at certain times of the day, at other times, monks will be found administering monastery business, gossiping, studying in their rooms and, perhaps, cooking. The monastery may seem deserted for many are outside its precincts, not working in the fields, rarely in offices or schools but usually in houses where they are performing rituals according to the texts they take with them and with the help of ritual equipment that they often have to carry too. Inside the monastery, the visitor will not be shown living quarters or a kitchen. Only the more public of the central rooms or buildings will be shown, such as the assembly hall (dukhang, 'du khang); dark, full of frescoes, cloth paintings (thangkha) and statues, in front of which are placed offerings of money, scarves, lamps. The assembly room lies in the middle of the monastery while it is the kitchen that occupies the centre of a house. A one-roomed

"monastery" (gongpa) or temple contains only this while a one-roomed house is a kitchen, with an altar at the side.

Ladakhis will describe all this as chos, "religion". The term, religion, has been used already and, throughout the thesis, it is intended as a translation of the Ladakhi chos. Although chos is not discussed until Chapter 3, a preliminary translation might be useful at this point. Briefly, the visitor will learn, if s/he is talking to a villager, that chos consists of worshipping and taking refuge in the "three jewels" or, as Ladakhis sometimes say in English, the "three gods": Buddha, Doctrine and Community. Buddha refers to the historical founder of Buddhism in India and to other saints and deities who have reached enlightenment. Some gods (lha) are seen as manifestations and emanations of these figures or individual travellers to enlightenment. Doctrine refers both to "religion" generally (chos) and specifically to the teachings (chos) brought by Buddhas into the world. Community refers to those who practice the teachings under the guidance of Buddhas. It refers generally to all Buddhists and, more narrowly, to initiates who have renounced the secular world; in Ladakh, to monks and their leaders particularly. Each "jewel" is intimately associated with the others and villagers, at least, preferentially locate the entire triad of chos, all three of the jewels, in the monastery where they are enshrined in the persons of rinpoche (reincarnate lamas, see Chapter 3). Chos is also given a history that stretches back to the dawn of time for chos in Ladakh is sometimes used as a synonym for civilization itself. Rinpoche are central to this picture: Buddhas created Doctrine and the Community in the past; today,

smaller-scale "Buddhas", that is, rinpoche, continue this process as they impart knowledge to pupils, keeping civilisation alive and growing. Monk pupils, as noted, generally join the monastery for their entire lives unlike monks in Southern Buddhist countries and they join as children. Even today, there are large numbers of monks relative to Buddhist countries in the south.

These are the immediate, crude distinctions that strike an outsider. They remain resonant to Ladakhis and orient their behaviour even when a monk is found living outside the monastery and working in the fields, even when the monastery is but a small temple buried in the heart of the village without any resident monks and even when an individual monk is known personally to be an inferior one. This can be shown by moving to the village where I lived, which I shall call Gongma. Here is but a small temple that is opened for religious service which is found on the top of the hill. Here the only monk lives in a trashak (grwa shag), a place for monks but one that sits with the rest of the houses in the village rather than on high, around the assembly hall. This monk belongs to the monastery of Tak Tok (Brag-thog) in Sakti, an old or "unreformed" order (Nyingmapa), which sends monks to the Leh area to perform domestic rituals. One is sent to Gongma, another to an area of Leh and a third to the house of the "prime minister" (kalon) in Leh. Monks from Sankar (gSang-mkhar, see below) visit the Gongma temple regularly for ritual services.

It is the small temple that gives Gongma a corporate identity on some occasions. For other purposes, Gongma is

not a village but a "suburb" or chutso (bcu tshogs) of Leh, organised with reference to rituals at the larger monasteries in the area. A villager makes donations to monks, commonly in the form of harvest gifts. In return, monks perform rituals for the benefit of villagers. Thus, Gongmapa (Gongma people) often give to the monks who live closest, in the monastery of Sankar, fifteen minutes' walk away. The monks, in return, perform rituals for the benefit of villagers. A Sankar monk says:

"because all the new monks get sonyom (3) from villagers to pay for a day's ritual for the dead and a day's ritual for the living, rites are performed, in turn, for all the villagers."

Villagers belong to households. These are equally defined in terms of monastic sponsorship. Gongma is said to have 28 households (tronpa, grong pa) because there are 28 sponsors (chindag, sbyin bdag) (4).

There are a number of dimensions to the material sponsorship of monasteries; endowments, the support of individual monks and the sponsorship of particular rituals. I have no information on the local endowment of Sankar monastery, which is sponsored by the majority of Gongma households. Sankar presumably has a record (Stobdan 1985:71) of gifts of land, grain, ornaments and other valuables made by its chindag households. Monastic finances through such "jisa" mechanisms (spyi sa, spyi thog) have been described as a relatively late development in Indian Buddhism associated with lay gifts to monasteries, from which an income could be drawn (Bureau 1960). Miller describes the operation of decentralised treasuries, that is, separate funds within a monastery, in Mongolia and other areas (Miller 1960).

Ladakhi household chindag could and, in some areas, still do borrow from such funds and pay back with interest.

Gongma villagers do not necessarily make large endowments though, at death, relatively substantial donations are made which are shared between monk officiants and two separate funds in the monastery. A Gongma household may support one of its members who has joined the monastery. It will make gifts to the monk that visits the house every month, whether or not he is a relative. It will certainly contribute to the monastery as a whole for monastic rituals, usually in the form of grain and a few rupees. On occasion, an individual will act as a major sponsor for a particular rite. In addition, patron households generally contribute to irregular expenses, associated with building for example (5).

All but two of the households in Gongma are sponsors of Sankar monastery, which houses some 25 monks and 7 novices (1982). Sankar itself is a branch monastery of Spituk (dPe-thub), a major institution with eighty to a hundred monks and a further two branch monasteries in the area. Spituk approximates most closely to the picture first seen by the visitor, of a monumental building that towers over the surrounding country. In actuality, this picture picks out the major monasteries, clustered along the fertile Indus valley, close to the traditional seat of secular power where the majority of the population is settled and along the trade routes. Branch monasteries are grouped under these major monasteries which, in turn, used to belong to a wider network that centred upon the Lhasa region and the monastery cities there. Today, Ladakhi representatives maintain links with new Tibetan "replica" institutions in India.

Spituk belongs to the "reformed sect" or Gelugpa order which predominates in this area of Ladakh. Of the remaining two households, one sponsors the Sakyapa monastery of Matho (Ma-spro) and the other the Drugpa Kagyupa sect at Hemis, the wealthiest monastery in Ladakh. Presumably, chindag relationships were fixed in the past by monastic grants; Ladakhi villagers talk of these relationships as if they were immutable and explain them simply as "custom".

Doctrinal differences are not important to the villager but Ladakhis do turn to different monks for different rituals. Gongmapa turn to the resident Nyingmapa monk for exorcistic rituals in particular and for astrological work while they turn to the monks they sponsor for other purposes. Many rituals such as funerals involve more than one sect.

There are no part-time religious specialists in the Leh area, as noted in Chapter 3 below, but further details may be found on lay ritual specialists in Chapter 4. Gongma villagers had little contact with non-monastic religious specialists during my stay. Indeed, they seemed generally ambivalent about yogins whose powers might be used for suspicious ends.

Two important dimensions to the relationship between monasteries and the rest of the village are contained in these brief notes. On the one hand, the monastery towers above the houses below and chos attracts a respect that can never be shown to secular life. Just as religious gods rank far above worldly gods so do all aspects of chos take precedence over secular life. On the other hand, monastery and village (6) are sometimes defined in terms of

reciprocity. Social organisation - the status of village, villager and household - is outlined partly in terms of monastic sponsorship. Monks are contrasted to lay people because they live on charity, provided by villagers. Ladakhi Buddhist villagers emphasise the reciprocity between monk and lay person especially when they are describing the contours of their society. Ladakh, they say, is made up of two parts, monastery and village. These two parts are mutually defining and mutually dependent. Villagers support monks materially and, in return, monks make secular life possible (see also Grimshaw 1983) (7).

The most potent image of this reciprocity is found in the relationship between a sponsoring household and its regular monastic officiant. In the ideal picture, a household sheds a younger son to the monastery. The integrity of the household depends upon non-division and one of the key mechanisms whereby this is achieved concerns marriage. Traditionally, only one marriage is made within the house each generation. Some children may marry elsewhere while others remain celibate. Male celibates become monks while female celibates are generally called nuns and live at home. Household property, specifically land, is attached to those who stay at home. A younger brother who has joined the monastery is likely to become the religious guarantor of his natal household. It is clear from what has been written above that the transformation from layman to monk is radical. All particularistic ties to kin, village and processes of reproduction are transcended. As a monk dons the cloth, he joins a spiritual community in which he loses his individuality. As a monk, he is equivalent to all other

monks as far as domestic ritual performances are concerned. Certainly, he will learn more chog with time and will eventually become "master" (slob dpon) of household rituals and take on specialised tasks in monastic ritual. Particularistic links such as kinship become theoretically irrelevant. Yet, the man who has been excluded from the household is generally the one who is fed and clothed by his kin. In this way, the household is reproduced from the monastery in a spiritual sense, while the monastery is reproduced from the household in a physical and material sense. Each of the two parts to Ladakhi society is therefore contained in the other (8).

This picture is greatly modified around Leh in the present day. Even though just one marriage is still generally made in the main house, younger brothers and sisters are more likely to marry today and set up independent off-shoot houses, which are described below, or neolocal units in Leh. Fewer men join the monastery. Accordingly, the kin links between household members and their monk officiant tend to be more distant. At Mig, the name I shall give to the house where I lived, the monk was not father's younger brother (FyB) nor younger son (yS); he was father's father's sister's son (FFZS).

These comments about the household will be clarified in the following sections. These initial comments are made because the hierarchy seen in the landscape and in buildings is accompanied by a notion of reciprocity, for Ladakhis, which is epitomised in the relationship between a sponsoring household and its regular monk officiant. This relationship

is created through the household structure and in biological kinship only to transcend, encompass and yet guarantee these basic building blocks of secular life.

It should be noted also that this image of a society made up of two parts is accompanied by many others. Moving down from the monastery to the houses clustered around its base or dispersed in the fields, further discriminations can be seen. Some houses are one-roomed shabby affairs; these often turn out to be the off-shoot houses mentioned above. Others are imposing structures, adorned with flags and paint, boasting large glass windows. These belong to wealthier villagers who often turn out to be higher-ranking aristocrats or perhaps prominent local notables such as "doctors" (amchi). Images of secular society, the state and internal monastic organisation are not developed because they are less immediately relevant to the focus of this thesis. Oracles continually negotiate a divide between monastery and village together with many of their clients and so this image of a society made up of clerics and lay people, monasteries and households, takes precedence. It provides the perspective from which the first part of this thesis is organised, moving to the village in the next chapter and the monastery in the third, all three chapters together providing background to the second part on possession.

Focusing on monasteries and castle ruins at the top, houses appear to be diminutive structures below. A closer look reveals many of these to be well-proportioned and substantial three-storeyed buildings. These too are oriented in a vertical space with gods above, people in the middle and lu below.

1.3 Houses

a) The household as a representation of the universe

The house to be described is a khangchen (khang chen) or main house. This is the major or only house of the household, tronpa (grong pa) or zhingkhang (zhing khang) which includes land and a cremation oven as well as one or more houses. A house may be bounded from the outside in the same way as a village. There are dry stone walls, stupa or chorten (mchod rten), prayer walls or mani and sometimes rigsum gonpo (rigs gsum mgon po), groups of three small chorten in colours representing the three great Bodhisattva who protect the village/house from danger. House boundaries generally enclose a small domestic space such as a garden or a place for storage and washing. A dog may guard the front entrance which ideally faces east. Gongma, in fact, is built on a hill and so many houses face other directions and Mig itself faces south.

The house rises in mud brick from stone foundations. The walls slope inwards whilst the windows gain in size and complexity on the upper floors. The whole is whitewashed and the top is usually picked out in a line of black paint. The roof is stacked high in fodder and other items but the corners of the parapet stand above, marked with prayer flags (tarchok, dar lcog). Marks in red paint at the corners and sometimes around the house at level of the first floor protect the house against tsan (btsan), spirits of the middle world (par_{sa}m or par_{sa}n, usually transliterated as bar btsan), who may cause harm to the people that share their world (9). In some villages, the red paint depicts people, bows and arrows, guns. The skull of a sheep or goat

surrounded by straw and thread crosses, called a sago namgo, guards the front door to the house (10). A wooden penis may be hung from the roof or walls to protect against the "evil eye" (mig phogches).

The main entrance is normally found at the middle level; it leads to the heart of the house, the kitchen. At Mig, another three rooms flanked the kitchen at this level; they were used for sleeping and entertaining. This is the world of people, it is par_sam. Below are animals, agricultural equipment, human manure and, periodically, pots of fermenting barley beer (chang). At Mig, the stables led out into an enclosed space for the cows and dzo (half cow, half yak) whilst another "door" gave access to a separate room that held human manure from the outside latrine above. There was no staircase linking the first two floors. As Mig is built on a steep hill, direct access is afforded both to the stables and to the middle level. Twice a year, the manure is dug out and taken to the fields as part of a collective village endeavour. This lower level can be seen immediately as the world of nature, specifically animality and fertiliser.

Above the kitchen are the offering room (chodkhang, mchod khang) and often a room with large glass windows (shelkhang) used for entertaining. Mig, in 1982, had no complete top floor. The offering room was built on a corner of the roof. This was the place for much domestic ritual performed by monks. It is barred to "outsiders", that is to non-monks and non-members of the ritual group known as a phaspun, a group of several houses sharing a common god. The

roof itself provided much in the nature of a third floor, at least in the winter, when everyone escaped from the kitchen up an external ladder to the roof as soon as the breakfast fire had died down. They sat in the sheltered sunlight with their spinning and handicraft work, gossiping with the neighbours, rooftop to rooftop. This is the world of religion, and also of gods, associated with stanglha.

The home of the phaslha, the god of the phasgun, will be found on the roof, with religion. The shrine will have a square white base, decorated with paint and crowned with branches of juniper and white ceremonial scarves (katag, kha btags). Some arrows may be glimpsed in the middle, point downwards. Mig had no shrine; its phaslha was housed elsewhere in two other houses that belonged to the same phasgun but the offering room was seen both as the place for religion and for the worldly phaslha. House architecture puts both worldly gods and religion (chogs) high, on the roof. This phaslha is often worshipped as a household god (see Chapter 2). However, Ladakhis do sometimes distinguish a second god; the goddess associated with the stove (thablha) (see Chapter 2). The term, khyimlha, "house god", is also heard but in less specific contexts; for example, village oracles are sometimes called khyimlha. Offerings are often made to the pillar of a house which, elsewhere, is described as the seat of this god. It has been suggested that all three gods are forms of a single household god in Ladakh (Dollfus 1988). In Gongma, at least, the term khyimlha does not seem to have a referent within the buildings themselves though it would be reasonable to see the thablha and phaslha as forms of a single god (Phylactou 1989).

A shrine to lu is found in the storeroom, a square, white unadorned block, equivalent to the base of the god's shrine (lhatho, lha tho) on the roof. Mig's storeroom in fact led off the kitchen and held principally grain, flour and valuables. The room is dark and small; it corresponds to the traditional store "below", reached by trapdoors from the kitchen. Lu, then, are found in the bowels of the house, but not at the bottom. They are also associated with the stove. An amchi (local doctor) told me:

"lu live around the stove. If there's anything bad by the stove, you'll get ill."

It may be recalled that lu are associated with earth and water, with natural cycles of growth and decay and with food production. In the Leh area, they are placed at the centre of the house together with (other) wealth and food. The lubang (shrine) highlights the life-giving qualities of lu.

There are countless variations on the basic house plan but the plan itself is fixed in some ways. The offering room cannot be lower than any other part of the house (except, sometimes, the shrine to the lha built on its roof); if it occupies a corner of the kitchen, then the kitchen must occupy the highest point of the house. Animals and manure are always found below while people stay in the middle. A one-roomed house may re-orient the vertical axis in horizontal space so that their animals, if there are any, will be outside and to the west, while the offering room will be found in the highest point of the kitchen, in the east.

Three levels to a house, three worlds to the cosmos. It has been implied that these worlds interpenetrate; house architecture provides a central example of the linkage

between worlds in the pillar that joins each level to the next (or, in some houses, four pillars). The pillar (ka) supports the main or mother beam of the roof (maṛdung) through a scalloped wooden capital (kazhu). Pillar and beam support the topmost level of gods and religion and join it to the world of people. The pillar rests upon the lower natural and animal level. Two aspects of this symbolism resonate with other aspects of Ladakhi ritual which will be introduced in the next chapter. The pillar is a "soul wood" (shrokshing, srog shing) which holds life just like the soul woods found in shrines, statues and chorten (stupa). The pillar is a repository of life linking the three floors of a house but centrally connected with the middle level (Kaplanian 1981, see also Corlin 1980). Tibetan and Ladakhi mythology are full of stories about trees of life, heavenly cords and the like which join the worlds together. The hole in the house, through which smoke escapes, is likened to the hole in the top of the head (Stein 1957, 1972). It is through this hole that the spirit enters a foetus and escapes from a dying person. It is also at this point in the head that the kings of early Tibetan mythology were linked to heaven by a cord. They are said to have descended from the sky on to mountains which have since become especially sacred. They went back to the sky at death by means of their heavenly cords and vanished without leaving earthly traces. Then, the cord broke and corpses remained (for example, Tucci 1980:225).

Alternatively, the pillar might be seen as an arrow which brings gods into the world of men and pierces nature,

releasing fertility. Ladakhis call the pillar's capital "bow for the pillar" (kazhu). An arrow is divided into three sections which are often said to represent the three tiers of the cosmos as well as the continuity of generations in a family. The house pillar might be extended metaphorically to the top and bottom levels so that it begins in stanglha where it is continuous with other arrows in the shrine on the roof and ends in yoklu where it is continuous with implements stored there, such as the plough tip that pierces the earth.

As shown in the next chapter, arrows are central ritual items in Ladakh. At present, it is important only to point out the gendered cosmology associated with their use. Arrows are quintessentially male items used in hunting, marrying and killing demons. The arrow is also evocative of the plough (11) and a potent image of male sexuality. Accordingly, the central support of the house, that is, pillar and beam, can be seen as symbols of a central complementarity between male (arrow, pillar, plough) and female ("mother beam" (12)).

The three worlds located loosely in the landscape and in a more complete form through architecture form a single cosmos, linked by the world tree, and a gendered cosmos, seen initially in the arrangement of pillar and beam at the middle level. One of the many notions of complementarity has been described initially because much of what follows elaborates instead the hierarchical gender relations developed ritually; Chapter 5, in particular, concerns afflictions associated stereotypically with village women. It is important, therefore, to point out the importance of complementarity in household space. This image is predictably extended to the lower and upper parts of a house.

It has already been suggested that the perag traditionally worn by married women when they milk the animals or work the fields in summer is an image of ly. Inside the house, women are likewise associated especially with the middle level of the house, with the kitchen and the storeroom, where the ly lives. Women do most of the food preparation and cooking. The stove provides a seat for the stove goddess, thablha. Men, in contrast, are accommodated more than women to the upper level where the phaslha lives. This god, it will be recalled, identifies a phaspun which has been described as a ritual group of houses. It should be appreciated further that, for ritual purposes, it involves primarily a group of men. A child should be born in a house belonging to the parents' phaspun, which it joins. But, should that child later marry elsewhere, then s/he leaves the natal phaspun and joins that of her or his spouse. Women are the ones who generally marry out and men, specifically, elder brothers, bring a wife in. Even though some women may stay at home and even though some men may leave, a gender asymmetry operates so that all men come to be seen as "insiders" who are closely associated with household ritual and all women come to be seen as "outsiders" who are likely to leave. It might also be noted that pha means father and male so that phaslha means male/father god and phaspun means siblings of the man/father.

The lower level of the house is less associated with the imagery of gender seen in the middle and top floors. The lower level is for animals and nature.

Sacred architecture creates the cosmos within its boundaries and orders relations through which the cosmos is

reproduced. Evil is excluded. Male and female domains can be seen as complementary parts which together bring about life. Gods and lu are joined through household architecture and the movements of people. Yet, this complementarity is easily moved into a hierarchical "vertical" ordering. Women, lu and the female domain are lower down and closer to a more animal nature. Men and gods are closer to the top, closer to religion and to gods in general.

As suggested, the house is not reproduced only from the inside. Religious personnel ultimately guarantee its reproduction from monasteries. This hierarchical evaluation of gender must be situated also within the realm of religion where, in karmic terms (that is, in terms of rebirth and the possibility of eventual enlightenment), monks rank higher than lay people and men rank higher than women. The partnership that I have described between monastery and household might be represented as a partnership between men. Men who stay at home assure household continuity through ritual and biological reproduction while their brothers who join the monastery assure household continuity through the powers of religion. Women are brought in to reproduce the household materially with food and children and they are not seen as true insiders as far as the ideal permanence and continuity of a household is concerned.

These discriminations will carry more weight with the description of household ritual found in the next chapter. Moreover, it should be emphasised that the imagery outlined belongs to an ideology that reifies the household as a permanent, fixed institution that can never change or die out. Houses are named and a house-name provides the prime

identifier of people who move through houses, who are born and die. Mig is a house name which is attached in the manner of an English surname to house members. This name is part of an ideal order where it is assumed to exist in perpetuity. Sacred architecture, brought to life in domestic ritual, provides the major way through which this eternal order is fixed. Numerous social strategies such as the patterns of marriage and inheritance mentioned in passing are also oriented towards the reproduction of an autonomous household. In practice, however, some houses have no names, others die out or divide and all daily enter into exchanges beyond the walls of their universe. The above describes the ideal and not the actual. It is only in relation to this ideal order that men come to be seen as the true insiders.

Views of Ladakhi space, from the mountains to the valley floor and from monumental buildings on the hilltops to main houses beneath, have so far focused upon the vertical ordering of space. Similar discriminations operate on the horizontal dimension. The Ladakhi kitchen in the middle of the house provides the main space for informal social hospitality.

A stove is at the centre of activity; nowadays, it is generally made of metal but some are still made of the traditional clay. Dung is burnt and the stove is kept alight by women usually, working skin bellows. The smoke winds around the room for chimneys are still rudimentary affairs, often merely "smoke holes". Some houses have an additional winter kitchen without any windows somewhere in the heart of the house and the smoke there has even less chance of

escaping. One wall of the kitchen is lined with shelves and all the fine cooking equipment; today, one area may be glassed to keep the new popular china and glass imports clean. The other side of the stove provides the best seat in the kitchen, with the wall behind and a tray of warm ashes from the stove in front. This is the top of the seating line which works its way around the rest of the kitchen towards the door, ideally in a clockwise direction. At the top (tralgg, gral mgo) which is also ideally at the right of the kitchen (oriented towards the shelves), sits the most important guest or, in the absence of guests, the oldest man in the house. At Mig, the seating line, in fact, ran in the wrong direction so that the man at the top, opposite the stove, sat to the left of the shelves and the line ran anti-clockwise towards the door. At the bottom (tralzhug, gral gzhus) by the door, no-one will be found unless the low-caste Mon and Gara are visiting. These names refer to traditional musicians and blacksmiths and Gongma village contains one household of each. They are described further in the following section. If guests are present, then this hierarchy is elaborated through the use of carpets for seating and tables for eating. Those at the top will sit highest and eat from the highest tables while those at the bottom may have neither carpet nor table.

Men and women do not normally sit in the same line. If a few guests are entertained in the kitchen, then, women are likely to cluster around the mother of the house at the stove while men sit "properly". On other more formal occasions, women will sit in a separate line, often a left-hand rather

than right-hand line, or they will sit in a separate room. Seating arrangements will be described further in the next chapter (see also Kaplanian 1981); at this point, attention is drawn simply to the hierarchical ordering of space. Members of households that rank higher in a village will sit higher (close to the stove) in the line when hospitality is offered. Their houses may still be found higher up in the village.

These discriminations concern the individual person as well. He should sit with his back against the wall and certainly not with his back facing anyone else present. His right should be higher than his left. His feet, the lower part of the person, should be tucked away out of sight. When a person finally negotiates his position in a line, he must shuffle towards his place, crouching, so as not to stand much higher than others present. He must move behind those already seated, that is, between their backs and the wall. The top of a person ranks above the lower parts, so too does right over left and front over back.

The vertical ordering of space is central to a reading of the physical landscape, the situation of buildings, sacred architecture and the orientation of individuals and social groups in space (13). Gods sit above and below them come people of the highest ranks. The top, front and right of the individual are oriented "upwards". Before looking at the movements of gods into lower spaces, the subject of the next chapter, it is important to provide a little background on this house architecture and to explain some of the terms mentioned, such as main house (khangchen), household (tronpa), Mon and Gara, village and household rank.

b) Household and social organisation

The ideal permanence and continuity of the Ladakhi household has been described through the use of a household name and its construction as a microcosm of the universe. Allusions have also been made to strategies designed to reproduce this unit through non-division of fixed property and a single marriage each generation. These remarks are clarified both with reference to processes outside the household that encourage non-division and processes within the household which contain division.

The Ladakhi household or tronga was traditionally fixed from above as the named tax-paying and landholding unit. Land belonged ultimately to the king but taxes were often passed through local monastic and secular estates. In theory, secular estates held land through grants that could be revoked but, in practice, estate holdings seem to have been inherited. Ladakh was never highly centralised and so estates probably maintained a high degree of control over their constituent tax-paying units. In the earlier part of this century, however, goods and labour seem to have been demanded by the state from Gongma as a whole and these dues were divided between the 26 named households in the village (14). As Ramsay noted in his 1890 dictionary:

"When the son takes possession of the "khangchhen", 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" (Ramsay 1890, under dictionary entry "Entail").

Taxation by the state scarcely exists in Ladakh today but this picture still applies to local "taxation", that is,

village and local dues for the repair of village property, the performance of communal ritual and so forth. Households remain the major landholding units although some property is developed by the state and some belongs to the village as a whole. Land is sold nowadays and, in Gongma, one additional "house" (khangpa) has bought land. It is not described as a "household" (tronpa) and it is not bound to contribute to village funds but Gongmapa often describe their village in terms of the 26 households, plus Mon and Gara, plus this Muslim (khache) house.

This picture of peasant households is familiar from other Tibetan speaking areas. Peasant strata (mimang) who live in households (tronpa) form tax-paying and landholding units in the local polity (Carrasco 1959). Aziz's account of the D'ingri is particularly sensitive to this middle ranking strata of peasants (grong pa) whose household is

"the unit of production, the unit of taxation, the landholding unit and the unit for political representation" (Aziz 1978:108)

There are a number of other accounts of Tibetan speaking groups in Nepal (for example, Clarke 1980, Goldstein 1974, 1975, 1977, Levine 1980, Ramble 1984, Schuler 1987) as well as Tibet (based upon Tibetan refugees) (Dargyay 1982, Goldstein, 1971a, 1971b, 1971c, 1986).

In these accounts, it seems that such peasant householders were relatively distinct from lower-ranking strata. Thus, Aziz describes three strata amongst the mi ser "commoners", themselves ranking above "ya-wa" outcastes and below aristocrats ("ger-pa") and hereditary priests ("ngag-pa"). She mentions traders (tshong pa) and landless peasants

(dud chung) in addition to the landed peasant classes (grong pa). These landless peasants are described as sharecroppers and artisans who form dependent relations with trongpa:

"dud-chung are commonly conscripted by a grong-pa family who is obliged to give a member to the army or to a government monastery. Unwilling to lose its own members, the house sends a youth from one of its indebted dud-chung families." (1978:72)

Dud chung are clearly poor but, as Aziz emphasises, they have no tax obligations and form a fluid social rank through which people move rather than a proletarian class (ibid: chapter 3). Goldstein's account of Central Tibet, based on refugee settlements in South India, suggests that all mi ser were tied to the land and can therefore be described as "serfs" (Goldstein 1986). However, the corporate families, khral pa, formed estates associated with the monomarital stem family while land was attached to dud chung as individuals who were accordingly less concerned to maintain an undivided family for the purposes of inheritance. Monogamy and division are associated with dud chung "serfs" (Goldstein 1971a, Dargyay 1982:33-4). The family corporations associated with relatively large landholdings and heavy taxation, similar to Ladakhi grong pa (trongpa), contrasted with the individual arrangements among different types of dud chung (Goldstein 1971a), associated with relatively little taxation.

Those who did not inherit land were, however, often linked to grong pa through marriage and kinship. Goldstein shows how Limi grong pa are forced into the lower strata through the developmental cycle of the landed household. Among the Limi, three status groups are described: the highest ranking corporate households, "grong-pa", the "mi-re"

and the lowest-ranking smallest units of an individual man or woman or a mother and her children called "mo-rang", which had the lowest tax and corvée obligations (Goldstein 1975, 1977). The lower ranks seem to be created as individuals are shed from the corporate grong pa household. Thus, one who left the house

"established a new unit which is usually relegated to a lower status level if one exists. In Tibet, eg, "taxpayer" serfs who split became "du-jung" (dud chung) and in Limi the "throng-pa" (grong pa) become "mi-re" (1977:55) (15).

Nyinba "grong-chen" (great house) are the residences of former Nyinba "masters" while the small houses (khang chung) are associated with former slave status; slaves were emancipated in 1926. Levine reports that slave descendants are originally said to have been created through indebtedness and the sale of land (Levine 1980); in other words, they too originally belonged to corporate households. Subsequent endogamy maintained a dependent class attached to "master" households and providing them with labour. Slaves were seen as the children of the main house though they could be bought and sold. After emancipation, these khang chung residents were generally evicted. Some became heirs to childless grong chen families, some cleared new land, others re-created client ties with the "great houses" (Levine *ibid*). The Nyinba example shows how residents of small houses form an inferior dependent class in some contexts rather than a "fluid social rank", even though they are originally said to have been created in the same way as their D'ingri or Limi equivalents (16).

These accounts illustrate interesting differences and similarities with Ladakhi "peasants", mimangs. Status

differences are less clearly articulated in Ladakh than in other Tibetan speaking areas but it is possible to talk of four kinds or types (rigs); the ruling family, the aristocracy, the smallholders and the three "low caste" artisans; Gara, Mon and Beda (Dollfus 1988) (17). A four-fold division is described elsewhere and compared with Hindu varna system (Allen 1978). Among the D'ingri and Chumikwa, these divisions are known as brgyud pa (see below) (Schuler 1987, Aziz 1978). The middle ranking smallholders or peasants in Ladakh may be described as "big" and "small" households (tronchen and tronchung). The "big" higher-ranking households include hereditary officials such as "doctors" and "astrologers" (with names such as lharjopa for the doctor) while the "small" ordinary households are known by a wide range of names that may include references to their location or to some idiosyncrasy (see Prince Peter 1956 for lists of house names).

Strategies that reproduce both the main house and the monastery, which encourage just one marriage per generation and no household division, also reproduce the household as a whole, which may contain "small houses" (khangun) and, in some accounts, "still smaller houses" in addition to the main house (khangchen). This internal division between a main house and one or more offshoot houses can be related to the distinctions made between peasant strata in other Tibetan speaking areas. The description of the landscape discriminated between large, well-proportioned houses and small one-roomed buildings. These latter are the traditional khangun which were, in the past, characterised as "hovels" (Ramsay 1890). Today, however, some khangun look just as

grand as the main houses and they can no longer be distinguished on architectural grounds, for reasons that will become apparent in the brief description below.

Inside the household: offshoot houses and social status

An offshoot house is created as members of the main house leave the main unit but stay within the household as a whole. Ladakhis describe an ideal process of khangun formation and dissolution in terms of a parental couple who have watched a marriage formed and progeny produced. They retire to a khangun with small strips of land allotted for their subsistence. Ideally, the khangun does not reproduce itself. When parents or other occupants die, the khangun with its small plots of land should revert to the main house only to be re-occupied in the next generation as family members are once more shed from the main union. Accordingly, khangun are sometimes known by the name of their major occupant in a way that signals the temporary nature of the residential unit. The main house, in contrast, is known by the household name which is associated with an ideal permanence and uninterrupted occupation.

It soon becomes clear that khangun may be occupied by other family members who have not joined the marriage in the main house. In practice, many khangun around Leh do reproduce themselves through marriage and form independent units for many purposes. The proliferation of independent khangun in Gongma has clearly been promoted by recent developments in Ladakh, especially the availability of employment off the land. But it is unclear to what extent khangun deviated from

the ideal traditionally to form reproductive units without much land, analagous to the lower peasant strata described above.

Khangun can be described briefly as parts of the household (tronpa) and as independent units. Dependents, khangun are defined in terms of their hearth, as units of consumption. Khangunpa (khangun occupants) rarely have enough land to reproduce themselves. Even if they do, they depend upon the main house for the wherewithal to cultivate the land, for plough, plough animals and so forth. Moreover, they have no independent ritual status, signified especially through the absence of a shrine. They belong to the same phasun as the main house, they are described by the same house name as, for example, Migi khangun (offshoot house of Mig) and they are unable to sponsor much domestic ritual independently. Whilst they avoid tax obligations, they are equally excluded from independent village membership. They cannot vote at village meetings nor fill village posts. Like the dud chung described by Aziz, they provide dependent labour for main houses. In the absence of taxation today, khangunpa fulfil most of the labour obligations inside the village. For example, khangunpa labour on the fields of the main house in return for the loan of an animal to plough their own fields. Khangunpa fulfil most of the village labour obligations in the same way. Traditionally, khangunpa helped a household to conserve family labour in a system that demanded diversification - labour for the state, for local trade, for the fields and for pastoralism. Ideally, men stay in the main house as part of the main polyandrous union while women are kept at home, often in an offshoot house, unmarried

(see also Aziz 1978:106) (18). In practice, as I have suggested, men, specifically younger brothers, may also move to offshoot houses.

Traditionally, khangu are seen as dependents of the main house who do not form a distinct status group in the manner of the D'ingri or Limi peasants described above. Today, however, khangu are increasingly independent of their main houses in Gongma and other villages and it is possible that they may begin to form a distinct rank. It is clear that very few offshoot houses in Gongma are going to revert to their households; most contain married couples with children. In scale, this khangu phenomenon appears to be new and, although khangu have little land and little voice in corporate village affairs, it should be appreciated that they are relatively wealthy today in Gongma. Land is no longer the major source of wealth and khangu are able to support themselves through salaried employment for which they have often been educated to a greater degree than their elder brothers. If men marry, they are less likely than before to join their elder brother's marriage and more likely to move out of the main house. If women marry, they will move out of the main house as before but they will not necessarily move to another main house. Gongmapa live neolocally in the Leh area but they also move out partially to live as independent khangu with a secure income and few "overheads". The marked gender asymmetry associated with the "traditional" or "ideal" picture where more men than women marry and where unmarried men become high status monks while unmarried women become low status nuns is thus modified in the present day.

Goldstein shows how younger brothers in Limi Panchayat have also begun to marry owing to new economic opportunities in herding and tourism following the Chinese conquest of Tibet (Goldstein 1977) (19). Between 1960 and 1970, 25% of the younger brothers in the village of "Tsang" left home to marry neolocally (ibid). Goldstein notes the demographic consequences in a "noticeable population growth" (ibid:58).

Many other local factors outside the household maintained offshoot houses in their dependent status. One is found in the phaspun or ritual kin group centred upon a common god which, as noted above, is not directly accessible to khangunpa. All independent Buddhist houses belong to phaspun and, though membership is usually attributed to the distant past, it is possible to form a new phaspun, with the blessing of a rinpoche, as in the new "Housing Colony" below Leh, or to change membership with the consent of the phaspun and, often, the village as well. In the Leh area, phaspun usually involve 3-10 houses (see also Prince Peter 1950 who gives an average size of 5.4 for Leh tehsil) which may have their separate shrines. If there is only one shrine, men from the phaspun congregate at the time of the secular New Year to renew it. Phaspun members guide an individual through the rites of the life cycle and they are especially central to funerary rites (see for example Brauen 1980b, 1982). It is said that phaspun cannot marry each other, any more than other kin.

The relationship of khangunpa to their god is mediated by the main house. Should a khangun split entirely from its main house, it may be denied phaspun membership and thus lose status altogether for it will not then be able to honour the

phaslha or to confer protection upon the newborn, full married status upon adults and rebirth for the dead. In all these spheres, the phaspun fixes the identity of a household from above. A khangun can only achieve independent status with the blessing of the main house and the phaspun. It may be admitted to the same ritual group or it may petition another group for membership.

Full household status depends also upon the agreement of the village who will allot the new house a role at meetings, in various rotas and in financing the village. Elevation in status will prove to be expensive for the house will now have to contribute a full share to village funds rather than the traditional half-share paid by Gongma khangun, become chindag or patron of a particular monastery and take turns in acting, for example, as the village steward (nyerpa, gnyer pa).

In Gongma, the new khangun have not (yet) become fully independent in this way. Phaspun still honour births and deaths in their khangun. Marriages are constructed in other ways. Proper marriages (bagston) must be negotiated by two households and their respective phaspun. Although only one marriage is sanctioned in this way each generation, additional unions which take the form of "stealing" or "elopement" (skuches, shorches) and, today, court marriages are made in khangun. As for village membership, Gongma khangun have not so far shown great interest in this sphere and seem rather to circumvent the "traditional" self-government of the village through informal means. It is true also that the main houses which together govern the village have not shown great interest in excluding the khangun voice.

Grandfather from Mig claims that permanently occupied khangun are a new phenomenon in Gongma. In his youth, he says, there were thirty houses (that is, residential units). Khangun were occupied occasionally and fell into disuse for long periods of the household cycle. When they were occupied, old parents or unmarried siblings, generally "nuns", lived there without producing children who might claim an inheritance from the main house. Dogma still asserts that Gongma has 26 trongpa, as well as the Mon and Gara units but Gongma also has 26 khangun today as well as the new khache khangpa, making a total of 55 residential units (excluding the monk's dwelling). Most of the offshoot houses have partially split from their households and claimed, by default, a small inheritance consisting of the land allotted as temporary shares. Some have been allotted or claimed larger inheritances through the courts (see appendix 2) and their current status as khangun is unclear.

The above strategies describe households with children. If a marriage fails to produce children, a household should not be allowed to die out. There are a number of adoption practices. Most commonly one or two young relatives are adopted. If two are adopted, one will come from the father's side and one from the mother's and they will be married to each other.

The landed household

The ideal permanence attached to a household name has been related to state and monastery organisation, to strategies concerning residence, marriage and inheritance and to internal division. This picture also rests upon a

valuation of the land belonging to a household which, as noted above, seems to be fixed from the state level (20). In fact, new land is cleared and irrigated and, today, land is bought and sold. Moreover, products from the land in Gongma provide only a small part of household wealth. Yet, the ideal autonomy of a household depends upon farming, particularly the production of barley which is an essential ingredient of food and barley beer. A house without land cannot become a household. Each household has named plots of land which, in Gongma, are generally planted with barley, some wheat, lucerne and vegetables. Trees are cultivated for building purposes. Cattle (cows and dzo) are cared for by individual households in the household compound and the high pastures. Sheep and goat are herded on communal village land and village-owned high pastures in the summer. An official, the lorapa, is elected every year to oversee a rota for this task. A "master of the water" (churpon) is elected at the same time to arbitrate the often acrimonious disputes that develop over irrigation (21).

Aspects of the agricultural cycle will be described in the next chapter but it should be appreciated that household and village identity are constructed partly through the cultivation of fields and, to a lesser extent, the herding of animals even though the majority of the Gongma population may be employed outside this economy for much of the time. The tempo of village life is set to the agrarian cycle which is itself orchestrated through the performance of domestic and village ritual and, in winter, monastic ritual. Mauss has delineated a movement to the annual cycle from social atomisation in the summer to communal sociability in the

winter among the Eskimoes:

"In the dense concentrations of the winter, a genuine community of ideas and material interests is formed. Its strong moral, mental and religious unity contrasts sharply with the isolation, social fragmentation and dearth of moral and religious life that occurs when everyone has scattered during the summer." (Mauss 1979:70)

The Ladakhi year contains a similar though less dramatic movement; it opens and closes to communal effort which separates individual household enterprise in the summer from the ritual gatherings of people and gods in the winter. This movement coincides most perfectly with the activities in a household with land but the activities of those without land and those who work in the "city" are forced into the same mould.

Kinship and the household

Land should never be alienated from the household and it is seen primarily as the object of household labour even though, as shown above, it involves a range of ties between villagers and also, in Gongma, the hiring of wage labour. In Ladakh, household labour involves unequal relations between the parts of a household which, in other Tibetan speaking areas, become relations between peasant households of different social status. These relations were fixed through various tax obligations attached to the land and through other obligations associated with village membership, ritual and monastery sponsorship.

The relationship between household organisation and social stratification has provided a major theme in studies of Tibetan social organisation. Another prominent theme concerns kinship and, particularly, the question of descent.

A brief consideration of kinship provides an opportunity to show how extensively kinship is conceived, like other relations, in terms of household ideology. Kinship refers below both to ritual and biological relations.

A number of the terms mentioned above for social groups around Leh are associated with lineal kinship in other Tibetan speaking areas. The "type" or "kind" (rigs) of an individual, for example, derives from both parents. Elsewhere, similar social strata are based on patrilineal recruitment; on heredity (brgyud pa) that passes through the male side or bone (rus) (see, for example, Aziz 1974:25). In Ladakh, as elsewhere, a foetus forms from the father's bone and the mother's flesh and blood. But, these substances are not used to refer to lineal groups. Ramsay suggests that bone (ruspa) provides a synonym for "type" (rigs) in Ladakh (Ramsay 1890); the term bone can also be used to refer to relatives on the father's side (phachog ruspa) and the mother's side (machog ruspa). Similarly, the term "of one flesh and blood" (shatrak chig) can be used to specify kin on the mother's and the father's side. More generally, the phrase sha rus cigpa, of one bone and flesh, is used to describe relatives (nyen) in general. Social status among middle ranking Ladakhis is established through descent from both parents.

In Ladakh, the term gyudpa (brgyud pa) or "heredity" may also seem to indicate patrilineality. Ladakhis ask if the practitioner of a particular craft or profession is gyudpa. If they learn that he is, they will often find that the individual was taught by his father, father's brother or

grandfather. However, gyudpa refers to a much wider concept of descent. In the second part of this thesis, it will be seen that village oracles describe their powers as hereditary or non-hereditary by reference to the term gyud. It will also be seen that women as well as men refer to heredity from any apical ancestor, man or woman, in the ascending or a more distant generation. Moreover, gyud is used to refer to relations with particular places or supernatural beings. Indeed, the term is perhaps most often used in Ladakh to refer to spiritual kinship relating to Buddhist teachings. Because gyud is generally translated as "lineage", of whatever kind, the same usage is preserved with reference to oracles.

In addition to these two contexts describing "bone" (in relation to social status or "type") and "heredity", a third context involving the ritual kin group described above, the phaspu, has suggested patrilineal organisation to some commentators (22). This impression is fostered by Ladakhi imagery of kinship which suggests that phaspu members are kin who share an apical, male ancestor. Thus, Carrasco and Prince Peter are led to conclude that Ladakhi phaspu are equivalent to the patrilineal clans (rus, bone) of Central Tibet (Carrasco 1959:38, Prince Peter 1956:138).

In the Leh area, among the middle social strata, none of these three terms; rigs, gyudpa and phaspu; refer to patrilineal links although all may be discussed within the realm of kinship; relating to endogamous social strata for the first term, spiritual and biological descent for the second, and ritual kinship for the third.

A discussion of descent in Tibetan speaking areas unfortunately lies beyond the scope of this brief review. However, it might be noted that patrilineality, which is documented especially in areas south of Tibet such as the Sherpa and Lepcha (Furer-Haimendorf 1964, Gorer 1967) is not the only lineal reckoning to be found. Matrilineal recruitment has been reported, for example, by Corlin in Northwest Yunnan (Corlin 1978). It also seems that the patrilineal element in Tibetan kinship has been exaggerated. Goldstein compares kinship among the Sherpa with the Lhasa area and suggests:

"The term ru (ru) which is sometimes claimed to mean clan in Tibet and is certainly used in Khumbu (a Sherpa area) to mean that -- in Lhasa simply connotes paternal relatives. The term sha ("flesh") is used for maternal relatives." (Goldstein 1975:62)

Space also precludes a discussion of other aspects of Tibetan kinship. Marriage practices are often related to concepts of descent. In Ladakh and Central Tibet, the kindred is exogamous and marriages within it are incestuous. In practice, Ladakhi tronga rarely count kin as far as the notional seventh degree or "rib". In areas associated with exogamous patrilians, such as the Sherpa, marriage practices vary. Goldstein has contrasted the prohibition on cross-cousin marriage in the Khumbu area with its preferential practice in Helambu (Goldstein 1975; see also Clarke 1980, Schuler 1987).

My focus rests with the household and recent work has suggested that Tibetan kinship too is better seen in terms of household residence. Aziz, for example, argues convincingly that lineality should be replaced by concepts of residence

with reference to the middle strata of D'ingri society (Aziz 1974, 1978 chapter 2).

In Ladakh and many other Tibetan speaking areas, it is residence that defines social identity. Those who marry out or join a monastery lose all rights to property in their natal household while those who remain at home, even in the khangu, or who marry in, maintain rights. The inheritance passes down to all children of the main and ideally only marriage even though the eldest son is singled out as the most likely to maintain his inheritance rights as younger siblings leave the household over time.

Households may be represented as if they pass down the male line. Ladakhis say that the father's side (phachoks) is more important than the mother's side (machoks) but I suggest that this statement reflects the importance of continuous residence by men in one place and the symbolic valuation of "maleness" (described previously) rather than patrilineality. The ancestors who are remembered at Mig, for example, in the New Year commemoration of the dead (shimi), include grandfather's father and mother and his father's father and mother. As men are the ones who tend to stay at home, residence over time can be seen in terms of a mini-patrilineage. Two further individuals are commemorated at New Year; they are grandfather's FZ and grandfather's FyB. The former stayed at home unmarried and the latter was, in practice, part of grandfather's father's marriage. The pattern of worship at New Year can be understood better in terms of residence than patrilineal links.

Aziz has shown how a bilateral terminology, associated with an ego-focused kindred, is modified in terms of

household rank (as well as other ranks, age and sex) (23). Some words describe both "kin terms" and "household ranks" (Aziz 1974). The same is true of Ladakh, as shown by one small example concerning address terms for a father and his brothers. The child in Mig addresses his ("real") father and his father's two younger brothers as father (aba) whilst he calls his father's youngest brother, who would have been excluded from a polyandrous union and who has subsequently, in fact, moved out, father's younger brother (FyB, agu).

If the reckoning of kinship within the household is mediated by household organisation, it should not be surprising to find that the same applies to the wider kindred. Relations with kin on the ground are seen as relations between households which are themselves biased by features such as relative status. Ladakhi tronga rarely trace relatives beyond the second "rib" or degree for general purposes. Relationships are calculated in terms of the first and second ascending generation; cousins, for example, are described as azhang ani truggu, MB (mother's brother's) and FZ (father's sister's) children. Mig regularly treated about fifteen households as kin (nyen). With some perseverance, genealogical relationships could be traced. Most of the houses were related through one of grandfather's sisters who had married out and grandfather's mother. But, closest relations were maintained with two households related through the mother. Aziz could find no general discrimination made between households related through father and mother (Aziz 1974) but clearly, on the ground, differences will be established according to patterns of marriage and residence.

Furthermore, ritual ties of great importance are established on the mother's side. The relationship with a MB (azhang) is key to the development of an individual, as shown through many rituals of the life cycle. Mother's elder brother (MeB) is most likely to live in that same household from which the mother married. At New Year, ancestors who remained at home are commemorated and these are likely to include links traced through the father, as noted above. At the same time, relations between daughters and mothers are honoured through gift exchanges (see Chapter 2). If gifts to ancestors are to be read in terms of a patrilineal bias, then gifts from mothers must be seen to reveal a matrilateral theme. Both sets of ties are, however, best seen in terms of residence. The celebration of the household and those who move through it is accompanied by the celebration of ties with other households which have provided wives.

These few notes should not be seen as an account of Ladakhi kinship but they provide enough background to show that the household is a key part of this sphere. Indeed, an argument could be made for an extensionist approach to the reckoning of kin in Ladakh, where the atom of kinship consists of households and household positions rather than biologically based genealogies. It should be emphasised further that ritual kinship carries the same value as other types of kinship. The importance of the phaspuñ has been noted. Another domain of ritual kinship, between "siblings in religion" (chospuñ) (see Chapter 3), is just as important as the "biological" domain.

Finally, it should be emphasised that the picture outlined does not apply to all Ladakhi society. Low-caste

Mon and Gara as well as high ranking aristocrats "marry close" for different reasons; a practice that comes close to incest in Ladakhi eyes. Low-caste individuals are forced into endogamous unions because they cannot marry outside their small status groups. All children in aristocratic households are married where possible; polygyny is common but polyandry rare. Aristocratic households do not often divide internally into main and offshoot houses but divide instead into branches of a particular line which does indeed reveal a patrilineal bias. Ladakhis often gossiped about the disgraceful marriage practices among aristocrats who were always marrying close. Sisters were commonly exchanged (24) and close relatives adopted and married to each other. Aristocrats look outwards to their class or status as a whole with whom they attempt to build and repeat alliances and so their residence, marriage and inheritance patterns are significantly different from those described. The Ladakhi Chronicles of the royal family, to which reference has been made in the Introduction, illustrate these differences.

The main houses described in the last section belong to ranked and also ideally autonomous households in a village. The household may contain more than one residence. Offshoot houses today look less like the traditional "hovel" and more like the parent house. The blurring of architectural distinctions comes not from wealth in land but from employment in Leh and the army. Higher ranking households are still the wealthier for they have had privileged access to new employment opportunities through which they maintain their more substantial landholdings and they are the ones most able to achieve the ideal household self-sufficiency.

Lower ranking households are less likely to be autonomous and this is particularly true of the low-caste Mon and Gara. Villages may also contain houses (khangga) which do not form true households (tronpa), such as the Muslim house in Gongma.

Villages, like households, are conceived in terms of an ideal autonomy with their own monastery or temple, common land, specialist artisans and shrines. In practice, village and household autonomy are always created through links with the outside; to their wider status groups, to different categories of kin and affines, to the money economy, to a wide range of ritual specialists and to the outside government. Nonetheless, all these cross-cutting links are mediated and channelled through the "inside" so that households, especially the richer ones, and their villages come to look as if they were reproduced from the inside.

Ritual provides one of the key mechanisms through which this autonomy is created. In the next chapter, I return to the position of gods above in order to show how they are brought into the world to guarantee social reproduction from the inside. Domestic and village rituals are described. Only the richer main houses are able to perform an extensive ritual cycle; khangun and khangga are largely excluded whilst poorer main houses are able to perform only some of the rites (see appendix 2).

CHAPTER 2

EMBODYING THE GODS: HOUSEHOLD RITUAL AND THE AGRARIAN CYCLE



Plate 6 Shrine to god (lhatho) on house roof



Plate 7 Shrine to lu (lubang)



Plate 8 Skarra oracle's offering room (chodkhang)



Plate 9 Altar with offerings

2.1 Ritual (skurim)

In the last chapter, gods were described on top. They sit above the middle world of people, par_sam, and the underworld of lu. At the same time, it was shown that gods do sometimes come down. At the beginnings of the world, they came to fertilise the ground and they have been regularly persuaded down ever since. In this chapter, a few household rituals are discussed in order to show how gods are brought down; to conquer demons and to ensure life. This theme is developed so as to show that the embodiment of gods in oracles provides just one of many ways in which gods are brought into the world and housed. Therefore, it is argued, possession practices should not be seen as a peripheral or distinct category of ritual but as an elaboration of a central theme. It is best seen, I argue, in relation to a hierarchy of practices where possession ranks relatively low (1). In fact, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 outline an internal differentiation among the possessed where village oracles sit above those who are afflicted by possession (mainly village women) and below those who practice possession in a controlled fashion (monastery oracles).

These remarks call for a preliminary sketch of Ladakhi ritual or skurim. Skurim can be glossed as rituals, but Ladakhi villagers tend also to contrast skurim as rituals performed in order to change the state of the world with other-worldly ritual which villagers locate predominantly in the monastery. Even when this distinction is made, it is qualified. Skurim carry a "religious" element; they make merit for all sentient beings which, in the long term, will help them on the road to enlightenment (2). Ladakhis have a

vast repertoire of skurim which are performed regularly during annual or life cycles and as standard responses to particular types of misfortune. Much of this repertoire belongs equally to other Tibetan speaking people. A few preliminary remarks establish the importance of bringing gods into the world; particular rituals are described subsequently.

Earlier visitors to Tibet often focused upon what they saw as a preoccupation with devils and demons. They dwelt upon the numbers of gods and Buddhas and their "fierce" aspects in which they conquered enemies. They saw little distinction between the fierce forms of powerful and religious gods and the demons to be conquered. Conway quotes a letter from Waddell:

"... No one seems to have realised that Lamaism is essentially a demonolatry ... Even the purest of all the Lamaist sects, the Gelug-pa, are thorough-paced devil-worshippers, and value Buddhism (the Mahayana) mainly because it gives them the whip-hand over the host of malignant demons which everywhere vex humanity with disease and disaster, and whose ferocity weighs like a nightmare on all. Even the purest Gelug-pa Lama, on awaking every morning, and before going outside his room, must first of all assume the spiritual guise of his fearful guardian, the king of the demons named Vajrabhairava or Sambhara. The Lama, by uttering certain mantras, culled from the legendary sayings of Buddha in the Mahayana Tantras, coerces this demon-king into investing the Lama's person with his own dreadful guise. Then, when the Lama emerges from his room in the morning, and wherever he travels during the day, he presents spiritually the appearance of the demon-king. And the smaller demons, his would-be assailants, ever on the outlook to harm humanity, are deluded into the belief that the Lama is indeed their own vindictive king, from whose dread presence they flee, and leave the Lama unharmed." (letter from Dr Waddell Jan 13 1894, quoted in Conway 1894:607)

Many other writers have commented upon the "grotesque" aspects of religious iconography. Fosco Maraini remarked upon

the "chapel" to a protective enlightened deity (of the status of Buddha) in a monastery:

"At the entrance are hung the decomposing bodies of bears, wild dogs, yaks, and snakes, stuffed with straw, to frighten away the evil spirits who might desire to pass the threshold. The carcasses fall to pieces, and the whole place is as disgusting as a space under a flight of stairs with us would be if it were full of rubbish covered with cobwebs, ancient umbrellas that belonged to great-grandfather, and fragments of bedraggled fur that had been worn by a dead aunt. On top of all, of course, there is the rancid butter. Pictures of gods are painted on the walls. At first sight you would say they are demons, monsters, infernal beings. They are, however, good spirits, protectors, who assume these terrifying shapes to combat the invisible forces of evil. ...

...a dark, dusty pocket of stale air, stinking of rancid butter, containing greasy, skinless carcasses, with terrifying gods painted on the walls, riding monsters, wearing diadems of skulls and necklaces of human heads, and holding blood-filled skulls in their hands as cups." (Fosco Maraini 1960:52-3 quoted IN Beyer 1978 (1973):48)

Later accounts dwell less on this "devil worship" and base themselves more extensively on Tibetan doctrinal traditions. Accordingly, "devils", "demons" and "enemies" are seen also as cyphers for the conquest of the self or, at least, the lower parts of the self; and the fierce deities are described through their evocation in meditation practices whose ultimate goal is enlightenment (see, for example, Beyer 1978, Snellgrove 1957). Nonetheless, villagers still focus upon a terrifying iconography. Nebesky-Wojkowitz introduces the iconography of wrathful protectors:

"(they) are mostly described as figures possessing stout bodies, short but thick and strong limbs and many of them have several heads and a great number of hands and feet. The colour of their bodies and faces is frequently compared with the characteristic hue of clouds, precious stones, etc. ... The sadhanas (texts describing forms and attributes of deities evoked in meditation; methods of evocation; Tib: sgrub thabs) often mention that the body of a ferocious protective deity is smeared with ashes taken from a funeral pyre and with sesame oil or that the skin of a wrathful god or goddess is covered with grease-stains, blood spots and shining specks of human fat. ... The faces of many protectors of religion possess a typical wrathful

expression: the mouth is contorted to an angry smile, from its corners protrude long fangs - often said to be of copper or iron -, or the upper teeth gnaw the lower lip. A "mist of illnesses" come forth from the mouth and a terrific storm is supposed to be blowing from the nostrils of the flat nose. The protruding, bloodshot eyes have an angry and staring expression and usually a third eye is visible in the middle of the forehead." (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975:6, see also pp. 6-21).

As far as villagers are concerned, higher ranking gods are called down and trapped, housed or seated in order to get rid of demons and all other potentially harmful worldly forces. As Samuel has noted, monks and their gods are valued especially for the powers they have over lower ranking spirits which harm people:

"A Sherpa could scarcely be an animist without being a Buddhist because only Buddhism provides the power to keep the spirits under control: and most Sherpas would hardly be Buddhists if they were not only animists, for the same reason." (Samuel 1978:112)

(The labels "animist" and "Buddhist" simply gloss beliefs in local spirits as contrasted to beliefs in higher ranking gods associated with lamas, monks and monasteries.)

These few comments already introduce a picture at variance with the one sketched in the previous chapter. There, gods occupied the highest level in a three-tier universe; lu occupied the lowest and tsan, "the spirits without backs", occupied the middle level with people. One theme associated with village perceptions of the Buddhist supernatural order concerns the continual battle between gods and demons. This theme is developed subsequently in relation to possession practices. Many ritual performances are concerned with the creation of a supernatural hierarchy where the highest gods sit at the opposite pole from demons. In this scheme, many of the local spirits mentioned previously occupy roughly the same rank, between the higher gods and the

demons. These middle ranking spirits; lha, lu and even the occasional domesticated tsan; might be seen as those with homes. They can be described as spirits of the place, worldly beings, housed in some natural spot such as a mountain or stream and in man-made homes such as shrines. These spirits are generally benevolent but extremely touchy and quick to anger if they are disturbed or polluted in any way. They are honoured as local masters of the place and as guardians. One way of looking at demons ('dre) is to see them as spirits without homes and without food which wander the world and, in their frustration, attack religion and people. Given a home, they may be turned into local protective spirits. According to this perspective, demons are only included in the Buddhist pantheon when they have been converted and given homes.

If demons are seen at the bottom without homes, in contrast to local protective spirits which are housed in the landscape and in man-made edifices, then the next rank can be seen simply as spirits housed in the monastery. Lower ranking monastery protectors are also local village gods which have been gradually incorporated inside the monastery walls (see Chapter 6). Some protectors still live in the world but others have reached enlightenment from which place they continue to guard the doctrine. Monastery protectors include also the great gods of the Hindu pantheon, which have been incorporated below the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Above all these ranks and, again, from a village perspective, there are an enormous number of "monastery gods" that are largely unfamiliar to non-initiates, though a few are well-known cult figures. These will therefore be

discussed only briefly and from a village perspective (Chapter 3). At the top are Bodhisattvas and Buddhas which may appear in various aspects. Lay approaches to these "supreme" figures of chos are described in the next chapter. Buddhas have supreme power and demons have the least power. The rank order to the pantheon is constructed in more or less detail at most of the rituals described in this thesis when it is superimposed upon the picture described previously.

During rituals, the highest relevant ranks are called into the ritual space first. Malevolent beings are called later. Local gods, lu and sometimes other domesticated spirits are often called together as a relatively undifferentiated rank "in the middle", unless the ritual directly involves one of these classes. Many of the rituals described in this thesis are exorcistic; as Ladakhis say, they are "rites to finish bad things". In this context, a further discrimination between fierce and peaceful spirits is important. As noted, demonic figures are angry. Village oracles are especially valued for their "fierce" (tragpo, drag po) gods (see Chapter 5). Higher ranking deities appear in various forms and their "fierce" or "violent" forms (tragpo) are often associated with the defense of Buddhism and a generally protective role. These fierce qualities are opposed to the "peaceful" or "calm" (zhiwa, zhi ba), which villagers associate especially with the supreme religious figures who have attained enlightenment. Indeed, the same term is used to refer to enlightenment and one who possesses such peace is a Buddha. Possession ritual in Ladakh is pre-occupied with both the damaging violence of low ranking spirits and the protective anger that can be engendered in

high ranking gods. Accordingly, my discussion of ritual is biased towards the fierce moods and states portrayed in "rites to finish bad things".

Beyer's discussion of the cult of Tārā provides one of the best, detailed accounts of Tibetan ritual (Beyer 1978 (1973)). It illustrates how ritual power can be used to generate a pantheon with Buddhas at the top and demons at the bottom (strictly, outside) as well as indicating other important structures and ritual functions. Differences between rituals intended to change the world and those intended to change the state of the practitioner are well documented in the sections entitled "application" and "worship". The former type of ritual includes similar steps to the latter but focuses upon an intended change such as the destruction of an enemy and earlier stages concerning the generation of a major deity are shortened. A "thread cross" ceremony sponsored by Beyer provides a good example of the summoning of gods into the world to destroy demons and a brief summary will reveal the basic structure of a ritual performed by monks. A full account can be found in Beyer 1978:321-359. Thread crosses are used in Ladakh and other Tibetan areas to trap demons, to offer them a "substitute" for those threatened by their predations and to satisfy them with an offering of the entire universe.

An altar is constructed for a hierarchy of offerings, as in all such ceremonies. Dough cones decorated with butter, colour and often sticks or flags are constructed for different classes of spirits. These are described as gtor ma in texts but Ladakhis use the word chodpa (mchod pa),

offering, to distinguish objects that will be kept from those that are thrown away. Only the latter are called gtor ma (storma). The gtor ma for the major deity sits higher together with offerings to her (the major deity in this case being Tārā). Gtor ma for lower ranking "guests" are found on a lower table. Beyer describes four for these lowly beings; "hindering demons", "creditors" and those that will clear the road when the thread cross is thrown. The first two gtor ma are decorated with chang bu, pieces of dough squeezed within the fist and passed over the body of those present. Ladakhis say that changbu (chang bu) remove "dirt" or "defilement" from the person; Beyer describes them as a substitute offering that will placate the demon and prevent it from attacking the real person. The thread cross occupies another table with a range of further offerings.

The ritual preliminaries introduce the self-generation of the major deity: Tārā is evoked bit by bit in the bodies of the officiants, according to the relevant teachings. The practitioner becomes the deity but this initial step is not elaborated for the deity is then generated in front so that her powers can be directed into the world. These two steps might be described as the first two basic parts to the ritual. The highest gods are called down, created in the bodies of suitable vessels and then placed in front, where their powers can be manipulated for the benefit of the world. In this example, the monks visualise that they have invited all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who are given a bath, music, clothes, ornaments and seats. Offerings are made to them, involving here the "outer offerings" which generally include water for the face, water for the feet, flowers, incense,

lamps, perfume and food. In this example, music is offered and water for the feet is not. Praises are sung and then the gtor ma are given. The offering gtor ma on the high altar is given first to the retinue headed by Tārā. This gift is accompanied by a prayer for the pacification of all evil. In effect, the high gods who have been summoned, seated, fed and entertained are now asked to do their work (ibid:342). The offerings, praises and gtor ma are then presented to the hindering demons to satisfy their desires and help them on the way to Buddhahood and then to the creditors. The fourth gtor ma is presented to clear the road for the thread cross and it is thrown outside in the direction that the thread cross will be carried. The climax of the ritual comes in the offering of the thread cross and substitutes to the evil spirits. In order to expel the evil spirits, a fierce high patron deity is visualised:

"Instantaneously I become the Blessed Lotus Lord (Hayagrīva), his body coloured red, having one face and two hands, with his right hand brandishing in the sky a cudgel of khadira wood and his left hand in the threatening gesture upon his breast. His three round eyes gape and stare, his mouth bares four fangs; his eyebrows and beard are red-yellow, blazing like the fire at the end of time; his hair is pale yellow, bristling upward, and on his crest is a green horse head, whinnying. He is adorned with the eight great serpent-kings, his lower garment is a tiger skin, he stands with his right foot drawn in and his left stretched out, in the center of a mass of blazing fire of knowledge: my body is unrivalled in majesty, to burn spiteful bringers of harm and all sin and obscurations.

"Tārā and her retinue generated before me are there as mediators; as I present the substitutes and speak the words to avert the evil spirits, they perform their active functions, that all the guests (that is, demons and so forth) obey, and their active function is quickly accomplished." (ibid:351)

A long prayer lists all the evils to be averted and the thread cross is dispatched together with the substitutes and

gtor ma added to it. In Ladakh, gtor ma are generally thrown at a crossroads or burnt. The ritual concludes with an excuse for any deficiencies in performance, a prayer that merit made in the ritual be dedicated to all living beings and then the highest gods are asked to depart, either into their image or painting (the basis or support) or in general.

A brief summary of Beyer's account has been chosen because it derives from the literate tradition; from monastic practices, texts and teachings; which is not developed below. Villagers are likely to emphasise specific aspects to the ritual. They will follow little of the text which is recited in Tibetan. Even though Ladakhis can understand some colloquial Tibetan, few are familiar with literary Tibetan, particularly when it is read at the speed associated with ritual recitals. (Often, individual monks will also be reading different pages of the same text so as to complete the ritual more quickly.) Villagers are likely to emphasise some interpretations rather than others; for example, in this case, they may say that the demons are killed rather than liberated (see Chapter 6 for further details). The uninitiated will know relatively little about the process of "self-generation" or the "generation in front" and they are likely to focus upon the performative aspects of the ritual; in particular, upon the objects which are manipulated. Dough offerings (chodpa) are seen as seats for different classes of deities and other offerings (storma) are seen as seats for malevolent spirits which will be expelled as the object is thrown away. These dough objects (together with other ritual containers) merit closer attention for it is suggested that a

major focus of Ladakhi ritual concerns the creation of bodies in which spirits may be created or trapped and manipulated.

The thread cross ceremony employs a structure common to a wide range of rites. The highest gods are summoned or invited, initially, into the bodies of monks. The gods are then placed "in front". In this example, they are evoked into the altar holding the gtor ma for Tārā, images of her, outer offerings for her and other food offerings. Most Ladakhis understand the gods to be contained in their offerings as they are generated in the ritual arena. From this position, their powers are tapped for the benefit of the world. Their powers are often directed against low ranking spirits which have been conjured into their own distinct offerings. Sometimes, they may be used to sacralise offerings for a congregation; sometimes, they are simply honoured. Once the "work" of the ritual has been done, the gods are sent away again and the ritual structures dismantled.

Ortner has analysed the symbolism of Sherpa rituals of this kind in terms of hospitality (Ortner 1975 and 1978a). Although the specifics of her analysis might be questioned, there seems little doubt about the importance of the idiom of hospitality. In brief, Ortner argues that the gods are pitted against the demons but the gods must be persuaded to engage in the battle. The offerings, together with the texts recited, constitute a coercive hospitality. High ranking gods are honoured guests invited to enjoy seats, bodies and food in their particular dough chodpa arranged on the altar. In accepting these gifts, the gods are rendered "humanoid"

for they are embodied and engaged in a social world based on eating and drinking:

"He (the god) has been, it seems clear, turned into a human being, trapped in a body and suffused with sensuous desires" (1975:155).

Many of the prayers cited by Beyer which have not been included in the above summary illustrate this process of embodying, flattering, cajoling, coercing and feeding the gods very clearly (ibid:321-359). They are thereby motivated to fight the demons.

Ortner's analysis is particularly important in relation to general models of hospitality; human guests are coerced in much the same fashion (Ortner 1978a, chapter 4; see also below for Ladakh). Her analysis also highlights the effects of hospitality for she suggests that guests are progressively polluted. The highest gods, it is claimed, might float out of the world altogether because they are so remote and "anti-social" ("anti-reciprocity, anti-exchange, anti-marriage" Ortner 1975:165):

"What the Sherpa ritual seems to do, among other things, is to reinvent, reconstruct, the Mahayana "solution" to the problem of the remoteness and asociality of Buddhism. Just as the Mahayana Bodhisattva reincarnates in the world to help those who remain mired in the illusions of worldly existence, instead of dissolving in to the nirvana to which he is entitled, so the Sherpa gods, with a bit of coaxing, incarnate in their tormas to help the lay people in their struggle to lead a better, and hopefully also more moral, existence." (ibid:166)

This insight is important to my discussion of Ladakhi ritual. High ranking gods are engaged in the world through ritual gifts; in particular, they are made angry. However, this process can only be understood in relation to the gifts given to other spirits. While the higher gods might be said to be angered, lower ranking spirits such as demons and local gods

are already angry. The anger of these lowly spirits is, however, socially destructive and must be purged. If it is accepted that the higher gods are "polluted" through their bodies, then the reverse reading applies to the embodiment of low ranking spirits who are "purified".

This reading is amplified in the course of this and subsequent chapters. Initially, its plausibility might be established in relation to the thread cross ritual described above. It is clear that the construction of bodies and gifts of food are important for all classes of spirits invited to rituals and not just the highest ranking. Offerings for the major god sit highest but there are also offerings for guardian deities, lower ranking gods and demons, which are presented one after the other. The *mchod pa* (*chodpa*) for gods may be ranked on one altar and separated from the *gtor ma* for demons (3) but demons, just like gods, are invited, embodied and fed during a ritual (4).

Ortner fails to relate the process of embodiment to the type of spirit concerned. This approach seems to have been promoted by the division of Sherpa ritual into two classes. There are rituals of exorcism which get rid of demons either by showering them with gifts or by killing them and these are distinct from rituals of offering where gifts are presented to the high gods:

"It will be useful to distinguish between rituals of offering to gods...and rituals of exorcism of demons, although this does not correspond to a native distinction. ... in fact, rituals of offering and rituals of exorcism would both be classed by the Sherpas as *kurim* (*skurim*)" (Ortner 1978a:92-3)

Ortner's approach enables her to deal with only two categories in the pantheon, at the top and the bottom, in

relation to two types of ritual analysed through very different frameworks (Ortner 1975, 1978a chapters 5 and 6).

However, offerings to demons can be analysed in the same way as offerings to gods. They are traps into which spirits are coerced; they are also palaces, luxuries, bodies and foods (as Ortner herself recognises in her discussion of exorcism (1978a, chapter 5)). Distinctions are related to the position of gods and demons in the pantheon rather than any intrinsic difference in the ritual mechanism. Those called first are coaxed rather than trapped and their powers are used to improve the world. Those called last are more obviously coerced and they are changed through the powers of gods already present. In almost all rituals to demons, a double interpretation suggests both that demons are killed and that they are turned into something better through the fulfillment of their desires. It is therefore difficult to support Ortner's classification of exorcism as a distinct type of ritual. The embodiment of lower ranking spirits is better seen in relation to a single ritual process mediated by rank position.

The hierarchical nature of the pantheon constructed during rituals requires emphasis. First, the highest gods are called and, as Ortner suggests, they are progressively polluted during a ritual which directs their powers into the world. Only the highest gods can guarantee ritual success. But they are not the only ones called. Worldly gods and demons are also invited. While the highest echelons of the pantheon might be said to be polluted by the ritual process, lower echelons are purified. The hindering demons are fed and housed so that they can join the quest for enlightenment.

The focus of this thesis is upon those who sit between the highest gods and the lowest demons. It is argued that local gods share qualities with demons and it is shown that they too are cleansed in ritual. But local gods also share qualities with the higher ranking gods and their powers are ritually employed against demons, illnesses and other problems in the world. In order to understand the place of local gods in domestic ritual and in possession practices, it is crucial to generalise Ortner's insights to the ritual process as a whole and to the entire span of the pantheon (5).

It might be objected that this discussion has made general statements about Ladakhi ritual on the basis of performances by monks. I do not want to impute a false unity to Ladakhi ritual but simply to delineate a common ground to much of the ritual described in this thesis. Oracles too call gods into their bodies but it is generally thought that they cannot summon enlightened gods, nor do they rely upon texts or monastic training but upon an initially involuntary possession as described in Chapter 4. Laymen, both other specialists such as lay astrologers and ordinary villagers, also perform rituals. They too call gods into ritual bodies but they generally call only local gods which are certainly not always evoked within the bodies of officiants. In spite of the diversity of Ladakhi ritual practice, there are important similarities in basic structures. Ritual is often employed to call gods into the world. The gods are invited, seated, embodied and fed according to their position in a rank order. Second, the creation of "bodies" is central

to the ritual process for it is through these containers that spirits are manipulated; higher beings may be polluted, as Ortner suggests, in order to engage their powers on behalf of humanity whilst lower beings may be purified through the fulfillment of their desires and the consequent destruction of their thwarted caprice. "Ritual bodies" include the bodies of officiants, dough bodies and also shrines, statues, paintings, particular trees or stones and a range of other containers.

2.2 The annual cycle

It is not possible here to present a broad or even representative range of ritual cycles in the monastery, household and village but, in this and the following chapter (as well as Chapter 6), a few rituals are discussed in terms of the annual cycle. This focus is chosen for a number of reasons. The rituals of the annual cycle constitute a particularly central metaphor for images of fertility and decay in this world and other rituals associated with the life cycle and the victory of Buddhism, for example, are partially mapped onto the year. Second, rituals of the year provide a particularly good example of the negotiation of division and mutual dependence between monastery and village which is the focus of this first part of my account. Third, these rituals involve a secular dimension which is important both to an understanding of the picture of Ladakh described in the last chapter and to the nature of possession practices discussed subsequently. Finally, they provide important background to the discussion of oracles specifically. Monastery oracles only appear during rituals of the annual

cycle, as discussed in Chapter 6. Village oracles may perform rituals of the kind described in this chapter; they may, for example, change local shrines to gods. Although they deal primarily with affliction (6), they perform or recommend many of the rites that are embedded in other ritual cycles. Accordingly, the oracle's "rituals of crisis" cannot be understood without reference to both contexts of performance; part of the regular passage of the seasons on the one hand (as well as other cycles) and unexpected affliction on the other.

A brief description of the annual cycle in Gongma provides the context in which a few rituals may be located (as summarised in Tables 1 and 2). It should be appreciated that this summary describes only a local variant, for the rituals performed in one village vary substantially from the cycles constructed elsewhere (see, for example, Dollfus 1988 on a village in Lower Ladakh). However, summer field work is generally associated with farming on the part of individual households and peaceful offerings to gods and lu. Winter is the time of maximum sociability, the worship of gods, exorcistic ritual and religion. Marriages and funerals are also ideally celebrated in the winter. Summer and winter are divided by transitional periods associated with collective work and collective ritual (7).

"The first ploughing" (saka) provides a convenient starting point to the year. It occurs "when the earth warms" at the end of the first or the beginning of the second Buddhist month in March (8). The ritual opens the ground for the sowing of crops, as described below (section 2.4), which usually begins a month or two later; wheat is sown in the

third month and barley in the fourth. Before fields are ploughed and sown, the village organises one of the most important collective work periods of the year when manure is taken to the fields (bun_glud). Meanwhile, in the second month, a procession of monks from Sankar visit the Gongma monastery and a large scale exorcism is staged in Leh (called stor_lok (9)). By the third month, households have begun to repair their walls and irrigation channels. Animals are sheared, work begins on the vegetable garden and wheat is sown. In contrast to the manuring of fields, ploughing usually involves the exchange of labour and animals between just two houses (lang_de). This partnership is made or reaffirmed during the earlier bun_glud or at one of the monthly village celebrations of the "10th day" (ch_ishu, tshes bcu). In the fourth month, village meetings will appoint individuals to look after the animals and the water and, usually, a smaller "earth carrying" (saskyaches) precedes the planting of barley (only one crop is sown in Gongma). Spring is celebrated in the fourth month. Many households perform a ritual to honour their gods (sol_ka), the village is whitewashed and, throughout the region, Buddha's birthday is celebrated in this, the second most auspicious month of the year. The shrine to one of the village gods in Gongma is changed on the same day. A feast is staged soon after and four new village stewards (nyer_pa) are elected to a year's office.

With the onset of summer, the village is fully occupied in field work and households are dispersed between fields, the high pastures and sometimes an additional summer house

(yersa). The other village shrine is changed. An important ritual to lu (sadag dondol, sa bdag gdon 'grol) is performed in many households. Lu are housed in a palace, given "white" and "sweet" offerings and washed. Their palace is generally thrown into "good, deep water". Afterwards, lay participants throw water at each other and monks take offerings to the fields which they sprinkle on to the growing crops. A village close to Gongma sponsors this ritual in the sixth month where it is explicitly linked to the purity of the water supply and successful growth.

In the sixth month, a procession of monks circles the cultivated areas and the village of Gongma during a circumambulation of the Leh area (bumskor); this ritual is also linked to the growth of crops. Summer field work is ritually brought to a close with the "festival of first fruits", shrublha, on the 9th and 10th of the seventh month when a sheaf of corn is ceremonially cut and hung on the household pillar. An "untouched offering" of corn is also placed in the offering room. Both are left in place until the next shrublha. Now, the sickle can be used again. It had been banned at saka for fear of harming the growing crops. The harvest begins. Barley and wheat are usually harvested about a fortnight later (in the middle of September) after the harvesting of grass and fodder. Labour may be exchanged and hired between households and individuals but not on a village basis. Monks, Mon, Gara and Beda collect harvest gifts. Animals are allowed back in the fields.

The harvest is completed by the ninth month and households then plough their fields with the partners they had at the spring ploughing (langde). Field work is

closed with another collective work period as earth is taken back from the fields to the houses and preparations for winter begin. Skangsol are now performed in most houses to excuse any damage caused through cultivation; apologies are made particularly for the murder of insects which were your mother and father in previous lives. These performances are accompanied by drunken village parties. Meanwhile, the grain is threshed, winnowed, washed and dried. Straw is stored and grain roasted for flour. Skangsol are completed before the secular New Year begins in the middle of the tenth month. New Year includes a series of rituals and feasts which last over a fortnight and provide the highlight of the village ritual cycle. Now that the crops have been stored and all sin excused, the house is shored up from the inside and evil is excluded. Exorcistic ritual of all kinds is generally restricted to the winter when crops and lu cannot be damaged. In Gongma, the major theme of New Year concerns the household. Relations within the house are reaffirmed; ancestors are honoured and affinal links celebrated. Fertility is brought inside and evil is thrown away. The shrine to the phaslha is changed. In other villages, the exorcistic theme is elaborated in masked dances and village rituals (see, for example, Rigal 1985 on Chiling, Brauen 1980 on Choglomsar, Dollfus 1988 and Phylactou 1989 on Hemis Shukpa Chan). In Gongma, the exorcistic theme continues into the eleventh month with performances in individual households and the village as a whole.

Table 1: THE ANNUAL CYCLE:
Agriculture, household and village ritual from the
perspective of Mig household in Gongma (1982)

The year usually begins around the middle of February, on 23 February in 1982.

| Ladakhi | | |
|-----------|----|---|
| Month/Day | | Activity |
| 1 | 15 | Village ritual (<u>timyos</u>) |
| | | Dig up potatoes |
| | | Prune trees |
| | | <u>Saka</u> |
| | | Take manure to the fields (<u>bunqlud</u> , co-operative labour in village section) |
| | 9 | Leh <u>storlok</u> |
| | 13 | Ritual with Sankar monks (<u>chugsum chodpa</u>) |
| 2 | | Building activities and repairs |
| | | Irrigation in preparation for sowing of wheat |
| | | Shear animals |
| 3 | | Sankar archery festival |
| | | Plough and sow wheat (use of <u>langde</u> labour) and then other crops such as peas and mustard. |
| | | Prepare vegetable gardens |
| | | Plant potatoes |
| | | Animals excluded from the fields until after the harvest. Some taken to the high pastures. Elect officials to look after animals and irrigation. |
| | | Irrigation for sowing of barley |
| | 8 | Whitewash houses and buildings, renew prayer flags (usually on 13-14). |
| | | Exchange of labour within the village section for taking earth to the house for building etc. |
| | | Plant vegetables |
| | 14 | <u>Solka</u> ritual in Mig (offering to gods). |
| | | Plough and sow barley. Mon and Beda given grain. |
| 4 | 15 | Change village shrine to Traltse gyamo |

table 1 contin

| Ladakhi Month/Day | Activity |
|----------------------|---|
| | Village feast (<u>gyetsa</u>), usually in 4th month. Leh archery festival |
| | <u>Sadag dondol</u> in Mig |
| 5 15 | Change village shrine to Nezer gyapo Collect and dry vegetables from mountains |
| | Collective <u>sadag dondol</u> in neighbouring village <u>Bumskor</u> , circumambulation of village with texts. |
| 6 | Finish collecting wild vegetables |
| 10 9-10 | <u>Chishu</u> for Leh irrigation masters (<u>churpon</u>). <u>Shrublha</u> (festival of first fruits) at Shey and in houses. Harvest begins with alfalfa and grasses, then barley and wheat. Hire labour. Animals allowed back in fields |
| 7 | Mon, Beda, Gara and monks collect shares of harvest. Dig pit to store potatoes which are harvested. |
| | Threshing |
| 8 | Wash and dry grain Store straw |
| | Additional <u>yanguk</u> at Mig Co-operative carrying of earth Roast grain Plough fields (<u>langde</u> or hired labour). Co-operative labour in village section to carry earth. |
| 9 | <u>Skangsol</u> in Mig Grind flour Collect dung from high pastures |

table 1 contin

| Ladakhi Day/Month | Activity |
|----------------------|---|
| 10 | New Year preparations; buy supplies |
| 25 | Beginning secular New Year |
| 1-3 | New Year visits |
| 3 | Welcome the new moon |
| | New Year continues in some villages |
| | Household rituals; <i>gyazhi</i> , <i>tsantun</i> |
| 11 15 | Village ritual (<i>shrangthug</i>) |
| | Buy in fodder, animals etc |
| 12 | Tibetan New Year celebrations among refugees |
| 28-29 | Leh <i>dosmoche</i> |

Table 2: THE ANNUAL CYCLE:
Religion and the monastery from the perspective of Mig
household in Gongma (1982)

| Ladakhi Day/Month | Ritual |
|----------------------|---|
| 1 | 1-15 First circumambulation (<u>tangpo skorra</u>) |
| | 5-16 Leh monastery, <u>mani tungchur</u> |
| | 9-10 Stok 'cham |
| | 14-15 Matho 'cham |
| 1 | 14-15 Sankar <u>nyenes</u> |
| | 14-15 Leh <u>gochak</u> (circumambulation) |
| | 18-19 Phyang 'cham (*) |
| | Recital of religious texts in village, as part of Leh. |
| | 29-30 Shey <u>rule</u> |
| | Religious recitals in village by monks |
| 2 | 9 Leh <u>storlok</u> |
| | 28-29 Lamayuru 'cham |
| 3 | |
| 4 | 15 "Fourth fifteenth", "Buddha's birthday" |
| | 15 Sankar monastery <u>skangsol</u> |
| | 9-10 Hemis 'cham |
| 5 | 14-15 Sankar monastery <u>namgyal stongchod</u> ritual |
| 6 | <u>Bumskor</u> , circumambulation with texts around Leh and Gongma |
| 7 | 9-10 Shey <u>shrublha</u> |
| 8 | |
| 9 | 22 Celebration of Buddha's return to the world |
| | 28-29 Tak Tok and Chemre 'cham |

table 2 continued

| Ladakhi Day/Month | Ritual |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 10 | 25 Commemoration of Tshongkhapa |
| 11 | 28-29 Spituk 'cham |
| 12 | 18-19 Thikse 'cham |
| | 28-29 Leh <u>dosmoche</u> |

(*) By 1982, in fact, the Phyang cham had been moved to the summer months. It took place on 22-23 July 1982 which probably corresponded to the 28-29 of the 5th Buddhist month.

The big monastery festivals have now begun. They cluster in the 12th and 1st month of the year (in February), culminating with Matho festival in the middle of the first and most religious month of the year. These are also concerned with the destruction of evil but the focus is upon religion rather than secular life. The victory of religion is celebrated collectively and combined with individual pilgrimage and ascetic practices which welcome the second or "religious" New Year at the beginning of the first month, normally described by Ladakhis as Tibetan New Year. Recitals of texts are sponsored in households on a village basis and in monasteries. Large monastery festivals in the winter provide the highlight of the monastery ritual cycle as far as villagers are concerned. It is time to open the agrarian cycle again.

Some of the rituals mentioned, such as the first ploughing and the festival of first fruits, are only performed as rituals of the annual cycle. Most are not. Thus, the ritual to lu, sadag dandol, is performed in the summer in relation to the health of the crops but it may also be sponsored in response to a misfortune attributed to lu. A popular exorcistic ritual in Gongma, gyazhi (rgya bzhi, see Chapter 5), is sponsored after the winter solstice in relation to the exclusion of bad things from the household but, it may also be sponsored in response to a misfortune attributed to demons.

Household rituals are not performed in the same way by all 28 households in Gongma. As noted previously, the richer sponsor more skurim and the wealthiest, highest ranking household in Gongma sponsored four monthly and thirteen

annual household rites during my stay. The poorest household sponsored just one monthly rite and one annual ritual (see appendix 2). This house had also recently joined the village chishu cycle where pairs of khangchen join a village rota to celebrate the 10th day of the month in their houses with a party during which men recite texts.

Only the first ploughing, yanguk and aspects of the village New Year are discussed below. Aspects of the religious times of year are discussed separately in Chapters 3 and 6. These examples are chosen in order to illustrate the ritual embodiment of gods in the world and their role in initiating life and destroying evil. The unifying theme concerns the ritual arrow which is used to release fertility and conquer evil. It may also be seen as a container and "tree of life".

In Ladakhi ethnography, the "wedding arrow" or dadar (mda' dar) has occupied most attention (10). This arrow is classically used at weddings to "capture" a spouse and install her (occasionally him) in a new home, as part of a hopefully fertile union. This arrow will not be discussed directly below; instead, another "ritual arrow" (sangda), which has received little attention in the ethnography, is introduced.

The comments made below depend upon a brief introduction to the ritual use of arrows. It is common to see a stack of arrows in some corner of the offering room but it is only during ritual that an arrow will be singled out. The "ritual arrow" can usually be distinguished by the five-coloured cloth attached to it. This cloth or strips of cloth signify religion. One that I saw used in an oracle's

initiation had dried white flowers tied on with the cloth, an auspicious symbol. A white scarf is often attached. The wedding arrow can be distinguished through its own special attachments. There is, for example, the knuckle joint that joins two people together as it joins two bones and the mirror which, some say, joins husband and wife through their reflections. Some arrows may be fashioned out of pieces of wood while others are "true" arrows with points at the end of the shaft (11). This point, whether or not it is a metal arrow tip, "finishes demons (dre) and devils (dud)" during rituals. None of the ritual arrows that I saw preserved the feathers at the other end. Although arrows are not generally distinguished on a day to day basis, a particular type of arrow is constructed when necessary from a makeshift piece of wood or from a real arrow kept in some corner of the offering room.

The discussion below is built upon three sets of associations. First, arrows are weapons. As noted in the last chapter, they are important symbols of male conquest. Conquest is ritually linked to the release of fertility as seen through central images concerning, for example, marriage in the secular sphere and the destruction of demons in the religious sphere. Second, arrows are also important containers whose ability to link or connect different levels is particularly central. The arrow is divided into three sections which join the three worlds of gods, people and lu or the three generations in a family. When the arrow is seen as a weapon, it is often seen alone. In other contexts, it is often seen "planted", in a pot of barley or, in the example given below, a "bag of fortune" (section 2.5).

Moreover, the ritual sequence often involves the transformation of an arrow, used as a weapon, into a tree of life which is planted. Third, Ladakhi arrows are integrated into a wider ritual domain which includes related items. In the last chapter, the house pillar was compared to a soul wood as well as an arrow. This soul wood is singled out from the wider context for discussion. Three aspects of arrows are therefore important to the following discussion in which arrows are used as weapons and receptacles for life and in which they are likened to other ritual objects such as the soul wood.

With these preliminaries, the discussion opens with a monthly performance which constitutes a rite of purification, for the god of the phaspu in particular.

2.3 A rite of purification (sangs) and the conquest of demons

bsangs: to clean, to purify; rites of incense-burning, incense

a) Description

Sangs is performed every day and every month to purify the house and, more specifically, the phaslha. In special circumstances such as birth, death or illness, extra sangs are offered. A brief description is followed by a discussion of the links between the god and its "territory" and a discussion of the way the ritual cleans this household god.

Every morning in Mig, the house was cleaned. One type of burning incense, sur, was taken outside the window or door or to the lu shrine (12). Another type made of burning juniper was taken around the house and left in the offering room. This burnt juniper comprised the daily sangs. The

people of Mig made an interesting distinction between these offerings, describing sur as a gift to ly and sangs as a gift to the god. More commonly, the former offering is described as a gift for those who live on smells (triza, dri za) who are generally thought to be awaiting rebirth. Every morning, someone in the house would also renew the seven small bowls in the offering room, and light incense and a lamp.

The monthly sangs is more elaborate. It is performed by the monk who has enduring ties with the household and it is ideally performed in the first week of the month. In brief, the monk reads a text in the offering room which lasts just ten or fifteen minutes. At appropriate points, he wields the ritual arrow, offers smouldering incense and scatters food and drink. Commentators claimed that the ritual was specifically directed to the phaslha and they drew attention to the ritual arrow which, first, finished devils, demons and defilement and, second, collected fortune in the household.

b) The phaslha

The phaslha has been described in terms of its territory. Sangs provides an important context in which links between gods and their territories are drawn. In brief, sangs removes pollution from the god and this action thereby cleans the entire territory; individuals, animals, household and so forth. The Ladakhi tip (grib) is glossed as pollution but it refers also to many different kinds of defilement or dirt, ranging from dirty substances to a spiritual ill-being (13). These different senses can be discerned in the explanations offered by the people of Mig:

"(Sangs) cleans the house"

"it removes defilement (tip) from the phaslha"

"it raises spiritual power (parkha)."

Monks added:

"Sangs removes pollution from the phaslha. More generally, it finishes pollution of men, animals and all gods, including the highest protectors. The ritual arrow collects wealth and prosperity for the household."

"Sangs finishes pollution of the phaslha and all house spirits like lu, "masters of the place" (zhidag) and the goddess of the stove (thablha). It cleans the phaslha and raises the spiritual power of your birth god (skyeslha)."

These comments require elucidation, particularly in relation to the supernatural hierarchy. As noted in the first chapter, worldly gods which have been called down from the mountain tops are gradually polluted. Villagers say that it is only worldly gods that decay; other-worldly beings are, by definition, immune. It has been shown above that rituals "pollute" the highest enlightened gods. These gods are aroused through offerings so that they will participate in the fight against the enemies of religion. Rituals to worldly gods, by contrast, "purify" them and remove their dirt. It might be said that, while the highest gods must be ritually excited to anger so that they will join the side of religion in the world, the anger of lowly gods must be purged so that they do not descend to the level of demons. Accordingly, sangs may be seen as a ritual of renewal that restores the phaslha (and other household gods) to their godly status. At the beginning of the month, after sangs has been performed, the phaslha is a god. At the end of the month, it is dirty and not quite a god.

This process of depletion can be understood in two ways. First, Buddhist dogma holds that life in the world is a life

of suffering. Transcendence provides the only escape from suffering. At this point, just one implication need be drawn. Pollution (or suffering) is an inevitable by-product of being alive, as far as villagers are concerned. Second, and more immediately relevant to the subject of local gods, activities in the world cause damage. When people cultivate the land or build a house, when they burn fuel or cook, they disturb other beings. The imagery varies according to context; for example, building activities may hurt lu whilst offensive smells produced through burning may pollute gods. The worldly phaslha therefore gets dirty as a matter of course and it is further polluted by specific activities as people fail to keep ritual observances or spill substances of the wrong kind in the wrong place. Whatever the precise imagery, the effects are the same for the "spirit" is angered and retaliates. As Ladakhis say, the god causes problems and illness when there is dirt; cows will die, people will fall ill, the crops will suffer and so rites such as gangs have to be performed regularly. Furthermore, members of the household and phaspun are, in some sense, consubstantial with their gods as shown, for example, in the various avoidances (zemches, 'dzem-) following births and deaths. If these avoidances are not observed, members of the phaspun may fall ill. When I asked about cases of this kind, I would be told with a wondering look at my continued failure to grasp the point:

"when you break zemches, it is not you but the phaslha that is damaged."

It seems, therefore, that members of the household and phaspun are automatically cleaned when pollution is removed

from the gods. Although Ladakhis normally describe local gods as touchy protectors who will look after you as long as you look after them, a closer analysis suggests that these gods are not so easily separated from people and other living beings in their territory.

c) The ritual

At the beginning of the chapter, it was implied that many Ladakhi rituals simultaneously constitute rites of offering and rites of exorcism. Sangs provides an example. Food, drink and incense are offered to gods while badness, in particular, the dirt attached to lower ranking gods, is removed. The exorcistic element to sangs might be explored through a tentative and speculative analysis of the ritual arrow used.

Although Ladakhis normally say simply that tip, dirt, is finished, there is in fact little to distinguish dirt from the demonic. When the god is dirty, it causes harm, just like demons. When demons are cleaned and given homes, they cease their malevolence and become gods. In what follows, dirt and demons are seen as near synonyms and the rite as a whole is said to make a god-turned-demon back into a god again.

Two properties of the arrow might also be recalled. First, it is connective and is often said to join three tiers of the universe or three generations in a family. Second, it is a weapon which kills demons and devils. It is suggested that the arrow at sangs orders a supernatural hierarchy through the shaft which is set to work through the point that kills. The supernatural hierarchy is assembled in relation to demons which are to be conquered.

It is not clear where exactly the phaslha fits into this scheme. However, the god certainly ranks low in the general pantheon and might be placed low down the arrow and close to the dirt that is finished. It might even be seen as a demon to be killed, outside the pantheon and the arrow shaft altogether. As shown in Chapter 6, religious murders can be seen to kill and save enemies. The phaslha might be seen as one such victim which is first of all finished through the point of the arrow before it can be saved as a god and restored to the world.

Further speculation is not useful. The general point, however, must be emphasised. The supernatural hierarchy cannot be described simply in terms of high ranking gods and demons. Worldly gods, which form the focus of this thesis, sit in the middle. They share some qualities with demons, which must be removed in ritual, and some qualities with higher ranking gods, which must be ritually reaffirmed. Whatever the precise place of the phaslha in the ritual as a whole, it seems to be separated from pollution and restored to its place in a supernatural rank order and in the world. The demonic, dirty aspect is separated from the godly and thrown away. The arrow seems to provide an important means of effecting this change.

The exorcistic aspect of sangs has been emphasised in this account, in accordance with Ladakh exegesis. In most other accounts, however, it is the offering element that is stressed. Thus Ribbach writes of Western Ladakh:

"According to ancient custom a ceremony was held in the house in the first "ascending" half of each month, that is with the waxing moon. Tibetans call it the lha bsangs coꣳ coꣳ which could be translated as "appeasement of the gods". ... The householder himself would visit each room of the

house with a bowl of incense (bsangs-'phor), usually glowing embers of juniper twigs on which he would blow continually. After this tour of the house he added more incense (ldug-spos) and made a food-offering of dough mixed with butter, salt and onions over which he sprinkled some beer. Both food and incense offering were placed on the edge of the hearth for the pleasure of the gods. At the same time the monks up in the house-temple read extracts from the book bsangs-dpe. They are not prayers. Without any particular sign of reverence the gods are bidden to kindly accept the offering, to enjoy it and in return to spare the donor any harm." (Ribbach 1986 (1940):165) (14)

Sangs describes more than one ritual performance. The most basic sangs consists simply of an offering of burnt incense which is made alone and also as a component of many other rites while the monthly sangs in Ladakh includes additional elements which set it apart. These have been described in order to outline the characteristics of village gods in more detail and in order to show how they are manipulated in ritual. One remark made by a Ladakhi commentator has been ignored for the sake of clarity. It may be recalled that a monk said that the arrow collected wealth and prosperity for the household. This comment is elucidated in section 2.5. The next section moves into the annual cycle directly and it focuses upon the conquest of the land rather than the conquest of demons/dirt.

2.4 The first ploughing (saka) and the conquest of the land

"sa-ga name of one of the lunar mansions, ... and hence also name of a month, part of March and April" (Jaschke p.570)

sa kha phye - "open the mouth of the earth"

a) Description

Saka is discussed as a ritual of conquest which brings life to the land. It is staged as the earth warms. Ice melts and the land begins to change. It becomes wet and green. Things begin to smell and food begins to rot. Saka marks a

time of transition. Collective labour begins outside the house with the manuring of the fields. Lu emerge from their winter hibernation:

"we stop telling stories now because the lu are awake. After skangsol (the autumn ritual of excuse), after the harvest, we can begin again because they will go back to sleep." (Gongma villager)

Two changes are specifically linked with the performance of saka. After the ceremony, a sickle cannot be used until the ritual of first fruits which opens the harvest. If the sickle were used, deformed children would be born (15). Villagers are also exhorted to observe death and birth taboos. If these are broken, the fertility of land and people will be compromised. Once more, it is the period of growth, until the ritual of first fruits, that is specified as a particularly vulnerable time.

The date for saka in Gongma is set by the headman for all of Leh at the end of the first or the beginning of the second month (usually the end of March). The 1982 saka in Gongma is described briefly (16). Early in the morning, the town crier appeared in the centre of the village wearing a special (natitpa) hat and carrying two small "welcome cakes" (drangyes, 'brang rgyas). This hat is also worn by the man in a wedding party who picks out a spouse with the wedding arrow (17). Welcome cakes are also important at weddings. They are distributed to guests just as they are at saka. Although their form varies greatly, they are all built in three tiers with four wings on the topmost level. They evoke images of the central mountain that links the three tiers of the universe and the four cardinal points or continents of Buddhist cosmography. Indeed, there are parallels between

cakes and arrows, both in three levels with four wings. At some weddings, the arrow is planted in the cake (Brauen 1983).

The town crier joined the Mon who was drumming for the attention of the village as well as a boy and girl in ceremonial dress. Both had "mother and father alive", both held welcome offerings. The boy carried smouldering incense and the girl carried a pot of the best "mother water" (beer) (18). As this group assembled, the town crier declared, "from now on birth and death taboos must be observed, from now on, no-one may go outside without hat and goatskin shawl". These precautions are designed to protect the fertility of the land (especially lu) and people.

By this point, men and children were gathering with their animals, dzo. The Mon drummer led a procession to the appointed mother field. He was followed by the town crier, the boy and girl and, lastly, by men and children leading their dzo. All dzo must be brought by all who have land. However, no dzomo (female dzo) are allowed for fear they should miscarry or stop giving milk. The procession settled in the field around a man in their centre who began to read the "trashī namgyad" text(s) (19). By this point, women had joined the assembly. The blessings were recited in a few minutes.

Next, two dzo were chosen according to their auspicious signs to plough the first seven furrows. The Mon drummed. The girl annointed each dzo with beer on the forehead and then walked ahead sprinkling beer, followed by a man leading the animals and another man steering from behind. The boy came last sprinkling barley. Another team followed though they

ploughed only three furrows. The rest, about thirty animals, were yoked turn by turn but they were not given the same offerings.

When all the dzo had ploughed the field, they were turned loose. Men encouraged them to run amok, to trample the field and terrorise the audience, particularly women. Laughs were mixed with screams. Eventually, the animals were rounded up and tethered; the welcome cakes were distributed and the men drank beer. Food and drink were financed by contributions from all those with new-born babies and all those who had bought dzo the previous year.

Later, households in Gongma also stage a small rite on their main field before the crops are actually sown. The first three furrows are planted in the same way as at saka. A man or woman sprinkles special beer in front of the dzo after anointing the animals' foreheads. A man or woman follows, scattering grain.

b) Male conquest and fertility

One image of gender relations stands out: men and male animals plough the earth, trample it and then attack women. This male violence brings about life. Another picture of complementarity between the boy and girl who together make offerings, soften the earth and sow the seed stands apart from the central focus of saka but provides nonetheless an important image of the agricultural division of labour.

The activities of men and male animals (dzo) class land and women together as ones who are forced to be fertile. Successful growth, however, depends upon a number of ritual observances. Use of the sickle will produce deformed

children; failure to observe ritual taboos will damage crops and people. Saka also seems to promote growth, as the food and drink are financed by people with new children and new dzo. These individuals are turned into special sponsors who will thus gain special benefits from the ritual.

While saka seems to bring about "gestation" in the land and in women and to promote growth in new household members as long as ritual taboos are observed, it is nonetheless a dangerous procedure. Dzomo, female animals, are excluded from the ritual. It seems that violence here is constructed in terms of its life-destroying rather than life-bringing aspects. If dzomo were present, they would miscarry and stop producing milk. Unfortunately, I do not know whether pregnant and lactating women are excluded in the same way. Interestingly, one exception is made:

"very occasionally, a dzomo might be taken if she had not calved for three or four years" (man from Mig)

It seems that sterility can be conquered, with violence. Certain types of fertility must be removed from the ritual sphere (dzomo) but others may be woken (non-productive dzomo).

Gods have not been discussed directly for they are not mentioned at saka. The wider context, however, associates gods with arrows. Saka establishes a clear correspondence with the mythical beginnings of cultivation, when an arrow was shot and pierced the land which was then settled and cultivated. The plough has been likened to an arrow: the horizontal beam is called "plough arrow", with a "plough

iron" that pierces the soil at one end and a man guiding the plough at the other. Kaplanian writes:

"il ne me paraît pas absurde de comparer le lancer de la flèche à Da (comme à Chilling) à un premier sillon, à un saka. On comprend alors mieux pourquoi, à l'occasion du saka, un natitpa tient une flèche dans le main, la pointe dirigée vers le bas. Nous avons là un exemple de rapport mythe-rite. ..." (Kaplanian 1983:95)

Two types of conquest have been described. At sangs, a ritual arrow is used to destroy evil. At saka, a plough-arrow is used to bring life to the land. Conquest becomes a subsidiary theme in the next section where arrows are seen in another aspect, as repositories of life. A household ritual is described where the arrow is first used to conquer demons and then to "collect fortune and prosperity." Arrows and similar items are also seen to hold gods in their shrines which are changed at New Year.

2.5 Gods "at home": yanguk and New Year.

I Yanguk (gyang 'gug): storing the crops.

a) Description

Yanguk is performed every autumn by most Gongma households (see appendix 2). It is also performed when a bride (or sometimes a groom) leaves her natal home so as to prevent the bride taking the household fortune with her. It is recommended too in response to a crisis in the household, rather like the similar tsengug (tshe 'gug), to collect life. Yanguk is described in the literature on Ladakh and only a broad outline will be given below (20).

Mig sponsors two yanguk: one is performed by Gelugpa monks during the three days of skangsol; the other is performed by a Nyingmapa monk independently in one day. This latter performance provides the basis for the following

description. In brief, a monk reads the relevant text facing a representative of the household and an arrow resting on a bag of fortune. The monk directs this household member to take the arrow and collect all fortune that may have been lost during the year into a plate of auspicious materials. This fortune is put into the bag which the monk seals at the end of the day.

The boy of the house was appointed to the role of household representative. He was hustled on to a barley swastika in front of the monk, smirking with pleasure and embarrassment and dressed in a ceremonial hat and scarf. Near him was the ritual arrow decorated with a white scarf, which had just been used to perform a preparatory sangs. The arrow was resting on the bag of fortune which was still sealed and next to a plate of auspicious materials.

The monk, facing the boy, sat by the altar with its dough offerings arranged in tiers. All but three of the offerings on the altar were to be kept in the house. At the beginning of the rite, one was taken to the roof for the protectors of religion. Later, a smaller chodpa was taken to the roof "to raise the spiritual power (parka, spar kha) of the phaslha". Towards the end of the day, a third offering which had been placed to one side of the altar was thrown outside for demons, "to get rid of hindrances". The monk began to recite the text. He told me later that he made offerings to Buddhas, to the high gods and then to all other beings. Next, the "lucky things" were listed. Two Mig people collected five kinds of grain, five precious minerals,

sweets, coins, medicines, tea leaves, butter, salt and incense as directed by the monk (21).

The plate was put back near the bag and more offerings were made. Then, the boy was told to prostrate himself and take the arrow in his right hand. A bowl of the first beer was placed on his right side. A sheep leg, in fact the right foreleg of a sheep, was brought from the kitchen and placed in his left hand. The monk returned to his recital as the boy sat down again but, now, the two watched each other closely. At intervals during the reading, the monk would nod and the child would respond with a shout: "victory to the gods", "may fortune be collected" (yang guk). He would then sprinkle beer and prostrate himself.

Once the storma to demons had been thrown, the boy was told to add the lucky things to the bag. The arrow was put back on top. Finally, the monk sealed the bag but I did not see him add the mantra and eight auspicious signs as prescribed. Bag and arrow were returned to the offering room (the ritual had taken place in the "guest room").

These proceedings can be clarified initially with reference to comments made by participants. I was told that the arrow was used to recall fortune lost or mislaid during the year and I was told that the rite was directed particularly to local spirits. This is obvious to Ladakhis because of the sheep leg which they say is an appropriate offering for only lower ranking spirits:

"the sheep leg is food for the masters of the place which keeps them at home and happy" (man from Mig).

Fortune is collected into the bag which has a mythic origin:

"One of the great Tibetan kings suffered ill fortune. He went to Guru Rinpoche and asked him what to do. He was

instructed to perform yanguk using the stomach of a sheep as the bag and kidneys as wealth to put inside. Nowadays, an ordinary bag is used and the kidneys are represented by auspicious materials" (version from a man in the house).

Below, I explore what might have been mislaid in relation to the timing of the rite as well as the symbolism of the arrow resting on the bag. The identity of the insider is also noted in relation to comments made in Chapter 1.

b) The pot and the arrow

The choice of a representative to participate in yanguk provides a clear illustration of the privileged relationship between household ritual and male gender, mentioned in the last chapter. I asked why the boy had been chosen:

"One person has to do yanguk. Usually, it is the father or the eldest son because the person who does yanguk is not allowed to leave the house. If he leaves the house, if he marries somewhere else, our prosperity will run away. We would lose all our luck and good fortune.

(in reply to my question) "Women can do yanguk but they never have here. It has to be someone who will never leave the house and take away its fortune. This is the first time that Nono (the young boy) has done yanguk. Grandfather is too old. (The child's father) is at work."

The boy was chosen because he was not expected to leave Mig. He is the only son of the eldest son of the household and so he is seen as the most permanent of male residents. In fact, the eldest daughter of the house will not leave either. I was told that women might, in theory, be chosen but, in practice, they are not. A male household member is seen to be nearer to the gods and spirits of the place and thus more able to approach them in ritual.

Ladakhis say vaguely that the fortune in the bag contains: "anything lost during the year". It is possible, however, to interpret the ritual in relation to the appropriation from the land that has just taken place.

Yanguk takes place when the lu go into hibernation. It might be said that lu have been cut down in the crops and taken into the storeroom where their shrine is found. Perhaps, they are also symbolically sealed inside a "bag of fortune", containing crops, to provide for the household during the coming year (22).

Ladakhis focus upon the bag of fortune but the ritual arrow is equally important to my analysis. The central image, in this context, is the planted arrow. The bag, it will be recalled, is a stomach. It contains food that nourishes the life planted on top of the bag. Since the rite is described as a ritual to the local spirits, it seems plausible to suggest that these are anchored firmly in the house, in their bodies and food supplies. Support for this reading can be found in the following discussion of a type of arrow, the soul wood, that holds a god in a more permanent ritual place, a shrine.

Yanguk closes the harvest season together with skangsol, the autumn "excuse" for damage caused to living beings during the agricultural cycle. If the ritual is tied to the agrarian cycle, then it may be seen to seal crops, related to lu, inside the house. The planted arrow contains life in the household; in particular, local spirits but also all life that will be nourished over the coming year.

II New Year and the changing of the shrine (lhatho sponches)

a) Description

New Year, losar (lo gsar), begins in the middle of the tenth month. It is sometimes described as the farmer's or agricultural New Year (sonam losar) to distinguish it from

the "king's" or "Tibetan" New Year which leads into the first month. A brief summary of the major events in Gongma is given to add depth to the picture of the household described earlier but the focus remains with gods and their homes.

Winter is a time of plenty. Marriages are celebrated; so too, ideally, are deaths. There is time and food to celebrate New Year now that the last agricultural tasks have been completed. In Mig, one woman was sent to buy white sugar and white wheat flour. A brother was sent to fetch foods for ritual. Another brother was commissioned to bring back a quarter of a yak from the frozen plains of Chang Thang. Ani busied herself making beer and bread.

On the 15th, children appear with fireworks and firebrands to announce that "the auspicious time has begun in Leh". On the 25th, butter lamps are lit on every window and rooftop as well as threshing floors, stables, water mills, religious structures and traditionally appointed mountain tops and trees. The birthday of Tsongkhapa (founder of the Gelugpa sect) is celebrated. From the morning of the 25th until the 30th, Mon drumming wakes the villagers in the early hours. Children roam the village to collect straw and fodder for the firebrands that they will burn on the 30th. They sing repeatedly until they receive a contribution from every house. From the 1st to the 3rd of the month, visits are made.

The major household events begin on the evening of the 29th when everyone, generally even monk relatives, has returned home. The "soup of the nine" is served, with nine ingredients in small dough balls. The "earth of the ninth", which has been blessed, is sprinkled in the stable. Small

dough "ibex" (skyin) are fashioned and arranged on the kitchen shelves. One (or more) of these will be "killed" later; this is all that remains of animal sacrifice in Gongma. At Mig, the family slept for a few hours after dinner. At 3.00 am, early on the 30th, the household awoke and made offerings of untouched foods and incense to the skyin and to gods (lhasolches). The eldest son of the house then collected offerings to take to the cremation ground (shimi). He collected some of the untouched foods together with the central offering, a special round dough pudding with oil in the top, seven of the special new year pastries (khura) and seven "sour breads" (skyurchuk). The dough, paba, is made of pea and barley flour that is partly pre-cooked before grinding and later boiled with water. This offering is known as the food of the 30th (stonzan) and it bears a close resemblance to the thabzan given subsequently.

I accompanied the eldest son to the cremation ground. We circumambulated the monastery before reaching the cremation oven where a lamp was lit and a clearing made. The man from Mig lit a fire and made offerings to six named ancestors. Untouched foods were offered individually to each on stone plates. We waited for our shimi partners, who were making offerings to their ancestors at neighbouring cremation ovens, and then pooled all our offerings to divide them afresh. After eating and drinking together, we returned to the house at 8.00 am with our share. The remains of the meal which is offered first to gods and ibex, then to ancestors and to the men who made offerings to them are shared out finally at home.

During the day of the 30th, shimi partners feast each other. Mig belongs to a group of three houses, which now includes khangun. A new rota has been established recently according to which one house hosts the party every three years. The party is markedly informal with men and women sitting and drinking together.

The evening of the 30th marks the height of the celebration of the house. Outsiders are barred. The flickering of butter lamps is suddenly swamped by the flare of a great fire that has been lit outside by village children, with materials collected during the week. As the fire dies down, children run as far from the village as they can with firebrands (metho). These are thrown away with shouts. The children bring back blocks of ice to their own houses.

From the kitchen, we heard hepla hep from the boy of the house, the exclamation that is made whilst carrying a heavy load. His father called out from inside, "What are you bringing?"

The child replied, "I have a golden stone."

From the house: "Where are you taking it?"

"I am taking it to the storeroom."

The door was opened and the boy took his block of ice to the storeroom. This was the version of the "golden stone" (seri pholo) exchange at Mig (23).

At yanguk, all that had been lost during the year was gathered into the house. It was also suggested that the crops were ritually appropriated from nature. At New Year, a further appropriation takes place. Ice, representing wealth and life, is taken inside to the shrine of lu and the store

of grain. While yanguk focuses primarily on the cycle that is ending, New Year looks forward to the next. Ice is a pledge of future life that will come with the spring melt.

The second lhasolches now takes place. It involves similar untouched offerings although the dough pudding is, this time, called "stove pudding" or "stove food" (thabzan). Grandfather offered incense to all the local gods from the village above Gongma to Leh below. He then made offerings to each, more or less repeating the same names in the same order (24). A dedication to the stove should have followed but it was forgotten. Instead, grandfather made offerings to other parts of the kitchen. Plates of food were given to "the turquoise capital;" "the main or mother beam of gold;" the small twigs which fill in the gaps between the cross beams, "the sticks of pearl;" and the earth which is scattered on top, "the roof soil of phemar" (a sweetened dough mixed with butter) (25). As the offerings were made, Grandfather said: "Eat harmoniously together, this is your share for the year."

Grandfather's eldest son then threw some of the untouched food backwards out of the kitchen door and the "smoke hole" in the roof, saying:

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

The offerings remain in place for three or four days. The round dough pudding is cut up and shared between everyone, including animals. Remains from the meal must stay inside the house.

Afterwards, another firebrand (galme) is dispatched. It is a more typical storma for it is stuffed with bad things

and surrounded by changbu, small pieces of dough clenched in the fist and passed over the body. The storma was lit inside the house and a younger brother stamped out the fire, crying:

"I have come from heaven (stanglha), I am a hero (spag, dpa' bo). May all the enemies (dra, dgra) from the right be finished. I have come from the underworld (yoklu), I am a hero. May all the enemies from the left be finished. I have come from the middle world (par~~sam~~), I am a heroine. May all the devils from every direction be finished."

With this, he ran from the house and threw away the torch. No-one could leave the house until the following morning.

At Mig, this was the end of the day but most households decorate their walls to celebrate the reaffirmation of the household. Offerings have been made to all inside, including gods, skyin, ancestors and living household members. Evil has been discarded while wealth has been installed in the storeroom. There are other traditions which are not kept by Mig. Most shrines to phaslha in Gongma are changed on this night, the night of the 30th. The phas~~pun~~ to which Mig belongs changes its shrine, at another house, on the 3rd. Mig members do not attend the rite and so I describe it at second hand below, once the intervening events have been briefly outlined.

The doors of the house are opened on the first of the month and, according to fashion in Leh, colleagues and friends are welcomed for meals or just biscuits and tea. Relationships in the village are also reaffirmed; ties with Mon and Gara households are recognised and many pay their respects to the kalon family, the hereditary prime minister, in Leh. Gongmapa do not visit the monastery or the headman, as in many villages. These visits are constructed in hierarchical form where the visitor or supplicant prostrates

him/herself as s/he makes a gift. The one visited returns a gift or hospitality. This hierarchical pattern is not evident during the visits between friends who may act both as host and guest at different times of the day.

On the first of the month or shortly afterwards, relatives may also be invited to feasts celebrating their recent marriage or the birth of a child. From the first to the third, women take beer to their relatives and receive thabzan gifts, which include the same round dough, bread and pastry that was earlier given to gods, ibex, ancestors and household members. This series of exchanges between women is discussed in the next section.

In Gongma, New Year draws to a close when the new moon is welcomed on the third of the month at tshe tshe. As the moon appears, incense, kalchor (or karchor, pure offerings), a variety of untouched foods, a spindle with wool, the dough ibex and a sour bread painted white on one side and black on the other are taken to the roof. Turn by turn, everyone in the house offers incense and kalchor to the new moon. The dough animals are held on a plate towards the moon. When I was present in 1981, Grandfather sang:

Ishe tshe, tshe tshe, we have finished the bad year and now we welcome the new. It is an auspicious day. May there be no illness until next year and may we find everyone laughing next year in the same way that they are now."

Grandfather "killed" one of the dough figures (Dzomo Ruyon) by pulling off her head and everyone ate a little together with something of the other foods. The other animals were turned on their sides "as if they were dead" and later given to children (26). The bread was circled around the outside of the group, white side up, while the woman of the house

span some yarn. A brother then threw it as far as he could in the direction of the new moon, shouting:

"May all bad things be finished; illness, fever, enemies, "bad luck", "misfortune", hindrances, whatever there is."
(27)

A firework is let off and everyone goes back inside (28).

On the third of the month, the shrine to Mig's phaslha is changed. It may be recalled that the shrine is made of a base of clay with juniper branches tied on top with scarves. Arrows are often interspersed with the branches. In the centre of the structure is a soul wood (shrokshing), an arrow shaft or similar piece of wood which rests upon a pot (pumpa), containing all types of grain and shavings of precious minerals. The pot is found in the base and the soul wood in the centre of the branches.

A suitably purified senior man is chosen to open the pot, renew its contents and the branches. Brief accounts from Mig revealed that the contents of the pot were first of all examined so as to foretell the future of the crops in the coming year. If one type of grain had dried out, that crop would be bad; if another had swollen, it would be plentiful. The pot is filled afresh or simply topped up and replaced. Then, new branches of juniper with scarves and prayer flags are added to the top. Finally, the base is repainted white, with red corners "to frighten away the tsan".

A man from the village of Chilling described a more elaborate procedure which I paraphrase:

The pot is renewed; a black and a white stone, which have been cleaned, are added together with 60 to 70 arrows which are put in the middle of the new juniper branches. Before the pot is changed, the soul wood on top of it is transferred to a chodpa (dough offering) so that the god can be moved while the shrine is prepared. Afterwards, the

god is put back in the shrine in the soul wood. The horns of the goat that is killed are added to the juniper branches every year." (see also Rigal 1985:182-5)

These additional arrows are akin to the central soul wood for, as Grandfather from Mig said,

"There are many arrows in a lhatho (shrine). If you want to steal the god, you have to take an arrow and run very quickly to build a new shrine (with it)."

Other accounts mention additional ritual items. A man from Leh described the pot in the shrine and said that the lhatho also has

"an arrow which is for spiritual power (parka), to make the spiritual power of the god high in the same way as prayer flags. It has a spear for the soul (shrok) of the god."

In this account, the arrow raises the god's spiritual power like the ritual arrow at sanggs while a separate spear holds its soul (see also Kaplanian 1981:209). The discussion below focuses just upon the central soul wood planted on top of a pot of precious things. This is generally described as a wooden arrow but, sometimes, as a wooden spear or dagger.

Other shrines in Gongma are associated with slightly different procedures. Gongma has two village shrines which are changed in the fourth and fifth months. The two gods are associated with their respective village divisions but Nezer gyapo is also seen as the protector of the whole village. The shrine to the lesser god, Traltse gyamo is changed on "Buddha's birthday", on the 15th of the 4th month. Untouched beer is offered and the sticks of various white woods (which contrast with the juniper used in household shrines) and white scarves are replaced. Beer is left in a yak horn in the body of the shrine. I was told that there was a pot inside the base but, as it was never changed, villagers were understandably vague on its composition. The shrine to the

major village god, Nezer gyapp, is changed on the 15th of the 5th month. This is subject to the same attention; the branches are renewed and beer is left in a yak horn. Below the horn, however, there is a pot like the one mentioned above and this is read and changed in the same way as in the household ceremony. The yak horn is also filled with untouched beer at many village events such as the 8th and 10th days of every month and during the largest collective endeavour of bunqlud (30).

New Year is drawing to a close. All that remains, appropriately, is the party celebrated by the new generation. From the 4th to the 7th, children collect contributions for a picnic in groups that tour the whole Leh area. They sing for food (29) which is shared out at a picnic held on or after the 7th. These are the children who performed the first exorcism, who brought fertility into their households, who eat the dough ibex and who now celebrate their coming lives in the New Year. They also wreak havoc, playing the hooligan and the fool.

There is one last exorcism that might be mentioned even though it is not formally tied to New Year. On the 15th of the 11th month the village stewards arrange "street soup" (shrangtug). The village assembles for a meal of soup and then storma are thrown. The stewards stand at the top of a line of flour with three breads, painted white on one side and black on the other. They shout a refrain similar to the one heard at New Year and throw the breads as far as they can outside the village. As they run, the line of flour attaching them to the village is quickly obliterated, as in

many exorcistic rites, so that the evil cannot return. Additions are made to prayer flags in the village and rooftops of houses and Gongmapa begin to turn their attention towards other matters. The monastery festivals are beginning and then there is the king's New Year leading into the religious devotions of the first month, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

b) The shrine: god and body

Secular New Year renews the household. All house members, including the dead and spirits, have shared communion meals together with central structures of the house. The boundaries of the unit have been reaffirmed as the bad from the old year is thrown away and the shrines tended. Overall, the earlier events focus upon the household and its internal order whilst the later events look outwards to relations between friends and the neighbourhood (on the first day of the month) as well as affinal ties celebrated between women with their thabzan exchanges (as discussed below). At New Year, the household is ritually constructed as a world in itself, a microcosm of the universe, before it is turned outwards, to other like units, to superiors and inferiors, and to affines. Some of the rituals focus on exorcism and some on offering but, overall, the two themes are combined. A summary of Gongma New Year has been given in order to reinforce the picture of the household described earlier.

Previously, the embodiment of spirits has been described largely in terms of dough objects. Although I saw no shrine changed, the accounts cited in this section all describe a soul wood that is combined with a pot of valuables. The soul

wood is said to hold the god while the pot is said to keep it happy, to keep it at home. The pot can be seen as an anchor, kin to the dough objects that provide more temporary ritual places for spirits and also to the bag at yanguk. The divination associated with the shrine establishes that the contents of the pot change over time. Since the god is planted directly above the pot, it may be assumed that the god consumes this food and that the future is predicted in the god's leftovers.

The pot can be seen then as a body or food supply that anchors a god in its home in the same way as other ritual containers. However, this particular configuration of pot and arrow enables more specific associations to be made between domestic ritual, the larger household and the agrarian cycle. There are two containers. One is the "arrow". The soul wood is the "arrow" that is most explicitly described as a container for the god. The other is the "pot", a body, stomach or store of food. In earlier sections, this latter container was related to lu. At saka, it was suggested, lu were associated with the land and woken by the plough-arrow. At yanguk, it was suggested, lu could be seen in the gathered crops, "sent to sleep" as they are brought inside and underneath the ritual arrow. The New Year rituals provide an appropriate point at which to refine the characterisation of these spirits by comparing the two types of household shrine.

Shrines to lu are similar to the base of a god's shrine. They generally form an unadorned white clay block though, in

some parts of Ladakh, the block is capped with a white clay ball. This unobtrusive block is generally found in the storeroom. The base of a god's shrine is called bang and stores of grain in the floor of a storeroom are called panga (bang ba); the shrine to lu is called a lu store, lubang. From the outside, then, the lu shrine is comparable to the base of a god's shrine though it lacks any decoration. Inside, the shrines are more difficult to compare. I have never seen inside shrines and few Ladakhis were clear about the internal organisation of a lu shrine for it is not regularly changed. Some Ladakhis support Kaplanian's account of lubang, containing both pot and arrow (Kaplanian 1981:212). Most, however, claimed that there is no soul wood in a lu shrine, only the pot of precious materials. The pot never includes iron for fear of wounding the lu. The man cited above, who spoke of a spear to hold the god in its shrine, spoke also of shrines to lu:

"A storeroom for the lu is made in the lubang. You collect the lu and much wealth together with untouched offerings of grain and you put them all in a pot. A monk consecrates it (rabnes, rab gnas) and then the lu stays there."

This structure is contrasted to the palace (phodrang) made for a god:

"The palace for the god is the lhatho which has a pot like the lubang for the god to live in if it likes. But, the lhatho also has other things. It has an arrow which is for spiritual power, to make the spiritual power of the god high in the same way as prayer flags. It has a spear for the soul of the god. The whole thing is its palace. This is different from the lubang which has only a pot and a house for the lu."

Whatever the internal configuration of a shrine to lu, it is clear that the pot is seen as the most integral part of this type of shrine (31).

The pot inside a ly shrine is changed only in unusual circumstances. Earlier descriptions of yanguk and the "golden stone" episode at New Year suggest that the shrine is renewed from the outside. It is possible then to suggest that the ly shrine is part of a larger structure, of the household itself. The house can be seen as a shrine writ large, composed of a stomach or store underneath a soul wood. The soul wood can be seen as the central pillar capped by the god's shrine (13). The corporate "soul" of a household is held in its "food" or "body", that is, the storeroom and ly shrine.

The lhatho then replicates this larger structure, holding a god above a body and food supply. The lhatho and the house as a whole mirror each other. They are contrasted to the ly shrine which consists simply of a store.

This particular interpretation is just one of many that might be suggested. It is chosen in relation to the discussion in Chapter 1, which showed that the union between god and ly was a potent image of fertility. Gods and ly are individually inert; gods sterile in the frozen wastes and ly hibernating in the earth. People initiate a partnership between them, through which they bring life but also threats to life. The discussion of ritual arrows and pots that has been presented in this chapter help to explain the evocative power of the dadar song, cited in Chapter 1, with its image of a wedding arrow planted upon a pot of barley. This song speaks to the complex movements of the household in relation to its fields and pastures over the course of the village year. It speaks also to the movements associated with other unions; between husband and wife and, as shown in chapter 4,

between god and person in an oracle. More generally, this focus on the embodiment of gods is chosen in order to provide background to the chapters on oracles. This interpretation of household shrines has been selected because it suggests that, in some contexts, lu may be seen as bodies and food for gods.

It is clear that the incorporation of food into the household and the person over the year is fraught with danger and hedged around with rites of protection. In the last section of the chapter, the feeding of human rather than spirit guests is described in order to explore the dangers associated with ingestion. This last section does not deal directly with the domestication of gods but it is important to the wider topic. First, the rituals discussed above are set in an annual cycle of hospitality and work just as much as a natural cycle of seasons. A brief description makes it easier to see the continuities between the entertaining of spirits and people. Second, this material is important to a subsequent discussion of possession and particularly to the topic of women's affliction discussed in Chapter 5.

2.6 Hospitality, work and gender

Hospitality offered to spirits is coercive; so is the process of entertaining people. Ortner's analysis of the yangdzi mechanism amongst the Sherpa provided the basis for her discussion of hospitality in general:

"The manipulative power of food and feeding is embodied in the Sherpa institution of yangdzi. In a yangdzi transaction, an individual brings a token gift of beer and/or food to another in a culturally formalized manner, and then asks the other for a favour..." (Ortner 1978a:68)

As Ortner notes, social hospitality provides an explicit framework for ritual action:

"The Sherpas make the explicit analogy between the offering ritual and social hospitality. The people are the hosts, the gods are their guests. The people invite the gods to the human realm, make them comfortable, and give them food and drink, all of which is meant to give them pleasure, "to make them happy" so that they will want to "help" humanity by providing protection from the demons." (ibid:141)

In Ladakh, a gender asymmetry is constructed through hospitality. Women and particularly younger women are seen to live partly between households in contrast to men who are firmly contained within just one unit. Women's cross-cutting ties are celebrated for the life they bring to the house, as shown in the description of thabzan exchanges. At other times, however, these ties are devalued and women are not allocated to roles during formal entertainments or certain labour exchanges between households. Moreover, women are thought to be particularly likely to suffer and cause harm at such occasions.

a) Thabzan: women's New Year gifts

From the 1st to the 3rd of the month in Gongma, thabzan is given to visiting relatives, almost always women. The visitor brings a pot of beer into the house and salutes everyone, beginning with the stove and then the highest in rank. She is forced to eat a proper meal nowadays before leaving with her thabzan, the same round dough, bread and pastry that was such a prominent part of the New Year offerings. She is also given sweet "butter dough" (phemar). During these few days, a woman makes careful calculations about gifts she will receive as some of these will generally be redistributed from her own house. The exchanges are made relatively informally in contrast to the earlier offerings of stove food and food of the 30th (stonzan) (p.154,156 above).

These New Year exchanges between women are initiated by marriage, more specifically, by the "feast for relatives" (nyenches or nyendron) that is arranged in the girl's house to celebrate the alliance that has taken place (32). A wife makes her first visit to her natal home after the wedding when she is welcomed by all her own relatives as well as a few affines. The ties that are affirmed between the wife and guests on her side of the family are those that are commemorated annually in thabzan exchanges. In the Leh area, a wife begins her married life with many visits; she may collect gifts from twenty houses at New Year. Over time, however, fewer visits are made and a woman tends to visit just two or three houses at the time that she begins to make gifts to the next generation. It is generally well-established "mothers" who give thabzan to women in their "daughter's" generation. Indeed, it is the mother-daughter relationship that is seen as the core exchange and, in other areas of Ladakh, a wife only ever visits her own natal house and, after her mother has died, her mother's natal house.

These exchanges complete the regeneration of the household described in the last section. The contribution of those who have married into a house are celebrated with the gifts they bring every year from the outside. Women thus keep open the paths created between affinally related households and, during the redistribution of food, they open up other paths with, for example, the kin of affines.

Individual women have unique thabzan relationships. This can be shown by looking at two women; Chorol who had just eloped and ani who had never married. Chorol's marriage had not been "properly" performed and so it

was difficult to arrange a feast for the relatives. I was told:

"The feast for relatives has to be done properly, otherwise, she (Chorol) will only get thabzan from her very closest relatives. The close ones are those who will continue to give to Chorol's child after her death."

A feast was promised by the groom's household. Forty houses were to be invited on Chorol's side of the family. Chorol would receive thabzan from all of these people. The feast never happened. New Year approached and the family complained:

"Chorol now has no value (rin med)."

However, when the time came, Chorol did collect gifts from her family and she told me that she had visited about ten houses:

"I got lots of invitations. I accepted most of them because I liked the people. But, I would not go to K. because..."

Chorol collected but did not make gifts. She will not give thabzan until she occupies a senior position in whichever household she chooses or makes. At that time, it was unclear where Chorol and her husband were living.

Ani in Mig house had never married and so she had made no new thabzan links. However, every year, she did collect gifts from two houses, from her mother's house and her father's mother's house. Relationships with women from these houses, who married into Mig, are also commemorated in another way at New Year. These women are two of the named ancestors honoured at shimi. Ani explained her visits in a number of ways:

"I go on behalf of the women who married here but who are now dead. The gifts are for their daughters."

"Thabzan is just for me because the others have the land."
However, she also said that the gifts were shared out at home and that, sometimes, she sent her elder brother to collect them:

"It is alright for him to go on my behalf. We all share the food at home."

Ani also claimed that she made gifts to visiting women but, at the two New Years when I was in Gongma, she gave nothing.

These few comments show that differences are expressed between women with the giving and receiving of thabzan. Younger women who are recently married visit a number of houses, as they please. They accept gifts from their seniors, both from their real mother and women in her generation. They do not make gifts. Older women visit only their natal home (if they have married out) and the household from which their mother came, if she has died. Migi ani, in fact, also visited the house from which her father's mother had married. Elder women usually give more than they receive; they give to their (real) daughters and to women in their daughter's generation.

Thabzan exchanges are virtually ignored in accounts of New Year and carry none of the importance attached to the other food offerings described. However, it is apparent that women's links between households are celebrated for the life they bring to their own homes. At the same time, it can be seen that a contrast is established between younger and recently married women and their "mothers". The former go where they like, irrespective of household membership, which is still unclear. Younger women are also associated with the witchcraft attacks described in Chapter 5 and it seems that

they are too much "in-between". With time, however, they visit fewer houses and their visits are based on household rather than personal ties; they also give thabzan to the next generation. The older woman, then, is firmly established as a senior in just one household, often as a mother. The life that she has brought and continues to bring to this one house is celebrated without any of the negative connotations associated with younger women.

Thabzan in the Leh area involves feeding as well as the exchange of gifts. Younger women are forced to eat and drink where they visit. New Year is also the time when relatives are invited to meals celebrating a recent marriage or the birth of a child. At such occasions, women behave in different ways from men, both as guests and as hosts. There is not space to describe village hospitality in detail but a short description will illustrate the differences in gender roles associated with informal and more formal hospitality. These differences will be linked to exchanges of labour between households.

b) Hospitality and gender

Women are largely responsible for everyday production, including the preparation of food and drink. Their everyday work is associated with informal exchanges between neighbours and friends; in the fields, fetching water, spinning, collecting wild vegetables or elsewhere. Thus, ani, the woman of the house in Mig would often be found with neighbours. She might be baking bread but she never had the "sour dough" used to leaven bread. So, she would visit her neighbour to borrow some. If the neighbour had none, she would tell ani where to go. The neighbour would have a

slightly different personal network to which ani would be referred. If a piece of sour dough were followed back to its inception, it would be found to have travelled through most of the houses in the village. Similar patterns can be traced in the exchange of beer or other household items, information and general village gossip. When a woman drops in, she is given a cup of tea and, sometimes, she is fed. During such informal hospitality, the women will work together.

Women are seen to organise household production through personal ties with other women as well as more formally constituted ties between households. Men rarely "drop in" to each other's houses like women though they will gather outside. Children, however, are often sent around the village on errands.

On more formal occasions, women are displaced from hosting roles and they do not participate as guests in the same way as men. It is suggested that images of women's everyday work inform their behaviour during formal hospitality. The organisation of hospitality is best seen through an example. Skangsol in Mig provides an illustration as one of the simpler but still formal village entertainments (33). Mig, the hosting household, is to force food and drink on guests. Food and drink are seen to have natural properties which will alter the mood of guests (see also Ortner 1970 (S Paul), 1978a:86) and negotiations, such as marriage, are named after the "beers" offered: to accept food and drink is tantamount to accepting the proposal. Hospitality, then, is a powerful social force. Hosts hope to engender the right moods and they fear that they might be

refused or that their offerings might cause illness and quarrels. Guests are, at least initially, reluctant to accept what they are given; they are especially worried about jealousy, pollution and poison (34) which might be ingested with food. Accordingly, hosts press food and drink tirelessly upon their guests who initially refuse with equal persistence. All guests show zangq; modesty, shyness, the "polite refusal" (35). However, a guest's initial refusal must be broken down. In the end, guests are bound to accept because, to continue to refuse for too long is to cast aspersions upon your host and the quality of his food and drink, to be seen no longer as moderate and polite but, all of a sudden, posq, proud or arrogant. At formal entertainments, it is men who press food and drink upon their guests and women who are generally seen to show most zangq.

Monks spent three days at Mig during skangqol. On the last day, they were fed by men rather than women according to the formal hospitality they received. Meanwhile, food was prepared for a woman who had recently married from the village, who came with her husband, his parents and maternal uncle and the woman who had acted as "helper" (bagroq) at the wedding, the wife's father's sister. This party was fed in another room. Finally, a feast was held for the village once the monks had left.

As usual, ani had prepared the scene; brewing beer, preparing some of the food, organising invitations and, for the previous two days, serving monks. On the day, she was displaced. A brother acted as cook and a brother-in-law took over as "server" (drenqa). Two other roles had been allocated. Another brother was ritual assistant to the monks

and an outsider, a woman, was appointed as "the one to tend the stove" (thabma). This allocation was explained by one of the brothers as follows:

"it is better to have a man because people aren't afraid to eat what he has cooked. We should have asked an outsider because then we wouldn't be blamed if everything wasn't perfect... But, we left it too late and no-one was free."

The conversation turned to Sh. mother, the stove-tender:

A few days before, some of her relatives had complained of sore throats. The daughter-in-law at Sh. had been the cook at their skangsol some two or three weeks before the illness. M. from Mig spoke about the quarrel that developed with some relish. The ill relatives threatened to go to Sh. mother and tell her that they had been poisoned. The daughter-in-law told them that they were stupid, what could they prove? M. interpreted the incident for me. The cook must have wished ill against one person in particular, maybe she even put poison in her food. But, he added, there is always a danger that you will affect other people as well, especially if they share a similar "sign" (an astrological term, lit. "element", khams). M. had told me all this in order to explain why the mother was available for help - everyone else was afraid that she too might cause damage. There was no question of asking her to cook, not only was she a woman but someone who might poison and pollute others. For similar reasons, "it is better for a man to do the work of server".

This incident shows that women should not cook and serve on formal occasions because they might cause illness. This propensity is intrinsic to the lives they lead in a partially separate woman's world that is not bound by household boundaries and to their natures which, it will be recalled, are lower on the karmic scale than men's. They are also said to have lower spiritual power (parka) than men.

The zang that women show as guests is related to a similar distinction. Just as women are more likely to cause harm, so they are more vulnerable to harm. They must be careful not to lose their self-restraint altogether for fear that they might take in something bad that they will not be

able to digest. At the "bride feast", the major guest did not quite fit this picture. She resisted classification as a guest, trying to stay in the kitchen. She also drank beer but only in the kitchen and she showed no more zanggs than her menfolk. This behaviour was possible because she knew her hosts. Even so, she was seen to conform to etiquette in the end because she did eventually accept her role as guest and as she began to behave formally, so she showed zanggs:

The guests were eventually ushered into a special room and forced to behave like guests. Endless pots of beer and tea were taken to the guest room. Periodically, there was a bowl of chapatti and sauce or some breads. Dinner (based on meat and rice) was served 3 or 4 hours after the guests had arrived, just as the men were falling into a drunken stupor and the women into a torpor of boredom. Each of the guests ate a little, then the men handed food to the women and the women emptied their own plates into their bags, stuffing the stickier sauces in between the chapatti and breads. Tashi, the bride, began the evening by giving some breads and money to ani in the kitchen. Ani returned a gift of money and scarf to the new couple when she brought dinner. A further exchange took place at the end of the evening as bride and groom made formal farewells and ani gave each guest two breads. (She told me, shamefaced, that they were bazaar breads). Tashi took advantage of her initial presentation to avoid leaving the kitchen. After a while, she was forced to join the others but she kept returning to the kitchen to gossip. She even drank some beer.

In the guest room, Tashi joined the others in a conspicuous display of zanggs. Everyone covered their bowls and cups saying mi tung le, "I shan't drink", ma zhu le, "please don't serve." At the beginning, no-one would sit and everyone tried to demean themselves by sitting low, though they agreed to sit in the proper places eventually.

Once the men had agreed to drink, there was a noticeable difference. They resisted the first drink for some time. At last, they were persuaded to drink three bowls of the first (strongest) beer in the proper ceremonial fashion, drinking the bowl dry. Later, they were served normal beer in a normal way, that is, they did not have to drain the cup every time a host passed. But, they found it much harder to refuse, partly because they had shown that they did drink (alcohol) and therefore had no reasonable grounds for refusal. They were placed in the position of all male guests: they could not refuse beer without leaving and they could not leave until they had eaten.

As the evening wore on, men from the hosting family spent more and more time with their guests, crouching the other side of the table, joining the drinking, chatting and laughing happily with the ones who had so recently elicited very formal and correct behaviour as well as obvious embarrassment. Tashi and her aunt joined in, they knew the family well. The mother-in-law, however, looked restless and ill at ease, she scarcely spoke.

This account confirms the importance of alcohol in discriminating between men and women during feasts. Alcohol comes to be seen as a crucial mechanism for achieving both good and bad relations among men and these stand for the relations established between households. At the bride feast, alcohol was first served formally, refused and eventually accepted formally. Later, it was accepted more readily. Eventually, the distinction between host and guest virtually disappeared and alcohol was shared. The feast had become a drinking session for men, producing, in this case, a new warmth between near strangers but often ending in quarrels and ill-feeling. The momentary transcendence of the normally impenetrable wall of moderation and self-restraint between men is also seen to bring their households together. Women, it seems, are said to show more zangs because their refusal to partake is never overcome; they do not drink alcohol (publicly).

Behaviour during the entertainment is related to activities before and afterwards, as hinted in the account above. Tashi brought some offerings and took others away. The women took their meals (or a substantial amount of cooked food) home with them. Food is typically taken to and from feasts and women take, collect and distribute most items. Men do this work as well but less often. Women can thus be seen as the primary mediators between everyday and special

occasions, gradually constructing and deconstructing the formal world. Ihabzan have provided an example of the ambiguity involved. Items are given relatively informally, usually by women to women. They are often dismissed as items of little importance but they are also celebrated as exchanges which make the household itself possible.

The bride feast began as the monks were leaving. A third entertainment was also taking place:

Ani gave soup to the village children in the afternoon. They took special "butter dough" home with them. In the evening, when the monks had left and the guests to the bride feast arrived, I was surprised to see M. locking most of the doors. I understood why when I saw the children coming back, somewhat ahead of their parents. They stood outside and periodically roamed the house, helping themselves to beer in the cups that they had kept tucked into their clothes. Several got drunk, several were beaten, almost all were thrown out of the house at least twice before they decided to leave a couple of hours later.

None of the girls came back in the evening. Almost all the adults were men. There were 3 or 4 women who sat resolutely in the kitchen. It was impossible to make them behave like guests: one got up to fill a pitcher of beer, another tended the fire while Sh. mother went to find dung, a third checked the rice as M. disappeared to help serve. They drank tea and the occasional glass of beer. As far as I could see, they also ate what was given to them at about 11.00 p.m., by whoever happened to be in the kitchen at the time.

About 20 men were eventually seated in a single line after the usual negotiations. They were persuaded to drink ceremonially and, later, they were given ordinary beer in the ordinary way. They were served by men all evening and, though there were no quarrels this time, there was a lot of noise and a few jokes that worried the hosts.

All the guests had left by midnight once the meal had been dispatched with the usual speed, in about five minutes. The hosts then ate. Only the stove tender abstained. She was given a little of everything to take home. The next day, the dough cones blessed by monks (tshogs) were distributed to all the houses in the village.

Once more, men entertain men. In this case, most village women refuse to attend. Only close neighbours came, "to help". At large feasts, where women are obliged to attend

and forced to behave formally, they are still full of zanggs and detached from what is seen to be the central process of getting drunk.

Earlier, it was suggested that women are associated with an image of informal work and hospitality. During feasts, women hosts are replaced by men and women guests do not participate as fully as men. However, formal entertainments are constructed and deconstructed by women collecting, taking, receiving and redistributing food through their own personal networks. It is appropriate, then, that the central part of the feast should involve men who get drunk for, if women are seen to stand somewhat in-between households, then men can be seen as true insiders. One important aspect of feasting concerns the process of gathering representatives of households together and then breaking down the separating walls. The transcendence of household boundaries comes to be seen as a process generated by men who drink sociably together (36).

This brief account of hospitality may be completed by reference to formal exchanges between households. Two types of exchange have been mentioned. The major manuring of the fields, bunqlud, calls for a wider formal co-operation in Gongma than any other agricultural task. There is a village rota which organises each house in turn to receive all the donkeys in that half of the village on a given day to carry manure to the fields. Labour is also exchanged and calculations are based on strict reciprocity between men. However, the work process also depends upon a less visible pattern of organisation, feeding, that is organised by women. While the labour of men was exchanged between households on a

formal basis, labour in the kitchen was recruited through informal ties between women. The three women who helped ani on the day of Mig's bun^uglud were invited by ani herself on the basis of personal ties that were not formally calculated. Angmo also helped in the fields that day but, unlike the men of the house, she was not obliged to return her labour to any other household.

A second limited exchange was mentioned in relation to ploughing. A langde partnership is often made between two households in order to put together a team of two dzo. Again, formal calculations are made and each day of dzo or adult labour is returned. During this period, women's work is reckoned as well as men's. Once more, however, work in the kitchen is not calculated:

"For bun^uglud, only men can do the reciprocal labour. For langde, at ploughing, women can go as labour to sow the seeds, to distribute the manure and to make the fields level." (Mig man)

Both these work processes depend upon food and drink that "make people work" without "making them lazy". Hospitality is formulated around conventionally defined grades of beer and foods but it is informal relative to the village feast just described. Accordingly, women are appropriate cooks and servers but their work is marginalised, invisible, according to the formal reckoning of labour among households.

Village hospitality and associated work are informed by gender differences where women are seen to be part of an informal pattern that cuts across households in contrast to men who represent their households and a more formal social

life. This contrast based on gender adds depth to the description of household ritual, where men were seen as the major participants. It has focused largely upon the woman's perspective in anticipation of a discussion of possession where informal ties among women are cast in a negative light.

This discussion of hospitality has been selective and gender roles have been sketched crudely, without reference to relative status, age and household position. Differences between women have been sketched while differences between men have not, because of the material on women's possession in Chapter 5. Nonetheless, this brief section illustrates the continuities between the coercive hospitality offered to spirits and people as well as showing that the organisation of both "ritual" and "social" hospitality is informed by gender differences among people.

2.7 Gods in the world

In Chapter 1, gods were seen on top of a three-tiered universe which is built into the landscape and house architecture. Gods were said to move down into the world and bring life to it. In this chapter, these movements have been described through the embodiment of gods in domestic ritual.

A ritual process was first described where gods (and other spirits) are enticed down into houses and bodies. They are fed and trapped. Specific rituals were described which elaborated the nature of certain ritual items, notably, the arrow and also the ritual pot. Others will be described which concern oracular trance and the embodiment of gods in people. These rituals will likewise be seen in terms of a union between god and body which brings life to the world. As shown

subsequently, oracular possession is distinguished from other rituals according to the nature of the visiting spirits and the ritual style rather than any difference in the basic ritual process. Are the spirits gods or demons? Is the "vessel" master or slave to them? Many of the rituals of the annual cycle also belong to the repertoire of village oracles and certain rites will be encountered again in this context.

The embodiment of spirits concerns an essentially coercive hospitality which constructs a rank order out of assembled guests who are forced to eat and drink. In the latter part of the chapter, the continuities between "social" and "ritual" hospitality were elaborated. Yet, an important difference is apparent. The entertaining of spirits in domestic ritual was seen to have the desired effects more or less automatically. The entertaining of people was seen as more of a problem for hosts cannot necessarily produce the desired effects. Guests fear that the natural properties of food and drink together with any associated ill feelings will harm them rather than produce the ideal social harmony. Every trance of a village oracle involves the extraction of pollution and ill-will from at least some of the clients attending.

Household life has formed the basis for a description of lay society, one of the two parts to an image of Ladakhi society. In the next chapter, the other part is described, monastic life. As mentioned previously, the perspective remains with the villager, not the monk. Accordingly, Chapter 3 completes my discussion of the village and forms the context in which possession practices are situated.

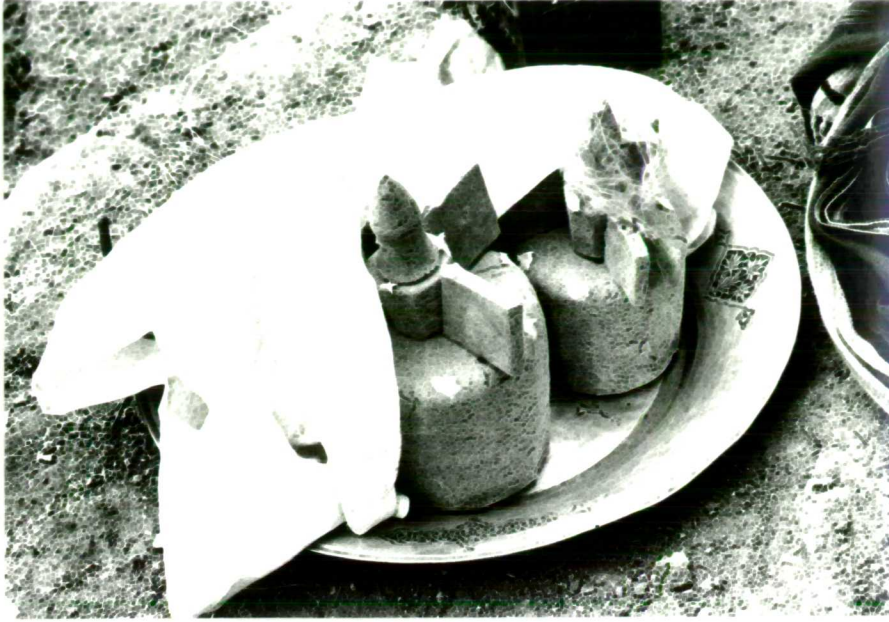


Plate 10 "Welcome cake" (drangyes) at Gongma saka
(rite of first ploughing)



Plate 11 Villagers in Hemis Shukpa Chan making tshogs
(dough offerings) (photo: M Phylactou)

CHAPTER 3

RELIGION (CHOS) AND THE MONASTERY



Plate 12 The first circumambulation (tangpo skorra) in Leh

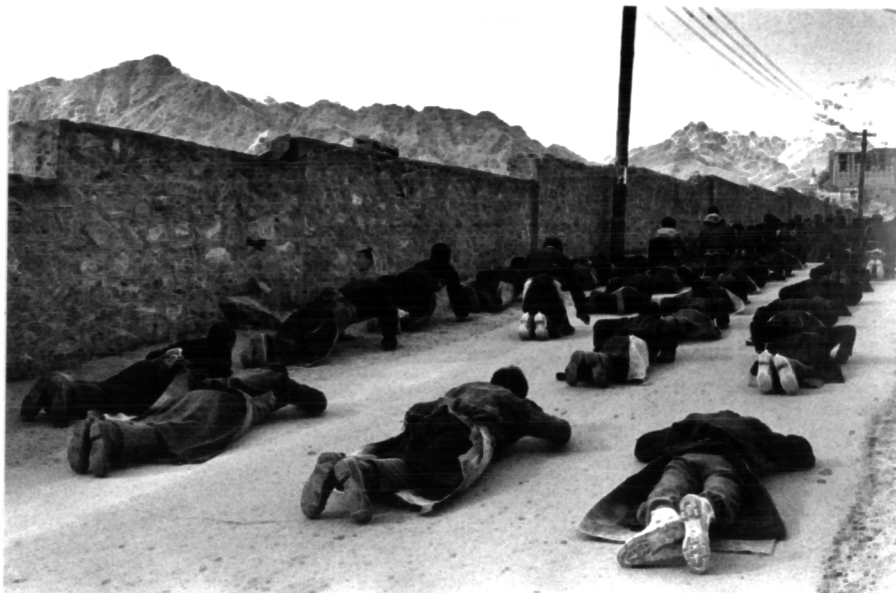


Plate 13 Gochak (prostration of the first month) in Leh



Plate 14 Making religious kin (chospun) at Shey



Plate 15 Monks in a funeral procession

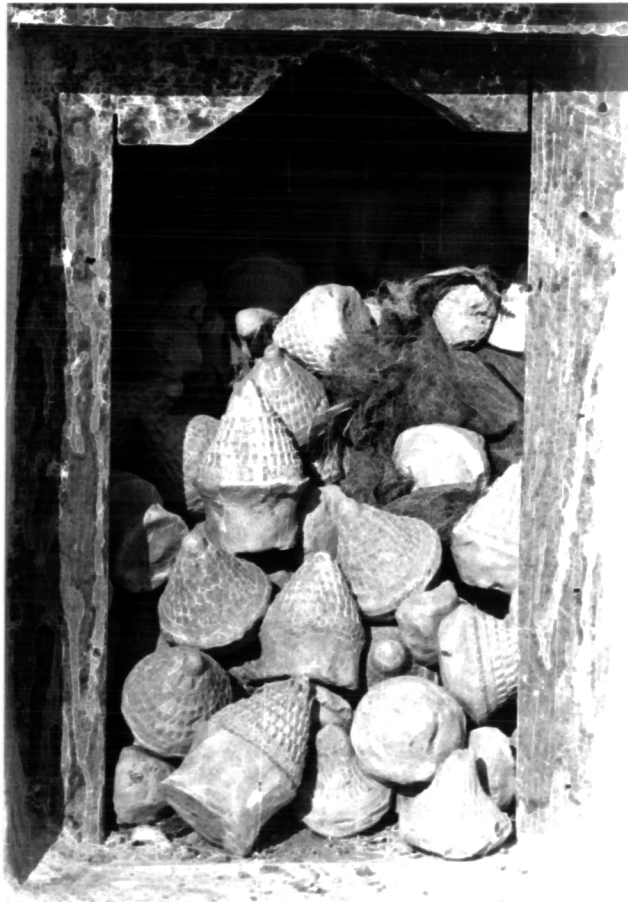


Plate 16 Offerings of clay and ashes (tsha tsha) made after death

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1, a Ladakhi vision of society was described which is made up of two parts, monastery and village. Aspects of the village pole have been described; in this chapter, the monastery is introduced from the villager's perspective (1). Because my general focus concerns oracles, this discussion neglects important themes such as the central importance of charity and the role of experts practising chos outside the monasteries (2). A sketch of the annual cycle is completed with a description of the religious times of year and the devotions of villagers. Mortuary ritual is also briefly described. "Merit-making" activities are then located in a wider discussion of karma. Rinpoche are described finally as the centre piece to village perspectives of chos.

Villagers visit monasteries less often than monks visit households. They make their devotions for individual reasons; to commemorate a death or to deal with misfortune. They also visit at particular times of year and it is these collectively orchestrated visits, embedded in the calendar, that are described below. Individual pilgrimages and requests for help will be noted in subsequent chapters. Whatever the purpose of a visit, villagers will go around the site which is united with a sacred past. They will make a measured circumambulation (skorra) of the monastery precincts, turn prayer wheels in the outside walls and enter the buildings to prostrate themselves (chak phulches) before images, texts, rinpoche. When villagers approach a monastery, they see themselves in the presence of a higher religion than that practised at home, and they go both to

make merit and to gain access to the other-worldly powers of gods in the monastery.

In Chapter 1, chos was introduced by means of the three jewels; Buddha, Doctrine and Community. Buddha does not refer only to the historical founder of Buddhism in India but also to many other saints and deities. As villagers worship, they may recognise images of some of the most popular figures such as Guru Rinpoche, who is seen to have introduced religion to Tibet; Chenrezig (Spyan-ras-gzigs), patron deity of Tibet; Chamba (Byams-pa), the coming Buddha and Dolma (sGrol-ma). Villagers are unlikely to distinguish many images clearly but they will be able to recognise these supreme figures who taught chos to the world and ensure its supremacy to this day. In Tibetan Buddhism, the concept of enlightenment has two aspects; first, transcendence of the world and second, a voluntary return to the world to help free others from their suffering (see also below, section 3.4). Buddhas are not, therefore, clearly distinguished from Bodhisattvas and the historical Buddha can equally be seen as a Bodhisattva:

"For the Mahāyāna, the ideal of the Bodhisattva was first articulated in this world age in the person of Buddha Cākyamuni. The term Bodhisattva is understood to apply to him from the time he took the vow under the Buddha Dipaṅkara to achieve full enlightenment down to his actual enlightenment at Bodhgayā more than three incalculable aeons later. During this immense period of preparation, his motivation and activity are understood to have been characterized by selfless compassion for others (karuṇā) and by the development of wisdom (prajñā), the two major characteristics of the classical Mahāyānist Bodhisattva ideal." (Ray 1986:36)

The presence of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas is guaranteed today in the persons of smaller scale figures, rinpoche. Rinpoche means "precious jewel" and is generally used by Ladakhis as a synonym for the Tibetan tulku (sprul sku), usually rendered

in English as "reincarnate lama". Tulku represent the third of the three Buddha bodies, the "apparent" or physical body which is manifest in the world (Skt:nirmāṇakāya). Tulku are reborn of important religious figures and some are also seen as emanations of deities. As far as villagers are concerned, rinpoche are special people who have died and then decided to be reborn in the present. "Lineages" may link a present incumbent back through a series of rebirths to deities such as Chenrezig, in the case of the Dalai Lama. The fact that rinpoche voluntarily and deliberately determine their next birth in human form implies very special abilities which could equally be applied to transcendence of the world. Rinpoche appear on earth to follow in the Buddha's footsteps:

"The bodhisattva concept is thus a part of the conceptual support for the role of lamas (i.e. rinpoche), who are seen in some cases as emanations of particular bodhisattva, and in all cases as performing the conduct of a bodhisattva." (Samuel 1975:71)

Rinpoche are described in further detail below (section 3.5).

Chos refers both to religion generally and to doctrine more narrowly. Two aspects of Doctrine are particularly important to villagers. Ideas about karma or "work" (las) are associated with the sutras (mdo) and they are familiar to villagers from popular sermons and dramas as well as various graphic representations such as the Wheel of Life. This topic is addressed below but another aspect of doctrine, the tantras (rgyud), is not discussed because it is largely inaccessible to villagers. As Stein remarks, the production of tantric deities:

"underlies every ritual practice; for to have any effect a rite requires the presence of the appropriate deity, who thereby bestows a "blessing" (byin rlabs) - the power of action - on the officiant." (Stein 1972:181)

When villagers visit monasteries, they come across countless paintings and statues of these tantric divinities, in fierce or peaceful aspect, painted in unnatural hues and with non-human bodies, extra limbs or hands or eyes. One deity has several forms and villagers are rarely able to explain which images are permutations of each other and which are distinct. They know little about these gods and they have no access to them except through the mediation of monks, who assume their forms in ritual. At cham, the monastery dramas described in Chapter 6, some of these gods come alive to villagers in the masks and actions of monks. This is the only context in which tantric ritual is discussed, and from the village perspective.

Buddhas created the Doctrine which they taught to the Community. Community refers to all Buddhists but also specifically to initiates who have dedicated their lives to chos in a quest for knowledge and liberation. "Skilful means" (thabs, Skt: upāya) in Tibetan Buddhism imply that teachers must use means or methods of instruction appropriate to the stage of development in their pupils. Monks are ready for more knowledge than most villagers and so the "meaning" of a ritual is different for different people. Layers of interpretation have been glimpsed in the accounts of domestic ritual given previously. Ladakhis associate the initiate lifestyle above all with the monastery where monks are guided by rinpoche to use their knowledge on behalf of all.

In Ladakh, there are a few rinpoche and yogins who live outside monasteries. Yogins are generally called drubā (sgrub grwa) and many are associated with monastic centres of training such as Lamayuru and Hemis (3). As noted in Chapter

1, Gongma villagers have little to do with yogins and suspicion was often voiced about their powers, which might be used for suspicious ends such as destructive magic.

There are no communities of part-time religious specialists similar to those described in other Tibetan speaking areas such as southern Tibet and Nepal. Such people practice agriculture, marry and perform much domestic ritual. Aziz describes one fifth of D'ingri agriculturalists as chos pa (religious ones) who live in their own hamlets, serkhyim gongpa, with temples. Each such gongpa has patron villages, a parish, for whom religious services are performed. Half of the gongpas among the D'ingri are of this type and carry little prestige as compared to the other half, "ascetic gongpas" or monasteries (Aziz 1978:chapter 4). As Aziz notes, D'ingri serkhyim gongpa are comparable to Sherpa institutions. Among the Sherpa, there is a similar division between reincarnate lamas (rinpoche), hereditary priests (sngags pa), monks and ser khyim pa (4). However, married monks are found in Sherpa areas as well. Clarke notes that Yolmo villagers (Helambu Sherpa) rarely use monks for ritual and rely instead upon the Lama community which is like the ser khyim pa described by Aziz (Clarke 1980). The Sikkimese analogues to D'ingri ser khyim communities, which involve Kagyupa and others, carry a much higher status. Nakane notes a division between these communities and Gelugpa monks who generally practice celibacy inside monasteries (Nakane 1966:226-229).

These few examples provide points of comparison with Central Ladakh. In Gongma, villagers rely upon monks and

rinpoche (reincarnate lamas) for religious guidance. As noted in Chapter 1, they also make distinctions between different orders, relying upon Nyingmapa practitioners for certain rituals, especially astrological and exorcistic ones, and Gelugpa monks for much of the rest of their domestic ritual (5). Non-monastic practitioners are consulted less often by Gongmapa but it is possible that lay astrologers (ongpo), doctors (amchi) and oracles (lhaba/mo) fulfil some of the functions provided by non-monastic practitioners in other areas. Clearly, the division of labour among religious personnel has important implications for the ritual division of labour in general, which is discussed further in the next chapter.

3.2 The annual cycle

Visits to monasteries are prompted by calendrical events which are described below and in Chapter 6. Villagers around Leh make visits to all the local monasteries, regardless of sect. The following description is located once more in this area and constructed from the perspective of Gongma villagers in particular. In the last chapter, winter was discussed as the time of transition between the old and new year. The first part of that transition was outlined with the village New Year. I turn now to the second part and to religious rites in the monastery.

The present discussion concerns rituals presented in Table 2, Chapter 2. The rites of the first and most religious month of the year at the end of winter are described and brief references are made to "Buddha's birthday" in the fourth month, which is also an auspicious month in religious

terms (6). Ladakhis always emphasise the separation between the village New Year and the king's New Year which occurs at the end of the 12th month together with the Tibetan celebrations. Secular New Year involved the consumption of meat and alcohol and the "finishing of bad things". The later New Year introduces religion; from the end of the 12th month, villagers practice religion properly, avoiding meat and alcohol, avoiding killing anything and making merit. The contrastive qualities attached to this period can be seen with "the first circumambulation", tangpo skorra (dang po skor ba), at the beginning of the first month.

Everyone completes at least three skorra of the local religious sites which, for the people of Gongma, means walking around Leh to finish at the new monastery in the town where om mani (the ubiquitous six syllable prayer, om mani padme hum) are recited. Many villagers do tangpo skorra for the first ten days of the month and some spend the night in the monastery reciting prayers. The prayer recital is known as mani tungchur (ma ni dung 'phyur), the hundred million mani. Every villager is supposed to contribute towards the total. The Buddhist Society organises sponsors to provide food and tea, a rinpoche attends and monks officiate. During the day, it is virtually impossible to get inside; at night, the numbers drop and there are more young people who are reputed to keep various secular assignments as they walk around the monastery after counting their mani.

Tangpo skorra and mani tungchur involve asceticism, pilgrimage and merit-making. Merit is made for the whole of Leh. It is said that these rites will bring snowfall too, so that there will be water for the crops in the coming year.

The next monastic rites are on the 14th and 15th of the month. Aside from cham, there is a procession known as "head prostration" (gochak, mgo phyag) and nyenes (bsnyen gnas), a rite which is named after the first of two days' fasting. Gochak is sponsored by the families of the men who join in and by some of the shops in the bazaar while nyenes is sponsored by all the households who sponsor Sankar monastery, where the rite takes place. Only young and middle aged men join the procession because "you need to be strong", strong enough to withstand the two and a half days it takes to prostrate yourself, move forwards to where your head touched the ground and sing mani each time, together with the refuge formula, and in this manner travel the religious sites of Leh. Shopkeepers bring tea and food as the procession moves through Leh and children line the route singing and accepting charity from onlookers. These others make merit by following the route, reciting prayers and giving charity even though the men are the main actors.

Children also line the path to Sankar and "sing for sweets". Inside the monastery are the ones who fast and pray for two days. At Sankar, they are mostly young women but, elsewhere, the whole village takes part. Around Leh, it is said that young women participate in preparation for marriage but this is not true elsewhere (7). The women have tea and lunch on the first day (nyenes). They wash their mouths out when they leave the monastery and eat nothing at home. On the second day, they return to the monastery where they fast and keep silence from noon until the following morning

(nyunges, bsyung gnas or smyung gnas). Both days are spent praying according to the directions of attendant monks.

These activities are important to everyone whether or not they participate directly. Everyone makes merit by abstaining at least from certain substances on some of these days, by going on some kind of pilgrimage, by praying or reciting texts and giving charity, in short, by "practising religion" (chos choches).

A final important occasion occurs in a local monastery at the end of the month. Shey rulo (sbrul lo) celebrates the theme of asceticism as the month for religion draws to a close. A special, powerful shrine room in the monastery at Shey is opened on the last two days of the first month and monks give offerings to the protectors there. Women are not allowed inside but male visitors enter the shrine, prostrate themselves and make small offerings of oil for the lamps or a few rupees. Visitors then circumambulate the monastery, reciting mani and turning prayer wheels. Old men and women often spend most of the day in this way. Afterwards, they enter the main buildings, prostrate themselves before the images and leave offerings, congregating at the feet of the main, huge Buddha image, lit by thousands of butter lamps, to perform as many prostrations as possible, punctuated by the om mani which are sung there all day long. In these ways, rulo is like a special pilgrimage, singled out from others because it is a day when "every sin and virtue is magnified many thousands of times". Rulo is attended by many old people and, it is said, by women who want to become pregnant. Ldadakhis say that visitors "make themselves clean", "like washing dirty clothes"; all sin, or what is called lanchaks

(lan chags), the (bad) karma accumulated from previous lives, is finished (8).

Rulo is also the time for forging special kin links in the Leh region. People attach their names to bits of jewellery, rosaries and other belongings which they give to monks. All are collected in a big pot and left by the Buddha statue overnight. On the second day of rulo, monks take out these belongings in front of their audience to find that many of the items have been joined together. They call out the names that have been paired in this way, making public the bonds of kinship that were formed overnight. Most Buddhists and some Muslims form such ties as they are moving from childhood into adolescence. The new kin are called "religious brothers and sisters", chospun (chos spun). They are treated in the same way as other kin, invited to the same occasions and visited just as often. The voices of chospun are said guide your soul through the intermediate state after death.

The activities described are performed by villagers in or in association with monasteries. During the first month, rites are also staged outside the monastery, which are described separately.

On the 8th, 10th and 15th of the month, there are village gatherings at which prayers are recited, texts read and foods distributed. New prayer flags are raised. Towards the end of the month, sometimes at the beginning of the second month, two further recitals occur but this time the villagers sponsor monks to read the texts rather than performing themselves.

At Gongma, the first recital is sponsored with other parts of Leh in the new monastery. This recital of the kangyur (bka' 'gyur) by monks is said to make merit necessary for success at the rite of exorcism (storlok, gtor-bzlog) on the 9th of the 2nd month. The second recital is sponsored by most villages at this time and it is performed by monks in households. Gongma sponsors a recital of "the hundred thousand" (bum, prajñāpāramitā) which takes place in half of the main houses (khangchen) on alternate years. Villagers said that the recital would ensure a good water supply for Gongma itself. A rinpoche is often invited to augment the power of religion at this time. In 1982, Tak Tok rinpoche came to read texts, distribute blessings and amulets, supervise the fire offering and organise the consecration of food (tshogs) to be distributed to houses. The ashes from the peaceful fire offering (zhi ba'i sbyin sreg) were scattered over the fields "to make the crops grow". In that particular year, the rinpoche also recommended further rites to get rid of illness that had been troubling the Leh region.

The Leh recital, culminating in an exorcism, together with the village recital complete the transition into the early spring when the earth begins to warm. These later recitals are performed by monks and sponsored collectively by villagers. The village is still governed by the same mood of piety. Individuals continue their own ascetic regimes throughout this period, until the first ritual ploughing discussed in the last chapter.

These activities are best understood in relation to the annual cycle as a whole. At the first New Year, I suggested, the boundaries of a household are redrawn. This image of the

secular world is transcended in the first month, after the king's New Year, for the household is opened up; the boundaries between one household and another and between household and monastery become blurred. Instead, it is the individual who is addressed, on a religious quest for merit (and salvation). The two New Years together achieve a successful transition for people in their normal lives so that "the crops (and everything else) will grow".

This description shows that merit is made especially through the monastery but it can always be taken back to the household, the rest of the village and this life. It is clear that the significance of merit-making and the monastery change according to context, even within the first month. Villagers first move to the monastery to make merit which brings "inner cleanliness" and "spiritual power", which "finishes sin" and "brings water for the crops". Villagers imitate the behaviour of monks as they go on pilgrimage, practice asceticism and offer devotions. At the end of the month or at the beginning of the second month, villagers employ monks to work on their behalf. The recitals which close this religious period of the year can be seen to mark a transitional period which return villagers to their households. The importance of context can be shown further by looking at a similar merit-making rite that takes place in the spring-time.

The fourth month is in May - June, the crops are planted, animals are excluded from the fields and it is spring. It is also the other religious month in the year because it is the time when Buddha was born, reached

enlightenment and left the world. Villagers practice asceticism and they say once more that the effects of sin and virtue are magnified out all proportion. There is a monastery celebration on the 15th when every villager goes on pilgrimage and visits the local monasteries, "to do religion". In Gongma, there is also a village celebration and, in the Leh area, spring archery festivals (dartses) are celebrated.

The pilgrimage in Leh is different from those described insofar as it is organised around a procession to the four local monasteries, led by musicians, boys and girls carrying auspicious offerings, a jeep with a Buddha statue under an umbrella, monks and boys carrying sacred texts with which they bless bystanders, who return buttermilk kalchor, school children singing victory songs and, finally, other villagers. The procession is a celebration and the children sing "victory to the gods, it is the holy day of Sangyas (that is, Buddha)". In winter, rites in the monastery and village establish the transition to a new year but, at Buddha's birthday, it is spring and the victory of religion that are celebrated. They are celebrated in the village as well where new prayer flags are made, one of the village shrines is changed and the entire village repainted. There is another feast when elected village officials are changed. All these activities mark the end of collective village life, summer is about to begin again and households will shortly separate to work in the fields and pastures until the harvest festival in the seventh month.

This rite is similar to the others, focused on homage to chos ("religion") in the monastery, influencing and

coordinating activities outside as well. However, the rite is, above all, a thanksgiving for spring and growth. The prominent part played by children, the offerings of welcome and the images of abundance such as the buttermilk and water offered by spectators can all be seen in this light. Finally, it should be noted that the festival is called the fourth fifteenth (that is, the 15th of the 4th month) but invariably described as Buddha's birthday. It is also the day of Buddha's enlightenment and death but these latter associations are not recognised at all in the village. No doubt, monks celebrate Buddha's transcendence of the world but villagers, on the contrary, celebrate his birthday, his life in this world and his contribution to fertility and growth. The village perspective draws upon the image of Buddha who left the world only to return again and again, through compassion, to help other sentient beings (9). This is the image of a Bodhisattva which is so central to Tibetan Buddhism and which, it is suggested, is integrated into the annual cycle and related to the attempt that people make to transcend the secular world temporarily during the first month. The world was left behind and then a new cycle of growth is initiated. On the fourth fifteenth, the first signs of life are celebrated together with the reintegration of both Buddha and people into the world.

Although some material on the religious times of year is still to be described (see Chapter 6), the above summary shows how villagers practice religion (*chos choches*) in the monastery and take merit back to their secular lives. Merit has been seen to clean and improve the person and to bring

fertility to the land. In the next sections, it will be seen that merit made in this life is also important to the next. The rituals performed by monks at death are described; these are situated below because they ideally fall in winter. Ladakhis do not map the entire life cycle on to the year but they insist that the proper time to die is in winter. The body will not decompose before it is burnt and so it is offered whole, not imperfect and riddled with worms. The lu are asleep and so they are not defiled by the cremation.

3.3 Mortuary ritual

Death is not a purely religious celebration though this is the aspect emphasised below and by most Ladakhis, who consider funerals to be the most important rite of the life cycle. Kin, phaspun and villagers will orchestrate and help pay for the feasting which begins on a small scale as visitors pay their respects to the deceased, build up to the grandest and largest of life cycle feasts about a week later on the day of cremation, and close with smaller celebrations on the fourth day after cremation, 30 or 49 days after death and sometimes each anniversary thereafter.

Cremation is the most common but not the only form of mortuary ritual. As Wylie cautions:

"No generalization should be made without allowing for the exception. Funeral customs in Tibet vary according to region, reason and rank. Some variations seem to be without reason other than local customs as in the case of water burial, while other variations are dictated by natural environment, such as the lack of firewood for cremation." (Wylie 1965:242).

In Ladakh, cremation is the norm. However, children are buried or thrown in the river (10) and those who have died of certain infectious diseases, notably leprosy, are buried

(11). High status Ladakhis, monks, and rinpoche also have different mortuary rituals.

Cremation follows a good death, which depends on merit. The self must be sacrificed voluntarily in order to make the greatest of gifts which will earn the lay donor enough merit to achieve another human life. Ideally, the sacrifice is staged in the winter, as noted previously (12). On the whole, this self-sacrifice is associated especially with the old. To die young is to have "your life cut off" before its time and suggests inherited bad karma. The elderly, however, have time to orient their lives to the making of merit in preparation for death. Old people give away their material possessions, they retire and, in some Tibetan speaking areas, join religious communities (13). The elderly are in a position to make merit simply by giving goods to their children though, of course, there is more potential for merit in giving charity to monks (14). Old people plan their dying carefully as they give away their property, "do religion" (chos choches) and accumulate and set aside gifts for monks and monasteries. Gifts are auctioned (phulches) after the cremation by officiating monks, who keep the proceeds. The auction and a number of other gifts and rites rid the dead person of all belongings and the household of their surplus. Social relations are dissolved in the giving of gifts and a number of special attachments must be carefully broken so that the dead person will not stay in the world, as a ghost, in sin. As March has written of the Sherpa, these gifts constitute the final reciprocation of outstanding exchange obligations which free the dead person from commitments that

hinder

rebirth (March 1979:76-7). In this way, the karmic idiom is intertwined with household organisation. The process of inheritance effected as the elderly retire and pass property on to their children can also be seen from a religious perspective according to which the old give away their sin in preparation for death (15).

A good death requires the participation of monks above all else. If there is no monk to take the soul of a person out of the body (or a substitute body if the corpse is unrecoverable), to address the soul before and after cremation and to organise the sacrificial fire, then it is a bad death. Three key activities of monks will be described, as derived primarily from Gelugpa informants. I did not see any of these rites apart from the beginning of the funeral procession. After death, the body cannot be touched until a senior monk has performed a rite to transfer the soul. This is the first key rite. The following day, a number of monks congregate to perform chogga, "rituals" (16), which last several days, fewer in summer and among the poor, more in winter among the wealthy. These rituals are summarised. Then, the corpse is cremated by many monks dressed in the appropriate clothes for empowerment or initiation (dbang rdzas) in a version of the fire ceremony (zhinshrek, sbyin sreg) mentioned previously; this provides the third point of discussion.

Before turning to these rituals, another preliminary point might be made about the idiom of merit employed in the context of death. Discussions of merit in other areas focus upon questions of orthodoxy. There is no question about the

orthodoxy of "merit transfer," "counter-karma" or the "death wish" in Ladakh as there seems to be in other contexts (17). The transference of merit, that is, making merit and (then) giving it away or the sharing of merit is completely orthodox as far as Ladakhis are concerned for it is central to the concept of Bodhisattvas (18). Counter-karma, that is, the making of merit to balance out previously accumulated sin, seems almost to be celebrated rather than dismissed as "unorthodox". It is always possible to cancel out and eradicate sin and the most popular saints are those who have lived in the greatest sin, atoned for it and achieved enlightenment (Ardussi and Epstein 1978). One last tendency that is discussed in the literature on S.E. Asia is the "death wish" and this is often compared directly with Tibetan traditions where the thoughts of a dying person are extremely important to her or his rebirth in the "orthodox" imagination, as shown in the famous Book of the Dead (bar do thodol, bar do thos grol).

The wider setting of death rites is important to an understanding of village religion. Unfortunately, shortage of space prohibits an extensive discussion and the following comments are confined to the religious rituals of death (19). My concern lies with the "gods" and "demons" that are generated in ritual and their association with internal states of sin and merit. It will be seen that gods and demons are not simply spirits out there but also ritual products and it is suggested that this link between sin, merit, demons and gods is important, albeit implicit, at other ritual events. A few concluding comments are made

about the state between one life and the next before turning to a wider consideration of the Wheel of Life.

a) Phoa tabches ('pho ba 'debs=)

A senior monk arrives to liberate the soul from the body. No-one else can touch the body beforehand for fear that the soul will leave there and then from the point of contact:

"the lama coaxes the soul/breath (uks, dbugs) upwards along the channel that connects the stomach to a hole in the crown of the head. That is the proper way for the "soul" (sems) to leave the body for it is not defiled." (monk)

Some accounts suggest that the person has to be brought back to life in order to extract the soul:

"the lama makes prayers, collects the breath, brings the person to life and then transfers the "soul" (sems) to a good life." (monk)

This first rite is critical to a good death. Its effectiveness is the subject of endless stories, such as this one:

"Some Baltis (Shiites) didn't believe that phoa tabches could kill. So, they covered a friend who pretended to be dead and called a high lama who performed the rite in all sincerity for he believed the body to be a corpse. He left, the Baltis lifted the sheet, to find their friend dead."

The corpse is bound in a foetal position and wrapped in a shroud. It is generally kept in the offering room. Monks arrive to perform choga: as noted, these rites vary and the following is an abbreviated description from Gelugpa monks.

b) Choga (cho ga)

Monks recite texts to guide the soul (sems) in the intermediate state and they perform rites of purification. Food offerings are made to fortify the soul on its way:

"The whole point of choga is to purify the dead person and send him somewhere." (monk)

Monks dispense "power" (wang, dbang (20)) and they wear the associated clothes which villagers sometimes describe as "god clothes" because they are similar to those worn by oracles but with additional items. The most important point of similarity is the five part crown (ringa, rigs lnga) representing the five Buddha classes which villagers also describe as the five kinds of gods. During rites of this kind, monks identify with their tutelary deities. They become incarnations of gods and the power that they dispense is the power of gods.

Although the first rite separated body and soul; although the reading of texts guides the disembodied soul (21); the rites in the offering room are effective because the soul is present. It is called back. In between guiding the soul and at some point during each day of choga, which rarely last more than seven days, the soul is recalled for a purification and despatched on its journey once more in a better state. A Gelugpa monk described the central ritual act as the "ritual empowerment" (choga wang). The soul, it seems, is called back into two "bodies"; one is the corpse and the other a paper printed with the image of a man or woman, depending on the sex of the deceased, and the name.

Monks pray and call the soul into these two bodies which are firmly distinguished:

"You put an arrow in the paper body (linga) and it becomes the person himself. Then, you perform an empowerment (wang) and put special clothes on the corpse. The corpse is in the middle of the monks and he also gets power (wang). You have to do this choga wang at least once but it is better to do it every day (of the rites). Then, you burn the piece of paper over a candle and take the clothes off the corpse." (monk)

The arrow has already been described as a soul wood, which brings life. The paper body is clearly brought to life by the arrow. It is subsequently burnt, like storma in other rites which are burnt to get rid of sin, enemies and demons. I suggest that defilement is separated from the soul, put into the paper body and burnt. The other body, the corpse, is treated very differently. It is dressed in the clothes of gods. Officiating monks wear these same clothes and it seems that the corpse is elevated in status and identified with the monks or, more accurately, the high ranking gods temporarily sitting in their bodies. I suggest that the corpse, at this point, contains only the good part of the soul which is enlarged through identification with divinity. The corpse is thereby rendered a fit sacrificial offering, containing a purified soul which may be sent to paradise (or, in the wider context, back to its journey through the intermediate state).

If it is recalled that the monks are orchestrating a good death which depends on merit, suggestive associations between the different terms emerge. I was told that defilement (tip) was removed as the paper was burnt. It seems reasonable to deduce that monks are manipulating sin and merit in the form of demons and gods. These spirits are at the very least analogous to karmic terms. It is suggested that the effectiveness of ritual lies partly in this transformation: sin and merit are translated into visible and external demons and gods which can be ritually changed. This transformation is central, I suggest, even when spirits are

denied an independent, "real" existence (22). It is worth noting further that the practices of merit transfer and counter karma that were mentioned above are constructed as the most orthodox of Buddhist activities in village death rites. At this point in the ritual, monks do not only guide the soul but, if my interpretation is accepted, they expel its sin and magnify its virtue.

There are other rites of purification; for example, "the soul is washed", members of the household call and feed the soul daily and visitors pay their respects while the preparations for the funeral are made.

c) Spor shrakches (spur(H), sreg-)

During cremation, the soul is separated from the gross body for the last time and the corpse is burnt. Monks and corpse are dressed again in the same god clothes and a procession makes its way to the cremation ground. The route is thronged with onlookers though only men are allowed near the oven.

The corpse is brought to life and that life is once more transformed:

"we don't think of it as a corpse but as a tutelary deity (of the sect concerned; idam, yi dam)." (monk)

"the monk imagines himself to be (or "the monk becomes") the tutelary deity and he makes the dead person into one of his attendant gods." (monk)

It seems that the senior monk in meditation effects some kind of union between the soul of the dead person and divinity. The corpse is placed on top of the oven, in the position for prayer, facing the senior officiant who is to orchestrate the burnt offering. Its special clothes are taken off for they belong to the monastery and cannot be burnt (23). Then the

fire is lit and the soul is separated from that particular body for the last time. The peaceful offering is made (zhiwe zhinshrek). As the body burns:

"all sin is finished (digpa drakches)" (monk)

"when you make the fire offering (zhinshrek), you don't think that you're burning a body; you imagine that you're burning the three sins in the Wheel of Life." (monk)

Sin is separated from the soul and burnt in the body while the soul is liberated. In this way, the possibilities of a good rebirth are once more emphasised for the good part of the person is again saved in the form of divinity while the bad is burnt with the corpse and, transformed or "digested" by fire, it becomes an offering for the gods.

Cremation does not complete the mortuary ritual. There will be one day's choga ("ritual") after the cremation. A monk or astrologer will also perform rites to make sure that the soul does not come back to close friends and relatives as a ghost. On the fourth day after cremation, the ashes will be dispersed. They are generally thrown in the river. Monks will be involved in further ceremonies such as the consecration of a religious picture and the making of small conical funerary monuments (tsha tsha) made of ground-up bones, ashes from the fire and clay. These are generally put in chorten and on mani walls. The corpse of the body is thus distributed together with her or his belongings. Monks will recite from the Book of the Dead or an equivalent at weekly intervals until the 49th day, when the soul will have been reborn. They may be called back for ceremonies after one month, 49 days and each subsequent anniversary.

d) Bardo (bar do): the intermediate state

These few notes on mortuary ritual have focused upon specific details concerning the ritual mechanism, namely the embodiment and subsequent transformation of "souls" and "spirits" which can be compared in some respects to the manipulation of spirits described in the last chapter. Further continuities between the process of rebirth and other ritual processes might be outlined with reference to the journey undertaken between the moment of death (in our terms) and rebirth 49 days later (24). Village perceptions suggest that a "soul" is guided through the intermediate state to an appropriate rebirth. This is the only point that is documented below and it is not necessarily congruent with doctrinal interpretations of the process (see, for example, Stablein 1980, Wayman 1974 and English editions of the bar do text (25)) nor with other village practices such as the honouring of ancestors at New Year mentioned in the last chapter.

Rituals involving "bodies" provide one technique designed to effect a good rebirth; recitals of the Book of the Dead (bar do thos grol) and other texts provide another. Western translations of this text are widely available (25) and it is generally known that a recital of the Book is thought to guide the dead person's "soul" through the intermediate state to a hopefully better state. Many Ladakhis will have familiarised themselves with the text, generally, through explanations by teachers, so that they will recognise the words they hear seven times during bardo (the intermediate state).

In brief, the "intelligence" (which, as noted, Ladakhis generally describe as the sems in contrast to the text which specifies the rnam shes) begins to lose consciousness and this is a moment for initiates to attain liberation. Later, it realises that it has "died" and watches weeping relatives and the cremation of its own body. Initiates put their training into practice and leave the world altogether. Most Ladakhis are not equipped to do anything but travel through bardo, with a bardo body, to encounter horrific visions, including a parade of the fierce and terrifying gods of the Tibetan pantheon (26). Bardo visions are produced through accumulated karma. Villagers suggest that later still the soul is brought before the Lord of the Dead to watch over its own "death" once more. As noted below, the deceased is judged and allotted an appropriate rebirth (27).

This cursory summary shows that the "soul" is variously embodied in the world and the intermediate state (28). It is worth emphasising this point in the context of possession practice. The bar do thos grol text lists six kinds of bardo, three of which do not refer to the process of death. One refers to existence in the womb (skyed gnas bar do); one to dreaming (rmi lam bar do) and one to meditation and trance (bsam gtan bar do). In this way, the bar do text makes explicit the similarities between a range of "altered" states when the consciousness is displaced from its normal position. Possession and meditation involve changes in the composition of the person which may be compared with the process of rebirth and, indeed, extraordinary processes of reincarnation in rinpoche. As noted below, rinpoche often construct continuities across their lifetimes; they remember previous

lives, recognise disciples and teachers from the past and collect their former belongings.

Ordinary processes of rebirth are set within a larger canvas than that described. They are located in a wheel of life, which is now introduced. They are, as noted, also counterposed to the extraordinary returns made by Bodhisattava, which are described in section 3.5.

3.4 The Wheel of Life

The language of karma, usually described simply as "work" (las) has been used in the above descriptions of chos (religion). In this section, talk of karma is located in a larger picture of the world which is taught to children and used in commentary upon a particular death, spirit manifestation or an act of unusual compassion. It is located at the entrance of every monastery and known as the Wheel of Life (chos kyi 'khor lo). The Wheel can be described in a number of different ways, as derived from the texts and from a broadly Tibetan monastic "great tradition" but the perspective chosen below is once more based upon the village and a local construction of the Wheel, which combines textual fragments with monastic teachings and local ideas about local spirits. Villagers often described chos to me by means of the Wheel but it should be appreciated that such discussions are also part of everyday gossip, framed by reference to karma, rebirth and religion.

As people learn "doctrine", they learn that all living beings are born again after death, all have a "soul" (sems) which is liberated and born in a new form after a period in the intermediate state. Exceptionally, it is not reborn in

the world but freed altogether as an enlightened being. The soul is not immutable. It is in a state of constant flux according to the work that had been done during present and past lives. Its state at any one time depends on the results of "work" or "action" (karma, las), the relative amounts of merit (gewa, dge ba (29)) and sin (digpa, sdig pa). After death, Ladakhis say that these amounts are measured precisely by the "king" or "Buddha" of the dead (Yama, Dharmarāja, gShin-rje chos-rgyal). There are various representations of the day of judgement but it is often said that every merit is represented by a white stone and every sin by a black stone; the white are counted or weighed against the black and a new form of life is determined. If sin outweighs merit, then a bad life in the world results which is shown schematically in three spheres of the Wheel of Life; as an animal, a hungry ghost (yidags, yi dwags) or in hell. If merit outweighs sin, then a good life in the world results, depicted in the upper three spheres of the Wheel of Life as gods, "not gods" (lha ma yin) and people. After death, an appropriate form of life is determined in which a new gross body is correlated with the quality of the soul.

Mortuary ritual and winter religiosity are located in this wider framework. In practice, villagers are not overly concerned with two of the unfortunate rebirths. Hell represents a straightforward punishment for sin. The realm of animals is mentioned only with reference to the sins of killing (30). But, the hungry ghosts symbolise a whole series of unhappy and demonic spirit rebirths. The ones in the Wheel are creatures with huge stomachs and tiny throats so that they can never eat or drink enough to satisfy their

appetites. The others, which are not depicted in the Wheel, are similarly frustrated by greed or jealousy and they have voracious appetites for food, possessions and, sometimes, sex. These others live in the world with people and they interact with them. They have not attained a proper life because of the sins they have committed. Alternatively, it is sometimes said that these creatures have not yet achieved rebirth at all; they are stuck. All the unhappy spirits are said to have deformed bodies or none at all and they can only satisfy their appetites by preying upon people. As shown in the last chapter, villagers placate or imprison these spirits with offerings to keep them away.

Born a demon, the soul commits yet more sins for it is governed by desires which can never be fulfilled. People who die in the midst of desire are likely to be reborn to that life of suffering, never realising that suffering can be minimised through the practice of chos and the making of merit. Consequently, just one bad birth is likely to begin a downward spiral:

"We pray to be reborn as men, especially as monks, for animals have no brain, they don't know what sin is, and they will sink lower and lower." (layman, eager to teach me the basics.)

In my brief discussion of mortuary ritual, I suggested that merit and sin were turned into or visualised as gods and demons during ritual and they were then manipulated by monks; demons are thrown away and gods purified or enlarged. The Wheel constructs a related image: sin in this life is turned into demons in the next.

Even the fortunate rebirths are viewed with some ambivalence. Villagers are not interested in birth as a "not

god" but they contrast life in the human and godly realms. There are many kinds of gods and villagers only consider some to be fortunate rebirths. Thus, it is unfortunate to be born as a homeless god (lha) who wanders the world for that "god" is a demon-like creature, liable to attack people capriciously for food and warmth. Some gods, then, are classed with the bad rebirths mentioned above. The god country (lhayul) seen in the Wheel of Life is different. Only people who have died a relatively good death and lived a relatively good life will be born there. But, birth in this god country may suggest too great a concern with happiness and the fulfillment of desires. Lhayul is separated and placed above people as a kind of heaven, a world of luxury and bliss. At least, this is how it seems initially. The virtuous are rewarded by a birth:

"in 33 countries, each of which has a king. One is the world of prosperity where the gods are invisible and so rich that they just have to imagine what they want and it appears." (layman)

Such luxury is enjoyed for hundreds of years and the gods who live longest:

"watch how the world begins and how it finishes in fire when everyone turns to dust. Then the gods cause rain like plough yokes to fall and they submerge the world in water. Later, the world starts again." (lay astrologer)

The lowest gods have failed to achieve bodies and their desires are frustrated. The higher gods in their heaven have achieved bodies through which they fulfil all their desires. Sometimes, this realm is thought to merge into the highest heavens where celestial gods live after reaching enlightenment, having transcended their bodies along with all desire and all ties to the world. Accordingly, the god

country is a good place to live, achieved through merit, in between the worst who are governed by desire and the best who have transcended it.

Nonetheless, the god country is also a suspect place. Suffering draws people towards chos but, in this heaven, there is no suffering and no religion. To indulge desire is to block the development of finer feelings and it becomes impossible to do good work, to make merit like people:

"It is good to be born a man because all the suffering involved gives you an opportunity to help others. To be born a man is like being born in India. To be born a god is like being born in the U.S. Americans are so prosperous that they never think of helping each other, nor of death and rebirth. People in India help each other because of their suffering. Gods live in many heavens which get more and more luxurious the higher they go but, like Americans, they are only higher in material things, not in things of the spirit." (lay scholar)

Eventually, these gods feel the first signs of discomfort; as their light dims and their flowers fade, they know that they are about to die. There is no-one to help. The god is fearful because it knows that it is likely to achieve a bad life as it has made no merit:

"Gods are very happy for 500 years. But, in the last few days, you suddenly realise that you are about to die. You are distraught. Your distress is not worth the pleasure of the last 500 years. There is no one to advise you how to prepare for death. You tell all the other gods but they don't believe you. They treat you very badly. Your suffering is terrible. After you die, you go to the "cold hell" for 500 years. And so, everyone always prays not to be reborn in the god country. Every night, my mother prays to be reborn a "person" (mi, person or man)." (lay woman)

Some Ladakhis suggest that life in the country of gods is a good one, others display an ambivalence towards the sensuous world by stressing an eventual fall from a good life to a bad one.

In the bad rebirths, sin is translated into the demonic after death, but the relationship between merit and gods is

more complicated. Some god births come from sin such as the homeless spirits who wander the earth. Others come from merit such as the blissful spirits in their god heaven but even they only reap the rewards of good work for a limited period. Finally, there are gods who have transcended the merit that binds life to a cycle of rebirths, they have left the Wheel of Life altogether.

The links between people and spirits are also emphasised in the Wheel. The six realms surround a small circle; half is white, showing monks and lay people moving upwards to the three comparatively happy rebirths; half is black, showing half-naked creatures dragged downwards to the miserable lives. At the centre of the Wheel are the three desires which keep the Wheel turning and unite all six spheres into a single picture. There is a cock representing lust, a snake for anger and a pig for ignorance. Around the edge of the circle, outside the six realms, are the twelve causes which bind worldly beings and, in turn, cause the miseries of death and rebirth.

People also learn that they occupy a special place in the scheme. The spirit rebirths have exaggerated human characteristics: essentially human desires which are either fulfilled or frustrated and a physical form like humans; perfect in the god's heaven and deformed for demons. In comparison with the spirits, people have control over their destiny. They can practice chog in its widest sense by moderating their desires and tempering them with compassion. Eventually, it is claimed, they will be able to put an end to their suffering. They will be able to escape the clutches

of the "king of the dead" who holds the Wheel by stepping outside, like Buddha who stands to one side of the picture. It is generally said that human life is essential to the attainment of Buddhahood and only the enlightened transcend suffering as they leave the world.

This privileged place derives from moral choice. Villagers can make merit in the ways described by practising religion (chos choches), narrowly defined around the monastery, broadly defined as all that is good in the world, to improve their condition. The various idioms of merit present too large a topic for this chapter but it is possible to sketch some of the contrasts that are drawn between villagers and monks in order to add depth to this description of the Wheel of Life.

Villagers associate doctrine closely with the monastery and so it is not surprising to find that the ambivalence towards human life in the world is also formulated in terms of a contrast between monks, who stand for the good side of the equation, and lay society, which stands for the bad. The former are learning to leave the world, the latter are enmeshed in all the attachments deriving from agriculture and family life. Even the elderly, who are severing their attachments to the world, remain "part-timers", inferior "monks", with a restricted access to doctrine.

The difference is sometimes formulated in such a way that the quest for merit is appropriate only to the lay person. This image is presented in a major Gelugpa text where the villager is a "small man" who tries to make merit to achieve a good rebirth as a man or god. He is contrasted to the "medium man" who realises that even good rebirths must

be seen in terms of suffering; such a man strives for enlightenment so as to transcend the world altogether. The most advanced is the "great man" who strives for enlightenment only to free others from their sufferings (31). In this perspective, merit is particularly closely associated with the lay lifestyle which, as described, includes financial sponsorship of the monastery as well as direct participation in chos. It is associated also with the limitations of a lay status.

However, Ladakhis use the vocabulary of merit in a number of ways. It has been shown above how merit is made in order to make people and crops grow. It might also be useful to distinguish three types of behaviour: avoiding sin, making merit through the practice of religion and showing compassion. Indeed, the word which is usually translated into English as merit or virtue (gewa) is normally used to describe the compassion of the "great man" and the Bodhisattva element within every person.

The monastic way of life is valued more highly, partly because it is not "real life". Monks do not live like normal people for they have retired to a twilight world where they are kept alive and reproduced by villagers. In Chapter 1, an image of reciprocity was described in which lay people provide for monks, in particular, they provide food and sons for the monastery. In the present context, these are the very activities for which they are damned. To practice agriculture is to commit sin through killing small creatures who, as the saying goes, "were your mothers in previous lives". To have sex is to indulge a desire that keeps the

Wheel of Life turning and promotes particularistic ties to household and kin. Villagers are well aware of the "sins" inherent in village society and they frequently contrast their way of life to that of the monk. They also say, however, that their efforts to reproduce the monastery enable them to transcend the worst aspects of the world.

What seems at first a straightforward contrast between renunciation and the embrace of worldly life is complicated, however, by the emphasis on compassion and what might be glossed by reference to "a common humanity". This qualification is captured in a number of standard phrases, such as the one quoted previously (fn 14):

"A villager can do better work through lighting a single lamp on behalf of all than a monk with superior knowledge who nevertheless uses that power only to achieve his own enlightenment." (monk)

Similarly, a sin committed knowingly by a monk has consequences far worse than a sin committed in ignorance by a villager. It is not the ascetic who is automatically respected but the one who shows the qualities of a Bodhisattva; the one who shows compassion. The Bodhisattva has refused transcendence and returned to the world to help others.

The central place of compassion is illustrated beautifully in the story of the "sinful butcher":

"A meditator was watching a butcher about to kill a sheep. The sheep was so terrified that it hid the knife when the butcher was not looking. Then, the butcher realised that the animal knew its impending fate and he was so ashamed that he jumped off the mountain. As a result of his compassion (nyingje, snying rje), he became a Bodhisattva. The meditator, watching on, compared himself to the butcher and thought, "if that sinful butcher can become a Bodhisattva by jumping off the cliff, so can I, after so much meditation." So he too jumped off the mountain edge: to his death."

It is not enough to avoid sin or practise merit automatically and none of the specialist knowledge associated with asceticism is of any use without the right intentions. It was the butcher who achieved enlightenment in spite of all his sins because he showed compassion and it was the meditator who fell to his death in spite of all his training because of arrogance.

These comments on merit and the associated contrast between monks and villagers accordingly lead back to the figure of the Bodhisattva and his representative on earth, the rinpoche. Monks are admired not just for their asceticism but for their humanity. Under the guidance of rinpoche, they will learn the impersonal and dispassionate compassion of a Bodhisattva, which they will practice at every ritual performance as they dedicate the merit made to all living beings. Just as merit-making dissolves into an empty formalism without compassion and right intentions, so does asceticism dissolve into an empty and suspect way of life without the guidance of Bodhisattva/rinpoche.

3.5 Rinpoche: "famous reincarnations"

Brief references have been made to the ordinary process of rebirth with reference to mortuary ritual. This section addresses the very special process of reincarnation that applies to rinpoche. At death, rinpoche undergo special mortuary rituals, often surrounded by miraculous events (Ramble 1982) and their remains are not scattered but enshrined in chorten. Sometimes, indeed, the bodies of especially high-ranking rinpoche in Tibet such as the Dalai Lamas are mummified rather than cremated for the body

contains no sins to be dispelled but only a sacred power that continues to be transmitted even after death:

"his spiritual qualities are considered to have permeated his flesh and bones,... the preserved body will continue to radiate its benediction as long as it is kept ..." (Ramble 1982:350. See also Wylie 1965)

Rinpoche, "precious jewels", have been described in the introduction to this chapter as the third of the three Buddha bodies. The "apparent" or "emanation" body (nirmanakaya) is the one in which Buddha manifested himself as a human being, in a physical but perfect and pure form. Villagers worship rinpoche as the consummation of chos and also as guarantors of religion in this world. The speech, touch or breath of rinpoche is inherently powerful at all times in blessing, curing and protecting ordinary people. All serious problems are taken to rinpoche for they can do the work of every other specialist, only better. As far as villagers are concerned, any visit to a monastery is happily concluded by offering devotions to the rinpoche and receiving an "amulet" (shrunpa) that contains his protective blessing in return. Ladakhis sometimes say that monasteries are organised around rinpoche: Buddhas created Doctrine and Community in the past; today, smaller-scale "Buddhas", that is, rinpoche, continue this process as they impart knowledge and power to their communities.

As noted, rinpoche is generally used by Ladakhis as a synonym for the more specific term trulku or tulku. The most common translation of tulku in English is "reincarnate lama" though it might be more accurate to use the translation "incarnate lama":

"The concept of incarnation, that is to say an "emanation-body" (nirmānakāya in Sanskrit; sprul-sku in Tibetan) dates

from the early days of Mahāyāna Buddhism and is widely accepted in conjunction with the bodhisattva ideal. Reincarnation, however, is uniquely Tibetan in conceptualization and late in origin, emerging for the first time in the fourteenth century. For comparative purposes, "reincarnation" is used in this paper to render the Tibetan term yang-srid, literally, "to exist again." (Wylie 1978:579) (33)

In other words, the emanation body is not necessarily also a reincarnation (Wylie 1981:87). Commonly, however, sprul sku is understood to refer to both emanation and reincarnation. Thus the more important rinpoche are seen as manifestations (emanations) of particular enlightened beings; the most famous is the Dalai Lama, incarnation of Chenrezig and the supreme authority in traditional Tibet. A Dalai Lama is also seen as a rebirth or reincarnation of a previous Dalai Lama and thence back to mythical ancestors who established a direct link with the deity (Stein 1972:138-9).

A number of Western accounts locate the development of reincarnations in Tibet's political history. Wylie, for example, concludes the paper quoted above:

"In conclusion, this paper contends that "reincarnation" developed in Tibetan Buddhism primarily for political reasons, and that its immediate purpose was to provide the Black-hat Karma-pa hierarchs with a metaphysical lineage devoid of patrimonial connections as a preliminary step toward the replacement of the quarrelsome 'Khon family as regents of Tibet." (ibid:586)

Reincarnates were also political-religious rulers. Over the centuries following the first Karmapa "tulku", the tradition was adopted by other sects and became the most important form of abbatial succession in Tibet. With this development, reincarnations were no longer separated by long gaps but began to follow one another in close chronological succession (Ray 1986:47, Tucci 1980:135). The tradition was adopted for

succession to the theocratic government in Central Tibet, established in the 17th century.

In Ladakh, rinpoche never ruled directly over any realm but the monastic where they generally fulfilled the office of abbot. Moreover, they tended to occupy the lower ranks of sprul sku within the Tibetan area (34). Ladakhi villagers rarely use the word tulku and they know little of the spiritual lineages or hierarchies of tulku within the wider Tibetan area. Nonetheless, villagers associate their rinpoche with an aura of divinity and indeed of kingship like the higher ranking Tibetan sprul sku:

"particularly the higher Tulkus are conceived in royal imagery, and are understood to be in possession of wisdom, miraculous power and sovereignty over the natural world."
(Ray 1986:58)

The special sacred qualities of rinpoche are constructed through the evocation of the life of Buddha. This might be illustrated with reference to a well-known Ladakhi lineage whose rinpoche act as abbots at Spituk. The current incumbent is the 20th Bakula (de Vries 1983). Few Ladakhis know much about Bakula's history: they know him only as the immediate successor to the last abbot, who died in 1917, and descendant of the first, one of the sixteen followers or arhats of the historical Buddha who helped to spread the doctrine. Nonetheless, Bakula is seen to reconstruct the life of the historical Buddha in the present. The previous Bakula died and, motivated by his Bodhisattva vow, he selected an appropriate rebirth in the world. His birth is understood to be, in some sense, miraculous, and the infant Bakula is understood to have exhibited special signs leading to his recognition by monks and disciples of the last

reincarnation. In these ways, Bakula, like all other rinpoche, reconstructs the pattern of the historical Buddha's life (Ray 1986:50) and establishes an identity with the beginnings of Buddhism in India as well as the recent past.

Other features confirm these ideas though they are not familiar to many Ladakhis. A recent article has brought together historical, textual and iconographic information about Bakula which is relevant to the points made above (de Vries 1983). First, the lineage is tied more closely to Buddhas and to historical figures of local relevance. A Tibetan text reports that the founder of the lineage was the Buddha 'Od-dpag-med (Skt: Amitabha) and so the arhat Bakula is seen as an emanation of a Buddha; later Bakulas are emanations of divinity as well as reincarnations of the saint. This text lists the tenth incarnation as Rin-chen bzang-po (958-1055), a great translator who established many temples in Ladakh. Thus, the present Bakula is seen as a reincarnation of one of the great figures in early Ladakhi Buddhism.

Second, the continuity of this lineage is asserted. A folk tale links the last two abbots more firmly to their early ancestors: before 1860, it is claimed, the incarnations were heads of another monastery and they were only established in Spituk by a mistake. Two wall paintings in Spituk depict the entire series and the present Bakula is seen to be the twentieth in succession; the Tibetan text also gives twenty names.

Third, biographical information shows that the present Bakula was set apart from people at an early age and trained to act as a rinpoche. There are several autobiographies written by Tibetans which illustrate the process of selection. The 11th Trungpa Tulku, for example, describes how he waved to the monks searching for him and how he hung a welcome scarf around one of the monk's necks when he was a small baby (Trungpa 1968:27). A few days later he was tested to see if he remembered his previous life. I have no information on the present Bakula's selection but, judging from Ladakhi accounts, the account in this autobiography is typical:

"pairs of several objects were put before me and in each case I picked out the one that had belonged to the tenth Trungpa Tulku; among them were two walking sticks and two rosaries; also, names were written on small pieces of paper and when I was asked which piece had his name on it, I chose the right one." (Trungpa 1968:28)

The narrator remembers his last life and he has special powers to reveal hidden knowledge; he is accordingly accepted as the next incarnation and enthroned (35). Such tests have been systematised and Ladakhis describe how the results are referred to the "state oracle" of Tibet or to the Dalai Lama for ratification.

Bakula was taken from his family and enthroned at five years of age. He was taught by monks in his monastery and by another Ladakhi rinpoche. Later, he studied in Tibet for a few years before assuming practical headship of Spituk. Thus, he was incorporated in the monastery and inserted into what are usually called "spiritual lineages" of teachers and pupils or "lineages of initiation" (see Stein 1972:179, Tucci 1980:44-5, Samuel 1975:225, Karmay 1975.) Particular

teachings are passed on from a teacher to his pupil who, in turn, passes them on to his pupil. Rinpoche are taught by other rinpoche and so they form additional, exclusive "lineages" amongst themselves.

Rinpoche are sometimes bound together by other relationships too. The last Bakula was son to the queen of Zangla in Zangskar. The present Bakula is his nephew or, in some accounts, his great-nephew from the royal family of Matho village, near Leh. The present abbot of Rizong, incarnation of Bakula's teacher, is also a nephew of the last Bakula.

On the assumption of teaching and religious practice, Bakula began to "turn the wheel", standing in for Buddha. Ladakhis say that rinpoche have perfect knowledge, often described as knowledge of the past, present and future, which makes them the best of teachers. They also say that rinpoche have supreme power (wang, dbang) which is often described in terms of the magical power of their blessings (chinlab, byin rlabs) and mantra (ngags, sngags) (36). As noted at the beginning of the section, a visit to the monastery ideally culminates in the offering of homage to a rinpoche and the receipt of magical power in return.

The pastoral and ritual activities of rinpoche place them at the centre of Ladakhi religion where they distribute knowledge differentially to lead people forwards and deploy their powers to help others. It should be appreciated that rinpoche are approached very differently by initiates who are, as it were, rinpoche in the making, and villagers who are, on the whole, more concerned with tapping a source of power. A general account of these practices would take this

chapter too far afield (37). However, attention is drawn to one factor that has been mentioned previously concerning the evocation of gods in ritual and the practice of meditation or "ascetic trance." The rinpoche/Bodhisattva is an embodiment of divinity in human form. However, during rituals, he manifests a "deeper" communication with the source of religious power:

"he induces another brief but controlled trance ... during which he is indeed believed to be in direct communication with a deity.

"One lama I observed rolled his eyes when entering a trance, closed them for thirty seconds and upon reopening them jerked very quickly as if returning from another consciousness." (Aziz 1976:355)

Aziz describes these practices as double or overlapping possession in order to capture the sense in which rinpoche are born to a permanent relationship with divinity, to a permanent trance, which is nonetheless deepened during ritual events. Many accounts dwell upon the spiritual presence of rinpoche. Pallis writes of the Dalai Lama:

"That function of his which chiefly attracts the interest of Europeans, namely his political rulership, important though it is in its own way, must yet be counted as a side-line; one might also say that a similar, though less categorical reservation applies to his ecclesiastical status, as an eminent member of the Buddhist clergy... In fact (his) essential function is neither the exercise of the Temporal Power nor yet of Spiritual Authority, but it is a function bound up with the fact that he is the representative on earth of a celestial principle ... through his person flows an uninterrupted current of spiritual influence, characteristically compassionate in "flavour", and it can be said that (his) office, in relation to the world generally and Tibet in particular, is neither the chiefly one of rulership nor teaching, but an "activity of presence"..." (Pallis 1960:161-2)

Samuel develops a similar metaphor; the rinpoche is seen as a storehouse of power, the point at which the "other world"

erupts into this one. The "current" or "power" is released into the world most especially during rituals.

It is rinpoche who create a single picture of religious life from the village perspective. This first part of the thesis has established the mutual dependency between monastery and village but this final section shows how rinpoche unify the two into a single whole. Aziz's metaphor for D'ingri religious life provides an appropriate image:

"The rules that give the system a framework and its motivation are at the centre where the la-ma operates, and at the edges with the population of laymen and other clients. The chospa, whether itinerants, yogin, monastic officers or serkyim, act as agents facilitating the interaction between the two parts of a wheel-like system. The lama is at the hub, clients are on the rim, and chospa are the spokes. This model can also be seen as a symbol of the Buddhist wheel of life, with the vagaries of samsaric sufferings and needs spread along the edges, but drawn together through their links towards the central Bodhisattva with a promise for release and unity at the centre." (Aziz 1978:258, my emphasis)

These few comments illustrate the unique attributes of rinpoche that place them at the centre of Ladakhi Buddhism. In some respects, rinpoche unify what have been presented as two distinct parts to an ideal Ladakhi society. Famous reincarnations construct one central image of history. They bring Bodhisattvas into the world, and with them, lineages that stretch back to the dawn of civilisation and repetitively re-create or return to the life of the historical Buddha in the present. The construction of ranked lineages of saintly rebirths might be described less as an image of past history than as an image of an unfolding present, determined by the vows of Bodhisattvas. These lineages are not "historical" at all; rather, they provide the unchanging centre to which the vagaries of historical time are accomodated and through which they are interpreted.

PART II: POSSESSION

CHAPTER 4

THE MAKING OF A VILLAGE ORACLE (I): ELECTION



Plates 17 & 18 Ayu oracle extracting "needles"
(khap) from a cow



4.1 Introduction

An overview of the first trance I attended sets the scene for this and subsequent chapters. The trance was an initiation and, because initiations are so unusual, this section concludes with a more general introduction. Two further introductory sections follow. The first looks at some of the literature on oracles and their equivalents in other Tibetan speaking areas. The second locates practitioners in the Leh area. The rest of the chapter deals with the making of a village oracle.

I was asked to the house by the oracle's husband. He appreciated that the spectacle would appeal to tourists and he obviously wanted to do M., my friend, a favour. I knew oracles were possessed by spirits and diagnosed problems in trance. I knew that there were two types of oracles who appeared in monasteries and in houses. I had even seen some monk-oracles the day before at one of the great winter festivals, described in Chapter 6. I was looking forward to comparing the occasions and the people, who are described as "village" and "monastery" oracles.

I learned subsequently that this trance was not typical. It concerned a novice oracle who had finally decided to accept her gods. She was in her late thirties and she had first been possessed some years previously. She had banned the spirits (tam tangches, dam gtong-) on several occasions but could do so no longer without risk to her own person. This was an initiation. An older well-established oracle was in charge of a "separation", the first and most essential stage of an oracle's training.

I barely met the woman novice for she was extremely shy and, deeply unsettled by this divine election, unwilling to discuss anything that might touch on her status as an oracle. She was a housewife and a mother of six; a farmer in the village of Sabu, 5 miles from Leh. Her teacher (gergan, dgergan or guru) obviously felt differently. He spoke little before the trance as he was arranging his equipment and directing a monk in the manufacture of offerings (chodpa). Afterwards, however, he sat drinking beer and telling stories about his life as an oracle, his father's and forefathers' before him; more generally, he spoke of miracle cures and the supernatural. Once I had met other oracles in the area, I came to expect wide differences between them for village oracles shared nothing that distinguished them as a group from their neighbours apart from a crucial period of "madness" that preceded initiation, as discussed below (1).

The room was prepared for three officiants; senior oracle, monk and novice. An altar had been prepared for the monk at the top of the room. Another two altars were arranged opposite each other on a single table. On the floor were five arrows in pots of barley. The central one was a dadar, a "wedding arrow". Above was the teacher's personal shrine, his lhatho, hanging from the roof. It was a bundle with a sword and two spears. As noted, most gods have stone shrines built for them on housetops and elsewhere but this particular god apparently lived in a mobile structure when the oracle was not himself possessed. Martselang lhaba said that the shrine had been given to one of his forefathers by the local and powerful monastery of Hemis.

The teacher was possessed first. As he came into trance, he put on the clothes which bring gods into an oracle. The five-piece crown or ringa (rigs lnga) is perhaps the most important single item for, when it is fastened, onlookers see a state of possession while, when it is taken off, onlookers assume that the god(s) have departed. It may be recalled that this crown is worn by others embodying gods. Monks wear ringa in ceremonies of empowerment or initiation (dbang) when they evoke gods into their bodies. I argued that the corpse could also be seen as an incarnate god during choga wang (Chapter 3.3). It is not surprising, then, that the five lobed crown signifies the immediate presence of gods in their vessel to Ladakhi villagers.

The teacher joined the monk in prayer once HE had become possessed (2). The novice then entered for the first time and sat opposite her teacher.

A plate of storma which had been made by the monk were thrown. It may be recalled that these objects are thrown to dispel hindrances, demons and sin. On this occasion, chasum storma (cha gsum) were thrown which are popular in curing ceremonies and also at weddings when they are thrown as an in-marriage spouse is about to enter his or her new home.

The teacher gradually abrogated the main role and HE began to sing as the woman became possessed, trembling and shaking. HE sang:

"If you are a god, then take this apron. If you are a god, let us cover your mouth as befits a god. And take this drum and this bell. ..."

HE mentioned every article of the god's dress and equipment as they were given to the woman by her relatives.

As the novice became possessed, her teacher sang a second song that asked the god to join the present company:

"If you please, don't stay at the top of the mountain but come here to us people. Come to this woman. Speak to us."

The monk prayed again; this time on behalf of the novice who, because she was unaccustomed to the god and because the god was unaccustomed to her, did not know how to pray.

The monk and teacher began to play a game of dice while the oracle sang a song from the Kesar epic which told of Kesar's game with the dwarf, balu. The epic tells of the conquests effected by Kesar, a god invited down to earth to rule as king of Ling, and it is popular in Ladakh as well as many other parts of the Himalaya, China and Mongolia. As suggested below, this epic is important to the initiations of oracles; it has also been related to marriage ritual (Phylactou 1989) (3). The episode with the dwarf lies at the heart of the ceremony. Kesar has learned that his wife has been captured by the enemy who are invading his country. He is travelling home when he meets the dwarf and they play a game of dice. The song relates this game which is repeated by the monk and teacher. Kesar starts badly and he loses everything; kingdom, wife and horse. Then, his guardian deity tells him to stake his right rib and Kesar wins the throw. The balu is so terrified at the thought of losing his ribs that he promises, and afterwards gives, great help to Kesar during his journey home. The dwarf is himself killed during the following ordeals. A plate of nine white and nine black stones were used for the game. The monk played with the black stones and the teacher with the white. There were five throws and the teacher (who is now a god or Kesar) won.

I was later told that the game is played until the god wins and so the monk (who takes on the role of balu) has to lose.

The small audience had not expected to hear extracts from Kesar and they were spellbound. Afterwards, they pointed out local Kesar landmarks and discussed the exact significance of the dwarf episode.

Next, two offerings (lud, glud) were thrown. Lud can be described as a kind of storma but they are seen more specifically as substitute offerings for an afflicted person or group which are given to the spirits causing damage as a ransom during curing ceremonies. One of the offerings was a black model of a girl and the other, a white model of a boy.

The teacher asked the novice god to speak and SHE finally said:

"I've come to help you and I shall return."

The teacher god asked:

"What do you have to say? Do you want to be here or not? Do you want me as your guru or would you prefer to have another god come and teach you? If you have nothing else to say now, you may go."

The novice did not reply and so the monk gave "golden drinks" (serkyem, gser skyems) (4) to the two gods and the teacher summed up the procedure:

"Shemul gyamo (the novice's god) has not come (properly) because a birth taboo was broken (panga). A small baby was taken to the queen's shrine in the village and SHE therefore requires cleansing. Two washes (trus, khrus) should be performed before next time. The oracle must also visit Stakna rinpoche before then to receive another initiation (lhaphok)."

Water was put on the nape of the woman's neck to help her out of trance and she slowly came back to normal as the assembled company repeated the victory shouts to the gods

that they had cried when the woman was possessed. The rest of the session saw the teacher treating three patients.

The first, a child, was told that his illness concerned "masters of the earth" (sadag, sa bdag) and the god sucked out something which he spat onto a plate. HE said nothing more. The next child, a boy, complained of watery eyes. The god agreed they had a dirty colour. This, HE said, was "pollution" (tip) caused by lu. Questioning of the boy's mother suggested that there was a black stone by a spring on their land. The god said that a lu lived there and must be built a "house" (a lubang). The last child, a girl, had a pimple which was also attributed to lu. The plate was brought back with a bowl of water and the oracle sucked blood from the spot on the girl's face. He spat the blood into the plate and rinsed his mouth out.

The god said that there was no more time. Further questions might be asked the following morning. HE threw offerings of rice, barley and sugar with his prayers. HE then threw a bundled up scarf containing barley at me. Apparently, the scarf brings a child to a married person and marriage to an unmarried one. HE finished praying and took off his clothes to begin a technical discussion, instigated by myself, on the differences between these spirits of the earth and water. Apart from the absence of a few stock phrases such as a distinctive way of saying "do you understand?" (with a final m, haggam), a favourite expression of oracles in trance, it was hard to tell that the oracle had come out of trance; his voice was the same.

At the time, I found the trance unintelligible. I had been in Ladakh six months. Some explanations were offered by

my Ladakhi friend who translated a number of terms and described the importance of the more common activities such as sucking out illness. But, much of the imagery, such as Kesar's game of dice, the collection of arrows and the songs made little sense for months. At the time, I did not appreciate how infrequently initiations were held before strangers and, unfortunately, I was to see only two more. Because this trance was so unusual, it may be useful to complete this introduction with a more general summary of trance and treatment.

As noted below (section 4.3), there are relatively few village oracles in the Leh area. Appendix 3 summarises details about the 22 oracles (18 Ladakhis and 4 Tibetan refugees) who I met in the area. There are wide variations in oracular practice. Some oracles work every day while others work infrequently. Some work mostly at their own homes while others visit their clients. Treatment may be sought by just one supplicant or more than eighty, who may ask the gods to reveal the truth about the past, present or future, cure afflictions or recommend appropriate treatment. Some oracles are known for particular skills, such as exorcism (Chapter 5) or training novices (below). Certain features are, however, standard. All but one of the 22 oracles that I met extracted substances from their clients and the context in which these extractions took place followed a basic pattern. The general structure of trance is summarised and concrete examples of treatment are given.

A room, generally the kitchen or guest room, will be prepared for trance with an altar in the "higher" part of the

room. The altar will be arranged according to the task at hand but it will include items found on all altars, such as the offerings of homage to Buddha in small bowls, items for offering during trance, the bell, prayer beads and thunderbolt and, sometimes, the ritual dagger, some dough figures or other icons representing the high gods and Buddhas as well as butter lamps and incense. Further items are more specific to the altars used by oracles. There will probably be a pipe, used to extract substances from people, an empty plate to hold such substances, and certainly the small two-sided drum, usually called daru after the Sanskrit damaru. This drum provides music for the gods and it is an important instrument for divination. Grains, usually barley, are placed on the drum and their movement reveals the answer to a question (5).

Clients will probably be seated before the oracle enters this room. The oracle is possessed as s/he puts on the clothes and this change in state is clearly seen in trembling, a strange voice and an altogether different demeanour. Every oracle wears a slightly different set of clothes but all have an apron (pangkhyeb, pang khyeb), which is usually put on first and a cape (stodle, stod le) as well as the essential crown (ringa) which is put on last or just before a final item, a scarf, is tied round the mouth. This scarf is said to prevent pollution (tip) of the gods by people. Sometimes, the crown has "hair" hanging from it - the nun-oracle from Skarra boasted multi-coloured hair of this kind, made of silk -; sometimes, just welcome scarves.

Oracles may have prepared themselves before donning their clothes. They may also have begun to invite their gods

down with a mixture of enticement and coercion, as in rituals performed by monks. The gods are invited into their vessel (schenden, spyan 'dren); a forceful (bskul ba) request (solka, gsol kha) is also often made. "Golden drinks" (serkyem) are offered to the gods, which often continue during the first few minutes of trance. As the ritual clothes are donned and the lamp of offering (chodme) lit, the spirits are definitively drawn into their vessel. As noted below, some oracles also meditate on a tutelary in order to induce possession.

As the oracle is dressed, S/HE will immediately pick up some ritual equipment, usually bell and thunderbolt, often prayer beads too, for the offerings and prayers that continue for the first few minutes of a trance. The oracle will probably be facing away from the audience or to the side, towards the fixed kitchen shelves, over the altar.

With these preliminaries, the oracle will turn to his or her clients and invite questions. Most oracles are possessed by more than one god and there is generally a marked division of labour in trance. Some gods may not talk, some may not know how to pray. One may be responsible for bringing needles out of animals; another may bring poison from people. There is, in fact, a tendency to acquire gods over time (see below) and so well-established oracles are likely to show more changes of character during trance than novices. Senior oracles generally claim to be possessed by relatively high ranking protectors of religion as well as village gods while novices claim just one or two low ranking local gods.

As the oracle answers questions, S/HE will be offered a scarf by every petitioner. This will generally be placed before the incarnate god and occasionally hung directly from the crown or right arm. Someone from the house will have a bundle of scarves ready to sell. Small amounts of money are offered too, but generally less obviously and after consultation. The god(s) may have an interpreter to render their elliptical statements of divine authority intelligible to an audience of villagers. In the Leh area, such interpretation is informal and ad hoc.

The oracle will deal with questions, sometimes speaking and sometimes simply gesturing and sucking out pollution from people or rushing outside to extract needles from cattle. Voices and behaviour will change with the succession of gods and, often, a major contrast is created between the peaceful, who is likely to sermonise, and the fierce, who may harangue or beat a customer. Speaking is often punctuated with song, prayer and, occasionally, dance.

Oracles may come out of trance abruptly, kneeling over their altar once more and showing brief signs of pain or difficulty, particularly in the back, before they doff their clothes (6). The gods often make a dramatic exit; praying, singing, throwing offerings into the air and wafting incense, then rubbing the vessel's back upon floor or wall and perhaps leaving the vessel hiccuping or fainting as the gods depart and the clothes are taken off. By this stage, support will have been offered by someone in the room. As the donning of the crown signals trance, its removal signals normality: the oracle is out of trance once the ringa has been removed (7) and the lamp taken to the offering room. The end of the

trance may be anticipated in a number of concluding episodes. The audience are often blessed directly, one by one, kneeling before the god, and receiving the thunderbolt, prayer beads or ritual dagger on head and shoulders (khapko) (8). Gods sometimes throw blessed grains, usually mustard seeds or rice, which are to be cooked in water that will then be drunk. Often, the god will give a sermon on the state of the world and advice for those present.

Another very general feature of trance concerns the extraction of substances. This is apparent even in the initiation described above, for Thikse oracle concluded by extracting substances from two of the three patients he treated. Some idea of the range of problems brought to an oracle and the overwhelming focus on extraction as a form of treatment can be seen through a short summary of treatment offered by Ayu oracle on three occasions. These trances were open to all-comers and so they provide an apt contrast with the private trance described above. Ayu oracle is selected partly because she will be encountered subsequently. One of her trances has also been described in detail in Kaplanian 1985.

i) 31.10.82.

There were 28 people; 14 men, 10 women and 4 children. The majority were local Buddhist Ladakhis but I was aware of four Indians and two Baltis (Shiites). These visitors were sitting towards the back of the kitchen, behind an altar facing the shelves. The oracle came down from the offering room, washed, came into trance and prayed in the manner described above. Her husband and son helped in these

preliminaries; lighting incense and distributing scarves to those who wanted to ask the oracle questions. The oracle then invited questions from the room.

Twenty-four people had substances extracted from them; ten of these were not given any advice. In most cases, a black liquid was sucked out from the stomach, often with the help of a pipe. This liquid was spat into a small bowl and, generally, the god rinsed her mouth with water and spat into that bowl again. The black liquid mixed with water was then emptied into a larger dish of ashes. I failed to ask how the substances were eventually treated. I am told that they are usually buried outside the house compound (pers. comm. A Schenk) but, sometimes, oracles swallow substances and simply rinse out their mouths.

Three of the clients who were treated in this way also had liquids extracted from the channels (rtsa) around the eyes, sinuses, throat and wrists. One was told that he had been given poison (tuk) by a relative. He was told that this relative had a black mole on his face and red hair. Substance (which I did not see) was taken from his stomach.

The god spoke to a number of further clients:-

A local man said that his wife was ill. He was told that she was suffering from tipo, gyapo and tsan (wandering spirits, see Chapter 5). He must bring her to the oracle.

A man from Lower Ladakh was suffering from sadag (masters of the earth). He should sponsor the rite of sadag dondol (see Chapter 2) but not now, not until the summer.

A couple from Phyang brought their child who could not walk. They were told to make him clean (tsangma) with juniper incense and rhododendron bark in the water. The husband was told that he would receive his discharge from the army.

A man from Lower Ladakh was told that the pain in his child's ear was due to yenak ("pus", "bad wax"). The child should go to a (Western style) doctor but he might not be completely cured.

An Indian man agreed, yes, he did have kidney trouble; yes, he had visited the doctor; yes, he was taking medicine. He was told to carry on.

A man and child from Lower Ladakh, who had substances extracted from their channels, were told to do a ritual wash (trus). The man was told that it was possible to move his shrine (lhatho) to the phaslha if he had the help of a very good monk. After more talk about the state of his home, he was eventually told to sponsor a particular rite. The child was given an amulet made from a scarf and blessed (khapko).

A man from Lower Ladakh, who also had substances extracted from his channels, was told to do sadag dondol for his house.

A taxi driver from Leh was given advice though nothing was extracted from his body. He had lost his radio. He was told that it had been taken by a friend of a different "status" (rigs) and of different "ribs" (non-kin). He would not get it back.

ii) 7.11.82.

Twenty-three of 34 people (26 adults and 8 children) were treated on this occasion. The general structure of the trance was the same. All 23 had substances extracted, most in the standard fashion; that is, a black liquid was extracted from the stomach with the mouth or pipe and spat into a small bowl. There were three exceptions. A woman brought her child forward and substance was sucked from the child's stomach and throat; prayer beads were applied to her eyes and the god said that posion (tuk) had been given by her "father's sister" (ani) in a meal. A man from Lower Ladakh and a woman from Stok had paper taken from their stomachs. This was "bad magic" or sorcery which was unravelled in the small bowl with the oracle's pipe so that all could see. The woman was told to do a ritual wash (the honorific was used implying that this should be done by a rinpoche) and get an amulet.

Again, the oracle spoke to a number of other clients:

A Muslim boy from Leh was told to go to an amchi for fire treatment (moxibustion). The doctor could cure him but it would take much longer. The boy said that people were "renting" his house and they would not move out. He was told to work very slowly, to make them happy and then he would be successful.

A man from Lower Ladakh was told that his illness was due to patkan ("gastric problems", "digestive juices") and blood. He should go to a doctor. There were no (curative) rites (skurim) to be performed.

A couple from Sankar approached the oracle. After extracting pollution, tip, from the girl's stomach in the form of black liquid, the god became very angry with the girl and screamed, "Do you have contact with Muslims? You shouldn't."

The oracle told a man from Phyang, "You'll get better in a few days without further treatment." SHE beat him for checking up (tsolta) on her status as a true oracle.

The oracle treated a group of Indians. SHE was angry with two and cried, "Don't check up on me like this." SHE told one child not to drink sweet tea and SHE gave another child an amulet. One man was told to sponsor a particular rite. Another was told that he might be successful in getting a new job.

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About fifty individuals were treated out of a total of 74. The vast majority had substances extracted but a handful were simply told the truth. All but two of the extractions concerned the sucking out of a black liquid from the stomach. The two exceptions concerned a Sunni Muslim and a Buddhist from Leh. Substances were taken from the neck as well as the stomach in both cases. The Buddhist was told to go to a doctor: "You have bruises and "yellow water" (chuser) on your bones. Show the doctor quickly because it is what they call cancer."

The oracle offered advice and revealed the truth to some of those who had substances extracted from their bodies:

A woman from Gongma, who now lives in Leh, came up with her child. The mother had a swollen cheek and she was told to

have an injection every five days. The child was told not to wash in dirty places and to have a ritual wash.

A man from a village close by told of a woman who called out the names of dead people. Why did she do this? The doctors and amchi could do nothing, he said. The oracle said that a particular exorcistic ritual must be performed, otherwise there would be great danger.

A woman from a nearby village brought her child. She was told that the child was ill because it was always left dirty: a ritual wash would help.

There were two Sunni women from Leh and the oracle told one that the pain in her legs was an old illness. She should show it to the doctor. The oracle would take all responsibility for an operation (that is, it would be a success).

A man from the village was told, "It is not patkan as you think, but "stomach problems" (pa, pho ba) from drinking too much beer. Your "brother" (spun) has illness in his lung."

There was a group of people from Kargil. One boy was told that the "channel" (rtsa) in his kidney was not good and he should show it to a doctor. Another was told that his illness was due to yama (wax?) in the ear; he should get fire treatment from an amchi (9).

A man from a neighbouring village was referred to an amchi for the pain in his back.

I could not hear much of what was said to a group of Indians. However, one man was told that his illness was due to cold.

A woman from Leh was told that she was in great danger. She must raise "wind horses" (lungsta, see Chapter 5).

Further advice was offered to clients who had no substances extracted from their bodies:

Amongst the group of Indians were four men. One was told that he might get a promotion if he paid and got someone to help him from the "backside": "Whether you are in the army or a civilian, everywhere you need these two kinds of help." Two were told that their transfers were possible. One was told that he would get his registration papers for a Ph.D. within a month.

Two brothers from Lower Ladakh brought forward a third, younger brother. They asked if he was a thief and the oracle said, "Who asked you to bring these things? The pressure cooker? The Mon boy? If you do it again, I'll put fire on your hand." (Apparently, the elder brothers had agreed to have the boy branded.)

The oracle told the son of the house (the vessel's son), "There is jealousy. Do a rite (one of two exorcistic

rituals)." A wedding was to be celebrated. A monk was making wind horse flags (lungsta) upstairs for the same reason, to dispel jealousy that might be aroused by the marriage.

A girl from Leh complained of an "unsettled mind" (mirdechēs, see Chapter 5). She was told that the gyapo, timo and tsan spirits were all coming together and she should do tidos and gyaldos (that is, sponsor the making of thread crosses (mdos) to trap and get rid of the spirits).

These examples illustrate the range of problems brought to village oracles and the diverse solutions offered. As noted in the Introduction, treatment is not explored in as much depth as the general position of village oracles in Ladakh. However, this short summary illustrates important aspects of oracular treatment which will be discussed in Chapter 7. Appendix 2 includes data on treatment from the perspective of Gongma village, listing household consultations with a variety of practitioners. Village oracles were called to Gongma households more frequently than astrologers, amchi, doctors and rinpoche in 1982. Appendix 4 includes one complete transcription of a trance session as well as a summary of the variety of problems treated by local oracles over the course of a week. All other material on treatment is presented from a different perspective, concerning the general significance of rituals of possession.

As suggested in Chapter 7, problems treated through extraction are often seen as the result of exchanges between villagers and, in particular, the result of hospitality. The problems which villagers attribute to relations among themselves are dealt with in different ways by ritual practitioners. While monks and rinpoche administer blessings and sacred substances such as water to the body, oracles take out pollution, poison and bad magic. Crudely, monks might be

said to put good things into the body while village oracles take bad things out.

4.2 A note on terms and the wider Tibetan speaking area.

The term oracle has been chosen to translate the Ladakhi *lha*, *lhamo/lhaba* for reasons given in the Introduction. The most common term for the trance practiced by village oracles is *lha zhugshes* (*lha 'jug-*). *Zhugshes* means "the going into, the entering, the beginning of a disease, the incarnation of a deity" (Jaschke p.177). As noted in the Introduction, the same term is used for the trances of monastery oracles and for other types of village affliction involving demonic beings. The link that is made linguistically between ritual practices concerning possession by gods and village afflictions associated with possession by demons prompts the discussion in the next chapter. The importance of this connection is often noted by Ladakhis. Interestingly, the similarities in the vocabulary used to describe monastery and village oracles as well as their trance practices attract little attention from Ladakhis. However, it is explored in Chapter 6.

Ladakhis sometimes also say that "gods descend" (*lhabab*, *lha 'bab*) or, simply, "come" and "go" (*skyodches*, *skyod-* (H)). The former usage was uncommon and seemed to be consciously literary or, perhaps, imitative of the Tibetan. The latter term is used for any coming and going and it was commonly used when oracles were understood to be the subject of conversation.

The vocabulary of possession is simple: the god comes/goes, the god enters and the god descends. These

phrases all show the god(s) to be the active agent and the "body" or person more or less passive. Although trance activities imply a more elaborate imagery (Chapter 7), there is no explicit suggestion that the spirit sits in a particular part of the body or that the spirit and person enter any more specific relationship (10).

This vocabulary does, however, provide a context in which the trance practiced by oracles is distinguished from the meditation practiced by monks or rinpoche. In the last chapter, it was suggested that both rinpoche and oracles "incarnate gods." Yet, the manner of incarnation is quite different. Zhugshes refers to a loss of consciousness; the person's "mind" is displaced by a spirit and oracles say that they do not remember what happens during a trance. There are many different techniques of meditation but, for the purpose of contrast with zhugshes, meditation might be said to refer to an enlargement of consciousness. When a monk meditates upon his tutelary deity, the process can be described as one of evocation, when a mental picture of a deity is constructed little by little, and unification, when the practitioner merges with that picture. Once this identity has been achieved, sacred power can be used within the world and to move towards enlightenment. The most common term used by villagers is gomches (sgom-) which connotes concentration and deep thought. Another is "to think", bsam-; a meditation room or hut is called samkhang. These terms all connote a carefully controlled activity where the person dissolves his mind into a wider divinity. Whilst the oracle's mind is displaced by a spirit, meditation ideally expands the mind so that consciousness and divinity are one. As noted in the

Introduction, possession and meditation are also glossed crudely as the ecstatic and ascetic.

Nonetheless, it should be appreciated that this distinction is not always so clear cut. It has been suggested that the word, shaman, which is normally associated with ecstasy, is historically associated with the "ascetic" or "one who practices austerities" (Bailey IN Blacker 1975:317-8, fn 4). A more exact contrast might be made between enstasis and ecstasy (Eliade 1958) but, as Peters notes, it is possible for shamans to have meditative trances and for yogins to have ecstatic experiences (Peters 1982:29). Moreover, following Eliade, Ladakhi oracles could not be said to experience "ecstasy"; they do not practice shamanism in Eliade's sense (see below). It is important to emphasise that the contrast, which I have glossed in terms of possession/meditation and ecstatic/ascetic trance, is used in descriptions of Buddhist societies as a gloss for local contrasts of the kind sketched above. Gombrich aptly notes:

"Eliade has called the state at which the yogin aims by stopping sense perception "enstasis": the meditator "stands within" himself. This should be the polar opposite of ecstasy "standing outside" oneself as the shaman does. ... to this day Buddhism preserves the tradition that enstasis and ecstasy are totally different and only enstasis is of soteriological value, yet we shall also see that to the outside investigator there are striking affinities between the two states which suggest that the rigidity of the distinction depends on cultural context." (Gombrich 1988:45)

Published material refers to a range of practitioners in the ecstatic throughout Tibetan speaking areas. Material on specialists in the monastery is largely descriptive and includes accounts of the nature of trance and the extraordinary feats performed as well as the identity of gods possessing oracles. The critical importance of the "state

oracle" is explored at length and the god concerned is described briefly, in anticipation of later discussions (11).

The state oracle has been an important arbiter of state policy. He was, for example, influential in choosing the 7th incarnation of the Dalai Lama and he is said to have revealed the 13th. The oracle is currently in exile at Dharamsala where he apparently still decides between rival candidates for office; for example, he continues to ratify the higher ranking oracles by testing them all in trance. There are various traditions about Nechung oracle which cannot be fully described here (12). According to one tradition, Guru Rinpoche established the monastery of Samye in the 8th century and he brought Pehar from the north, from Hor, after he had subdued him in a duel. He turned him into a guardian whose ferocity is displayed in the mask worn by his oracle (13).

Pehar was later settled in the sanctuary of Nechung (gNas-chung) (Lama Chime Radha 1981:29). He is believed to have moved in the reign of the 5th Dalai Lama, seven centuries after he first came to Tibet (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975:104). Many accounts suggest that Pehar left Samye in the reign of the 5th Dalai Lama, after quarrelling with a monk. The guardian was caught in a trap and found by the Dalai Lama floating down the river. The god then chose its abode near that place in the form of a dove. A small temple was built around the tree to which he had flown and, ever since, the state oracle could be found at Nechung (14).

In the Gelugpa tradition, Pehar is thought to be the one that possesses the state oracle. In other traditions such as

the Drigungpa, the god is thought to be rDo-rje shugs-ldan, an important lama (rinpoche) who committed suicide in the time of the 5th Dalai Lama because of persecution. He became a demon which was turned into a god through conquest (Lama Chime Radha 1981:31-2).

Whichever the tradition, it is often thought that the guardian god has made so much merit since his conquest that he has achieved the status of a celestial Bodhisattva (Lama Chime Radha 1981, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975). Sometimes, then, these defeated enemies of religion make enough merit as guardians to become high ranking gods and eventually achieve enlightenment. Nebesky-Wojkowitz refers to Pehar's "chief minister", rDo-rje grags-ldan, and suggests that:

"Pe har, who will shortly become a 'jig-rten las 'das pa'i srung ma (i.e., enlightened protector), feels more and more reluctant to speak through the oracle-priest of Nechung, and (that) in many cases rDo rje grags ldan answers in his place." (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975:125)

In other words, Pe har is on the way to enlightenment and his deputy has taken his place in the world. The significance of this movement towards enlightenment and the transformation of demons into gods through conquest is explored in Chapter 6.

Literature on the state oracle shows that "shamanism" is central to the monastic system. At the heart of the Tibetan theocracy, ecstatic and ascetic trance are combined. The Dalai Lama, reincarnation of the earliest Tibetan kings and of the Buddha Avalokitesvara as well as more recent Dalai Lamas, is assisted by this oracle, who practices ecstatic trance, possessed of a god that was originally conquered by the Dalai Lama. Work on monastery oracles often acknowledges a debt to Eliade in this field (see, for example, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975). Eliade recognised the importance of

shamanism in monastic Buddhism with references to the early Tibetan kings ascending the sky after death, the skeleton dancers at 'cham (see Chapter 6), the "mystical heat" and flight generated by meditators, the use of drums, the healers' search for lost souls, death rites and especially the Tibetan Book of the Dead, practices like offering up the body to demons and so forth (Eliade 1964:108-9, 409-10, 430-40, 443). Eliade suggested that these various techniques are integral to a much wider religious complex than the specifically shamanic.

Eliade must be the single most important figure to have inspired work on spirit possession and shamanism in the Tibetan speaking area. Distinctions drawn between possession in the monastery and the village on the one hand and between themes emerging from work in Nepal and Tibet on the other may be explored briefly in this context.

Monastery oracles in Ladakh will not be discussed in as much detail as their village counterparts. The biographies of their gods are skeletal as compared to Pehar's but similar in structure and what will be emphasised is the theme of conquest. Monastery oracles, unlike their village counterparts, are rarely initiated through an involuntary madness in Ladakh. They are generally elected or appointed. They appear in trance at cham, annual dance dramas, whilst village oracles generally practice regularly (15). Monastery oracles wear highly individualised clothes and perform special feats as well as "telling the truth" from the past, present or future. Unlike village oracles, they do not perform curative rituals for individual clients. Ladakhis

often distinguish the two types of oracle by emphasising that monastery practitioners do not extract substances from petitioners.

Writers on other aspects of the monastery have also noted the importance of shamanism. They have followed Eliade in recognising the importance of shamanic features to the high prestige religion in the monastery and they have rightly extended this observation beyond ecstatic trance to the "ascetic". Aziz' important article on the double trance practiced by rinpoche has already been mentioned (Aziz 1976). Aziz suggests that the tulku can be seen as a routinised shaman or a "para-shaman" (1976:358). Others have made similar points. Stablein, for example, coins the term neo-shaman for the master of tantric ritual. He explains the term thus:

"If a shaman can say, "I am possessed by a spirit", the vajramaster, after the invitation phase of the ceremony, can say "I am Mahākāla." (Stablein 1976a:368)

These authors have pointed to important continuities between shamanistic and orthodox Buddhist ritual techniques. However, they have not explored the interconnections either between different monastic practices or between (ecstatic) possession (that is, zhugshes in Ladakh) in the village and monastery. Aziz concludes that reincarnate monks (rinpoche) are in no way comparable to village mediums (1976:358). Paul, in the same volume of essays, deduces a historical shift among the Sherpa, suggesting that possession has become less important in the village as it has become more important to an expanding monastic system (Paul 1976). While Aziz refuses to relate different trance practices and while Paul outlines a historical displacement of one type by another, a third

approach, illustrated by Holmberg with reference to the Western Tamang, describes a complementarity and a tension between ritual specialists inside and outside the monastery, showing how they co-exist (Holmberg 1980, 1984).

Possession (ecstatic trance) and meditation (ascetic trance) are sharply distinguished by Ladakhis and other Tibetans, as shown by reference to the vocabulary of trance described above. The literature on shamanism has pointed to continuities between ritual techniques but it has also introduced a further distinction between different types of ecstatic possession (zhugshes) which is based upon local exegesis but not upon the vocabulary used. There are monastery oracles and there are village oracles. My research with village oracles led to an exploration of their relationship with monastery oracles. To my knowledge, no attempt has been made previously to trace any systematic links between these two types of practitioner in the ecstatic. Indeed, my research also led to work in a third area associated with involuntary affliction in the village. This topic is crudely glossed as "witchcraft" and it too has been discussed quite independently of other types of possession in the literature. One possible reason for the lack of discussion on the relationships between different forms of "possession" (zhugshes) seems to relate to the division that is so much emphasised between monastery and household. This and the following chapters attempt to relate different types of possession (zhugshes) to each other rather than addressing the equally important topic of the relationship between possession and other ritual techniques.

In pursuit of this theme, the division between monastery and village is not given great prominence, nor is it presented as a fixed division.

The literature on village oracles is also largely descriptive (16) but it is less unitary. Material from Tibet is not interpreted in the same way as material from Nepal. Eliade seems to have had a rather different influence in Nepali studies which are more preoccupied with definitional issues and with the relations between Nepali groups and neighbouring "great traditions". Eliade concludes his great work on shamanism:

"the specific element of shamanism is not the embodiment of "spirits" by the shaman, but the ecstasy induced by his ascent to the sky or descent to the underworld; incarnating spirits and being "possessed" by spirits are universally disseminated phenomena but they do not necessarily belong to shamanism in the strict sense." (Eliade 1964:499-500)

This follows a discussion of the shamanic heartlands of Central and North Asia and of shamanic elements all over the world, from the Plains Indians to the Andamans. While Eliade's approach to Tibet promoted a special perspective on "shamanism", his search for traits seems to have inspired studies of syncretism in Nepal. There are many publications on Nepal which suggest that spirit possession establishes greater continuities between neighbouring groups than other social practices (see particularly the collections published in Hitchcock and Jones eds, 1976, Fisher ed, 1978 and Furer-Haimendorf ed, 1974). Spirit possession provides a theme that links "orthodox" Tibetan speaking groups practising a Tibetan Buddhism focused on monasteries with tribal, bilingual and Hinduised groups to the south. Some of this work is also oriented towards a distinction between a "pure"

Central Asian model of classical shamanism and the "degenerate" Indian practices of spirit possession. Is a particular practice possession or shamanism? Does it derive geographically and historically from Central Asian, Tibetan, Hindu or any other source? Note:

"Many of the themes of classical shamanism can be found with varying degrees of modification in other ethnic groups of Nepal as well, at least in kernel form. ... Does this suggest, perhaps, that there was a proto-tradition of the non-Indic peoples of Nepal which may have very closely resembled the classic Inner Asian tradition? The incidence of Kham-Magar shamanism (where the author worked) shows that such a tradition can and does, in fact, exist in Nepal." (Watters 1975:155)

In the Introduction, one problem was associated with this definitional approach for it was claimed that village oracles in Ladakh could not be sharply separated from shamans on the one hand and those afflicted with possession on the other (fn 3, Chapter 1). Another problem has been discussed by Lewis who questions the validity of Eliade's distinction within the "shamanic heartlands" themselves (Lewis 1986, chapter 5). More general problems relate to the validity of this style of explanation. An explanation of the present in terms of a putative history or the diffusion of traits may mislead. The comparison of superficially similar "traits" from different places, abstracted from their normal context, has been castigated as "butterfly collecting" (Leach 1961) (17).

The influence of Eliade has been discussed by other writers on shamanism in Nepal. Reinhard, for example, comments on Eliade's use of the terms "shamanism", "spirit possession" and "ecstasy" (Reinhard 1976a). He notes the significance of possession for Eliade; it is "more mundane" than shamanism. Finally, he points out that soul journey

(or, more generally, ritual journeys) and possession might be appreciated better as two aspects of the same reality (Reinhard 1976a. See also Allen 1974, Hofer 1974).

The literature on Tibetan "village oracles" does not reveal the preoccupations described above although, as noted, it is not closely integrated with an analysis of other types of possession in monastery oracles or village illness. There are notable exceptions to this generalisation, including Peters' study of Tamang shamanism (Peters 1982). Peters links Tamang bombo to tantric practices. He notes, as I have done, that both yoga and shamanism involve the embodiment of gods and he questions the distinction between enstasis, as applied to yogins, and ecstasy, as applied to spirit possession (Peters 1982:29). Peters suggests that the most obvious parallel concerns the tantric concept of cakra or centres of energy and the Tamang concept of three souls in the body. Initiation of the bombo (oracle) involves gradual mastery of the souls in the solar plexus, then, the heart and finally the forehead, between the eyes:

"To a large extent, yoga has "somaticized" the symbolism and rites of shamanism. The axis mundi so typical of shamanism, the ladder reaching through the numerous levels of heaven, corresponds in Tantric yoga to the spinal column and the cakra that are likewise traversed in order to attain the final initiatory experience. The Tamang shaman's activation of the three souls, as undertaken at different levels of initiation, culminates in the ritual ascent to heaven during gufa and parallels the ascent of the kundaliṇī in Tantric yoga" (Peters 1982:29)

These parallels enable the continuities between different forms of altered states of consciousness to be specified more concretely than general comments about the embodiment of gods. They lead Peters to conclude that the main contrast is to be drawn between the goals of shaman and yogin. Unlike

the shaman, the tantric practitioner seeks enlightenment; detachment, autonomy and liberation from the world (ibid:40).

The largely descriptive, ethnographic material on oracles in other Tibetan speaking areas reveals a range of practitioners in the ecstatic who may be compared to Ladakhi village oracles. The position of these practitioners varies in relation to the wider ritual division of labour and, in the next section, the position of Ladakhi oracles in the Leh area is explored.

At the most general level, it is worth noting that Ladakhi lhaba share their name with some Tibetan speaking practitioners such as oracles among the Sherpa (Berglie 1976, 1978) and in Dolpo (Jest 1975). Some Tibetan oracles are however known as "heroes", dpa' bo (Berglie 1976, 1978, 1980). Although Berglie implies that the "heroes" he studied are standard, for he does not refer to any other Tibetan traditions, Nebesky-Wojkowitz writes differently. Their special dress, he says, is rare (1975:413) and they are grouped with the female bsnyen jo mo or rnyal 'byor ma, both types being found mainly in the Chumbi Valley, Sikkim and Bhutan (see also Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1952, David Neel 1967:36-38). Aris describes trances of these "heroes" at the agricultural new year in Bhutan and he too notes that male oracles are known as "heroes" while women are known as rnal 'byor ma or bsnyen jo mo as well as dpa' mo (Aris 1976:605).

Another term is lha kha. Waddell, for example, describes oracles in Western Tibet as lha kha who are said to resemble the bsnyen jo mo and dpa' bo of Sikkim (Waddell 1972 (1895):482). Prince Peter also writes:

"Village oracles are of various categories; they are known as lha-k'a (lha-kha), ku-tän-pa (sku-bstan-pa), ngag-pa (snag-pa (sic)), etc. Their popular name is ch'ö-je (that is, chos-rje)." (Prince Peter 1979:53)

All these terms refer to oracles. Some of them may also be used to refer to yogins and tantric practitioners. Chos rje is commonly used of monastic specialists in Ladakh; rnal 'byor pa are best known elsewhere as hermits or yogins.

Important regional differences are apparent from the literature. For example, it is said that Sherpa lha pa are consulted for diagnosis and prognosis rather than curing; neither they nor the Tamang bombo are said to be possessed during trance (Berglie 1978:45, March 1979:237,273). Tibetan "heroes", however, are consulted for cures as well (Berglie 1978:45). Furer-Haimendorf, who worked in a different Sherpa area, claims to the contrary that oracles do not travel to the world of spirits as suggested by other commentators (Furer-Haimendorf 1964:256) and his case studies illustrate a number of cures (ibid:256-7). Ladakhi lhaba/lhamo do not travel to the world of the gods and they are consulted primarily for cures.

A number of related practices are described in these areas. There are clairvoyants, mig thong, who see the truth (18). Aziz writes of pha mo or mediums who cannot directly cure and exorcise clients. They are poor, uneducated women who practice trance (Aziz 1976:357). An important category of "shamans" are those who suffer death (or coma) once, journey to the land of the dead in spirit and are finally reborn to their old bodies. These figures are known as 'das log (19). In different areas, the ritual field is carved up a little differently and, in Central Ladakh, there were no separate

"soothsayer" or "clairvoyant" roles even though villagers commonly talked of itinerant phra men mo in the recent past who read signs in mirrors and water. Nowadays, villagers go to monks or astrologers for this service. Specialists in dance, mime and story telling such as ache lhamo (a che lha mo) performers have been evident in the recent past in Central Ladakh and the link between shamanism and story telling is still seen among Tibetan refugees in Ladakh and elsewhere. Note the following history:

A Tibetan "bard" had a dream in which Gesar (Kesar) was recited to him. He had a similar visitation every night for two years and so he knew the entire epic by the time he was 15. At the age of 16, he was "called" by gods to accompany them and he did. He became a madman (smyon pa). Many years later, he passed tests to prove that he was a "hero" (dpa' bo) and he received a blessing from a lama. (paraphrased from Berglie 1976:89. See also Brauen 1980a:155-9 on a Tibetan in Ladakh.)

Bards, especially those who tell the Kesar saga, are specialists in trance. Stein, for example, notes in a summary that:

"They (the singers or bards, sgrung-mkhan) are said to be inspired, when singing, or even in a kind of rapture or trance (sgrung-'bab). In any case their attitude at that moment has largely a religious tint. They wear a special hat, the parts of which are symbolically explained in a special song (zhva-bshad) in the same way as do other specialists or on other occasions (the "clown" 'dre-dkar chanting at the New Year; the ritual "explanations" of every ingredient or instrument, like the sword (gri-bshad), the horse, etc., in various not specifically Buddhist rituals). The hat of the bard is characterised by two big asses or kyang ears, by sun and moon on the forehead and by flower-like ornaments made of little shells (cowries)." (Stein 1981:3-4) (20)

The initiation rite described above showed the importance of Kesar to lhaba traditions in Ladakh. It may be recalled that the teacher oracle was identified with Kesar. Another example is given below. It is worth noting that Kesar is seen simultaneously as a Bodhisattva who subdues demons and

and as a secular king, involved in the secular world of exchange and marriage. In Ladakh, the precise correspondences between Kesar and his entourage and the Bodhisattvas of the Buddhist pantheon are a topic of major interest (as too are the correspondences with the earliest Tibetan kings). The role that Kesar plays in Ladakhi oracular traditions echoes the theories of Eliade. As noted, Eliade contrasts shamanism, which is defined in terms of ecstasy and magical flight, to possession, which is found everywhere. Kesar, who might be described as a shaman-king, travelled through all three worlds in the cosmos and joined them together in true Eliade fashion. Today, his descendants might be said to practice a corrupted tradition in which the most they can do is attract visitors from these other worlds. Ladakhi attitudes to village oracles evoke Eliade's image of a pure shamanism that is contrasted to a degenerate spirit possession.

Elsewhere, close links are constructed between shamanic and early Buddhist traditions. For example, Berglie writes of a foundation myth for Tibetan dpa' bo in which Guru Rinpoche is said to have invited four shamans from the four directions, who cured in different ways. These are the archetypes mentioned in trance today (Berglie 1976:96). Berglie also describes the association between Guru Rinpoche and the area of Mount Targo and Lake Dangra where such heroes are initiated (Berglie 1980:40,43). It is Guru Rinpoche who permitted or even originated shamanism. In other foundation myths, Guru Rinpoche or another Buddhist figure defeated the first shaman and then prescribed permitted practices. Among

the Tamang, it is an elder Buddhist brother who defeats his younger brother. Holmberg writes:

"The lama bound the following oath: "Look, I will take care of the dead and you will take care of the living." Bombo now go crazy if they eat the food of the communal feast at a gral (funerary feast). The bombo cannot touch the dead either. The portions were divided between lama and bombo." (Holmberg 1984:714. See also Hofer 1974a:173).

In other accounts, the defeat is more final and Das writes of Naro-Bon-chhun, the shamanic (Bon) figure in Tibet:

"When Naro-Bon-chhun was attempting to rise above the neck of Tesi (the mountain), he fell down and his tambourine rolled down towards the southern valley of Tesi." (Das 1970 (1881):25)

These few comments show that village oracles are common throughout Tibetan speaking areas though they may be known by different names, associated with variable trance practices and situated in different ways within the ritual division of labour. Finally, it can be seen that village oracles associate themselves with the past through links that are drawn to Kesar, Guru Rinpoche or other "historical" figures (21).

For my purposes, it is important to establish the continuities between village and monastery oracles. It has been suggested that Eliade has had a rather different influence on Nepali studies, where he has inspired works on "syncretism", than on Tibetan studies, where the contrast between a "pure" shamanism and a "corrupt" mediumship never assumed great importance. Instead, the relevant contrast has been between monastic and lay society. Writers such as Aziz and Stablein, cited above, clearly challenge the syncretist approach for they examine possession in context and establish its importance. Possession is rightly seen to be central to the high-prestige religion in the monastery. However,

generally speaking, they fail to treat Tibetan culture as a whole, just like the syncretist writers, insofar as the divide between monastery and household is taken for granted.

There are good reasons to frame an account of spirit possession in terms of the division between an initiate Buddhist and a lay society. The emphasis on this division undoubtedly derives from local constructs as well as Buddhist literate and monastic traditions. I do not intend to dispute this framework in any general sense but only to focus upon the links between forms of possession rather than the distance that separates them. After all, village and monastery oracles are both called lha and luya and they practice ecstatic trance. Ritual practice and village affliction are equally subsumed under the single term zhugshes, "possession". I attempt below to link these trance practices. The first stage in my argument is presented in the second half of this chapter with an analysis of the training of a village oracle as a conquest that leads from village affliction towards lay religiosity.

4.3 Village oracles in Central Ladakh

Ladakhi ritual has been discussed with reference to the division between monastery and the rest of the village. Almost all ritual functions have been incorporated in the monastery. Reference has been made to monks, particularly to their performance of domestic ritual, and to rinpoche. Monks are themselves differentiated; there are scholars and teachers, tantric virtuoso and meditators. As noted in Chapter 1, sectarian affiliation is important to villagers as far as the performance of domestic rituals is concerned. Some

monks are also called upon individually for their specialist skills; some, for example, work as doctors (amchi). Two monks appear as monastery oracles at Matho festival every year (see Chapter 6).

The extraordinary concentration of specialist ritual practice inside the monastery implies a corresponding paucity in the village. As noted, laymen perform much domestic ritual, particularly in the worship of village gods. Nuns who live at home also play an important ritual role. Individual villagers are known for certain skills; perhaps divination, the interpretation of omens or their knowledge of religious texts. In addition, there are village specialists who are trained in a vocation and spend substantial amounts of time practising it; notably lay astrologers (ongpo, dbon po), amchi and oracles. Such lay skills may be "hereditary" or gyudpa (see Chapter 1) though many are not. Ladakhis claim that "non-hereditary" practitioners are a new phenomenon, related to development and modernisation.

Many villages traditionally boast one village doctor and some also have an astrologer or oracle. Whilst oracular practice connotes no particular village rank, "hereditary" amchi and, to a more variable extent, astrologers traditionally rank high. Thus, an amchi will almost always receive free labour from the village as a whole in return for his services and as appropriate to his rank.

Little will be presented on amchi or ongpo. Lay amchi deal with illness and, nowadays, particularly with certain kinds of illness that are thought to be beyond the competence of Western-style medicine (22). Tibetan medicine is inseparable from Buddhism (Stablein 1976a, 1976b, 1980,

Wayman 1973) and so illness connotes as much a spiritual as a physical condition. Lay astrologers in the Leh area perform a number of rituals of the annual cycle that might equally be performed by astrologer monks, such as the rite of yanguk described in Chapter 2 and exorcistic rituals such as gyazhi (see Chapter 5) which Gelugpa monks will not perform. They perform rites of the life cycle such as the rite to return the soul of a dead person (shedlok) so that it does not trouble kin and friends. They are consulted in the event of misfortune and illness when they frequently suggest "astrological" rituals in the English sense of the word. Thus, rituals are performed to avert the misfortune suffered at particular ages and brought about by an unfortunate conjunction of elements in the twelve year cycle (longyak, gumig).

Although reference will scarcely be made to astrology, a note should be made on the name ongpo (dbon po) as it has attracted attention in the literature. In Tibetan, dbon is a kinship term (Uebach 1980) but it is also used to refer to ritual practitioners. Indeed the latter sense has been derived from the former in a number of accounts (23). Dbon seems to refer to a range of ritual specialists; married clergy, secular clergy and astrologers. Thus, Jaschke suggests that dbon refers both to a certain sect of married lamas and to lamas skilled in astrology (Jaschke, p.389). The term, dbon, also seems to provide a synonym for other terms such as sngags pa. In Ladakh today, ongpo is used with reference to astrology, which may be practised by monk or villager.

These few references are intended to situate village oracles within the wider ritual division of labour. The framework that has been presented, within which lay specialists are accorded very little importance, is reflected in numbers. There are approximately 1,500 monks in the monasteries of the Leh area (24). During my stay in Ladakh, there were between 20 and 25 village oracles (see appendix 3) and about the same numbers each of lay astrologers and amchi in this area.

Map C (in the Introduction) isolates the area in which I collected information on village oracles. This area is part of Upper Ladakh or Stod which is distinguished from Lower Ladakh or Sham to the west. The location of oracles practising in 1982 is shown on the map. Ladakhi village and monastery oracles and Tibetans are included. The map should be read as a regional map of village oracles constructed from the perspective of Leh and especially Gongma village in 1982. The area is not an administrative district but it loosely represents the area in which a Gongma villager might travel or request visits from ritual specialists in general. The area stretches westwards from Leh to Phyang and south-eastwards as far as Martselang, Hemis and Sakti (Tak Tok), but excluding the Markha valley. The Sakti area is very much at the outer limits of this region and is included largely because of the special services offered by Nyingmapa monks in the valley. Hemis is also an important centre. It should be emphasised that this region derives from a consideration of oracles in particular and ritual specialists in general. A Gongmapa's picture of important ritual sites, for example, would contrast with this one for it would include the area of

Sham or Lower Ladakh, west and slightly north of Phyang. Similarly, kinship and marriage links with Lower Ladakh are more important than those with the area to the east of Map C.

Just 25 village oracles, but Ladakhis in the area say that there are more today than before (25). Some attribute the increase to the development of Leh and the increasing amounts of cash which may encourage oracles to pursue their practice. Certainly, there are more oracles in the Leh region than in other parts of Ladakh. For example, there were just four working oracles in Sham in 1982. The Leh area has attracted immigrants from outside Ladakh as well. At least four Tibetan oracles have arrived to the refugee camps near Leh since the Chinese takeover of Tibet. Ladakhis attribute an increase to the influx of gods as well as people. For example, Martselang lhamo describes the god who possesses her as a refugee from the Chinese. Ladakhis further attribute the increasing number of oracles to the worsening state of the world. They are unclear whether oracles are a feature of our worsening condition or a specific means of combating it.

In other Tibetan speaking areas, the number of mediums is similarly said to be increasing (see, for example, Pignede 1966, Allen 1976b). These changes may be attributable to the growing importance of immigrant Hindu and Buddhist ritual specialists while, in Ladakh, it is the number of Buddhist monks that is declining (26).

The necessity of locating oracles within the wider ritual division of labour has been emphasised repeatedly. Monastic specialists can do all the work of lay specialists,

according to dogma, only better. The gods evoked by monks are far more powerful than the gods associated with oracles. Moreover, the actual practices of oracles depend upon this wider context. No lay-person can become a true oracle without the permission of a rinpoche and both rinpoche and monks play a part in diagnosing, curing, training and validating village oracles in Ladakh (27). A successful initiation also depends upon the ties novices construct to sacred places, through pilgrimage, and sacred practices, through meditation and prayer (28). Novices may consult doctors or astrologers early on, when they are suffering illness and before they have been recognised as oracles.

If the making of a village oracle depends on other ritual specialists and especially the monastery, successful practice involves a similarly wide range of practitioners. The brief summary in the last section shows that oracles are centres of referral, who send many of their clients to monks, doctors and astrologers for further treatment (see also Chapter 7). Occasionally, these other specialists will also refer individuals to oracles (29).

Finally, it should be appreciated that individuals who consult oracles also consult other specialists. They may go from one expert to another (as shown in some of the histories of novice oracles given below) or take different problems to different specialists. Some Ladakhis said that they would never consult a lha. Oracles may be preferred for a number of reasons but they are generally recognised as the best experts in three areas. Senior oracles will be called to train novices in almost every case (see below). Oracles are commonly called to deal with intractable cases of

"witchcraft" (Chapter 5) and they are the only specialists to extract substances from people and animals (Chapter 7).

In conclusion to this overview, it should be noted that village oracles in the Leh area are internally differentiated. Mention has been made of three factors; first, the distinction between "hereditary" and "non-hereditary" practitioners; second, the relations between novices and senior oracles and, third, immigration. Two-thirds of the practising oracles in the area "inherited" their gods and belong to shallow "oracle lineages" (l_he g_yud, lha'i brgyud) which often include a grandparent and sometimes a more remote ancestor as well or occasionally instead of a parent (30). It is no surprise to hear that a relative of a recently deceased oracle has "inherited" the same calling yet, before this is said, before the lineage oracle is recognised, s/he will have undergone exactly the same procedures as her or his non-lineage counterpart.

As noted in Chapter 2, "lineage" or "hereditary" is only a rough translation for g_yud and ideas of family descent are at least partially determined by locality. An example might be cited with reference to Sabu oracle, who was introduced at the beginning of the chapter. One of her gods also visited a neighbouring senior oracle, Ayu l_ham_o. Ayu oracle had inherited this village god (yul lha) and one other from her mother. In trance, Ayu l_ham_o explained to the novice:

"you are l_he g_yud and you must receive very many initiations because you have banned the god so many times."

In other words, she belongs to a "lineage" because she shares the same place (yul) not because she shares the same genealogical descent line.

Novices are trained largely by senior oracles. There are three senior oracles in the Leh area who are generally recognised as teachers. The teacher-pupil bond is ideally close and life-long; in ideal circumstances, teachers and pupils visit each other in the same way as kin. Indeed, the ties may be continued across generations between two gyud or "lineages". For example, Thikse oracle was trained by Sakti oracle/nun. She, in turn, was taught by Thikse oracle's father and the Thikse lhaba is currently training her nephew. In practice, however, relationships are often soured by financial considerations because large amounts of cash and/or goods are given in return for teachings (see appendix 3). Sometimes, competition for clientele can also lead to bad feelings.

The Leh area, as noted, attracts immigrants. All the Ladakhi oracles practising in 1982 were local but there were also four Tibetans who worked from the refugee camps. Their traditions were comparable but by no means identical with the Ladakhi and they will not be discussed in detail.

In Central Ladakh, men and women become village oracles in equal numbers, post-adolescence. Practising oracles are more likely to belong to oracle lineages in the tronga (grong pa) or middle ranking groups. I never heard of an aristocratic (skutrag; sku drag) oracle and, as far as Ladakhis are concerned, the lack of high ranking oracles indicates both the lowly status of these specialists in trance and the intrinsic protection conferred upon the higher ranks by their own gods. I have met a musician (Mon) and a beggar (Beda) oracle. They were not popular because it was feared that the god, blessing a client by blowing or

spitting, might be mixed up with the person, whose touch is polluting. Predictably, given the close association between oracles and the monastery, the majority of oracles are found in Buddhist families. However, oracles (of the type described in this thesis) are not exclusively Buddhist. In 1982, there was one Hindu soldier oracle in the army (see fn 48 below) and, in the recent past, at least one Muslim in Kargil district, who died in the late 1970's, as well as a Christian in Leh, who stopped practising a few years ago (described further below). All seemed to conform to some Buddhist conventions: I was told that the Muslim used incense and butter lamps in trance while the Hindu followed simple Buddhist practices such as reciting om mani prayers. There may be others in Ladakh who practice spirit possession in distinctive Muslim and Hindu contexts, of whom I am unaware.

All the practising oracles in the area were possessed by gods (lha) though it will be seen below that they are also associated with demons in certain contexts. Oracles are possessed by lha, lu and tsan in other areas where they are associated with somewhat different cosmologies (see, for example, Berglie 1976 and 1978, Holmberg 1980, March 1979, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975:234). I only ever heard of one oracle who was possessed by another type of spirit in Ladakh; this was a woman who had practised some years previously and, in trance, she was visited by a lumö or female lu (31).

The one and only essential criterion to oracular practice is a god-inspired madness. This is the subject of the next section.

4.4 The election of a village oracle

a) Madness

The novice is elected through madness. S/he experiences a violent loss of control which suggests, to other Ladakhis, a certain initial weakness and vulnerability. Novices may be rendered incapable by "fits" and "unsettled minds" for months or years while families and friends search for cures and specialists provide no help at all. Eventually, a diagnosis is made by novice, senior oracles and monks together. This diagnosis must be ratified by a rinpoche before it will be generally accepted.

Tukchikpa lhamo was a woman of 28 from Matho, whose services were in great demand at home and increasingly from other villages. She described what had happened two years previously.

"I was very, very ill for a month. My body was so heavy that I could barely move. Yet, if I stayed at home I'd have a fit, that is, everything would go dark and I'd feel as if I were about to faint. Then, I'd come to with no recollection at all of what had happened. But, I didn't feel much better afterwards. I'd feel very weak and my head would hurt. I was ready to die, I was terrified.

"So, every day, I used to go somewhere. I'd go to Leh or to a monastery because it was so difficult to stay at home. But, sometimes, I'd have fits outside as well.

"I spent Rs 1,200 (nearly 80 pounds sterling then) that month on rituals, travelling and consultations. I got amulets from every monk in Leh and I visited most of the rinpoche. At that time, there were six rinpoche in Hemis and they each gave me a blessing. But, none of them told me it was a god. I also visited the oracle, Taklangsha, but he didn't tell me it was a god; he said I'd get better.

"One day, I visited my elder sister in Leh. It was the first time I was possessed. My elder sister told me that I said chod (mchod (32)) and then the god came. No, I don't know what the god said, but then we realised what had happened and so, the next day, I went to Sabu but the oracle wasn't there. Then, I went to Thikse but there was no-one there. Then, I went again and again to Skarra but grandmother oracle refused to give me my permission (33).

So I went back to Thikse and he agreed to take me on. That was just before our festival here so it was nearly two and a half years ago..." (October 1982)

Tukchikpa novice requests amulets and blessings in the hope of a cure. Still ill, she visits senior oracles as well. Two are known as teachers who train novice oracles. The third, grandmother from Skarra, has never trained novices but she is so highly esteemed that the young woman undoubtedly imagined she could help. The initiatory illness described by Tukchikpa oracle is by no means standard in its length, symptoms or recognition. Ayu lhamo, the famous teacher, described a much more generalised malaise that lasted many years:

"The god first visited me when I was four years old. I was in Stok castle with my mother who was a servant there. My mother arranged for a ritual wash because she thought I was afflicted by something.

"The gods didn't possess me often before my mother's death. But, afterwards, I was unsettled for many years - in the sense that I was very talkative and rather foolish. I used to visit all the rinpoche regularly to get blessings and directions. It was they who eventually recognised the presence of the gods and, about twenty years ago, I started my training... I only completed my training 8 or 9 years ago." (June 1982)

The newly trained Kakshal or Kirzi lhaba, a policeman in his late twenties, described his more violent and dramatic election:

"I joined the police in 1976. Two years later, I was on duty in Lamayuru (in Lower Ladakh). It was the third month of the year and I was on traffic duty. Suddenly, I saw a lot of smoke and I went to that place but I was very thirsty. I drunk seven cups of tea with butter and then I gave some tea to someone else. Soon after, I was in the D.C.'s (Development Commissioner) vehicle approaching Khaltse balu khar (a local landmark). I saw lots of apple trees with big apples and small apples and I brought four apples back, big ones and small ones. I told the D.C. but it was difficult to speak so I gave him an apple. Later, I realised that I shouldn't have given him one; if I'd kept the apples, I wouldn't have had to have the initiation (lhaphok). I don't know how we got back to Leh.

"Afterwards, I was transferred to Choglomsar (a village close to Leh on the Indus). Normally, I wouldn't be able to reach my house in two hours on foot but, once, I covered the ground in five minutes. I don't know how I got home because there were many religious paintings (thangka) on the road and I couldn't walk over them.

"During this period, I was possessed again and I dived into the Indus at Choglomsar bridge. I stayed in the water seven days but the water parted either side of my body. Everyone thought I was mad at first but, then, they started to look after me, especially the Mulbek lhadag (lha bdag) (34). I remember the incidents that happened at the beginning but I don't remember the later ones.

"Then, I had my initiation with Taklangsha (the Thikse oracle). It lasted two years. I never visited rinpoche deliberately but when the god(s) came, I often ran to Bakula (Spituk rinpoche) in the middle of the night. I lost thirteen shoes in this manner, one of them was returned by the S.P. (head of police)." (December 1982)

One last account is given of the Skarra nun. What she told me agrees in most respects with other published accounts, for example, in Brauen 1980a, but aspects of her election are described in order to illustrate special features of her initiation. Skarra lhamo had always wanted to be a nun but her family found her a husband when she was still young and she had two children by him. It seemed as though she would never follow her chosen path:

"One day, the children were out playing with a servant. Then, the lhamo came, as I was churning butter. I felt someone pushing into my body, into my back and my hands. I fell senseless and I don't know what happened.

"The lhamo began to come often. Everyone thought it was a gongmo or gongpo ("witch", see Chapter 5); they thought I'd gone mad. I used to run along the shelves in the kitchen. My husband used to beat me because I didn't do any work.

"My father took me to visit the rinpoche. It was Bakula who said this was a lhamo. At the time, Tibet was ready to finish (it was the time of the Chinese invasion). The rinpoche made clothes for the god and found that it was a Tibetan goddess that visited me. This lhamo broke my bracelets. (35) ...

"For my initiation (lhaphok), the goddess possessed me and the rinpoche asked questions. He gave me a ritual wash (trus) and invited the gods (schenden). He asked

questions: why are you here and what would you like to do? The goddess answered with a story. A king and queen were ill and a meditator came and made a very big storma. He prayed and threw the storma away. Then, the king and queen were cured. The goddess said I have come to cure people. People won't die if they have faith. The goddess explained that people in the world think we have to make a shape of people or animals to get rid of evil but, in fact, you can do this just with your mind if you have faith.

"The rinpoche made the first clothes for the goddess. He gave her lots of advice and books. He made a throne for one of the goddesses who came later. He was going to make me a room in Sankar where I could go into trance just on auspicious days. Then, there was a lot of gossip and I stopped going to Sankar ..."

I was sceptical of this history but found it confirmed by the nun's relatives and neighbours who only added that Bakula later became disillusioned with her powers. Another notable feature of this oracle's history concerns her "journey along the roads of the dead" (daslog). Early on in the process of election, the oracle did indeed become a nun. She described how her conversion occurred during a journey to death and back:

"Early on, I became unconscious for five days. My body stayed warm but my "breath" (uks) left the room. I went through a very small hole, along a dark and narrow path. After a while, I came across three of my goddesses on the path wearing crowns (ringa). I found that I was naked and so I begged them for some clothes. They said nothing. But, then they talked to each other and one handed me a cloth (zangos, gzan gos, a cylindrical cloth worn as a skirt by nuns). I woke up five days later to find my father bending over me to see if I was dead. Then I knew that the gods had told me to become a nun." (Compare with Brauen 1980a:146-151 where another longer journey of this kind is also reported, agreeing in general with what the nun told me.)

Few are convinced that the oracle travelled the path of the dead in this manner but it is true that she became a nun, studying at a nunnery attached to Rizong monastery for three years. The nun's divine election, so different from other Ladakhi oracles, and her recognition, which involved only a

rinpoche, sets her apart from other village oracles. She continues to dissociate herself from these others in her work:

"I have never sucked out illnesses; that is the business of khyim lha (household gods). Occasionally, I send patients to (these oracles) for this purpose. If the sun rises in the west and if water flows uphill, then I will suck poison from the body."

Even though the nun's history and practice contrast with other oracles in these respects, she is included as a "village oracle" because she worked in the village, at her own or other's houses, where she was called to cure illness and reveal the truth in the same way as other village oracles.

All four oracles dwelt upon their loss of control; "fits", "an unsettled mind", the experience of "death" and generally "abnormal" behaviour (see also appendix 3). It is worth emphasising the importance that this "madness" assumes above all other factors. Three of the four oracles described were in fact self-defined gyudpa albeit, in one case, by a rather circuitous reckoning and, in another, after a gap of one generation. Only the nun said that she knew of no other oracles in her family. None of the "lineage" oracles stressed heredity in explaining how they came to be recognised. In all cases, the spirit affliction is critical (36). And this affliction has certain further implications that help explain why village oracles are ranked low in the ritual hierarchy.

Madness, loss of control and unpredictable behaviour evoke negative attitudes from Ladakhis. On the one hand, the problem is likely to be attributed to demons or other local capricious spirits. On the other hand, the afflicted

individual is held responsible for the success of this attack. Many kinds of illness are attributed to local spirits; to local gods, lu, tsan and a host of other figures. These spirits are thought to be angry, at a neglected rite or a polluted site, or greedy, for people's food or wealth. Many village afflictions are attributed to "living demons" (sondre, gson 'dre) and almost every Ladakhi woman as well as children and some men will be told that they are suffering from living demons at least once in their lifetime. This topic is discussed in the next chapter. Most cases of "madness" are initially attributed to these demons. An oracle in the making is therefore seen first as a victim of a local demonic spirit and only later as one elected by local gods. Ideally, people are not susceptible to incessant threats from such worldly creatures; they are protected by ritual devices and performances, good karma and relatively high "spiritual power" (parka). Newly elected novices must be suffering from "low spiritual power" (parka mamö) which has opened them to the predations of worldly greed, jealousy and anger (37).

Accordingly, involuntary election through madness constitutes a highly ambiguous initiation. No-one can become a village oracle without going mad. Such loss of control implies weakness and worldly attachment. Moreover, the initial stigma is perpetuated through certain ritual practices described in the following chapter which suggest that disapproval can only be dispelled if the individual stops practising as an oracle. It is possible also to see this violent initial frenzy in muted, positive terms. Madness

may be a sign of divinity, a form of divine revelation and direct communication with the spirit world. In this way, newly elected novices construct continuities with other religious traditions associated with the wandering ascetic and the saintly madman who form similarly unmediated but voluntary relations with the sacred (see, for example, Ardussi and Epstein 1978 or Milarepa's autobiography (one translation can be found in Evans-Wentz 1969 (1951))).

The elected novice is represented primarily as a weak unfortunate. The afflicted attempt to overcome censure and the rest of this chapter explores how far the initial stigma is, in fact, contained.

b) Control of madness

Gods may reveal themselves, as in the case of Tukchikpa lhamo. In addition to the elect, senior oracles and rinpoche both play important roles. Senior oracles will install the god(s), as described below, while rinpoche, considered to be infallible, confer authority on the diagnosis. The negative attitudes of rinpoche towards village oracles are reflected in what they told me of their consultations.

Skyabgun (sKyabs-mgon), one of the two Drigungpa rinpoche, is a Tibetan who has been in Ladakh since about 1980. He told me how he would consult his divination books to find the cause of affliction in visiting villagers. Demons were expelled by a "blessing" (khapko) and novice oracles would be referred to their seniors for training. Rinpoche rarely train village oracles; the single generally accepted exception concerns Skarra nun. Skyabgun rinpoche found referrals from village oracles troublesome. As he said:

"Sometimes, oracles like Ayu lhamo send patients to me. As a rinpoche, I know what the lha has said and advised. If she has made a mistake, I call her, thunderbolt in hand. Then the god is frightened and reforms her behaviour."

In November 1982, I was told, a soldier from Lower Ladakh visited the rinpoche. The soldier needed certificates for various officials to prove that he was an oracle. Skyabgun rinpoche said that he performed some tests and found that the man's gods knew the present and the past but not the future. So he wrote a recommendation which said that this was a "normal lha". He confessed that it might have been a Penpe lha whose religious status and power for good was very uncertain (38).

The other Drigungpa rinpoche, a Ladakhi, has played a part in diagnosing four oracles who are still practising. His descriptions revealed an important contribution to their training:

"If the client is possessed by a god, and if it is established that possession will promote the welfare of people and animals, then I give the person a specific permission. Each god has a "tutelary" (idam, yi dam) and I have to tell the novice which is which and give him permission so that he can meditate (on) becoming his own tutelary when he goes into trance."

Meditation upon a tutelary is a standard procedure for monks. However, few established oracles reported this technique (39).

A third rinpoche, from Stakna, described how he could ban a god. Following diagnosis, a novice may follow one of two paths. Spirits may be banned, usually by rinpoche, and the would-be oracle is restored to health as an ordinary villager. Such was the path initially chosen by the novice described at the beginning of this chapter. Alternatively, the elect may follow her or his calling and attempt to become

a true oracle. As rinpoche hold village oracles in no great esteem, they often recommend an exorcism (or banning) of the troublesome spirit(s):

"A monk was possessed by a god and he came to ask my help, for he disliked this god. I told him to arrange the zhitro (zhi khro) ritual in his village, which lasts three or four days. I said that he would have to come into trance during the ritual so that we could check the status of this god. During the ceremony, other monks made offerings and invited the god to join us and then the monk was possessed. I held a sword in one hand and I asked the god why he had come. He replied, "I have come for the welfare of all sentient beings". I told the god that this monk was unhappy and so, "You must not return again." Then, the god cried and asked me why I was stopping him. I repeated, "Don't come back here." Then I made the god swear not to come back. He swore thus in words and, after much hesitation, he bowed his head under the thunderbolt that I held in my other hand. Thus he swore by speech and gesture. The oath must have been binding because the god has never returned."

This action, tam tangches (dam gtong-), is normally described as banning or swearing the god(s) to oath. These oaths are acts of conquest which involve religious and military weapons in the subjugation of an inferior. Not surprisingly, the oaths or bans executed by rinpoche are the most powerful but, as shown subsequently, "lower order" acts of conquest are also central to oracular practice (40).

These examples illustrate the prominent role of rinpoche in confirming a specific diagnosis of god-inflicted madness and either banning the spirits or referring villagers to senior oracles for training. They show that validation from the monastery, which is sometimes described as lha lung, "permission to be an oracle", and which is essential to a future career of this kind, also invites disapproval. In some contexts, this disapproval may have political implications (see fn 1, Chapter 6 for an example).

Should a novice decide on further training, a teacher oracle must be found who will organise the various necessary rituals. Only the first "separation" (ph_heches, phy₋) is critical. One such rite has been described above (4.1) and the only other example that I attended is described in the next section.

The separation of gods and demons (lhadre ph_heches)

Ladakhis call the entire process of training lhaphok (lha 'bogs) but individual rites also have specific names: lhadre ph_heches (lha 'dre phy₋) is the name of the first important rite (41).

Sabu oracle, it will be recalled, had reluctantly agreed to try and install her spirits. The rite was not very successful. Bad things were thrown away in the two types of storma while the gods and demons battled over a game of dice. The logic of the rite will become clearer with another example, which was more successful.

The initiation of Choglomsar novice

It was an auspicious day, the 8th day of the 6th month. Teacher (Ayu oracle) and novice had emerged from meditation the previous day. There were thirty to forty clients present as well as a monk who had been called to help and to check the gods. This same monk had been present at the teacher's initiation several years previously. As I arrived, he took teacher, novice and their families upstairs where he poured ritual water into their hands. They rinsed their mouths, performing a "ritual wash" (trus). The monk blessed them with the thunderbolt (khapko). He stayed to make chasum storma as the others went to pray in the offering room. The oracles then went back to the kitchen where they had prepared altars, a dough cake offering of welcome (drangyes), five arrows in tins of barley and a barley swastika. The five arrows were decorated with coloured cloths: one was black, one blue, one green, one red and one yellow; there was also a "wedding arrow", a dadar. Equipment for trance was ready; the clothes by the big pot of water at the side of the room and other items such as the drum (daru, damaru, the small two sided drum) and bell (tilu, dril bu) on the floor in front of the altars.

The two oracles washed at the side of the room and were possessed as they individually put on their own god clothes. As the ringa crown was put on, the women were possessed and all that remained was the scarf that was tied over the mouth so that spirits speaking through their vessels are not polluted. The pupil, Dolma, sat on the swastika; the teacher, Ayu lhamo, sat "above" to her right and they prayed in unison as they gave "golden drinks" to the gods, inviting them down to the world and to their bodies. The monk came in and passed the storma over their heads which the son of the house threw outside.

Ayu lhamo drank a glass of special beer brought by Dolma's family; a welcome scarf was draped over her arm and SHE began to dance, at first speechless for SHE was possessed by a wolf-god, but then singing as SHE held the dadar, possessed by a second god:

"Today, I saw a very auspicious dream. I saw a very auspicious dream. In this dream, I saw a carpet lying. On the carpet was a thunderbolt. Then I saw myself wearing a crown (ringa) on my head. Then I saw myself wearing a cape and apron (42). I am obeying my teacher's advice.

"You may stay three years at the top of the glacier and you may stay three years at the bottom of the sea. You may stay three years at the top of the three mountains and three years at the cross-roads where three valleys meet. When you are there, speak three lines of advice to me. Speak." (43)

Dolma replies:

"I stayed at the glacier, I stayed in the sea. I stayed at the top of the three mountains and I stayed at the cross-roads where three valleys meet. Now I have come to help all those who have life."

Ayu lhamo says:

"If you have come to help all living beings, then you must follow the advice of the "high lamas" (44).

SHE sings:

"Then tell me who is Dorje Semba of the east, Rinchen Jugdan of the south, Nawa Taiya of the west and Doyod Druba of the north. Where are they?" (45)

Dolma takes four of the arrows and SHE explains which is the Buddha of the east, south, west and north. Then SHE takes another black arrow and breaks it, shouting, "This is the devil (dud, bdud)". The son of the house throws it outside to a chorus of "victory to the gods" (lha gyalo).

Ayu lhamo continues her song as she adds the dadar to the remaining arrows:

"That dadar, you should put five different coloured cloths on it. Then put a mirror on it. On the mirror, put five different coloured materials. I am the teacher, Taklang Anchuk (this is the god currently possessing the oracle introducing himself). Don't stay three years on top of the glacier, nor where the three valleys meet. Don't stay there."

Dolma speaks in a very high-pitched voice:

"I come with Dorje Yuron on auspicious days. I possessed a person who left Ladakh and stopped being an oracle. Then I wandered. Then I came to you, luya (lus gyar, "vessel").

Ayu lhamo sings:

"Take a dadar. On the arrow, put a mirror and on the mirror, put a bone joint. Put a bone joint on the mirror. If this is an auspicious day, then we may give you a village god (yul lha). I saw a dream and, in this dream, I saw someone ploughing the mother field (mazhing) with crops. Then I saw a big storeroom being filled with grain. On the trapdoor of the storeroom an arrow was standing. On the arrow, I saw a gyalung (?) (I do not know what this means). On the arrow are the five coloured cloths. On the cloth is a mirror, It is like the filling up of a lake. Then the lake is offered to the sun and moon."

SHE continues with advice that is described below.

The novice comes out of trance first, after SHE and her teacher had together blessed everyone present with their thunderbolts (khapko).

Meanwhile, the monk had performed the monthly purification (sangs) for the house in the offering room. He had also performed a ceremony to raise the spiritual power (parka) of the gods. He had read the full version of the "coercive" (skul ba) text which, he said, also forced the gods to behave in a certain way so that they could be controlled. At one point in the trance, he remained alone with the two oracles in the kitchen to perform a test. He had hidden a piece of paper in one of two small bowls and each oracle had to reveal which bowl it was, and what was written on the paper. When I asked about the test, he seemed embarrassed and shrugged rather dismissively. He was clearly not convinced by the answers he had been given.

After the trance, he consecrated dough offerings (tshogs, tshogs) which were distributed to every house in the village as well as to the novice and her family.

The overall ritual action is clear: gods, or what will be gods, are first of all invoked and then evil is thrown away in dough models. The throwing of storma can be seen as a preparatory clearing of the stage. Indeed, as the monk said of the chasum:

"this is necessary for the new god which is particularly susceptible and vulnerable to anything bad that might be around the place".

Finally, the spirits in the novice are manipulated. These are called gods (lha) and also "gods and demons" (lhadre), as in the title of the rite. It is suggested that the demons are separated from the gods and thrown away so that what in fact happens is a transformation of gods and demons into gods alone. The demons are embodied in a single, black arrow which is broken and discarded before the gods are put into a separate "wedding arrow" and planted (47).

It might be helpful to recapitulate briefly what happens with the three different kinds of arrows. Dolma sat in front of the arrows on a barley swastika. The swastika is an auspicious sign closely linked with fertility. Dolma has to separate the five arrows:

1. Four represent the Buddhas of the four directions.
2. One is a devil. This devil is removed from the Buddhas and destroyed. The novice, who is initially identified with "gods and demons", with good and bad, is now identified with a pure "religion", unsullied by any demons. But, SHE is not yet fully included.
3. There is a sixth arrow, the dadar which I have translated previously as the "wedding arrow". The guru holds this arrow as SHE sings. Only when the devils have been destroyed does SHE relinquish control of it. SHE plants it next to the Buddhas. It is suggested below that this arrow represents the novice herself. As the gods are properly installed in their vessel, the novice is equipped to work for the welfare of all living beings. In this way, "gods and demons" afflicting the elect become pure gods, properly domesticated (48).

The general structure of this separation rite is standard but the details vary quite widely, judging from accounts that I have been given. Comments about the third guru in the area, Thikse oracle, are illustrative. His pupils generally spoke either of the separation of five arrows with different coloured cloths attached or of the separation of white, auspicious objects from black pebbles in a pot of water. A few talked of both. Tukchikpa lhamo described 11-12 visits to Taklangsha (Thikse oracle) for her training, which I paraphrase:

The first two or three visits were tests of my status. I was also taught to make simple offerings. Half of the visits took place in my village and half in Thikse. Each teaching was given in both places. On the fourth occasion, there was a separation (pheches) at my village. The headman was there, as well as two or three monks who made offerings to the god. There were villagers to welcome the god; with food offerings and scarves carried by five boys and five girls, all of whom had fathers and mothers alive. There were also villager-witnesses to publicly authenticate the god.

First, I was tested. The guru threw grains on to his small drum and he asked me how many there were and what they meant. If it were a devil, I could not have answered. Next, I had to separate five arrows arranged in five pots of barley. All I remember is an arrow with a black flag which I broke. Someone threw away the pieces outside. Finally, I had to take things out of a big brass pot full of water. Rings, coral, turquoise, pearls and black and white pebbles had been thrown into the pot. I had to take out all the auspicious and the white objects together. I succeeded. (Had she brought out a black stone, she would have shown that god and demons were still mixed together in her body and the initiation would have been repeated on another occasion.)

Every time I received an initiation, I became well again. Gradually, I became so much better that I did not suffer when there were long gaps between visits.

Thikse oracle confirmed the importance of tests before the separation itself. He explained how HE might ask a novice to distinguish two packages, of black and white stones, and say

how many stones there were. Alternatively, "witnesses" might test the novice. Often, the elect had to find things that had been hidden.

I asked all the oracles I met about their initiation; about half of them "could not remember" (classically, the vessel knows nothing of the trance after s/he has regained consciousness); the other half spoke only of these tests (see appendix 3) (49).

The separation rite shows that a novice is possessed by a mixture of bad and good, demons and gods. Over time, the afflicted will become a healer, hosting gods. Aspects of the separation rite are discussed further before turning to the wider trajectory of a village oracle's career.

c) A note on the separation rite

The general structure of trance has been outlined above (section 4.1). Unfortunately, space does not permit a more detailed discussion of trance form, its aesthetics and drama. However, the division of labour associated with oracular practice might be characterised further by exploring the contrasts established between the two types of guru, senior oracle and monk, during separation rites. Rituals performed by monks and oracles are similar in some respects as they conform in general to the basic ritual structure outlined in Chapter 2. Yet, the style is very different. Martselang guru performs a much more vivid, concrete exorcism in the first example, presented at the beginning of the chapter. HE fights a real adversary, pitting his god(s) against the demons. HE plays a game of chance, unsure of victory and, indeed, largely unsuccessful in the end. The demons are spirits who once

caused him to go mad and now HE gives them no quarter. The guru shows his pupil what success will mean: control of the gods has turned him into a powerful figure, working "for the welfare of all living beings". HE, the vessel, is also a healthy and financially prosperous practitioner.

At the same time, it should be recognised that even successful oracles attract a slight unease. Their gods might revert to their inherently capricious natures and join up with the demons again. It is not clear that such gods can ever be fully controlled by mere villagers. This unease is frequently confirmed when gods make mistakes and when oracles fall ill, inviting a re-examination of the initiatory process and, often, a re-definition of the status of that oracle. This process is captured in a well-known story about a prominent Christian woman in Leh who worked as an oracle for about two years some time ago. She had been possessed by what various specialists agreed to be a messenger god with wings, probably the Angel Gabriel, and she began to offer her services in trance without further training. Unfortunately, the god's pronouncements proved to be inaccurate. Most damning was an answer SHE gave the vessel's husband when he asked whether they would ever have children. The god answered in the negative, the couple proceeded to adopt a son and the wife/oracle became pregnant a year later. Not surprisingly, she stopped practising and most people agreed that she must have been possessed by one of the "living demons" described in the next chapter. Accordingly, the

battle waged by the guru should be seen as a personal confrontation which must be won in order to re-confirm Martselang lhaba's status as a true oracle.

The game of dice is replaced by the manipulation of arrows in the second example. While Martselang guru conquers the demons himself, Ayu guru guides Dolma, so that SHE, the novice, can overcome evil. There is a greater emphasis on teaching "religion" in this second example and, in particular, to do as the monks and rinpoche recommend.

The differences between these two rites illustrate the originality and inventiveness with which oracles effect cures. Each one has an individual and idiosyncratic style which differs in some respects from all other practitioners. Objectively, monks probably differ one from another to the same extent. But, they are seen to follow the precise details of a text, dressed in uniform, and attempting to repeat a rite in the same way that it has always been performed by all monks since the beginnings of Buddhism. Monks are not individualised. In both examples, monks prepare the novice and her god and they perform a generalised exorcism but their other tasks differ. In spite of the differences, they are seen in much the same light; above all, as representatives of the monastery. They are defined, in lay terms, by their privileged relationship to the triple jewel as described in Chapter 3. Their ritual practice is seen as an exercise in self-control that contrasts with the loss of control suffered by novices and induced by senior oracles.

Moreover, the monks themselves often emphasise their impersonal qualities. The "gods and demons" (lhadre) do not pose a threat to monks because monks follow a text or teaching which encodes sacred authority, tapped through the ascetic lifestyle and monastic training, which calls down high ranking gods who could never be harmed by local spirits. Once these deities have been evoked, the consequences are automatic: demons are trapped in dough offerings which are thrown away according to the specifications of the text/teaching.

The monk in the first example acted the role of dwarf or demon in the game of dice and yet he remained remote from the combat. From a doctrinal perspective, the exorcism is impersonal, for the spirits pose no threat; and abstract, for the spirits do not "really" exist. The rites may be seen as gentle delusions with which to educate ('dul) the assembly. Neither god nor demon really exists; both are imagined by villagers through ignorance according to their collective karma (Samuel 1975:111). In this interpretation, a patient falls ill because of karma and will be cured by getting rid of sin and accumulating merit through the monastery. To monks, oracular initiation may be the first step in drawing the novice towards the monastery for, as shown above, novices turn to the monastery for help and they try to make merit so as gain strength with which to expel demons (50). The roles played by monks and senior oracles in the further training of novices are described in the next section.

Two other aspects of the separation rites might be considered further. First, the importance of Kesar should be reiterated. In the first example, the teacher oracle/Kesar fights the dwarf. In the second, Druguma's wedding song about the arrow on a granary evokes the epic, for Druguma was Kesar's wife. The links made between oracles and Kesar are seen most clearly at separation rites. As noted, the kinship claimed in Ladakh is of a particular kind. Kesar was a god invited down to earth to rule as the King of Ling. He might be described as the first "shaman", a god (re-) born in human form on earth, who travelled at will through different parts of the cosmos. Today, "shamans" have lost the power to travel and they have lost the ability to merge god and vessel so completely. Today, they invite gods down to earth and to their bodies to "work for the welfare of all living beings". Striking parallels were suggested between this image of Ladakhi oracles and Eliade's view of possession as a corruption of classical shamanism: at the beginning of time, shamans were all-powerful but today they are lesser beings, as are all of use who belong to this degenerating cosmos.

The action of the initiation rites also evokes the epic in which Kesar subdues devils, demons and evil beings. In the first example, the oracle, Kesar, enacts a victory over the dwarf and the demonic aspects of the lhadre. The second example includes themes of conquest but the Kesar theme is more explicitly concerned with fertility. Druguma's dream

occurs the night before her wedding to the hero and it tells of agricultural plenty (51). This theme may be explored in relation to a second aspect of separation rites, the role of the arrows.

This discussion develops the earlier analysis of arrows as instruments for collecting and holding spirits. The demons, caught in one arrow at the separation rites, are broken while the gods are installed in another and, I suggest, subjected to further transformations. In particular, I suggest that the wedding arrow or dadar is turned into another type of arrow, a sangda or ritual arrow (52).

At the beginning of the second rite described, Ayu lhamo holds the dadar and reports a dream which shows that SHE is a true oracle who is able to teach others. Then, SHE calls the new god which pledges her good intentions. The new god is asked to prove herself by picking out the four "Buddhas" from the five arrows in pots. The novice points to the Buddhas and breaks the black arrow, shouting that it is the devil. This is proof enough of the new oracle's religious nature and the teacher now plants the dadar amidst the Buddhas. SHE tells the novice how to treat this arrow and how to behave properly.

Druguma is said to have dreamt of a dadar the night before her marriage and, as the arrow is planted by Ayu lhamo, Druguma's song is sung. This song celebrates agricultural fertility and its association with Druguma

speaks further of human fertility, resulting from marriage. The separation ritual suggests a third theme. The song brings attention to the hoped for fruits of a "marriage" or union between god and person in the novice, which will work towards the welfare of all living beings from a particularly village perspective, associated with the exchange involved in agricultural life and particularly marriage.

Interestingly, the dadar is subtly transformed at this stage. The novice is told to add five coloured cloths to the white welcome scarf already hanging from the arrow. These five colours of religion are generally added to sangda. Moreover, the dadar is also planted amidst the four Buddha arrows, assembling the "five Buddhas" in their five colours for the first time (53).

The dadar initially symbolises agricultural and human fertility as well as the successful union of god and person in the teacher. When the dadar is planted, and the teacher relinquishes control, it becomes a symbol of the hoped-for union of god and person in the novice. This union involves a religious dimension and the planted arrow can also be seen as a ritual arrow, a sangda, anchored firmly in religion. The symbolism is clear although a sangda never features as such in the rite.

This analysis suggests that the distinctions between various arrows are not fixed. The "wedding arrow" has attracted much attention in Ladakhi ethnography, but an analysis of the separation rite confirms that the dadar must

be understood contextually. The initiation rite only becomes intelligible when the final arrangement of arrows can be related both to the dadar and the sangda.

The performances described therefore involve more than the separation of gods and demons and the destruction of the demons. Further actions with the "wedding/ritual arrow" suggest that the gods are properly taught and planted in religion for the good of all.

4.5 Training

Instruction in the use of equipment and proper behaviour for oracles usually accompanies or precedes the separation rite described. Further specific permissions are also given where the pupil learns by imitating the teacher. Novices are generally given at least two specific permissions to extract needles from animals and pollution from people. As shown in appendix 3, the sequence of these initiations varies; about half the time permission to extract needles is given first because, it is said, the extraction of pollution is more dangerous and might harm the person and/or god. About half the time, this order is reversed because, it is said, the teaching to extract pollution also allows the oracle to absorb (or neutralise) pollution in general. A few oracles have also been given specific permissions to extract other bad substances from people such as poison and bad magic. In many cases, however, the permission to take out pollution also allows the oracle to extract other substances. A small number of oracles have also taken teachings later to finish demons by burning. These teachings may be summarised:-

1. Khap pingches (khab 'byin-), "to extract needles". The substance is "taken out" (pingches, 'byin-; sometimes tenches, 'don-)). "Needles" and other small metal items are sucked out from cattle (including dzo). They are extracted from different parts of the animal, but most commonly from the neck or abdomen. "Needles" in animals are more or less comparable to pollution in people as they are thought to be ingested naturally with fodder and not given intentionally or maliciously (54).

2. Jip or tip pingches (jib, grip 'byin-), "to extract (pollution)". Jip means simply to suck, tip means defilement or pollution.

As noted, one permission is generally given to extract from people (jip pingches). Sometimes, however, further permissions may be given for the extraction of specified and more dangerous bad substances, which may be given intentionally rather than ingested naturally in the course of everyday life:-

- a) tuk pingches (dug 'byin-), "to bring out poison".
- b) shugu pingches (shog bu 'byin-), "to bring out paper" (a form of sorcery or bad magic). Ngan chos pingches or jadu (U) pingches (ngan chos 'byin-), "to bring out bad magic." Kaplanian cites further synonyms: nganstat and tappis (Kaplanian 1985:145).

Bad magic or sorcery is more serious than poison, as discussed in Chapter 7.

3. Shrakches lung (sreg-) "permission to burn". Only two oracles are generally called upon to "burn demons", according to the permissions they have received. A third, the nun, has burned demons in the past but she never had any formal training. However, as noted in appendix 3, a further two Ladakhis say that they have received this permission and two

Tibetan oracles also practice shrakches. Three of the younger oracles intend to take this teaching shortly. They will learn, as before, by imitating the officiant, who collects the soul of a demon, puts it in a "body" (ling ga) and burns it, generally in private (55).

A few oracles mentioned additional permissions but those described form the standard repertoire. Brief references to Sabu oracle illustrate the difficulties of training and provide further information on the division of labour between the two gurus, that is, senior monk and senior oracle. A more extensive account of Dolma's training shows how a permission for the extraction of pollution is given.

Sabu oracle had been part-cured and part-trained on many occasions. The event described at the beginning of the chapter was the second of four initiations with Martselang guru. Sabu lhamo would never tell me her life history and the following summary is drawn from comments made by her husband:

At the very beginning, a Tibetan lama (geshe, dge bshes) made offerings to the god and performed various rites to purify god and novice. Then, there were two separations with Thikse guru. After this, Stakna rinpoche banned the god for a period of three years because of the novice's small children (56). Then, she was possessed again until Kushok Bakula banned it for another two years, after which a geshe repeated the ban for two years more. A third initiation was attempted by Ayu guru but it was unsuccessful.

All in all, including her recent training, Sabu novice has had eight lhaphoks over the last 13 years. The husband said that she had been possessed intermittently during the last seven or eight years but the god no longer gives reliable answers: "it has probably been weakened/lowered by all these bans". The god has warned that any further interference might damage the woman's health. Consequently, the lhamo has visited Sras rinpoche (from Rizong) in Leh for advice. He told her to visit on a day that was auspicious for the gods. He then checked the gods. He wrote the names of the 360 village gods on pieces of paper and mixed them together in a large tin. The novice

went into trance and picked out the name of Shemul Gyamo correctly for SHE had been told to produce the paper that named her own god. The rinpoche advised her to proceed with the initiation and to read a particular text with a good lama (to raise her spiritual power, the husband explained). Sras rinpoche did not have the specified text and he sent them to Rinpoche Bakula. But this kushok had just lost his copy in a fire and she has not been able to find the text to date.

It was at this point that she sought out Martselang guru. In the initiation after the one described, the novice's husband described how both Martselang gurus (husband and wife) went into trance. THEY asked the name of her god and THEY asked how many brothers and sisters there were. THEY asked where her palace was. Then, THEY taught her how to answer questions, how to use the drum and the bell, how to wear her clothes and how to offer "golden drinks" to the god. The husband was particularly interested in the descriptions of various ritual items: chodpa (offerings) were white glaciers and chuphud (chu phud, untouched water) was the wide, full ocean.

In the fourth and last training session while I was in Ladakh, the oracle was given her first permission or teaching (lung) when she was shown, by example, how to take pollution out of a patient. The husband was not allowed to watch but he was told that SHE copied the guru by sucking pollution from a client's body through a scarf.

So far, the lhamo has paid Martselang teacher a cow with calf, worth about Rs 1,000 and clothing, worth Rs 500.

These extracts show how senior monks and rinpoche test the spirits/oracle, ban the gods and strengthen the novice while senior oracles give specific teachings to their pupils. The one training session that I saw provides further details on this process of instruction.

a) Novice and senior oracle

Permission to extract pollution was given to Dolma once she had broken the black arrow. This instruction was omitted from the above account for reasons of clarity but it may now be described. Ayu lhamo said:

"These are the words of advice and there are many more. If you don't work for the welfare of sentient beings, it is not good. If you can't recognise the illnesses of humans and animals, it is not good. Now I am giving you jip lung (the permission to extract pollution). Bring a child who has both father and mother alive. Bring a plate for the "extract" (jip) we suck out. You have to take great care. People may give you tests. They may hide a number of things which you have to find. They may hide barley in their hands

and ask you how many grains they hold. If you don't look after the welfare of living beings properly, the people of the world won't believe in you. Do you understand? To suck out a needle that someone swallows, is it possible for you?"

"No, without a proper teaching (lung), I can't do that."

The teacher prays. A small child is brought. She is held by the guru's son who, as the main helper, is dressed in the special natitpa hat mentioned in Chapter 2. First, the guru sucks from the stomach of the child and then Dolma does the same. Both spit a black liquid on to the plate. The teacher adds water and holds up the plate. Everyone shouts, "Victory to the gods, may their spiritual power become high."

Ayu oracle treats a number of patients and answers questions. Then, SHE speaks to her pupil again:

"If you don't go to the lamas of the past, present and future and if you don't investigate (your status), then you're not a proper god. Then it is a demon (dre). These are bad times. Kangka Shamed, Shemul Gyamo, these two (gods) are the same. These gods are living in bad times. How do the gods come? What is their ancestry? These questions might be asked by the monks. They might ask how many generations there are and how many followers the gods have. Such are the questions they will ask. Do you understand? There are twelve (followers) and five (generations). Do you understand? Which gods do you possess?"

Dolma replies, "Shemul".

"No, you're not Shemul. You're Shemul ma tid song. ... I am going now. You may also go and practice welfare for people and animals."

Other oracles described teachings that seemed very similar although each permission might be given just once or as many as fifteen times. Thus, Tukchikpa oracle was given the permission to extract pollution once while Dolma was given it twice and Ayu oracle claimed to have been instructed on ten to fifteen occasions: jealousy had hindered her training (57). According to their pupils, Thikse oracle generally completes an initiation in six months while Ayu

oracle takes between one and two years. The process of learning by example also varies. For example, some oracles learned to extract needles from animals; others from the bodies of their gurus. Tukchikpa oracle learned in both ways. She first copied her guru who had sucked a needle out of a dzo and then she took another needle, completely covered by threads of five different colours, from the throat of her guru. Monks were sometimes called to witness teachings, together with villagers.

Specific teachings (lung) are accompanied by a more general training in religion and trance practice. A number of restrictions surround trance. The novice is taught to avoid alcohol, onion, garlic and sometimes cow or dzo meat before a trance. Restrictions concerning death and birth in the phaspun must be stringently observed. Pregnancy and childbirth may pollute the god(s) and so they are often "banned" for a period (see fn 56). Manure is polluting and many oracles say that they never handle it. Delightful anecdotes are told of malefactors and frightened children hiding in the toilet during a trance for gods can never approach them there. Some teachers also encourage their pupils to invite the gods on auspicious days (zhag bzang) and, regularly, for the sake of their vessels' health. Some change their village shrines.

Novices often accompany their teachers on pilgrimage. When Choskid, the Shey lhamo, went to the Chilling area with her guru, Thikse lhaba, she was involuntarily possessed by gods at every monastery they visited. She was, at the same time, introduced to a potential clientele: villagers from the area always called Thikse oracle for help and, now, they will

call Choskid if he is unavailable. Dolma went into meditation with her teacher during training.

Although oracles generally receive at least two permissions from their teachers and although they generally also receive further informal training in trance practice and religion, it should be appreciated that there are great differences between one initiation and the next. As noted, the Skarra nun does not extract poison or bits of metal and she has never been taught by another oracle. The Chanspa lhaba likewise refused to accept permission to take out metal. Some oracles are pious while others are perfunctory in their religious observances. Some are famous for specialised work such as the burning of witches while others are known for their ability to answer questions truly even if they have not received any further permissions.

b) Novice and monk

Contact between monk teachers and oracle pupils is not confined to the ritual events described; that is, treatment of madness, diagnosis and the separation rite. Monks and rinpoche play an important role in purifying both god(s) and vessels during the earlier stages of training and the monastery plays an important legitimising role throughout an oracle's career.

At the time of the initiations described above, novices and their gods were involved in rituals to raise their spiritual power. The discussion of sangs in Chapter 2 illustrated the difficulty in distinguishing unambiguously the spiritual power of gods/demons from that of people. The same point applies in the present context. Rites are

generally performed to raise the spiritual power of both gods and vessels and each rite has a reciprocal effect on the other: host or visitor. In other words, a rite that raises the spiritual power of the god will also strengthen the novice while a rite that purifies the novice will also affect the god. The mutuality between these rites can be illustrated with reference to Sabu novice.

Sabu oracle sponsored three offerings (lhasol, lha gsol) to her god, Shemul Gyamo, while she was apprenticed to Martselang lhaba in 1982. Two were staged at home by one monk. The third was performed by four monks at the village shrine to the goddess. In trance, the god had cried "atsatsasi", declaring herself polluted. The novice accordingly consulted Stakna rinpoche who advised this ceremony. At the offering, I was told, many coloured cloths were hung like flags on a clay mould which already had a scarf attached. Novice, family and monks took this offering to the shrine, accompanied by seven village women and seven village men. Incense, food and kalchor were offered to the god. All participants had been ritually purified and, on arrival, the shrine was likewise cleansed with incense. Then the monks honoured the god with many chodpa (dough offerings) and the company shouted "victory to the god, may the power of the god increase". They returned to the lower village for a meal, leaving the clay mould and incense at the shrine.

The offerings were designed to raise the god's spiritual power. Stakna rinpoche had also recommended religious practices for the direct benefit of the novice: 100,000 prostrations; 1,200,000 repetitions of a short prayer, Benza

guru or, if she could not recite so many, she should at least visit all the (local) monasteries and recite the refuge formula (skyabdro, skyabs 'gro) 100,000 times. During the period of the separation rite, Sabu lhamo told me, she spent at least an hour reciting prayers and performing prostrations every day under the guidance of rinpoche. She also visited many monasteries. Clearly, these activities were not enough: at the end of her initiation, she was referred back to rinpoche and she was told to "wash" the god in her village shrine. In other words, she was to redouble her efforts to raise her own spiritual power and that of the god.

Choglomsar novice was engaged in even more intensive religious practice before her initiation, largely because Ayu oracle kept intimating that the god did not come properly because the vessel was lazy. The rite described took place after novice and teacher oracle had meditated together for a month.

Oracles sometimes maintain close ties with monks after the first and most important rite of their initiation. Thus, Ayu oracle asked the very same monk to her pupil's separation as trained her many years ago. On the whole, however, established oracles turn to the monastery in general rather than a particular monk during their later careers. It has been noted that well-established oracles tend to be possessed by more gods and, particularly, by higher ranking religious protectors. These are often acquired through religious practice, notably meditation and pilgrimage. Dolma expected to add a new god to her repertoire in meditation. Ayu lhamo has acquired five "refugee" Tibetan protectors (shrunqma) on

pilgrimage in India. Three were recognised by Tibetan rinpoche in Dharamsala who welcomed the gods (schenden, invitation) and gave her, the vessel, amulets (shrunqa) to help induce trance. Ayu oracle must put these on with her god clothes as she falls into trance; and she must take them off before the gods are able to leave her body. The amulets thus serve as a shrine or home for the gods in the same way as the personal shrine carried by Martselang oracle (section 4.1, above). The gods that possessed Choskid on pilgrimage did not return with her but, in the future, she may add higher ranking gods to her repertoire through pilgrimage or meditation. Religious devotion in itself also enhances a reputation. The most popular oracles of recent years spend half their days in prayer and meditation and some months on pilgrimage nearly every year. They thereby demonstrate their ability to host gods taught in religion rather than village spirits compromised by the demonic.

However, village oracles can only move a certain distance towards the monastery. A telling episode was described to me which concerned Skarra nun. After her conversion and initiation, the nun continued to work as a religious practitioner. After her stay at Rizong, she went on pilgrimage and preached all over Ladakh; in Sham, Nubra and Purig as well as Lahul and many sites in India. In the early years (the 1950's and 1960's), she was famous for her work in converting Muslims to Buddhist practices such as lighting lamps or refraining from taking life. In recent years, she has travelled little though she comes into trance regularly and treats clients at her own home. She is still very devout and spends much of her income on religious monuments.

Her status is questioned in accounts of a meeting with Thikse oracle. Both Thikse oracle and Skarra nun referred to this occasion when they had both been in trance:

SHE told him he was false. SHE said that it was impossible to suck poisons and metals out of the body without piercing the skin. HE did not reply to this attack but HE said that the nun was behaving improperly: she was doing work that rightfully belonged to monks. Once, Thikse guru told me that she would be punished in hell during her next life for this behaviour.

In other words, the nun has gone too far. She is not behaving as a village oracle should. Instead, she is appropriating the work of monks and she is described as an impostor.

In general terms, it can be seen that the life trajectory of a village oracle involves a definite but restricted movement from the village towards the monastery.

4.6 The life history of a village oracle

Village oracles are caught "in the middle". All that is distinctive about their ritual power depends upon its derivation outside the monastery through an initiatory madness, located in a village world of exchange and reproduction. These distinctive attributes are developed with the cure and training provided by teacher oracles (except in the case of the Skarra nun) and the practice of ecstatic trance (discussed further in Chapters 5 and 7). Yet, initiatory madness also creates an ambivalence towards all practitioners which is restimulated through trance practice. Oracles relinquish control during possession and they relinquish control to gods that behave like demons, to gods that cannot be fully controlled by villagers.

This suspicion is to some extent allayed through oracles' religious devotion and their dependence on the monastery. Successful practice depends upon the cultivation of links with the monastery for this is the only route through which a good reputation can be established and maintained.

Village oracles sit "in-between": on the one hand, they have to stay in the village to maintain their distinctive attributes; on the other, they have to subordinate themselves to the monastery in order to consolidate their position. Not suprisingly, oracles evince contradictory attitudes towards monastic institutions: in trance, THEY are often the most vocal critics of the monastery through the highest ranking of their gods, the monastery protectors; while, out of trance, they are the most religiously devoted of villagers who constantly reaffirm monastic hegemony.

It is suggested that the very first initiation rite, "the separation of gods and demons" describes a process which also applies to the life history as a whole. Gods and demons are separated; demons are destroyed and gods are taught to behave properly. Over time, oracles are seen less and less as incarnations of the demonic, the enemies of religion, and increasingly as incarnations of the divine, who operate under the umbrella of chos within the village.

This process of movement is relevant in other fields. It resonates with ethnography presented earlier; with the movement towards chos that is part of the ideal villager's life cycle; with the transformations enacted at death rites as merit is enlarged in the form of gods and sin destroyed in the form of demons. Further parallels are presented below in

Chapter 5. The position of village oracles is explored with reference to (other) village affliction. It will be seen that the experience of other afflictions involves a movement away from the worldly and demonic towards village religion. A direct comparison awaits Chapter 6 and the introduction of monastery oracles, who are similarly caught between the demonic and higher ranking gods, and simultaneously moving ever closer towards chos. It will then be seen that the ethnography described in this chapter illuminates central preoccupations of Ladakhi ritual and religion. Based upon the perspective enacted at monastery dance-dramas, cham, it will be argued that the making of a village oracle involves the very same processes that, in the long run, have made a civilisation from people and other worldly beings.

CHAPTER 5

THE MAKING OF A VILLAGE ORACLE (II): "WITCHCRAFT" POSSESSION

The position of oracles can be explored further in relation to village affliction. Oracles are likened to victims of "witchcraft" (1) and they play a central role in formulating and negotiating ideas and practices associated with "witchcraft" when they treat clients in trance. Witchcraft is only gradually and partially separated from a host of other village troubles. The first section attempts to locate witchcraft in relation to a range of other problems such as bad luck, bad karma, spirit damage, people's jealousy, superstition, bad magic and poisoning. Section 5.2 explores "witch possession" (specifically *gongmo zhugshes*, 'gong mo 'jug-), which is then related to village oracles in section 5.3. I conclude by reiterating that village oracles are inevitably "caught in-between" the worst and best aspects of village life even though they also move haltingly towards the monastery during their careers (5.4).

5.1 Trouble

a) The vocabulary

Witchcraft is sometimes described as "supernatural damage" (*nodpa*, *gnod pa*) and sometimes as trouble caused by other people. It is closely linked with (other) spirit attacks, including the attacks by "gods and demons" on novice oracles described in the last chapter, and also (other) types of damage caused by people through talk (*mikha*, *mi kha*), the evil eye (*mig phogshes*, *mig 'phog-*) and unintentional pollution (*tip*) (2).

A widely disseminated medical classification divides 404 illnesses into four types: 101 will get better on their own, 101 require rituals, 101 require medicines and 101 will not

get better (3). Much of the damage caused by spirits and people falls into the category of illnesses requiring rituals. Illnesses requiring medicines might be crudely distinguished as "naturally occurring troubles". Food and drink have natural properties which may cause illness; so too, does an imbalance of bile, air (or wind) and phlegm, properties of the climate, positioning of the stars and (other) astrological configurations. There are numerous naturally occurring troubles which will not be listed. Medical frameworks have been used in other accounts of Tibetan illness and treatment (4).

In practice, it is hard to distinguish different illnesses and later descriptions will show how oracles are preoccupied with attempts to separate problems of jealousy from the natural effects of living in this world, partly so as to refer troubles appropriately to doctors, monks and astrologers (5).

Whilst troubles requiring medicines feature little in the following chapters, troubles requiring ritual provide a major focus. Damage by spirits is generally glossed as nodpa. A vision of the universe in three layers was described in chapters 1 and 2. Some of the beings that share this universe with people were described, who cause trouble when they are disturbed. People's problems may be attributed to contagion, that is, pollution passes automatically from spirit to person, or to the spirit's fury when an individual but not necessarily the immediate transgressor is punished. Gods and lu were described in greatest detail. But, t_{sa}n and demonic beings who share the middle world with people were

also mentioned. These "spirits" will be described in greater detail in this chapter.

Supernatural damage is generally seen to be morally unjustified and so the spirits involved are typically lower ranking spirits, not part of religion. Nodpa is associated with many other terms. As noted above, Ladakhis do not draw a firm line between spirits and the jealous feelings projected by people. Other terms that are often heard describe "cause", "fault", "damage" and "hindrance":

i) Don or rdon (gdon) and dong (gdong) were occasionally used more or less synonymously for nodpa. The term don (gdon) is also associated with particular disease-causing demons. A series of fifteen demons which attack children was often mentioned (6). Dong seemed to refer to a general causation but it was used very rarely in my presence. It is possible that the term is also used to refer to a type of nodpa, as described for other areas. Lichter and Epstein also mention gdong 'dre or "ghosts" in an account of Tsum, in Northern Nepal, and Tibetan refugees (1983:248).

ii) The words skyon (skyon) and skyen (rkyen) were used to specify "cause", which sometimes relates to damage by spirits. Thus, a phrase such as lui nodpa innok, "it's damage caused by lu" might be rephrased thus: lui skyon innok (klu'i skyon yin nog), "it is due to a lu" (7). Skyon means "fault" and, in more ethicised contexts, the fault is often a karmic condition or sin that has nothing to do with spirits. skyen (sometimes shkyen or k Yen) may refer to misfortunes caused by spirits but the word is also used to refer to other misfortunes and the reasons for them, as among the Tumba and Tibetans:

"The Tibetan word for co-operating causes ... is rkyen ... If we were to select an Aristotelian gloss for rkyen, we would call it the "efficient cause" ... In one breath, Tibetans will assert that almost any bad thing that can happen to a person is rkyen. In the next, they will restrict rkyen to supernatural causation (gnod-pa)." (Lichter and Epstein 1983:238)

Das gives three headings:

"I In Buddhist science this important term expresses any co-operating influence which serves to shape and bring about an event as distinguished from rgyu, its direct and obvious cause ...

II ... (the types of rkyen in Buddhist metaphysics)

III misfortune, ill-luck, calamity. ..."

Once more, it should be noted that "spirits" are often reinterpreted in ethical terms and Epstein quotes one such interpretation involving the term rkyen:

"People (laymen) do not realize that (rkyen) is a function of karma, and they attribute to it an independent existence, generally calling it harm by spirits (gdon). However, this really means that both the demon and the human who is affected had some relationship in a past existence, and this now becomes manifest." (monk, Epstein 1977:88 quoted IN Lichter and Epstein 1983:239)

iii) Obstacles may be related to nodpa. The most common terms for obstacles are gyeg or gyak (bgegs) (8) and parchad or parchod (bar chod, bar chad, bar gcod). Gyak may be distinguished from parchod as a general term for "trouble" in contrast to an interference or hindrance. Parchod also refers to a sudden or unexpected accident.

(iv) A verb meaning to hit or injure (phogges, 'phog-) is often used in conjunction with supernatural damage (9).

Witchcraft may be classed with nodpa because it involves a person's spirit. During witchcraft possession, bad feelings acquire an independent life of their own and accordingly behave like any (other) demon. Other problems caused by people such as poisoning are not described as nodpa. Damage caused by people include the intentional malice associated especially with occasions of hospitality (see Chapter 2).

Occasionally, individuals are said to place poisons, perhaps nail clippings, hair or polluted substances, in food and drink. Bad magic or sorcery, jadu (U), nganchos (ngan chos) or shugu (paper, describing one common form of bad magic) are usually distinguished from poison, tuk (dug). All these words convey a sense of conscious and immoral activity, in contrast to damage caused "by the way" while looking, speaking and feeling (10).

Unintentional damage includes all sorts of defilement or pollution (tip); witchcraft can be described as a particular and dramatic case of this kind. Distinctions between unintentional damage and poisoning or bad magic are common in the Tibetan area. Note, for example, Lichter and Eptstein's contrast between the Tumba poisoner (intentional) as a bad host and the Tumba witch (unintentional) as a bad guest (ibid:250). There is however a particular twist to conceptions about poisoning in Tumba which is absent in Ladakh:

"Poisoning's peculiar relationship to ideas of karma is that poisoners hope to acquire their victims' merit (bsod-nams) by murdering them." (ibid:250-1)

Lichter and Epstein suggest that poisoners consequently look for those with high status, with good karma. This quest, they say, is even more true in the context of (unintentionally caused) mikha:

"Anyone who is too outstanding in any way, even in happiness, risks mi-kha, a type of rkyen such that universal gossip becomes reified somehow as a malignant agent and then must be exorcised just like a demon." (ibid:251) (11).

The three broad categories of trouble described; naturally occurring troubles and troubles inflicted by spirits

or people; are associated with three rather more specific categories which both constitute problems in themselves and conditions that make the first three troubles more likely to occur. They might be labelled "inner states": first, spiritual power; second, karmic condition and third, "scruple" or "superstition".

Numerous references have been made to spiritual power (parka, spar kha) which describes an individual strength that waxes and wanes over a lifetime. It also describes a strength that is differentially distributed between categories of people: women have less parka than men and laymen have less than monks; children have less than adults and ordinary villagers less than aristocrats. The effects of work (karma), astrological configurations, general health and many other factors influence the position of an individual's parka (12).

Parka mamo (spar kha dma' mo), low power, is in itself debilitating and makes the individual vulnerable to other troubles. Rites to lower the spiritual power of "witches" and thereby weaken their hold on their victims are mentioned later in the chapter. They involve "going low"; for example, making a witch lick a shoe. More commonly, rites are performed to raise an individual's spiritual power. The ritual, appropriately enough, makes use of height. Prayer flags or wind horses are hung from roof tops, mountains, trees or bridges where their messages will be carried in the wind. Generally, the age of the weakened individual is specified in the number of flags hung. The person's birth year is given in the elements printed on the flags and the colours used, that is, in the lostag (lo rtags) or year-sign.

The wind horses or flags are known as lungsta (rlung rta), a name which also refers to the rite as a whole, "to raise flags", and to spiritual power itself (13). In many areas, the word lungsta is the only term cited for "spiritual power" (see, for example, Lichter and Epstein 1983:240).

The effects of karma may look very like the effects of spiritual power. Merit-making activities and the vocabulary of karma were described in Chapter 3 and will not be elaborated further. However, it is important to note that Ladakhis commonly point out the connections between spiritual power, fortune (wangthang, dbang thang) and the effects of karma (14). In theory, merit and sin are produced from "work" and altered only through ethical behaviour while spiritual power is affected by a range of features, as described above, and it can be altered ritually. In practice, as Lichter and Epstein note, the differences between these states are hard to recognise:

"Very often the difference between bsod-nams and rlung-rta can be and is ignored,..." (Lichter and Epstein 1983:240) and, later on,
"It must be recalled, of course, that the results of good karma and the results of high rlung-rta look the same in the world." (ibid:241)

Good karma protects the individual and explains high social status just like high spiritual power, parka thonggo. Sin makes other troubles more likely while merit makes them less likely (15). Indeed, it is impossible to know whether happiness and prosperity result from merit, luck or high parka since karmic states are largely inscrutable.

Namstok (rnam rtog), "superstition" or "scruple", describes an attitude or orientation that invites problems. To believe in supernatural harm or people's ill intentions

makes it more likely that you will suffer an attack from a spirit or witch. Most commonly, I was told of superstition surrounding "dirt": if you drink from a dirty cup or if you share a cup with a (low caste) musician, then you may or may not fall ill depending upon your attitude.

The sense in which namstok is understood depends on the context and I have used two words in translation so as to preserve both the village notion where belief brings about a result and the more philosophical notion where doubt poses an obstacle to results (knowledge). Thus:

"Colloquially, rnam-rtog means both suspicion (as of a thief) and distaste (as of a dirty teacup). Tibetans will declare straightforwardly that pollution is a function of distaste and hence its causes can be modified by changes in taste. Philosophically, the term refers to discrimination in general, a cognitive function which according to Tibetan Buddhism is an obstacle to enlightenment. A bodhisattva or a saint must overcome all distinctions between opposites, even good and evil." (Lichter and Epstein 1983:245-6)

This crude dictionary has described trouble from the perspective of village afflictions and, particularly, village possession. The vocabulary shares much in common with other Tibetan speaking areas but a brief comparison with Sherpa ethnography illustrates how analytic perspectives influence the form that classifications take.

The classic monograph on Sherpa society by Furer-Haimendorf (1964) provides many descriptive details that are absent from later accounts and therefore provides a good example for comparison. Furer-Haimendorf is concerned to portray the Sherpa as ethical individualists (Samuel 1978, see also Furer-Haimendorf 1964, preface) and an explanation of this morality is found in Buddhist concepts of merit and sin, together with a relative autonomy from the outside

world. This perspective is perhaps responsible for the presentation, which deals with supernatural causation in one chapter (chapter 7, "The control of invisible forces") and ethical causation in the next (chapter 8, "Values and moral concepts"). As Samuel notes, the material that is said to explain an ethical individualism takes up just one quarter of the ethnography on religion (ibid). Furer-Haimendorf's approach, therefore, locates morality and ethical beliefs in the realm of Buddhism which is radically separated from other beliefs in the supernatural. This approach has a long history in Western exegesis of Buddhism as the ethical religion. In contrast, the perspective taken in this thesis makes it difficult to separate the "ethical" (Buddhist) and "supernatural" ("animist").

The ethnography also seems superficially distinct from the Ladakhi for other reasons. Thus, the chapter on invisible forces mentions shrindi, spirits. These may have once been human, in which case they are also known as norpa or ghosts (presumably the same as Ortner's nerpa, Ortner 1978b). We also hear of witches or pem (also sondim) and the locally important lu as well as specialists who deal with "invisible forces" such as oracles. Some of these terms are glossed differently by other writers. Pem, for example, may be seen as an aspect of a person rather than a witch. Funke

"talks consistently of the pem, even when its effects are evil, as the "nicht körperlicher Teil des Menschen" (1969:343), never uses it to refer to a role, and suggests that it is not clearly to be differentiated from sim or sem (p.140) (mind)" (Allen 1976(b):539).

Ortner similarly glosses pem as a force within people that may become active in witchcraft attacks (Ortner 1978b:270).

Many of these terms might be tentatively related to other Tibetan words. Shrindi, for example, might be derived from the Tibetan shi 'dre or "demon of the dead", like the Ladakhi shinde (ghost). Samuel suggests the possible derivation srin bdud or "devil-demon" (Samuel 1978:102) (16). Similarly, sondim might be derived from the Tibetan for "living". In Ladakh, "living demons", including witches, are called sondre, gson 'dre. Again, norpa may have some wider significance as "wrong-doer" (Tib: nor ba; to do wrong, to make a mistake).

These examples suggest that what initially look like purely local Sherpa usages may be related to other terms in Tibetan speaking areas. It is misleading to ignore the wider Tibetan context (Snellgrove 1966) as it then becomes difficult to perceive the linguistic links between one area and the next. The likely linguistic links suggest that Sherpa make distinctions between demons and local spirits and between different kinds of demons (from dead people, living people and so forth) which are very similar to the Ladakhi distinctions, described below. Once these similarities become visible, significant differences in language and belief are also illuminated. Lu seem to play a far more significant role in Sherpa aetiology than in the Ladakhi:

"among the Sherpa, as also among other Bhotia populations, they (lu) have assumed the character of spirits very closely associated with individual families and houses. This association invests them with an importance in the esteem of the average Sherpa far surpassing that of most other classes of gods, and the maintenance of friendly relations with its house-lu is a vital concern of every family." (Furer-Haimendorf *ibid*:269)

The configuration of "invisible" troubles among the Sherpa begins to look more like the Ladakhi with a closer

reading of the ethnography. The division between "Buddhist" and "animist" aspects of Sherpa religion may be attributed to the analytical perspective employed. In Ladakh, the difference between a gyapo who causes damage "morally" in the protection of religion and another kind of gyapo (see below) who causes damage capriciously for selfish reasons is never obvious and requires considerable negotiation. I argue further below that witchcraft (in the household, secular, animist, nodpa) is central to the creation of the sacred (in the monastery, rinpoche, Buddhist, karma, chos) and cannot be fixed, therefore, in a separate sphere. A similar approach could be applied to Sherpa ethnography.

A dictionary irons out the very great differences between the naming of trouble in one context rather than another and it is already clear that trouble is dealt with in a number of distinct situations. Two types of situation have been outlined concerning the experience of misfortune (Chapter 4) and calendrical ritual (Chapters 2 and 3). At regular rites, all potentially malign or destructive forces in the world are expelled in contrast to rites of affliction, where just one category is isolated. It has been seen, for example, how novice oracles "go mad", how they are blamed for "low spiritual power" and "bad karma" and how a diagnosis is only completed when one or more local gods have been named. While regular rites list all hostile beings with a process of labelling misfortune that is correspondingly general; rites of affliction involve the opposite process, in a way that continually tries to specify a unique set of factors. The vocabulary used differs accordingly.

A third type of situation is sketched in the next section; where trouble "lives". The topography of evil is highly localised and the landscape around Gongma is described so as to illustrate another but related way of specifying trouble. This approach is selected because of its relevance to ideas about "witches". Others would be relevant to a more general discussion. There are, for example, stories, notably Kesar and associated myths which list devils (dud, bdud) and witches or cannibal demons (shrinmo; srin mo/po) that conjure images of beings roughly analagous to witches and devils in our fairy tales (17). Before the landscape is described, aspects of one calendrical ritual are explored in order to show how Ladakhis themselves bring different interpretations to bear upon their vocabulary of trouble.

b) Ladakhi interpretations

Ladakhis themselves bring alternative interpretations to bear upon the same words, as shown in the following example. None of the exorcistic rites of the annual cycle were discussed in detail in Chapter 2. In Gongma village, gyazhi (rgya bzhi) is the most commonly and regularly performed of these rites, staged "after the sun has turned" in December or January. Gyazhi is also performed to solve a specific problem on the advice of monk, doctor, astrologer or oracle. The formal performance is the same in both contexts.

The ritual has been described in a number of accounts (for example, Ortner 1978a, Paul 1979, Nebesky-Wojkowitz and Gorer 1950:79) and it is only the interpretations offered for the lud (glud) that are discussed below. Lud are variously described as substitute offerings, ransoms or scapegoats (18). They were arranged on a central device

which was thrown away at the end of the rite. They included:

1. 100 miniature lud (ngar glud) arranged around the perimeter of the central square board
2. four larger lud, also called mdos (dos) or "demon traps" placed below and behind the square
3. two further lud moulded into the shape of a boy and girl and placed to either side of an offering in the middle of the square (19).

The officiant, a Nyingmapa monk, explained each category: "the miniature ngar glud are to get rid of badness and trouble"; "the boy and girl lud are substitutes for the people of the house" and "the four outer lud are devils". The monk gave these four devils their textual names: the white one was called lhayidud; the red, nyonmongdud; the black, chitagdud and the yellow, pongpedud. According to Das, these names should be understood as follows:

"There are four bdud devils:- (1) phung-po'i bdud, the devil originated from the aggregates, i.e., the constituents of the living being; (2) nyon-mongs-pa'i bdud, the devil ruling over sufferings and diseases; (3) 'chi-bdag-gi bdud, the devil of death, the messenger of the lord of death; (4) lha'i-bu'i bdud, the lustful god or Cupid. The first two are classed under the rnam-par rtog-gi bdud as devils of the imagination or Vikalpana, the last two are figuratively called mi-ma-yin-pa'i bdud, the demons that are not human beings ..."

The monk thought differently:

"They (the lud) get rid of the whole year's troubles (gyak) from gods, demons, tsan, "not gods" (lhamayin), animals, yidags, thebrang (the'u brang) and so forth. ... All the lud are also food, decorated with clothes and precious things for those who are jealous, for the demons who cause damage because they are jealous..."

The monk's interpretation, perceived as "doctrine" (chos), named spirits which share a village world with people as well as remote beings from other worlds (in this case, the yidags and lhamayin) (20).

Lay spectators added another layer as they explained the monk's exegesis. They told me only of problems in their everyday world. They spoke first of trouble (gyak) and supernatural harm (nodpa). Next, they commented upon the category of nodpa by specifying gods, tsan, lu, zhidag (gzhi bdag, masters of the place) and demons (dre). The dre were said to be the most troublesome. I was told of the "people demons" midre (or minde, mi 'dre) and "god demons" (lhande, lha 'dre) which would be trapped in the four outer effigies. The former, I was told, include "demons of the dead" (shinde, shi 'dre, ghosts) and "living demons" (sondre, gson 'dre, witches) (21). I was also told of more colourful types which will be mentioned briefly below.

The monk officiant did not challenge these interpretations and the lay audience clearly thought they were explaining rather than changing the monk's account. The interpretation of just these four outer lud shows, then, that words for troubles can and do carry a range of interpretations. Lay spectators talked only of spirits that shared their everyday world and these lived, for the most part, locally. The range of interpretations offered in this particular context also illustrates the difficulties of distinguishing in practice between Buddhist and "non-Buddhist" frameworks.

c) Spirits in the Gongma area

The road from Leh to Gongma passes under the old castle and monastery, through a sparsely settled hamlet, Ch., which sits under the shadow of a mountain. The road passes to one side of the next hamlet, K., recently settled by people

moving out of Leh to the "suburbs". There is a row of chorten on the right and a school on the left, which is baked by the sun. Approaching Gongma, there are a few outlying houses on the right of the road and the main village off to the left, past another row of chorten and the shrine to queen Traltse. The road continues to the hamlet of H., G. and the high pastures before it climbs a number of passes; the smaller ones lead to local villages and the high one to Nubra and Sinkiang.

These roads are marked by various landmarks. All walk around the chorten and some greet the three gods who live in shrines on the way. On special days, the lower stretch of the road becomes part of the Leh pilgrimage route and offerings are left on the shrines to local gods. Villagers also walk around Gongma on such days and up the hill to the local monastery. There are other auspicious landmarks such as the stone on the road where women sometimes stop. They reach into a hole to pull out hair; black hair means a daughter and white a son. G. is sometimes described as a particularly blessed place, an erstwhile bayul or hidden country (22). Grandfather said:

"It used to be a great lake and, when the water came out, G. was revealed. Part of the lake remains in the mountains behind. The sounds from the lake show that it is a bayul but the rinpoche says it would be a great sin to bring it out." (23)

At night, however, or after some unsettling event, the road becomes much more sinister. In the winter, all those from Gongma who work in Leh have to return home in the dark. Women go in company, men sometimes travel alone and unprotected. Most Ladakhis are worried about travelling at night:

"When we're young, we're always told that it's lhande if we misbehave, or gongmo (a kind of witch, see below) if we're depressed. We're always told that babies who have died have been eaten by bamo (also a kind of witch, see below). That's why we won't go out at night alone. If I'm ever frightened travelling at night, it is not because of the people but because of lhande and manmo (see below)." (young man from Gongma)

Strange apparitions are reported. Ch. is one of the dangerous places. The people of Leh say that it has been more or less deserted because of an obstacle (parchod) which leads to misfortune and they point to the man who moved to K. after his wife and child were killed in extraordinary accidents. No-one is very clear about the shape of this obstacle but all hurry under the shadow of Ch. Further up the road, spirits live:

"There are two stones past the school which are famous for lhande. Nearer to S, (a house on the other side of the road), there used to be a manmo." (Gongma villager)

Others just talked of odd feelings as they walked by. On the outskirts of Gongma, strange sights are reported near the houses on the right of the road. Some described an apparition of a donkey which, they said, was probably a lhande.

Lhande appear as phantoms, like English ghosts, which may be absorbed into rocks and trees or float without touching the ground, dim to the eye and usually only glimpsed at night. Villagers would tell how lhande appear in the middle of the night to spirit you away and they would attribute accidents and deaths to lhande:

"Rigzin was beset by lhande at night in a house he had rented in Leh. He soon moved. Later, he learned that the house had been deserted beforehand because a child had died there." (man from Leh)

On the road to Gongma, there are just two special spots for lhande; the one in stones by the school and the other, according to some, on the outskirts of the village itself.

All figures are frightening at night but it is hard to know what you have seen. A phantom might turn out to have been a god:

"A year ago, the Muslim X met someone who looked like a monk at Ch. (near the place of the lhande). The "monk" was ahead on the Gongma road and he circled the chorten. After his circumambulation, he was absorbed into the shrine (lhatho) there." (Gongma villager)

He was the god who lived in the shrine. Gods also travel at night and move between their shrines. Migi grandfather says he has seen queen Traltse moving in the shape of a white animal at night, making her way up the hilltop to visit the other village god, king Nezer. Grandfather also says that his phaslha comes in the shape of a nun at night.

There are no special spots for tsan (btsan) on the road from Leh but they are often mentioned: spirits without a back, the sight of which will cause illness or death. Isan are sometimes said to warn passers-by of their presence:

"If you don't hear the whirring noises of a tsan (and, it is implied, get out of the way), they might get angry and empty their bag of illnesses (nad) on you." (Gongma villager)

Isan are often twinned with gyapo (rgyal po). The term gyapo is used in at least three distinct ways. Some gyapo are wandering demons while others form a powerful group of monastery protectors in the world, who inflict madness upon transgressors. Gyapo Pagar is the most powerful local god in Ladakh and he protects Hemis monastery. He has a quite merciless brief to punish theft, trespass and all other

infractions of religion (24). Third, the name, gyapo, is also used as a courtesy title for ordinary place gods (25).

Isan are twinned just with the wandering gyapo. Like tsan, these gyapo are homeless and liable to inflict problems capriciously on anyone who bumps into them. Like tsan, gyapo are sometimes described as rebirths of the proud and arrogant, especially of monks. This is true of other areas too:

"rgyal-po are the most powerful ghosts; the standard idea of rgyal-po is that they attain a preeminent status among ghosts by outstanding success, especially in possessing human beings. They are also especially irascible. Lamas, already being powerful in life, are likely, if they become ghosts, to become rgyal-po. For Tsumbas, this is the criterion by which rgyal-po are distinguished from other ghosts, and the lamas who become rgyal-po are distinguished by greed and irascibility - inappropriate character traits for beings whose karma is supposed to be too good for such faults." (Lichter and Epstein 1983:249)

"Some Tibetans would not limit the production of rgyal-po to lamas alone. But generally, rgyal-po do originate from powerful, or particularly irascible, individuals. Some Tibetans also add that the demons known as btsan may also originate in this way." (ibid:footnote) (26)

These qualities of arrogance and anger are interestingly correlated with gender stereotyping. Wandering gyapo and, in some contexts, tsan are the only specifically male characters met on the road or around the village. While female "witches" are jealous, an emotion associated with too much (unregulated) co-operation and dangerously little awareness of the boundaries between the self and others, the male demons are arrogant. In "real life", women are seen to get too close while men are seen to destroy social harmony by behaving as if they were better than their neighbours.

Though tsan and gyapo are often singled out by these characteristics, they are also mentioned as members of a triad, "tsan, gyapo and timu" ('dre mo) who together cause

damage, often minor illnesses. Timo (27) are described as one of the "living demons" (see below) but the name is also used as a general term for a number of types of spirits. Sometimes, dungzhonma (gdung zhon ma), the riders of beams, are described as a kind of timo. They are relatively remote from everyday life:

"I met someone who knew a dungzhonma" (Gongma villager)

"About 15 years ago, a woman tried to file a suit against a man who accused her of being a dungzhonma" (man from Leh)

Demons have been described as anti-religious in previous chapters. A number of these highly localised characters are imaged rather in terms of their threats to local secular institutions such as the household. Beam riders, for example, are anti-domestic (see also Levine 1982):

"Dungzhonma have very long hair. They replace the beams in your house with their hair. Then they attack people with the swinging beam and they may kill you in the street." (Gongma villager)

"These are ladies who take the beams from people's houses, but they take them in such a way that the house does not fall down. Normally, these women cannot walk but they can ride these beams. Sometimes, people are crushed by them. But, bold men can catch up with the women and threaten to reveal who they are. Then, they are bribed." (man from Leh)

Other accounts suggest that dungzhonma run with the beams rather than riding them, as if they were pole vaulting (Kaplanian 1981:215-6)). The beam rider can be seen as an evil mother who steals the main or mother beam of a house and destroys rather than sustains the household. This characterisation is important in relation to gongmo who are young women, daughters and wives, rather than evil mothers.

Gongmo can also be described as neighbours in contrast to wild Circes from the mountains, that is, manmo (28). Manmo

are not generally located in settled landscapes but in mountains with gods and wild things; they are beautiful, solitary women who, for Gongma people at least, are slightly unreal. They are remarkable both for their wild natures and their voracious sexual appetites.

"Deer are the sheep of manmo. If deer approach the village, as they do in winter, you know that manmo are close by looking for husbands. Once, a hunter shot a deer and he found a lot of mustard seeds when he cut open its stomach. Meanwhile, he heard shouting from one mountain top to the other, "Where are the deer?" "Why haven't they come home with the mustard seeds?" These were manmo." (man from Markha valley)

Manmo eat clay (kartsi, dkar rtsi) and salt; in Zangskar, apparently, they carry you away for your salt (K. Hoffman, personal communication). They also like human husbands and spend their days searching for single men, usually travellers. There are very many stories about these wild women but, in the Gongma environment, it is the contrast set up between "wild" and "tame women" (witches) that is most relevant (14).

Ghosts (shinde) have no particular places on the road or in the village at present (1982). In theory, ghosts are only created by bad deaths but, in practice, most deaths are accompanied by some kind of ghostly manifestation. Villagers usually attribute unexpected noises, sights or illnesses that occur soon after a death to the ghost of the dead person who does not want to leave the living. Soon after an old woman died in Gongma, several households reported sounds of clay falling in the night. These sounds were attributed to her ghost and described as "bad back" (gyap nganpa, see fn 6, Chapter 4). Shinde are usually named in the context of illness and are thereby distinguished from that aspect of the

dead person, the ghed (gshed), which is exorcised during mortuary ritual (ghedlok, gshed zlog) (30). Oracles and probably other specialists too play an important role in selecting individual ghosts who are remembered for some years. In Gongma, two children who died of measles have been selected out of all the deaths in the last twenty years to account for the majority of ghost attacks in the village. This selection seems to have been promoted by just one man, who used to be an oracle. His words in trance are always remembered and quoted when a diagnosis involving ghosts is made and so the children are named repeatedly (31).

Ghosts are generally demonic but, on occasion, they act as local protectors. Like gyapo, ghosts may be either "good" or "bad". The minister of Wanla is a local long-dead hero who sometimes possesses oracles like gods:

The man was originally a mere householder but he was so powerful that a rinpoche said he should be made a minister (longpo). He was heartily disliked by the king and other ministers partly because he was always shaming the traditional high families with his prowess in war and his magical abilities. They conspired against him. After his (engineered) death, they had his head cut off, buried beneath a chorten and tied down with four chains while monks banned (tamma tangs) his soul from rebirth in the world. According to some accounts, this chorten is in the north of Ladakh, in Nubra, and nowadays it is cracked and the chains have vanished so perhaps the hero will soon be reborn.

Meanwhile, his soul has turned into a ghost because it was not taken out of his body in the proper manner nor accorded the proper death rites. This ghost wanders the earth and possesses many people. During my stay in Ladakh, several people in the Purig area were said to have been possessed by the minister. During possession, however, he does not act like any other ghost, he does not cause harm like a demon. Instead, he behaves like a god, he foretells the future and "comes for the welfare of all sentient beings". It is said that some of these villagers have been trained as "vessels" (luya). Certainly, one of the established oracles in the region names Wanla longpo as one of the spirits which visits him regularly in trance.

Once more, it is apparent that spirits cannot be immediately classed as demonic or divine. In the last chapter, it was shown how the spirits afflicting novice oracles were gradually purified and domesticated as gods. Similarly, local spirits are often described as demons if they are homeless, hungry creatures and gods if they are properly housed and fed (Chapter 2). This ambiguity is central to the nature of local spirits and applies as much to gyapo, tsan and shinde as to the lha and lhadre discussed previously. Thus, gyapo include homeless demons, local protectors and more powerful religious protectors in the world. Isan in other Tibetan speaking areas possess oracles in the same way that gods do in Ladakh and they are seen as potential protectors.

If the journey from Leh to Gongma is extended into the village; if the account moves from night to day and from the unfamiliar to the familiar; then a very different group of demons appear, as shown in the following account:

"In P. khangun, there is a gongmo. She possessed our neighbour, Dol, twice. In T., there is one. The Sh. mother from Yurtung (a suburb of Leh) has been notorious as a gongmo over the last 2 or 3 years. She is often called upon at village feasts to cook. We were worried about poison from her at Chorol's "wedding feast" recently. She is the second wife and has no children so her powers will not be passed on. In H., the grandmother, who died 10 or 12 years ago, used to be a bamo. Now they say her son's daughter is too. She's about 25. She may be a gongmo because of her mother from C. in Chanspa (that is, she may have acquired powers from her mother who married from C. house). The oracle said that house was a "lineage house" (gyudpa).

"In T., it is only the mother who married in from Stok. In Zh., there is none now. The mother was a gongmo but she is dead and her daughter has married into Choglomsar so now there is none. Grandfather says that the Zh. mother poisoned and killed our mother. T. mother said that the wife of Sp. was a bamo and that she possessed her child who died.

"Mother Dol, the one in the law case, is active now as a gongmo. She has possessed many people in Gongma. She doesn't have any children. Diskit, who goes around the village complaining about Dol, even at night, has only one child alive. The other two died because of these quarrels.

"K. house is gongme gyud. The grandmother from Sankar and her daughter-in-law were definitely gongmo. There haven't been any complaints about the daughter who married in Ch. village, but the son's daughter is a gongmo, that is, the one who married in Sham.

(Me: what about gongpo?)

"I have heard of one gongpo (male gongmo) but not in our village. G. house (in a nearby village) was gyud. The mother was a gongmo and her husband left her, saying "why are you jealous all the time?" Apparently, her son possessed someone in Leh. Gongpo attacks are much worse than gongmo.

"It's difficult to know which are gyud (in which households these qualities are passed on) because all the young girls possess each other. You usually stop possessing people at about forty and you also stop being possessed at that age. If you know that there are gongmo in a house, it doesn't stop you marrying there. Gongmo will not attack family; if they do, it is curable and anyway stops with age. It's not like families with bad body smell (sibri gyud); you would never marry there. You can't get rid of that smell and you would never borrow their clothes as you can catch it. There are no sibri gyud in our village but a girl from such a house in (the nearby village) married into G. house in our village. Her beautiful daughter made a bad match with a Khaltse policeman who nearly divorced her as soon as they were married because of this. The brother-in-law of the first woman - the one that married into G. - his daughter married into G. house here. But, there are few complaints about her and maybe the distance is too great (that is, for inheritance). The other daughters of that house (from which the G. wife came) never married. One is a nun and one is still at home. The sons did marry but not well. You can't keep this sort of thing secret because the go-between will find out before a marriage is arranged.

"About gongmo though, there may be others. People don't talk about it much in case someone should overhear. We tell a story about Langdarma (the Tibetan enemy king):
"Langdarma kept his horns secret. When his wives found out, he used to kill them so he married again and again. Then, he told one wife that he had killed her predecessor and she called upon the "leaks in the roof" to act as her witness. She rushed "to court" and told what had happened. This shows that even leaks in the roof can act as witnesses."
(32)

"You only know about the gongmo in your own village. I don't know who's a gongmo even in (the two nearest settlements). It's never publicised or taken to court. How

would you prove it? (33) But, Kirzi oracle said there were many more in our village and this side of Leh than in most places. He said about half the women were gongmo. He didn't blame the people but the times; these are bad times which will finish in a couple of years." (male speaker)

Witches are generally women who unconsciously afflict others through jealousy. They have bad thoughts or bad feelings (34) which are stimulated by the sight of good fortune. Perhaps a neighbour has just married or wears exceptionally fine clothes; perhaps she has just given birth to a child. Ladakhis are vague about how these feelings travel but one stereotype attributes such feelings to the birth demon who can travel like any other demon. Thus:

"Every person is born with a ... black demon. The dre causes harm. During possession (zhugshes), your demon copies you (the person) just like a taperecorder. At the time of possession, it becomes very powerful and changes into an angry person (by copying you). It then goes to possess someone." (rinpoche)

Usually, it is other women who are afflicted but all sorts of everyday problems are vaguely attributed to gongmo and then ignored. If a girl does no work for a week or two, she might be given a protective amulet, she might get better and everyone will attribute her laziness to gongmo. Children who cry a lot are said to suffer from gongmo; sometimes, their parents read a short text to get rid of the trouble.

The word bamo also appears in the account cited and is sometimes used as a synonym. Iimo is closely linked and may be substituted for the words gongmo and bamo. There are subtle and shifting differences between the words for types of living demons (gson 'dre), particularly from one village to the next but, in many of the contexts described below, all three terms can be glossed by the English "witch" (35). The account quoted above reveals striking differences between

gongmo and other local spirits. Every villager can point out gongmo in their midst. They discuss the village, house by house, saying that there are witches in this house or the khangun of that house, pointing out whether they are found in more than one generation and whether it is then reasonable to assume that gongmo qualities are "inherited".

In Gongma, at least, gongmo were the only demons who were definitively located in a world of people working, eating and living together, that is, in a practical everyday life. Knowledge of other demons and spirits is always oblique and fragmented, acquired through stories and the occasional close contacts of spirits with people. Gongmo, in contrast, are almost tangible aspects of people living close by. Nevertheless, it will become clear that the effects of gongmo on others are not always immediately recognisable for what they are. They cause problems of the same kind as other spirits and other people (5.2) and their effects are sometimes confused with the effects of gods and god-demons (5.3). They are only positively identified in rather unusual circumstances of full-blown possession.

Indeed, all the spirits described are identified only gradually in special circumstances. When a spirit is named in regular ritual or in stories, its precise identity is of no great concern. When a spirit is seen or felt fleetingly on the road, it is a matter of only passing interest. However, in the experience of misfortune, especially illness, the exact nature of the problem is a vital part of the cure. And then, half-remembered encounters will be re-analysed and the nature of regular ritual performances re-assessed; other relationships with people and spirits will also be explored;

all in order to discover what might have gone wrong. An example concerning the naming of different types of gyapo is illustrative. Gyapo demons are usually related to minor illnesses, often together with tsan and timo. The client is told to throw a storma or wear an amulet. Initial vague symptoms are given a provisional diagnosis and an all-purpose treatment. Protector king-gods, in contrast, must be immediately appeased. They are named individually in severe illnesses, generally after some time has elapsed and a particular chain of events uncovered, which links god and person and shows how the patient might have caused offense:

A girl from Chemre had recently married in M. I first heard about her when she had broken windows in the Housing Colony. The following morning, she was returned to Chemre in a taxi, tied up. ...

Up to this time, it seems that her problems had been attributed to bad magic (jadu) but, now, they were redefined to match these new symptoms of madness. The girl later went to Ayu oracle and I was told of two diagnoses. The god extracted jadu and said that it had been given by a Muslim. SHE also asked about a piece of gold which, SHE said, belonged to Gyapo Pagar (see fn 24) and must either be returned or thrown away. SHE said that the end was not certain, in other words, SHE did not know whether the girl would recover.

Subsequently, I asked the oracle about this case. She explained:

"the girl's husband's brother is a converted lama from Hemis (that is, a derobed monk). He took some earrings and Gyapo Pagar was offended. ..."

I never heard about the girl again so I do not know what happened later.

This case shows how diagnoses are much more sharply defined when troublesome symptoms persist. Protector king gods are generally isolated at a late stage of illness in association with symptoms of madness (36). The misfortune is, in some sense merited. By contrast, gyapo demons might be mentioned from the beginning of an illness in relation to almost any

symptom. The misfortune is only indirectly deserved, insofar as the patient allowed her/himself to be attacked.

Misfortunes create more intimate relations than normal between people and spirits and they prompt a closer look than normal at these other beings who share our world. All specialists who deal with misfortune accordingly play a major role in negotiating the form that trouble takes and village oracles define the shape of local spirits in their own distinctive ways as suggested in the remainder of this chapter.

5.2 Witchcraft: *gongmo zhugshes* ('gong mo 'jug-)

Material on Ladakhi "witches" and living demons is compared further with data from other Tibetan speaking areas before looking at Ladakhi beliefs and practices. Two aspects to *gongmo* attacks are explored. The first is a description of symptoms, how they are negotiated and treated. The second is a brief sociology of witchcraft, that is, who is attacked, when and by whom. The first aspect provides material for a comparison between oracles and witchcraft victims in section 5.3, but the background provides an important amplification of the material on hospitality given in Chapter 2 and also helps explain the low rank of oracles in Ladakh. The account is based largely on reports and on mild attacks attributed to witches (37).

a) *Witchcraft in Tibetan speaking areas*

Sherpa *peṃ* seem to be similar to Ladakhi *gongmo*. The word is sometimes translated as witch and sometimes as bad feelings (see section 5.2 above). Ortner notes:

"a woman (usually an old widow) whose peṃ becomes regularly active may be called (though not to her face) a peṃ; and further, it is possible, though rare, for peṃ to become active in a man. The peṃ of a man tends to cause fatal illnesses, while the peṃ of a woman tends to cause non-fatal, although potentially serious, ailments, usually centering on digestive disorders. Peṃ are aroused to violence by the sight of others enjoying good food and fine things, and not sharing any with them. They strike those people with illness either directly, or through spoiling their food; in their lowest grade piques they may simply curdle the household's supply of milk for the day." (Ortner 1978b:270)

Ladakhi gongmo might be described in similar terms, with one exception. Both Furer-Haimendorf (1964) and Ortner (ibid) single out old women in their accounts of peṃ. In Ladakh, one type of witch, the ḅamo, is sometimes seen as an old widow but gongmo are associated with younger women.

A number of similar figures are mentioned in other Tibetan speaking areas. Lichter and Epstein note that some Tibetans contrast two types of witches, bdud mo and sbag mo, to a third type, phra men ma (1983:250 fn 17). Phra men ma are particularly devout women and it seems that they may attract suspicion because they have withdrawn from social life. The other figures, bdud mo and sbag mo, may be too much involved, constantly dropping in on their neighbours and, according to some Tibetans, they actually have evil intentions. In another article, Ardussi and Epstein say that bdud mo or gson 'dre also label women in somewhat marginal roles, such as rich women traders (Ardussi and Epstein 1976:329).

One account deals extensively with living demons among the Nyinba from Northern Nepal (Levine 1982). There are 'gong po (masc: 'gong po, fem: 'gong mo) who behave just like their Ladakhi counterparts:

"(the 'gong po) is described as the product of a parasitic demon which takes root and lodges permanently within the minds of receptive persons - those consumed by jealousy (Tib. phrag dog) or anger (Tib. zhe drang) towards others. This demon operates through the mind and eye of its possessor-host, so that whenever the person afflicted sees someone or something arousing its envy or dislike, the 'gong po directs an act of aggression against it." (Levine 1982:261)

While gongmo are a type of gson 'dre in Ladakh, Levine describes a reversed classification; gson 'dre are one of two types of 'gong po. Gson 'dre are particularly jealous of property and small children while food demons (za 'dre) are known for their greed. Again, witches tend to be women but Levine notes that they are poor, widowed or of low social status, which is not true of Ladakh.

There are other Nyinba witches who are less easy to control. While gongpo cause harm unintentionally, nganma ("women who do evil") inherit their witchlike attributes and are trained by their mothers. Stories about these characters are evocative of the Ladakhi bamo and dungzhonma. They have long canine teeth and, at night, they remove the central beam from the house to ride it and they poison their victims (ibid:263). Such characterisations seem to be quite general for another description of Tibetan witches is also reminiscent of Ladakhi bamo. Bell writes:

"A witch appears at night, in dark deserted spots. Probably in the distance it takes the form of a beautiful young girl. But as it draws near it changes into an old hag of terrifying aspect with long hanging breasts and two long tusks..." (Bell 1928:153)

In Ladakh, an important contrast is made between those who know not what they do (gongmo) and others who intentionally practice witchcraft or sorcery. The same distinction is drawn among the Nyinba where nganma seem to provoke much more horror than 'gong po (ibid:266). Levine

does not mention possession as a problem but it is unclear how far the Nyinba ethnography differs from the Ladakhi in this respect. In other accounts, possession is mentioned in passing (by Lichter and Epstein for example 1983:250).

The ethnography shows correspondences of detail as well as overall outline between Ladakhis and other Tibetan speakers. Contrasts are made between those who cause evil intentionally or unconsciously, between bad guests and bad hosts, between outsiders and neighbours. Many problems are closely related to hospitality including poisoning, cannibalism and greed. Levine also discusses the issue of gender: Nyinba witches are (predominantly) women, like their Ladakhi counterparts. She provides an explanation in terms of women's place in the household but additional factors are discussed below.

One last feature might be noted from literature on the less Tibetanised groups in Nepal. In many accounts, the links between shamans or mediums and witches are carefully pointed out and analysed. Thus, the Limbu yeba/yema, a priest who deals with witchcraft, is also sometimes seen as a witch (Nep. boksa/si) through association (R. Jones 1976). In myths of origin, this priest was created together with envy, jealousy and greed. And, in treatment for witchcraft, the yeba is indispensable because his tutelary deity is a witch who can help remove substances from victims' bodies and retrieve souls. Limbu say "when jealousy appears, one needs a yeba" (ibid:39).

Another example from the Bhujel region of Nepal groups witch and oracle together because the major task of the

shaman is to counter witchcraft. Hitchcock writes of the Nine Witch Song in which the first shaman spares a ninth witch so that he will always be called to cure her evil effects. He reminds her to leave his patient when he brings her share to the crossroads (Hitchcock 1976) (38). In Tibetan speaking areas, oracles are often suspected of working for ill rather than good because of their links with the demonic. For example, Berglie notes how demons might sneak into an oracle's body (Berglie 1976) while Jest claims that only lha pa can deal with Dolpo gson 'dre or sorcerers (Jest 1975:371). March reports that Sherpa shamans may be likened to witches (March 1979:272). The material to be described shows that demonic possession is common in Ladakh and constantly linked to a more beneficial possession by gods and it is possible that this theme is more standard than suggested by a brief review of the literature.

b) What gongmo do

Around Leh, it is gongmo who are twinned most often with village oracles. I therefore restrict my discussion of different types of village possession to the links between gongmo and lha. Three aspects of the ethnography are addressed; (i) the unremitting connection between gongmo and women, (ii) the drama of full-blown possession and (iii) the relationship between witchcraft attacks, household and religious organisation. The discussion addresses questions of gender that emerge from the ethnography on possession.

i) The scope of possession: witchcraft and women

As R.L. Stirrat has argued in a paper on demonic possession in Sri Lanka, perceptions of what is appropriate to a demonic attack, that is, the "ideology", shape the "incidence" (Stirrat 1977). Stirrat offers a valuable corrective to previous analyses by suggesting that ideological categories logically precede the actual incidence of attacks. In Ladakh, being a woman is part of the category "witchcraft" although men are, on occasion, involved. What might look like similar symptoms in a man and a woman to an outsider are most unlikely to be labelled in the same way by a Ladakhi (39). A few examples will show that symptoms of "witchcraft" are non-specific, ranging from headaches and spoilt milk to depression. It is shown that diagnosis does not depend on any specificity of symptom; rather, witchcraft is seen as a woman's trouble from adolescence to middle age.

All manner of daily problems are attributed to gongmo when little interest is shown in the identity of the witch. My examples come from a slightly more unitary set of symptoms - anxiety, depression, palpitations, an unsettled mind - because, in these cases, the witch herself is more likely to be discussed and the relations between witch and victim can then be explored.

One common term is, literally, "to be unhappy" (mirdechēs or midechēs, mi bde-). My friend said:

"I yawn a lot and my back is painful. I'm very restless and I don't like having people around. I don't talk very much. This is mirdechēs due to gongmo. I am cured by an amulet or a blessing from the rinpoche."

It is assumed that such symptoms will develop into possession (zhugshēs) if they are not treated:

I was staying in a house where Diskit worked as a servant. She looked miserable and I asked what was wrong.

"I feel illness/pain in my heart (nying zumo yongerak)."

I asked what sort of illness she felt. She said that it was not heart pain, nyingka, but an agitation, an unhappiness (tshererak). She was incoherent (laplip). Diskit said:

"This happened when I saw the bamo who had once possessed me at Tak Tok several days ago. Since then, the bamo has come to me three or four times; once last night and once this morning. The last time that I was seriously possessed (zhugghes) was in Martselang. It was stopped with amulets and I still wear all three that were given to me; one from Stakna rinpoche, one from Tak Tok rinpoche and one from Hemis rinpoche. These were enough then... (40)"

Over the next fortnight, Diskit remained edgy. She asked two close friends in Leh for help and they took her off to get more amulets. Within a month, she was back to normal.

Diskit's symptoms are a little more severe than those described in the first case but they are equally described in short-hand as mirdech. This is a generic term that glosses a number of others such as:-

tserches, to be agitated or anxious (see fn 40).

chalchol, ('chal la 'chol le), to be confused or disordered

phararak ('phar ra rag), palpitations (or, in Jaschke, "I have heart throbbing")

sabsub yongches, "to be startled" (41)

depted ('dre 'ded), to be unsettled, taken over or pursued (42)

Although Diskit's symptoms are linked to the first case, they merit the additional label, "possession" (zhugghes), albeit in a mild form, because the context is more finely drawn and the problems are attributed to a known witch.

Diagnosis during full-blown possession describes a rather more specific process but it is an inclusive one that retrospectively incorporates all previous symptoms. Chorol's case will be cited at length and so it is worth sketching the background:

Chorol was troubled on and off for six months. Later, her illness was attributed to gongmo.

The symptoms that I saw were similar to those described above. At times, Chorol looked tired and pale; she used to retire to her room for two or three days at a time to sleep. She gave up cooking, shopping and agricultural work during these periods through she only missed a few days of work as a caretaker in Leh. At these times, she complained of pains in her back and sometimes also in her arms.

She exhibited no signs of serious zhugshes in my presence but I draw on accounts by her family and herself about such episodes in August, September and December (43).

An oracle was called in mid-September and it was he who first induced possession, as described shortly. Up to that point, no-one was very clear what was wrong. The first signs of illness, in August, were a sore throat and a cold which got worse and worse. Chorol lost her voice for several days. She also developed boils which, she said, did not begin to get better until the end of September. When I asked what was wrong, the family usually said they didn't know; sometimes, they said "she's lazy and stupid" and, when she had complained of back ache, they sometimes claimed "it's gongmo, it must be gongmo, Chorol has been possessed before". They thought that amulets from the village monk might help and they told anyone who asked, "she's got a bad throat and she's resting."

Again, symptoms of witchcraft are altogether vague - sore throats, boils, tiredness, unsociability - and they contrast with episodes of full-blown possession which were also suffered by Chorol:

In August, Chorol's brother came home late one night. He was just about to go to bed when Chorol's younger sister rushed in, terrified. Chorol had suffered zhugshes for five minutes; she had laughed hysterically and her eyes were rolled back so that you could only see the whites. ... On Saturday, Chorol and Tsering (the younger sister) sent the child to look after the cows. Then, they locked the door so there must have been signs of approaching zhugshes. Still the gongmo managed to get in. Chorol had slight convulsions and she breathed in sharply. Then she was possessed. She laughed hysterically again just like the Indian film stars in Hindi films. Chorol said she remembered nothing about these episodes.

Chorol said that something must have happened a month later. She remembered nothing except that her husband was very frightened and cried. Over the next three days, there were further episodes. One brother described what happened when he was alone with Chorol:

"She cried and screamed a lot. I could have stopped it if I'd had my ritual dagger (phur pa). Instead, I read texts. Chorol snatched the book from me and began to read in Bodi (that is, Tibetan which Chorol does not normally claim to

understand). She arrived at the word gyapo and became very happy. She must have remembered something nice about a ceremony or some other occasion involving gyapo. Then, she spoke to me in English (which she does not normally speak). Then, she said in Ladakhi, "Brother, I know your sort, I'm not frightened. I've met lots of people like you before." The bamo was very clever and hid from us. On the third day, we called the oracle ..."

In December, Chorol was staying at home again. She hadn't got up for two days and she was looking very thin. Even though there were no other signs, her family called the oracle again and she became possessed while he was in trance. Later, she visited a rinpoche.

I was told that there were no further problems but I left Ladakh in January and I doubt that I would have been told of any developments by letter.

These symptoms are very different from those described earlier. Chorol loses her memory and witnesses see a complete change of character. Chorol was said to laugh, shout or cry hysterically; she loses control. She was said to speak in languages she did not "know" in a voice that was not her own; she changes personality. All of this indicates full possession which is later diagnosed by the oracle partly through the identification of individual witches (see below). In retrospect, every symptom pointed equally to witchcraft. In fact, the family emphasised early symptoms of mideches and omitted to mention the sore-throat, the cold and the boils. They began to talk as if they had always known it was gongmo.

Ideas and practices concerning witchcraft incorporate diverse troubles and associate all of them with women. They may accordingly be glossed as assumptions or "collective representations", in the words of Stirrat (Stirrat 1977). There is also a more detailed processual dimension to ideas about witchcraft which emerges from the above examples. The labelling of witchcraft organises symptoms

retrospectively and anticipates developments prospectively. Restlessness, for example (case 1), is not actually equated with full possession (case 3) but it is seen as a problem that will lead to zhuggshes unless appropriate steps are taken. In effect, the first case cited above is seen to contain seeds of the second and the third. In this way, talk of gongmo gives the impression that all women from their teens to middle age are continually possessed. This sequence suppresses the obvious differences and particularities in illnesses suffered by women of the appropriate age in favour of the links between gongmo and younger women. In fact, it is my impression that rather few cases of "restlessness" culminate in possession. When restlessness does not culminate in possession, Ladakhi faith in preventative steps, such as amulets, prayers, blessings and religious practice generally, is confirmed. Reciprocally, any case of full possession is given a history which includes some episodes of mirdecheshes. An illness is accommodated to ideas about the typical, predictable progression and any anomalous aspects that do not fit the image are forgotten.

ii) Full-blown possession (44)

Ladakhis talk of spontaneous zhuggshes but dramatic symptoms are encouraged and developed during curing sessions. Full possession is important in the process of diagnosis and healing and so the following description combines the ethnography of illness and healing (45).

During mild attacks or mirdecheshes, the witch (gongmo) is generally ignored while the patient is protected and strengthened. Chorol was given amulets, and mustard seed

incense (dugzes, bduq zas (46)), which had been blessed by the rinpoche, was burnt at home. Chorol's younger brother said:

"I ignored her. You mustn't talk (to an affected person) then, because the attention might encourage possession. If you ignore her, the gongmo might go away."

When problems persist, further steps are taken. The same brother told of his attempt at the "finger test":

"I grabbed her two middle fingers hard. SHE (Chorol) hid her face and tried to cover her shadow which I wanted to beat. Then, she came round and almost cried. She must have realised what had happened because I was still holding her fingers." (47)

The finger test

This is a highly conventionalised procedure which is supposed to induce possession. Ignoring the witch has proved ineffectual; now, she must be coerced. The details vary from one place to the next but the version from the house where I lived provides one example:

"You must make her (the witch) talk (shedches, bshad-). To do this, you grasp the middle finger on both hands. As you grab the fingers, the gongmo may be persuaded to say who she is. At the same time, you burn cloth so that SHE smells the smoke. SHE says tu and spits on the cloth in disgust. This too makes the witch come so that you can ask who SHE is. SHE will probably answer. Finally, you beat the shadow of the patient. It is the gongmo who is hurt, not the person. SHE will start talking and tell you to stop hurting her. Then the witch will say where SHE has come from and why."

In other words, the witch is summoned through the fingers, through bad smells and through physical pain. In this account, it is the middle fingers that are held but, in others, it is the ring (fourth) fingers and, in still others, a cross is apparently made with the fingers. Kaplanian reports a special link between gongmo and the middle fingers and he notes that a ring is supposed to stop the witch going

to your heart by this route. At one trance, he saw the five-coloured threads of religion tied around the middle fingers of a patient (Kaplanian unpub.ms (a):18). The witch is clearly associated with the back too. She lives in your shadow (gyape dimag, rgyab kyi drib ma) and she can be hurt there.

If the finger test is successful, then the witch will tell you who SHE is. Now, it is easy to expel her. You threaten to publicise her activities and SHE is silenced by shame. Indeed, the physical beating is not thought to be as effective a weapon as this humiliation.

The finger test is not always successful as in Chorol's case when the witch hid her face: "the bamg was very clever" and SHE refused to tell her name. Then, someone more powerful than a layman is required to force the witch to go. Specialists direct their attention both to the person (the witch victim) and the spirit (gongmg), as discussed below. Rinpoche collect witches and ban them in the same way that they ban gods while astrologers (villagers and monks) and oracles expel witches in storma or other effigies (linga) as well as swearing them to oath. Village oracles are the only experts to identify individual witches and delineate the exact circumstances of attack.

The vessel for a witch, that is, the victim, is strengthened in the same way as the vessel for a god, a novice oracle. Rinpoche give their patients protective devices and blessings; all specialists are likely to recommend religious practices of the kind advised for novices and for those suffering from anxiety or depression (see above). However, treatment for witchcraft carries its own unique connotations. In particular, treatment tries to alter

the balance of one woman's spiritual power against another's and whoever wins the highest parka wins the war.

As the finger test had not worked for Chorol, the family called an oracle:

"I (one of Chorol's brothers) finally persuaded him (Kirzi oracle) to come. ... He stayed all night. He came into trance and, first, HE sucked something out of grandfather's leg, saying that meme (grandfather) was ill because he drank too much. Then, HE sucked something from Chorol's stomach. HE put mustard seeds in the fire and blew the smoke over Chorol. HE blessed her (with a khapko blessing) and immediately grasped her two middle fingers.

"But, the bamo came and went very quickly. HE called her Yangchen and said that she was the girl from K. main house. Just as HE was about to beat the bamo with a stick, Chorol said, "No, don't, I'm not possessed". Yangchen's grandmother was also possessing Chorol, HE said, but she didn't appear at all (48). Because the gongmo went so quickly, the god couldn't ask the normal questions. HE stayed all night in case they should return but they didn't.

"The god said that an amulet would cure Chorol so we got one for her the next day and we also took her to Tak Tok rinpoche who gave her a khapko blessing." (49)

Although this report reveals little about possession itself, it shows very clearly how laymen and experts induce or attempt to induce possession in order to control it. This example, then, shows that possession belongs to the context of treatment just as much as it belongs to everyday life (50).

Kirzi oracle returned in December:

"Kirzi oracle had said that today (Tuesday) was good for gongmo possession. He made offerings and he washed, then he pushed back against the wall very violently. As he became possessed, HE put on his god clothes. First, HE sucked something from Chorol's stomach which, HE said, had been given in tea. Then, HE tied a knot in Chorol's hair so that the gongmo would be locked in when they arrived. Then, HE took her two middle fingers, burnt mustard seed incense, whistled and called "Come! Come!" (phabs, phabs (H)) to the witches. He beat Chorol with a stick but he was really striking the gongmo for Chorol herself was already possessed.

"SHE had stretched her back and her face had changed completely. You could only see the whites of her eyes. But, SHE said nothing at all.

"In this way, HE managed to collect five gongmo. Then, HE sent everyone out of the room except for Chorol and HE told the witches to come back with the people (51). They came back ten or fifteen minutes later.

"There were three gods. The first was the ordinary one who answers questions (tugstak, thugs rtags?). The second was Nezer Gyapo. The third was called Shangongka (52). HE said, "I'm from your family" (kyozhe gyud in). "I sent you to bring meat (53). Why haven't you brought it?" After some time, HE said, "Call me again in half an hour, I need to rest."

"The oracle came back into trance from about 3.00 to 4.00 that afternoon. The god said that the witches had only gone as far as Chorol's throat. HE told them to go to her heart so that they might speak. Then, they would be easier to finish. HE said that the witches had come to Chorol three days ago. HE also said that they only came when she was in Gongma, not in Leh. HE did not reveal their names but HE pointed out the directions, which suggested their origins. All were from the village. HE gave Chorol an amulet which was a welcome scarf with three knots containing barley. HE told her to keep the amulet with her. HE said that HE would take responsibility and she would suffer no possession for a year. Then, he turned to the other people, to treat them.

"In spite of the god's promise, Chorol did not get up the next morning and so she was taken to see the Tibetan rinpoche in Choglomsar."

It is clear that Chorol was out of control and "unconscious", that is, she remembered nothing that had happened. To Ladakhis, her behaviour is closely linked to the tiredness and depression she was suffering at that time and her behaviour in trance made the witches, who had been there all along, visible.

I saw another case in a very different setting, at a trance of Ayu oracle's. I knew little of the antecedents or developments to this single episode:

There were twenty people at the house on a Monday morning. The oracle was about to conclude her treatment with a khapko blessing when a girl from the neighbouring village knelt before her. Nothing was said but I saw at once that this was a case of gongmo zhugshes as the god took one of the girl's middle fingers in her right hand. SHE blessed the girl with a ritual dagger and SHE waved another bowl of incense containing mustard seeds over the girl. The god said, "Speak! speak! (shod, shod) Say why you have come! What is your name?"

The girl replied very softly, "Dolma." SHE paused and spoke again, "Angmo."

The god asked. "Why have you come back? Never come again!" There was another pause. Then the god said, "Swear on oath after me. Swear by religious protector Shaze traktung (chos skyong Sha-za khrag-'thung) that you will not return. Swear by this protector that you will not come back."

The girl nodded. SHE said nothing. So the god continued, "Then, swear by your son Rinchen." The girl spoke, "Angmo and Dolma, the ones who possess, swear by the son Rinchen not to return."

The god told the girl to take off her shoe. SHE took off her right pabu (ba bu) and licked the inside sole very happily three times. Then, her expression changed and she began to cry.

The entire episode lasted about five minutes.

The girl was not obviously out of control. She was quiet and cowed. Yet, she did lick the inside of her shoe, a horrifying sight to a Ladakhi and one that dramatically signals some altered state of consciousness. This state contrasts with the crying. As the girl began to cry, she became more aware of her surroundings. Chorol had also begun to cry as she regained consciousness. It seems that crying often signals the end of the witches and the reappearance of the person. As in Chorol's case, possession is induced during treatment. First, the witches are summoned. Then, they reveal their identities. The god can now force them to go. Ayu oracle first tries to make them swear an oath. SHE tries to bind them by a fierce protector, a flesh-eater and a blood-drinker. But, SHE is not convinced by a nod. So, SHE binds them by another oath, which names the son of one of the witches. It is worth reiterating that gongmo can be subdued once they are named for then they can be bound by oath and shamed. After the oracle has bound the witches, they are reduced completely by the shoe-licking episode. In this case, they are not publicly shamed nor physically beaten but forced to defile themselves. As they lick the girl's shoe, they

lower their own spiritual power dramatically and thus their ability to possess a victim. The girl told me afterwards that she had been to the oracle two or three weeks previously when three or four witches had been diagnosed.

Witch victims look rather like their healers during trance insofar as they behave unpredictably and uncontrollably, speak in different voices, through an altered face and with changed movements. Moreover, trance in the witch victim is often induced by the specialist and I suspect that trance occurs unequivocally during treatment more often than at other times, as suggested by Chorol's history. These links between oracles and witch victims are explored after looking at the relationship between aggressors and their victims.

iii) The setting for witchcraft.

The circumstances of the two victims described above are summarised in order to explore the aetiology of witchcraft attacks.

1. Chorol

Chorol eloped after her first attack and before her second. Her husband was despised by her elder sister, ani. Ani was extremely reluctant to lose her sister's labour at home. Almost none of the proper steps were taken, even for a "stolen" wedding (see Phylactou 1989) and all the relatives were upset.

Chorol's position is the first aspect that is explored in detail. Once the cause of illness is suspected, she is seen in a new light. She is very tired from doing all the work at home and, in all probability, she is vulnerable to witchcraft. Once her family knows about the marriage, the jealousy and slighted feelings of others are emphasised more than Chorol's weakness.

The witches attack when Chorol comes home. They are all ex-neighbours; they do not attack in Leh.

Only one of the five witches is taken into consideration as Chorol's environment is explored in detail. She is a best friend who is still single. She had been in the mountain

pastures when Chorol eloped. On her return, she asks, "where is Chorol, I want to see her". She had known nothing of the marriage. Two factors are singled out: she misses her friend and she is jealous because she has been left behind, still single.

2. The case treated by Ayu lhamo

Both witches were relatives; one was an affine, a woman from the husband's family, the other was related through the girl's mother. The girl herself was recently married and she had a small child. The affine was said to have attacked the girl because of jealousy: she had no children herself. I could not discover why the mother of Rinchen was implicated.

Even these few details suggest similarities with Chorol's case. The witches are closely connected to their victim: in this case, they are relatives rather than neighbours. The witches are jealous but, in this case, fertility is the issue rather than marriage.

The examples given above illustrate the three factors to a Ladakhi aetiology of witchcraft: low spiritual power, bad feelings and close connections between aggressor and victim. Issues of marriage, reproduction and affinity, which are important to anthropological analyses of witchcraft (54), are also mentioned insofar as destructive emotions among closely connected women are likely to flourish and cause problems in these contexts. As such, they describe the circumstances of an attack but not an explanation for it.

1. Low spiritual power

All women have low spiritual power relative to men. Thus, women cannot do the "finger test". It was a man who commented on one of Chorol's attacks:

"Ani was no use, she cried. Women cannot cope with zhugshes. You have to be a man because women are frightened of men. Men have higher spiritual power."

Ani herself simply said that she would not have been able to make the witch talk, in contrast to her neighbour, an ex-nun, who was dealing with a similar illness in her mother:

"the girl is very strong, she is an ex-chomo".

However, there is an important additional asymmetry between victim and aggressor during witchcraft attacks:

In August, when witches had been blamed but before the oracle's first visit, I asked who was troubling Chorol. No-one would tell me. Eventually, I persuaded the younger brother to gesture towards the village. So, I asked if it was the Mon woman. He was amused and explained patiently that it couldn't possibly be her because she had low spiritual power (parka mamö). Only someone stronger than Chorol could succeed. ...

The victim is seen to be weak and, like the novice oracle, culpable. The witch is certainly culpable too but she must be stronger than her victim in order to penetrate her person and take her over.

2. Bad feelings

The aetiology of Ladakhi witchcraft suggests that the act of aggression is effected through bad feelings or bad thoughts. This explanation carries an important ambiguity. On the one hand, it refers only to negative feelings, for example:

"My friend was possessed recently. The bamö explained: "you're always working, making hats, knitting gloves and socks, doing coolie work and you just bought all my gold jewellery. I won't go. Maybe, I'll throw you in the river.""

The witch is simply jealous.

Towards the end of her illness, Chorol's brother explained: "It's jealousy because Chorol is always staying here." I replied, "Surely, they would be just as jealous of Tsering (her husband)." I was told, "It's the boys who are jealous of him. Usually, men feel jealous when they see you, when you meet in the road or somewhere. But, they forget about it afterwards. Girls think and think, even at night. That's what causes zhugshes. Should a boy behave like this; if it's a gonggo, then it's much more serious. Maybe, they didn't attack Tsering because he's got higher spiritual power. You know, if you've a bad mind (sems tsoggo), you're much more likely to be attacked. If you've a bad mind, you're much more likely to hurt someone else."

Women are less powerful than men but they dwell on their jealousy.

On the other hand, so-called bad feelings refer to any (particularistic) feelings of friendship at all. Buddhist doctrine devalues this-worldly attachments and it has been shown that all sorts of spirits and demons are produced through attachments to the world. Women are seen to have closer friendships than men and they produce gongmo through their attachments to families and friends:

Dol began to generalise about young women and gongmo. She said that young women were involved most of all because they were always thinking of each other. When I asked why this should cause problems, she said, cryptically, because they lead such difficult lives. So, I asked instead why they should always be thinking of each other and I was told, "because they spend so much time together."

Young women, then, simply feel for and think about each other more than men.

3. Close connections between aggressor and victim

Witches and their victims are close to each other; they both have bad minds, they think about each other a lot. Ladakhi aetiology actually assumes a pre-existing link, almost a channel, along which feelings can travel once they have been aroused (55). This channel is created through "spending time together". In fact, Ladakhis are associating women with a particular kind of informal contact rather than simply more contact, as noted below. Diagnosis and treatment depend partly on tracing these connections. Note for example, the following report:

Martselang oracle performed a cure for one of Ayu lhamo's grand-daughters. The girl was possessed and the oracle performed a burning rite (shrakches, sreg-). HE managed to collect three of the five bamo into pictures and, according to one of Ayu oracle's daughters:

"When the oracle wanted to put the pictures into the fire, they rolled away and one ended up in another room. At last, the papers were burnt and they smelt like burning flesh. When the papers caught fire, they turned red, the colour of a lung, and they took a long time to burn. On

one of those pictures, the lhaba had painted black marks just below the eyes. The next morning, I went to look at that woman and her face had gone black in those very places." (see also fn 49)

At the time of the cure, the neighbour seems to be in a different place and she seems to be behaving independently of the patient. Yet, the cure proves, to the contrary, that witch and victim remain linked through the gongmo's jealousy. It may seem that women meet to chat, work or eat and then separate to do other things but appearances are misleading as cases of witchcraft show.

For Ladakhis, the sociology of witchcraft describes merely the occasion for an attack and not the reason. I do not have enough data to describe the incidence of attacks in relation to marriage, affinity and reproduction but, as I have described so few cases, a further example might be useful in confirming the importance of these contexts. The account is given by a man and concerns his household:

"Perhaps the worst case was about ten years ago when nong's (a young boy in the house) mother lived here. She was possessed for a few months. I only remember the worst bits. One day, SHE was shouting and crying all day long. Everyone was at home and we caught her but SHE refused to say anything. We said we'd tell all so the witch begged us not to and revealed her name. SHE was a neighbour without children who was jealous and threatened to harm nong. The witch said SHE might go but SHE might not. In fact, SHE didn't leave and when we tried to throw her out of the front gate, SHE fought with Chorol. Another day, we put her alone in a room. SHE was ready to jump from the window. We all stood by the windows and doors making jokes. We asked, "Why are you behaving like this? How dare you try to jump from the window here?" We beat Dol's (the witchcraft victim) shadow. Eventually, we called a neighbour to help. The gongmo began to fight with him. I lost patience, caught them and threw both to the ground. The neighbour's watch broke. Finally, the witch was ready to go back to her own house. We took Dol up the hill behind our house. At the top, she fell to the ground, senseless. When she came round, she was better and we took her back home. Perhaps, there were two gongmo, the one who laughed and the one who had no children.

"About four or five years ago, ani and Chorol were possessed all the time. There were so many gongmo in the village then. ... All the bamo in our house were from the village. (He describes the rite of burning performed by an old sect monk.)

"More recently, in the last two years, Chorol has been possessed and also Norzin, our neighbour who lived with us last winter. Chorol was possessed by our neighbour from D. house because of jealousy. I can't remember what we did. It happens so often that it's not very interesting. ... Norzin was possessed when she was staying with us. It was another neighbour. Norzin saw the gongmo woman outside our house one day and she fell down. That evening, after she had made dinner, her eyes went red and stood out of her face. SHE looked very badly at us. So, we put her to bed in the kitchen. In bed, SHE laughed hysterically. We caught her but SHE hid her face and wouldn't let us see it. Later that night, we grabbed her third (that is, middle) finger and asked who SHE was. SHE replied with the name of the neighbour and said SHE was jealous because Norzin worked at our house every day. SHE didn't talk properly or for long. Norzin began to cry. The next day, the gongmo came back in the same way; laughing and saying nothing. We beat Norzin's shadow and Norzin (the person) beat it too. The witch did not stay for long but Norzin's eyes were red and strange all day. We burnt mustard seed incense. After two or three days, someone took her to Stakna rinpoche. She was given an amulet and the witch did not come back."

Norzin's attack was attributed to the witch's jealousy of her work. This sort of jealousy is probably as common as that related specifically to marriage and reproduction. It might be emphasised also that the reports do not suggest that jealousy is a heinous crime; it may describe one of the sins in the Wheel but it is also part of village life, part of being a woman and rarely the cause of fatal problems.

The first case was the most violent and it occurred as a wife married into the house. This is always a difficult time, especially when the family includes a number of unmarried brothers and sisters. Jealousy was attributed once more to reproductive success and, in this context, it is important to realise that a woman's spiritual power is weakened with the pollution of sex and childbirth. Ladakhis often talk of witchcraft when they talk of marriage. They

talk both of the rites which dispel jealousy when a wife enters her new house and of the attacks that occurred during a particular marriage. Usually, the wife is the one who is said to suffer, but sometimes it is one of the women in the house that she has joined.

Comments made by Ladakhis actually apply more to some women than others. As suggested previously, witchcraft is associated with young women of approximately equal status who might feel jealous of or close to each other, who are marrying and having their first children. Women of higher status ("aristocrats", shema, rje ma) are less susceptible.

c) Discussion: gender and rank

Witchcraft beliefs and practices are important to analyses of more formalised ideologies about the place of women in Buddhism and the household. It is suggested that they constitute a life crisis for women and a hazy, uncertain rite of passage into motherhood and full household membership as well as a more respected religious position (56). A tendency in Tibetan studies to bifurcate society into monastery and village has already been described. Witchcraft is generally located in the village and explained in terms of village beliefs. It is suggested, however, that witchcraft also provides one of the contexts in which doctrine makes concrete sense to those unschooled in philosophical doctrine. Subsequently, witchcraft will be related to other forms of possession, some of which are staged in the monastery.

Relatively speaking, the symbolism of witch and witch victim remains unsystematised and invisible. However, I

suggest that it provides an important context in which discriminations are made between men and women and between younger and older women (57). Witchcraft should not therefore be seen as a separate field but an integral part of more visible domestic and religious ideologies.

i) Religion

Although ethnographies of Buddhist groups generally claim a relatively high status for women, it is equally clear that women are ranked lower than men in religious matters. Women are not admitted to monasteries and they do not make good ascetics on the whole. Celibate nuns are ranked below their male counterparts and women are universally seen to be lower down the karmic scale than men. In Chapter 3, the karmic idiom was outlined in relation to chogs and the monastery. Villagers consider themselves to have at best a partial knowledge of that world. However, karma is clearly as much a village notion as a monastic one; it does not live just in texts and monastic practices but also and equally in the village. When villagers make bald and unelaborated doctrinal statements of the kind, "men have achieved a happier rebirth than women" or "men have better karma than women", these comments must surely be understood at least partly in terms of village beliefs and practices. Witchcraft gives these comments a concrete reference: women suffer from witches and men do not (on the whole).

Yet, the ethnography in Chapter 3 and many other accounts of Buddhist groups show that older women have a relatively privileged position as compared to younger women. They make good religious donors, better lay ascetics and they are seen to have worked off the worst effects of their karmic

inheritance. Doctrinal images of the life cycle were described and it may be recalled that sin is associated with those most engaged in the world. These images are equally brought to life in village practices; it is younger women who are involved, not their grandmothers. Both the overall status of women and the relatively lower status of young women in religious terms are, I suggest, negotiated during witchcraft attacks.

Indeed, discussions of the aetiology of witchcraft soon led to treatises on religion or, at least, comments couched in the language of religion. Jealousy, anger and greed, feelings attributed to the witch, are immediately described in terms of the cardinal vices at the centre of the Wheel of Life. Low spiritual power is often re-presented as bad karma (lanchaks). Moreover, the differences between witch and victim are only relative; both suffer bad karma and, in all likelihood, victim will turn aggressor in a future attack. Many Ladakhis deny any reality to gongmo at all, witchcraft is entirely a question of karma. One woman, a headmistress, told me that women simply imagine gongmo; they delude themselves about the nature of their illness. A monk told me:

"Gongmo, bamo and timo are the same kinds of things which are produced from the minds (sems) of people, mostly women. If you're possessed by a gongmo, you mustn't blame that person for the fault is your own. It is some sin, maybe from your previous life, and you must make an excuse. You might read a "confession of sin" (ltung bshags pa) containing the thirty-five names of Sangyas, for example. You will only be possessed by such things if you're susceptible anyway."

According to the headmistress, demons do not exist; according to the monk, demonic manifestations are produced from sin. Ladakhi comments about witchcraft tend to move from the

trimmings or particularities of a witchcraft case toward the doctrinal image of bad karma described. Indeed, most talk of emotions and individual differences in fortune and health are quickly appropriated by the same language.

Finally, it has been shown that witchcraft attacks are associated with too much unregulated contact among (younger) women. This imagery is also negotiated within a wider context which refers to the ideal of renunciation in Buddhist doctrine as much as the picture of exchange associated with village life. The ascetic withdraws from the daily give and take and he thereby stands aside from the feelings that are also exchanged. He is immune to the problems caused by jealousy, anger and greed. Women, on the other hand, are associated with particularly problematic types of exchange, sharing and contact, as discussed further below. Their susceptibility to gongmo may also be contrasted to the relative immunity of laymen, who are associated with more highly regulated and formal contacts in the village.

It is not possible to divorce witchcraft from religious ideology and it seems that the influence of doctrine on witchcraft is not a one-way process. Witchcraft attacks show what bad karma looks like in the world: bad karma means that you are accused of having bad feelings and that you suffer illness. It may not be stretching the point too far to suggest further that, in a classification based on age and gender, being a young woman means that you have bad karma.

ii) The household

The previous ethnographic section shows that talk of witchcraft contains ideas about what younger women do as well as what they are. They work hard, they are just married or

about to marry. They are barren or just borne of a son. They associate with their peers independently of household affiliations. The lives that young women lead are evaluated negatively with respect to the household imagery described in Chapters 1 and 2 and, to explore this, I shall refer back to the descriptions of work and hospitality.

In Chapter 1, a partnership was also noted between male household heads and their monk relatives who together reproduce the household spiritually, in rituals, without the direct intervention of women and domestic life (58). In Chapter 2, women were associated with a picture of informal labour, governed by ties of co-operation and friendship that exist somewhat independently of household boundaries. The imagery of labour was closely related to the provision of hospitality. At feasts, women hosts and guests play a much less visible role than men. Hospitality provides a key focus for the elaboration of fears and accusations about poison, pollution and witchcraft. The fine food, drink, clothes and ornaments all provide objects that arouse jealousy or greed. Food and drink also become a medium through which bad feelings, pollution and poison travel. In my brief discussion of hospitality, I suggested that the success (or failure) of an entertainment was attributed to men, partly through the material properties of alcohol. I also suggested that men were thereby seen to set up cordial (or unhappy) relations between households. I did not, however, discuss the reciprocal evaluation of women. One important sphere concerns the topic of this chapter. The perceived non-participation of women is not seen as I described it. Women are highly constrained by rules of etiquette; "they do not

join in" and (therefore) they are thought to be busy creating their own informal contacts which cut across the formal relations between households set up by men. It is feared that they are informally, indeed, surreptitiously casting the evil eye, thinking jealous thoughts and generally subverting the formal dimension. The behaviour of men at feasts belongs to the public domain and to a formally defined set of relations among households. Women are not only seen to abstain from this arena but, at times, to subvert it as they set up their own private links which are evaluated negatively in terms of witchcraft and pollution accusations. The behaviour of women at feasts and the understanding of what is seen to be the almost excessive zangs shown by women can be understood more fully in the context of witchcraft and pollution fears.

Most of the ethnography on feasting applied to women in general. However, older women are not bound by the constraints on behaviour nor the related witchcraft accusations to the same extent as younger women. Ideas about karma and household position are mutually reinforcing in that younger women, with low spiritual power and jealous feelings, are simultaneously the ones who accord least well with the ideal of the household as cosmos, sufficient to itself. Younger women often move between households. A description of marriage would take this chapter too far afield but ideas about witchcraft can be related to the movements made at marriage. As noted above, witchcraft is related closely to the wedding period, to the period of accommodation with affines (less frequently, kin), and to the production of

children. These times of particular danger might be contrasted with later periods of relative safety by looking once more at the gifts of stove food, thabzan, described in Chapter 2.

Thabzan relationships are initiated by marriage and exchanged at the end of New Year. In Chapter 2, it was suggested that women could be seen to renew a household that had already been strengthened internally by opening up relations with the outside world, along paths of affinity established previously through marriage. This discussion showed that women's work between households is sometimes seen to bring vitality rather than disorder. At the same time, a difference was noted between exchanges that occurred shortly after marriage and long-established links.

It may be recalled that gifts are initially exchanged between a number of houses, at least in the Leh area. A newly married woman chooses where to go according to personal preference as much as kin and household relations. However, women who are more firmly established in one place make their visits according to specific household and kin links. In the Leh area, it may be recalled that, eventually, a woman visits just her natal home and her mother's natal home (after her mother has died). During this later period, a woman settles in one house, whether or not she has married. A final stage to thabzan exchanges was discerned in the giving rather than receiving of gifts. It is the senior woman in a household who gives and, in the ideal picture, the core gift is to her (real) daughter. When a woman begins to give thabzan, she is seen to belong to just one household where she occupies a senior position.

While young women are associated with peer groups and personal friends, older women are not. Whether or not they marry, their household allegiance becomes clear with time and the links that they commemorate with their mothers and, later, daughters are seen simultaneously as links of relatedness between the households involved. By this time, the process of marriage and/or household allegiance has finally been negotiated. The promise of fecundity and household continuity that is celebrated at weddings has finally been delivered, perhaps twenty years later.

A matrilateral bias has been noted to these gifts. Although Ladakhis see thabzan as mother-daughter links, what they particularly emphasise are the links created through movement. Houses remain, symbolically, the fixed points and thabzan keep open the paths between them that are created through marriage. Eventually, the paths opened by marriage are recognised for what they really achieved; the renewal of the house and a promise of continued viability. Initially, however, they are often seen as potential threats to the household.

These comments on aspects of the marriage process hopefully contribute to an understanding of women's illness. Ideas about gongmo epitomise the negative connotations of a life which is in some ways detached from the household and lived in-between. The contribution made by young women in sustaining and recreating the household will only be celebrated after the fact: older mothers are seen as life bringers while younger women seem to threaten the vitality which is precariously contained inside households.

References have been made to a number of factors in this attempt to relate witchcraft in Ladakh to a wider social and cultural context. A composite picture has been outlined with reference to gender, age, household and religious organisation. In conclusion, the importance of these various concerns might be emphasised. Levine explains different forms of Nyinba witchcraft in terms of the isolation and division of women in patrilocal and usually patrilineal households (Levine 1982). My brief references to marriage confirm the importance of this domain but it would be misleading to suggest that witchcraft can be explained purely in these terms. To give just one example, as Levine herself notes, men are also involved whilst nuns are rarely affected. If witchcraft is not confined to women and if it does not affect all women, it clearly cannot be explained adequately in terms of the position of women in the household alone (59). As Kapferer has shown, witchcraft can be seen as a general (male and female) household concern even when possession victims are women (Kapferer 1983). My discussion shows that witchcraft is associated with general (male and female) household ideals and practices even though women are usually the ones to be directly implicated. Kapferer shows how dramatic cures involve the entire household; this is also true of Ladakh. Moreover, the "non-ritual" arena is also influenced by witchcraft in Ladakh: a younger brother in one house commonly afflicted by gongmo married neolocally and he said that this was partly because he did not want his wife to fall ill.

Kapferer considers the wider cultural as well as social arena. For example, he puts forward an explanation of the vulnerability of women in terms of the symbolisation of disorder and he analyses the cure of victims in terms of the imposition of a religious order upon a female, demonic disorder (60). I begin to explore an analogous imposition of order on gongmo victims in the next section.

Kapferer's approach provides a useful corrective to reductionist explanations such as Levine's. Other approaches which single out one particular explanation include the view of female spirit possession as a psychological resolution to social/psychological traumas (Obeyesekere 1981) or a form of rebellion (Lewis 1966, see Introduction). Ladakhi witchcraft cannot be seen simply as a social or psychological rebellion by individuals even though particular cases may include these motivations. As suggested, witchcraft can be related to (other) life crises such as marriage. Stirrat has analysed demonic possession in Catholic Sri Lanka in exactly such terms where he identifies possession as a cultural and social rite of passage which separates women from the "bad sacred" and reintegrates them into the "good sacred" as wives and mothers, in Christ (Stirrat 1977). As noted previously, he too disputes a reductionist approach to spirit possession when he suggests that the system of collective representations defines incidence and cannot be seen simply as the product of social or psychological illnesses.

Kapferer, Stirrat and others have argued convincingly that demonic possession should be integrated with wider social and cultural concerns. I have attempted to look at the part witchcraft plays in creating married women out of

unmarried girls and in creating a particular vision of the demonic in the religious field. Witchcraft constitutes the wider arena as well as reflecting it. My focus is on possession rather than gender and the remainder of this chapter explores the links between demonic possession (witchcraft) and oracular possession in the village.

5.3 Oracles and witchcraft

A dictionary definition illustrates the confusion between different forms of possession:

"POSSESSED - hla zhugskhan or hlaba (of a good or evil spirit). The first word is used to signify a man only while actually under the influence of the spirit. Hlaba is applied to a person who is at times so possessed. ... Gongpo (or feminine gongmo) is the term applied to the "spirit" with which a person is "possessed"." (Ramsay 1890)

What better summary of the general links made between oracles and witch victims. Treatment of gongmo affliction by oracles is discussed first. Then, links between witch victims, novice oracles and established oracles are elaborated.

a) Treatment as a form of domination

Treatments offered for gongmo affliction vary but all are based upon a categorical distinction between the affected person and the gongmo (which is rarely apparent to the onlooker). Rinpoche and most monks work from a distance by helping a victim protect herself, often with amulets, minor rituals and religious practices which will raise her spiritual power. Thus, efforts are made to raise the spiritual power of the conscious victim high enough to conquer those who had initially conquered her. Village oracles, by contrast, and occasionally astrologers or old-sect monks induce possession during treatment. When the victim is unconscious, oracles (and some other specialists)

will shame, beat or, in extreme cases, burn the gongmo out of their host's body. Should host and witch remain intermingled, intervention is very difficult because the processes applied to host and witch are the opposite of each other. It is the radical cures offered by oracles that are discussed.

Oracles are generally called to deal with severe or persistent affliction. They make the witches visible and audible, thereby precipitating extreme symptoms in the patient. When treatment induces possession, all interventions are seen to affect the witches and not their host. When Chorol hid her face from her brother and covered her shadow, she was not seen to challenge his right to subject her to possession; it was the gongmo who were hiding. Similarly, Kirzi oracle's first trance failed because of Yangchen, the gongmo who was "so clever". Later, in December, one of the gods located the witches in Chorol's throat and it seemed to me that HE was explaining his failure to make the gongmo speak and thus amenable to treatment (61). Possession can only be induced through the subject's more or less voluntary participation. She has to agree to the diagnosis, place herself in the hands of a healer and, finally, give herself over to the witches. This last sacrifice replays or invents the perceived origins of the illness when a person was first taken over by low-ranking demons. Chorol does not seem to have agreed to this process of subjection for the first few months and it is only with Kirzi oracle's second trance in December that she participates fully. At the first trance, she had a substance sucked from her stomach and she

had her fingers grasped. Yet, she did not allow herself to be beaten. During the second trance, however, she allows herself to be subjected to more radical interventions; she is metaphorically tied up by a knot in the hair, she allows herself to be rendered senseless, she lets the god fill her with foreign spirits who are then beaten in her (Chorol's) body.

Chorol's treatment is described as if it involved only gongmo. Similarly, the case treated by Ayu oracle is seen only to humiliate the witches. When the woman is forced to lick a shoe, it is the gongmo who are weakened so that they can be forced to swear an oath and leave the patient. Yet, it is apparent that victims, at the very least, give themselves over to a greater authority. Only then are they able to act out their initial and unwitting subjection to lesser beings, to witches. They agree to re-enact their initial downfall in the promise of a cure. Moreover, it is equally apparent that the victim also agrees to the conquest of a part of herself, even according to Ladakhi aetiology. Ladakhi explanations of witchcraft attacks point to close connections between aggressor and victim which imply further that a victim on one occasion will become an assailant on another.

During treatment, the victim agrees to sever close connections with other women which have led to even closer and obviously harmful co-mingling. Aspects of women have become confounded within a single vessel instead of living separately in their respective bodies and houses. A cure depends upon the expulsion of witches and, in "real life", friendships are also likely to be affected for a short while. Even if patients are unconscious for much of their treatment,

their voluntary subjection to gods at the beginning, their tears at the end and their willingness to temporarily break important personal relationships afterwards indicates that witchcraft victims are conscious of and agree to a process of subjection directed at aspects of their own selves.

Accordingly, illness in young women may be seen as part of a wider process of domination, composed of episodes of radical treatment, during which individuals agree to be transformed into "older women", wives and mothers, living in just one house and following the appropriate path of religion. Conventional stereotypes associate all young women with the process described even though, in practice, only some are affected. Younger women are initially weak and vulnerable. They are taken over by aspects of their stronger peers. And, to transcend this unenviable position, they must agree to another conquest. They subject themselves to a cure, whereby the bad is thrown away with the gongmo and the good retained and strengthened.

The ideological link between younger women and witchcraft is a political construct as well as a "collective representation". On occasion, possession may be seen as an act of rebellion or insubordination on the part of the disadvantaged (see Introduction, Lewis 1966) but it must be recognised equally as an act of authority on the part of a diagnostician and healer. In cases of witchcraft, laymen and experts make diagnoses stick and, even though witchcraft is so common that it is not seen as a particularly serious problem, these diagnoses and cures do affect the position of witchcraft victims, at least in the short term.

Stirrat further interprets demonic possession and physical illness in Sri Lanka in relation to life cycle rituals (ibid). Although witchcraft attacks in Ladakh have also been described as rites of passage, it should be emphasised that they are associated with a period of many years and the distinctions between who is and who is not implicated are fuzzy. As suggested, the propensity to become either an assailant or a victim is not clearly transcended until later middle age. If this is to be described as a life crisis or a rite of passage, it must be recognised as a rather hazy and extremely long process. Moreover, there is more than one form of village possession. This analysis has suggested that younger women are transformed through affliction. The "bad" (demonic) sacred is removed and the "good" confirmed. Young women are turned into members of just one household, often through marriage and motherhood, and they are associated with a superior village religiosity. Novice oracles are, however, turned into ritual specialists as well. The following section explores the similarities between novice oracles and witch victims which will, over time, be sorted into very different types of life crisis or rites of passage.

b) Novice oracles and witchcraft

As future oracles fall ill, their symptoms are vaguely classed with problems of the kind described in this chapter. It might be pollution or poison from food and drink, the anger of local gods, the jealousy of people and so forth. When they go mad, as most do, the range of explanations is narrowed to rabid dogs (khyi nyonba), a possibility that is normally confirmed or rejected rapidly by looking at past

history, vengeful king gods (gyapo), zhugskhan, agents causing possession and, rarely, a kind of natural senility. My description of zhugskhan has concentrated upon those mentioned most often in and around Gongma, that is, lha and gongmo (also called bamo).

The early and general confusion about the agent responsible for possession is illustrated in the following case:

Thikse oracle told us that he was going to treat a case of zhugshes (possession) and direct the making of a sago namgo (a protective device hung outside the house, see Chapter 2) at a house in Z. We met him at a neighbour's where he began to explain that living demons (sondre) were much worse than ghosts. The god, he said, has to get rid of living demons by burning. Their names are written on pieces of paper and burnt with the appropriate materials. Ghosts, he said, can usually be finished with a storma: "I'm usually called to Ch, some 2-3 days away, to burn timo but, closer to home; here, Spituk, Thikse, I'm called for all sorts of reasons. ..."

We moved next door, wondering what sort of demon we would see. Thikse oracle made offerings and put on his god-clothes. HE held a bell and a spoon in his left hand, a small drum (damaru) in his right. HE began to speak in a high-pitched voice, calling angrily for juniper incense. Then HE asked,

"Chi inda?", "What's the matter?"

While HE spoke, my friend pointed across the room and whispered, "that's the zhugskhan." A man sitting by the window was shaking and trembling but saying nothing. My friend whispered that it was unusual for men to be possessed.

Shortly afterwards, the god addressed this man and both of us were surprised at what he said:

"I have tried to collect the lha. He couldn't come because of the pollution (tip) of smoke and beer. I'll try again. I have a plan to collect the god once you (the man in the corner) have stopped smoking and drinking. ..."

This was no case of gongmo/po zhugshes; it was a would-be oracle. Later, we learned that the man was a distant relative of the oracle who came from an oracle lineage. Our confusion may have been encouraged by the oracle, who knew the case, but it may also have been common to everyone watching for no-one could know exactly what was happening until the god

spoke. All people who behave in similar ways; who shake, tremble and lose consciousness; are simply possessed (zhugste). The differences between one form of possession and another are not initially obvious.

All victims of possession have invited an attack through low spiritual power and close involvements with a village world. As noted in the last chapter, it is against this background that a novice oracle must struggle to establish herself or himself as a vessel for a god, trained by a teacher and guided by the monastery. At the same time, would-be oracles are also distinguished by gender. Most of my data about novices are necessarily derived from established oracles. Many of them do not remember their initiatory madness and so it is difficult to reconstruct the way in which their problems were singled out of the mass of village afflictions and given such an unusual shape. Even so, it is possible to detect a gender asymmetry to the initial diagnoses. I collected detailed life histories from nine Ladakhi men and nine Ladakhi women. None of the men mentioned jealousy and gongmo in contrast to six of the women. Just one man, Korpon oracle, who had only been practising for two years, hinted at the complexities of diagnosis:

Korpon oracle fell ill about five years ago while still in the army. He was discharged because he was mad. He says that gods were diagnosed early on by lama and rinpoche but not with any certainty. He explained that he was very short-tempered, he beat his wife who left him. He once sat on his baby daughter when she was asleep and nearly killed her. He slept by a shrine (lhatho) at night. He fell unconscious. He was so angry that he didn't believe what the rinpoche told him and refused initiation. He had lots of pain in his body and he still can't walk properly. He has to have an injection from the army doctor, even now. Today, he knows it is gods and he has accepted initiation.

But, before, he did not know what was wrong. Some people thought him possessed, some thought him mad, some thought he had angered the local gyapo.

Accounts from the women are different. Skarra chomo suggests that it was only onlookers who suspected witches:

"Everyone thought it was a gongmo or a gongpo. One person threw a carpet on me. I thought I would die."

Tuckchikpa oracle was unsure herself what was the matter:

"... everyone thought I was mad and some people said I was suffering from gongmo. There is a lot of "damage" (nodpa) and, these days, there is more poison (tuk) and possession (zhugshes) than before. We are richer now and people suffer more from jealousy because they have fine clothes and ornaments. There was a festival at Shey when I was ill. I went to make a circumambulation. Afterwards, I became unsettled (mirdeches) and they told me it must be jealousy because I wore ornaments that day."

In another account, Choglomsar oracle re-interpreted an illness at school in the light of later developments. At school, she blamed gongmo. Later, she married and took over her husband's god and she has now assimilated the earlier experience to a god-inspired madness (62):

Choglomsar oracle reports two stages to her illness. Recently, she married. A god came to her soldier husband who, she says, was too dirty for the god. The god said it would come to her instead and she is now more or less established as an oracle. Dolma says that people still say she is afflicted by timo, they say it isn't a god but a timo speaking in trance.

Dolma also mentions earlier episodes when she was at school in the eighth class. She was with three friends when she suddenly went mad and ran to the roof. The others thought it was a gongmo and put carpets on her and shoes in her mouth, to lower the power of gongmo and make it easier to get rid of them. Now, she thinks it must have been one of the gods. She got better after a ritual at that time and wasn't affected again until she married.

Her teacher has taught her religion in meditation to keep away the bamo and tsan that she hears outside the hut.

Women are much more likely to be seen as witch victims than men in the early stages of affliction. With yet further exploratory efforts, men and women are linked once more as victims of gods or, at this stage, potential gods (63).

Similarities established between those afflicted in the village are related further to the nature of local spirits. The earlier parts of this chapter have shown that there is no obvious difference between gods and demons in the village. Discriminations are made through their relations with people. Thus, gods are spirits who have been given homes such as shrines (lhatho) and the bodies of trained oracles. The differences between gongmo and gods, witch victims and oracles are sorted out gradually through their mutual relationships. However, ideally categorical distinctions between spirits are also asserted by Ladakhis.

"A bamo is the opposite of a lha" (young woman)
but only in carefully controlled circumstances which are not necessarily true of today.

"There are many more gods today than before. This is not a good thing because every lha that comes brings a timo with it. It is very necessary to have a proper initiation (lhaphok) with a good lama and a good guru because, sometimes, a timo pretends to be a lha. I remember one such case in Che. The timo came along to the lhaphok but could only say a few words for it did not know the truth."
(old woman)

Much of this thesis concerns the ways in which differences are made out of gods and demons. Ladakhis claim that it is perfectly clear that a god is a god and a demon a demon in ideal circumstances but, demons lie. In the village, we never know which is which and nowadays (when lies and pretence are anyway rife), it is impossible to tell them apart. The old woman claims that the confusion between gods and demons is a function of the times (64). Others make a different claim: when gods are incarnated, they are polluted so much that they behave like demons. It is impossible to put a god in a human vessel and expect it to remain god-like:

"We don't have luya (vessels for the gods) in our village. We believe in lha but we think that luya are like gongmo, they are bad." (man from Sham) (65)

Whatever the ideal contrast between god and demon, Ladakhi agree that, in practice, they may look rather similar. Individuals are accordingly classed together in terms of the nature of those who afflict them as well as symptoms of possession.

c) Established oracles and witchcraft

Similarities in the behaviour of healers and their patients have been noted. These have been related to the past history of an oracle. The oracle was once a patient. Trance was induced, the demons conquered and the gods domesticated. Would-be oracles may, indeed, have been subjected to witchcraft cures in their early days.

The past experiences of oracles are central to the treatment they offer in general but most especially in the treatment of nodpa, including possession. Oracles claim special powers to heal on the basis of their own experience of a similar suffering in the past which they have transformed to a greater extent than other victims of possession. They were not re-integrated into the status of ordinary villager but into the new and special status of village oracle. They claim a kinship with other victims of possession but they also claim a superior power. This is illustrated clearly by Kirzi oracle when he is treating Chorol. Just before his rest, the lhaba is possessed by a god called Shangongka (or Shang-kong-ka, Brauen 1980a:152). HE says:

"I'm from your family (or "I'm of your kind"): I sent you to bring meat. Why haven't you brought it?"

The god claims to hold authority over all gongmo as their head. These demons are his immediate subordinates. Unlike other healers, who distance themselves from the world of village spirits, the gods that possess oracles during this type of trance describe themselves as senior kin. Ayu oracle was also possessed of a fierce demonic god when she dealt with gongmo. Most oracles are possessed by at least one such god who can do fierce (traggo, drag po) work and it is these gods who are valued most by village clients. An oracle from Phyang who is now dead

"came from (Lower Ladakh). He brought with him a god which was a thebrang, a dre-like, lhande-like god. (This god) was very good and fierce." (villager)

The fierce gods that visit oracles establish close relations with their clientele. They do not, however, cause illness: the oracle shows that he is no longer a patient but one with power, gods, abilities to reveal hidden knowledge and cure afflictions. His personal experiences and his fierce gods give him a special ability to call forth and overcome similar illnesses in other villagers (66).

The Ladakhi truism - village oracles can do nothing as well as monastic specialists - makes it difficult to understand why oracles are consulted at all. The material in this chapter provides one answer. An oracle's gods are village gods and their vessel is a villager. It is not simply that they demonstrably understand and know the village world; more important, they have jointly (that is, god and vessel) conquered the worst aspects of village life in the past and moved towards their specialist work, suitably informed by religion. Therefore, oracles are uniquely equipped to induce a similar movement in their clients.

The close links that are established extend beyond the patient and her assailants to the shape of the village in general. Kirzi oracle does not talk simply of the jealousy of friends. HE explains exactly who the witches are, why they appear in Gongma and not in Leh, where they are situated in the patient's body and why they are jealous. Such details enable onlookers and, probably, Chorol herself to construct a palpable picture of relations between family, friends and village. This dimension of trance practice can be illustrated further through an extended example of the style of treatment offered by oracles as contrasted to rinpoche.

Stakna rinpoche

During a visit to Stakna rinpoche, I watched him offer advice to three clients. The first was a woman who asked about her pregnant daughter. The rinpoche mumbled inaudibly over his book and said that she did not need to go to a hospital. The woman had brought butter for a blessing, which the rinpoche duly provided; this "mantra butter" would ensure an easy delivery.

The second client was a man who implied that his family were quarrelling. The rinpoche did not ask for details nor did he divine the future. He gave the man amulets (shrunga) for the entire family, as requested, and an extra one for his ill father. These also had mantra murmured over them. The man had brought a bottle of water which the rinpoche blessed (ngags chu). He said there was no need to do any ritual (skurim) but he told the man to return if his problems persisted.

The third client, a woman, wanted advice about her son. He was mad (nyonba), she said. She didn't know if he was unsettled (mirdeches) or possessed (zhugshes) but he rolled about the floor, quarrelled with his sister and behaved in a generally hysterical way. The rinpoche sat for a moment with his eyes closed. Then he said that the man was possessed and he should make his mind higher (semba chenmo choches). He must take the blessing (chinlab) that the rinpoche gave the woman. He must wear two amulets that he also gave her: one was for damage in general (nodpa) and the other was a tishrung, an amulet against timo.

The rinpoche is wholly composed, he sits still, often in a meditation pose, counting his prayer beads, handling dice or fingering a text. His authority is complemented by the words laid down in sacred books. He remains detached from the problems of his clients and gives rather vague diagnoses and all-purpose cures as compared to oracles. The examples that have been given show a marked contrast between oracles in and out of trance. Their gods are unhampered by normal logic, elliptical, difficult to understand, often violent and angry. The oracle changes physically into a jumbled sequence of seemingly disordered forms; the frenzied interrupted suddenly by a beatific countenance; the speechless all at once punctuated by a high-pitched recitation. A more extensive extract from an oracle's trance will show that this contrast is a general one, which applies to a range of problems that will be discussed further in Chapter 7. A trance in a private house by Skarra oracle is quoted because her speech is more discursive and easier to understand than other oracles (67).

Skarra chomo

"... you will see all this as you are about to die. Everyone can see and your soul leaves your body and you are in shima. One soul (soms) goes downwards and one upwards. But there are not two souls - it is our own power (rangi shuks) that makes the soul act in different ways. If we follow the advice of guru, follow the ten merits and stop the ten demerits, follow the advice of our lama, then our soul will leave straight from the top because of our spiritual strength. If we behave badly and go against the advice of lama or lha, then the soul may go straight downwards. Just after dying, when the lama takes the soul from the head (phoa tabches, see Chapter 3), if the person has behaved well, when the lama makes this sound "charch hop hop hup" to encourage it, then the soul goes straight upwards. The soul goes up with the lama to catch the feet of the lama. Then he'll get a good path, thinking that he (the lama) is his guru. If someone is against the religion, speaks against the lama, does damage to animals, then, after death, through greed, he won't find the proper road and his soul may stay at home inside. It may go by the earth road or the water road. Staying at home may be due to his wealth or the pull of his children. Someone who

has done half sin and half merit faces many difficulties. It's much better for such a person to read the phog texts before he dies to a lama and then the lama can explain the parts he doesn't understand. The text explains how the soul can go from the bottom or from the heart and all this must be kept in mind as you die so that you have the power to send your soul where you will. So, familiarise yourself with the text.

"After you die, it's important to read todol ("the book of the dead") every seven days. It's important to be familiar with this too so as to find the right path. Have you ever read it? (SHE quotes and explains parts of the text ...)

"The luya (the vessel) is very old now and the god (who is speaking) can't come again and again. Some people speak badly of me and we are not all in harmony. Have any of you smoked? Smoke tastes good in the mouth and puts the mind at peace. But, if I tell you where it comes from. It comes from the blood of a menstruating devil woman (dud pom). She prayed, "if the smoke doesn't cover the whole world, then I may vomit a snake and an elephant." Then, she vomited a snake and a big elephant which breathed fire from its mouth. Why is it a sin? The leaves of the grass are sinful and the prayer that devil woman made was bad. ...

"There are no animals or insects that haven't been our fathers and mothers. These are simply people who have not found the right path. It's like a blind man who is left on a huge plain. If someone of good mind comes and asks, "What are you doing?", the man may reply, "I can't see so I can't go anywhere." Then the sighted man guides him and explains, "Here is water, come this way. Here is a big stone, follow me." Then the blind man can find his way. ... Chos is like this and the blind man is the one without knowledge while the sighted one is a religious person. If the blind man goes toward the sighted one, he can go everywhere with his help. If you don't drink beer, smoke, eat onions, then maybe I'll return. ... What is your question? Have you just had an exam or what? In your house, there has been a quarrel. What kind of quarrel was it? It was about land. There were many reasons for the quarrel. You've sworn many oaths and so you need to make many excuses. You might succeed in your exams but there's someone in the middle (causing trouble). If you behave properly, you'll do well. You were disparaging about the protectors (shrungrma) so light a butter lamp, put up a big prayer flag (tarchen) and do lungsta ("raise prayer flags"). You are very hasty. You sometimes don't feel well because of gossip (mikha). Sometimes, you get very angry. There are very many big and little problems. But, I've already spoken with you and given you a lot of religious advice and so now you should understand. Internal problems and external problems and illnesses, all may be finished with consultation. I'm not a "household god" (khyimbe lha) but a protector goddess (shrungrme lhamo). I'm not a house god who sucks out poison and needles. I have come to the people of this land to give advice about the people's religion and enlightenment (chang chubi semba)".

"You've got a lot of pimples. How did they start?"

("I've had them a long time.")

"This is due first of all to lu. You did something in a place where lu live. It would be good for you to visit the hot springs."

("Which direction is best?")

"The east side is better. After crossing a mountain. ... Go to Panamik and it will provide an effective cure. ..."

SHE blesses the audience with her thunderbolt as SHE recites a text. Then, SHE enumerates the gods that come in trances:

"Now Jetsun Dolma may come for a little while to do the work of Nasthan Bakula. Then Dorje Trakgyal, I call this name. Jigsten Odzinma is to do the work of the whole world. That's why I was called.

Then I call Tronyingma.

I call Jetsun Padma Dolma for the work of the gods. SHE is also for enlightenment.

Then I call Kachodma to get rid of devils (dreshrin).

Then I call Uljangma who interprets what Jetsun Dolma has said (for the latter does not speak).

Chezungma comes to work with lu.

Khandro de chokma gets rid of bad people who damage the world and SHE protects you against them.

There are twelve goddesses altogether.

Kolo de chenma is for the welfare of animals. SHE teaches religion to animals.

Chuchodma is for offerings to the gods.

Norgi kapelma is for the benefit of all; eyes, stomach.

If it is possible, you should have a second trance in the morning because people may have eaten onions or garlic by the evening and that is not good. I may throw a storma tomorrow. There are two kinds of storma to finish bad things. ... Mostly, time are coming to you because people are jealous of the animals. Near here, there is great gossip (mikha) as well. You need nothing apart from faith and then I can throw these two storma. Without faith, it won't do you any good even if Buddha comes."

Three gods come in quick succession, pray, sing and play music. SHE comes out of trance after the last goddess, Jigsten Odzinma, has sung:

"Now the time has come for me to go. ... Life is limited and we have many sorrows. There are many internal things at variance with religion. There are many channels (tsha) inside which are also at variance with one another and so there are many diseases in the body. There are many enemies (dra) which interfere with our work. Because of the lama's work (lit: plan), we can get rid of all these problems. If we don't work well now, we might repent after death. We've prayed in such a way that we may reap the fruit. That's the way to acquire merit. You don't know now, but everyone has to face the problems after death. If you don't repent now, you'll have to on that road. Try and harvest the fruits of what I've told you."

There is a second trance the following day which begins with a ritual to finish bad things and the throwing of a storma. Then, SHE tells a man how to recite a particular payer to control his mind. SHE tells him not to drink beer. SHE says

he is suffering from a tiṃṃ, perhaps a woman he saw butchering meat in Chang Thang, where he works. There is a friend he shouldn't trust. The youngest brother is also told not to trust someone close to him. He must free the life of a fish (an act of merit, tshetar). And, a compromise should be made at work where everyone is quarrelling. The elder sister is told that she is ill from bad blood and bile. She should go to a doctor and make lots of prostrations. The eldest brother is told that he is often unhappy without cause. Grandfather is told not to eat bad food. The family, SHE says, has thrown bad things in the water. An excuse should be made but the storma will finish all these troubles (gyak). She turns to the youngest brother again. He is ill because of a tiṃṃ. He must make many prayer flags (lungsta) and fetch an amulet of Dukar (Avalokitesvara):

"One day, someone wanted to marry you and you didn't agree. Now her tiṃṃ is troubling you."

Then, the god says that there are troubles from the house. When it was built, there were many broken bones in the old walls which are now causing trouble. During building, a number of stones were broken too. And a ritual performed by monks was not done properly. The entrance to the house is on the south side which is bad. So, all the animals need amulets. They are also suffering from gossip.

"Why have all the wives left the house?" (Three of the men are divorced.) SHE prays that the inside of their souls will stay clean but it is like a room which always gets dirty again. Then, there is some discussion of problems in the village and more advice about behaving virtuously. The trance is completed again with songs and prayers, with advice on how to pray and prepare for death and, finally, for the house:

"May there always be welcome/luck for this house. May the sign of welcome not be ruined and everything come to pass. May the mind remain strong."

The oracle has drawn upon chos and the immediate environment of lu and jealousy in order to explain her clients' problems. Her diagnoses and recommendations are not unique, they might be suggested equally by a monk, astrologer or rinpoche. Yet, the style is very different, not simply because of the contrast between ecstatic and ascetic, but also because of the contrast between one who is closely involved in village life and one who is removed. Unlike the rinpoche, who did not elaborate any of his remarks, Skarra lhamo has filled in the details and explored the village setting. Each trouble is specified and described with a wealth of detail. The gods demonstrate their close ties with

as they know the village people individually. They draw attention to the idiosyncracies of a house or person and build narratives around their clients which refer equally to the immediate setting and to death and rebirth. The rinpoche is not closely engaged with the world of his clients, a world that he has left behind. He has not individualised his discourse in the same way, partly because his procedures are based on a much higher and universally valid authority deriving from texts and teachings. From a village perspective, this style is true of all monastic specialists, though in varying degree (68).

These accounts confirm that village oracles continually demonstrate their intimate knowledge of village life. They do not, however, work simply with a given body of village knowledge and practice; they play a central role in shaping it. In trance, they formulate and negotiate ideas about local spirits and local problems which remain unspoken, fragmented and opaque at other times. Much of the material on local spirits in this chapter has been focused with reference to what is said in trance. Oracles play an important role in making detailed discriminations between one form of possession and another, between one spirit who has a home and another who has none and all those other distinctions described in this chapter.

5.4 Oracles in the middle

In the last chapter, it was suggested that oracles remain in-between the worst and best of the village. They can never command the authority of monks and rinpoche: Chorol's eventual cure was attributed to her final

consultation with the rinpoche rather than Kirzi oracle. Rinpoche command a supreme power and co-ordinate the incorporation of most ritual functions in the monastery while oracles remain ambiguous figures who practice in the village, on the margins of chos.

In the last chapter, a move towards the monastery was described. In this chapter, the limits to that movement have been defined. Oracles are consulted for special abilities which include a particular style of cure for witchcraft possession. Treatment for possession is based especially upon the incarnation of similar agents of possession who are, however, more powerful than the spirits afflicting the patient. Oracles call a "head witch" or a similar figure to combat the demon on its own ground. In these ways, village oracles separate themselves from monastic practices (69). But, in order to establish that their powers are religious rather than demonic and, distancing themselves as healers from their patients and their past histories, oracles must combine the powers derived in affliction outside the monastery with the legitimation given by a life-long religious training. All established oracles juxtapose images of their religious powers given by protector gods with images of a virtually demonic power, associated with initiation and fierce, local spirits. Consequently, it must be emphasised that the ambivalence shown towards village oracles can never be overcome for it is confirmed with every episode of trance.

In conclusion, however, I turn to a specific and potent image of religion which can be found in the life trajectories of oracles. Many Ladakhis dismiss oracles as charlatans. Yet, there was one aspect to their lives that all endorsed.

Even the most sceptical commentator pointed out one redeeming feature, affliction leads many oracles to religion. A friend who had launched into a tirade against village oracles stopped, paused and concluded:

"There is one good thing. You become a properly religious person. When the god strikes, it is best to be very religious because the god will then come and go easily."

Oracles are seen to experience unusual suffering and sin, to be overwhelmed by negative aspects of the village and then to begin to build a religious life. Their devotion is that of a villager, involving no special renunciation or textual knowledge, and combined with normal everyday activities in the household and family. It is consequently precarious. Oracles are liable to experience misfortune or to be overwhelmed by affliction once more. This is a key image. However trance is evaluated, oracles embody an image of chos and a "proper life" in the process of construction out of the worst aspects of the world. It is an image that focuses on the process of building, the uncertain advances, the difficulties of village life rather than the achievements that are normally taken for granted with any movement towards religion and the monastery. In other words, the initial affliction is always in the process of being overcome but success remains forever elusive. The image dwells upon the position of oracles caught between ill health and the powers brought by religion, between gods and demons and between sin and merit.

A discussion of village possession suggests that the life trajectory of village oracles is built upon and, indeed, influences the better worn path travelled by other villagers.

Images of conquest and transformation are central to ideas and practices of all types of possession in the village and not just the careers of future oracles. In the next chapter, I return to the monastery in order to show that these ideas are not confined to a village setting. I turn to an exploration of monastery oracles, the third and last of Ladakhi practitioners in the ecstatic, and I explore their significance in relation to what Ladakhi villagers consider to be orthodox Buddhism. I shall argue that the movement accomplished by village oracles, the distance they put between their current status and their witch-like beginnings, is continuous with the journey travelled by monastery oracles. The biographies of these figures also tell of murky origins, past conversions and a steady movement towards religion. What I shall emphasise is the way in which this transformation is seen as a centre piece to Buddhism in the monasteries.

CHAPTER 6

ORACLES AT MONASTERY FESTIVALS ('CHAM)



Plate 19 Monastery oracle at the Stok 'cham



Plate 20 A "black hat" (zhanag) dancer at 'cham
(photo: M Phylactou)



Plate 21 A skeleton dancer at 'cham

6.1 Description: monastery oracles and 'cham

a) Introduction

Monastery oracles have been mentioned with reference to their biographies (Chapter 4) and it is these histories which provide the focus of this chapter. In Ladakh, monastery oracles appear at cham, monastic dance-dramas, and the following account is based largely on the appearances of two monks at Matho (14-15 of 1st month) and two laymen at Stok festival (9-10 of 1st month). In the Leh region, outlined in Chapter 4, monastery oracles also appear at other 'cham. Thikse festival in the 12th month is conventionally associated with an oracle who did not, however appear at either of the two performances during my stay. A layman has appeared at Hemis festival in the 5th month, but he is not accepted by the monastery (1). Finally, an oracle features at the heterodox harvest festival in Shey which is not a 'cham (2). The other dramas included in Table 2 (Chapter 2) do not feature oracles (3).

Cham have been described in many Tibetan speaking areas, from a variety of perspectives (4). Jerstad, for example, focuses upon the performative aspects of mani rimdu among the Sherpa in Khumbu (Jerstad 1969). Aris's account of the official New Year at Punakha in Bhutan highlights the theme of conquest and victory, not just on the part of religion but also the state:

"the entire theme of the festival is still today one of spiritual victory over the supernatural forces that are believed to hinder its ('Brug-pa) dominion and martial conquest of its external human enemies." (Aris 1976:602)

Cantwell's account of the exorcistic rite (zlog pa) at the end of the 12th month in the Nyingmapa refugee monastery in

Rewalsar explores monastic and textual perspectives, dwelling equally upon the realisation of enlightenment (stod las) and the liberation of hostile forces (smad las) which impede this realisation (Cantwell 1985). These accounts show that cham rituals vary widely, featuring different masked figures and following different texts. In Ladakh, they range from rituals performed at the end of the year such as the dgu gtor at Spituk to the celebration of Guru Rinpoche's "birthday" at Hemis tshes bcu on the 9th and 10th of the 5th month. Only some 'cham are associated with tantric ritual and so only some culminate in the grand exorcisms described below. In Ladakh, villagers see cham as a marshalling of the forces of religion which culminates in an exorcism. Villagers are little interested in the finer differences between one performance and another and tend to focus on a few themes. One includes the appearance of monastery oracles, whose cham are the best attended. A second concerns the process of conquest carried out by Guru Rinpoche who brought religion to Tibet. A third concerns the defeat and liberation/murder of Langdarma, the apostate Tibetan king. A fourth concerns the motivations for attending cham, preparing for death and rebirth. These four themes, which derive from a village perspective that is not necessarily reflected in monastic and textual traditions, frame the following account.

The last three themes are discussed in the literature on cham, particularly the earlier sources. Guru Rinpoche is seen as the great civiliser who defeated autochthons in Tibet and brought them to religion. Sometimes, the first conquest is associated with the building of the first monastery at Samye (bSam-yas):

"The performers of that mystical dance wore masks of mighty gods. While dancing they read formidable invocations and spells. All this performance was organised because of the attempts of local heathen deities and ghosts to prejudice the erecting of the monastery - the hearth of the new religion." (IN Fedotev 1986:50)

The conquests of the "second" Buddha are repeated in a number of cham including the Hemis tshes bcu described so often in Western accounts, where the eight emanations of Guru Rinpoche appear together and one by one in the staging of the life story (Helffer 1980). Ladakhi villagers associate cham generally with the civilising influence of Guru Rinpoche even though Guru Rinpoche features in relatively few. Indeed, most of the characters at 'cham come from the ranks of the oath bound gods described below.

One of the enemies who is vanquished is Langdarma (gLang-dar-ma), the great opponent of early Tibetan Buddhism. As far as Ladakhis are concerned, his murder in 842 AD led to the revival of religion. It is said that his monk assassin wore the clothes of one of the more important characters in the dances, the black hats (zhanag, zhwa nag). The monk, dPal-gyi-rdo-rje, entered the king's court with a bow and arrow hidden up his long, wide sleeves; he danced to the king and afterwards shot him. Then, he rode away on his black horse and the king's guards never found him because he crossed a river which washed his black clothes and black horse white. Villagers identify these black hats with the conclusive rule of Buddhism in Tibet which was brought about through a distinctively religious murder. Such murders are also seen as liberations, as described below.

Although the significance of the Langdarma myth may be disputed from a doctrinal perspective (Stein 1957:202),

Ladakhi villagers described the "black hats" at cham in relation to Langdarma's assassin. Earlier accounts frequently distinguish the two themes described. Waddell, for example, notes how Guru Rinpoche is intimately associated with the old sects and so the Gelugpa offer a rival interpretation of their cham, based instead upon the murder of Langdarma (Waddell 1972 (1895):519). Govinda writes:

"The struggle between the forces of light and darkness, between the divine and the demonic, between the titanic forces of decay and dissolution and the innate urge for eternal life - this struggle is depicted both on the historical as well as on the timeless plane of the human soul. The coming of Padmasambhava (that is Guru Rinpoche) and his victory over the black magicians and the host of evil spirits, whom the latter tried to appease with bloody sacrifices, both human and animal, is the main subject of the first day's performance in the monasteries of the Old Schools (Nyingma, Kargyud, and Sakya) while the Gelugpas depict the slaying of King Langdarma in the bow-and-arrow dance of the hermit, who appears in the guise of a black magician, attired in the robes and the black skull-surmounted hat of the Bon priests,.." (Govinda 1966:177)

Whilst both these themes echo the past and single out two great victories which are retold and thereby re-enacted in the present; the third prominent theme refers primarily to the individual. Ladakhis give many reasons for attending cham but one of the most prominent is reflected in comments of the kind:

"I go to get ready for death"

or

"I go to make merit"

These comments are generally elaborated in the following way: after you die, your soul travels to a new life but it is often terrified on the way by figures just like those seen at 'cham. If you familiarise yourself with their grotesque forms beforehand, you will be able to listen more attentively

to the advice of monks and thereby achieve a better rebirth. One woman commented upon the skeleton dancers who appear on stage:

"the skeleton dancers are those who take life and when they cut the enemy and take out its internal organs, it is just how they take your soul after you die."

It was in the context of cham that I was told of the day of judgement, described in Chapter 3. Every individual, I was told, is born with a demon on the left shoulder and a god on the right; at the day of judgement, the god speaks for you and the demon against. Ladakhis did not draw explicit parallels between the enemy as a representation of Langdarma and the enemy as a representation of their own (future) corpses. However, a number of accounts combine the two themes. Waddell describes the rite of "killing" the enemy with disapproval:

"The enemy of Tibet and of Lamaism is now represented in effigy, but before cutting it to pieces, it is used to convey to the people a vivid conception of the manner in which devils attack a corpse, and the necessity for priestly services of a quasi-Buddhist sort to guard it and its soul." (Waddell 1972:527)

Gompertz, drawing upon Waddell, dwells rather on the journey after death:

"Most of the play deals with Langdarma's adventures after death and thereby serves the purpose of teaching the people what to expect if they have not been good." (Gompertz 1928:202-3)

Govinda provides an interpretation which is more in keeping with accounts by Ladakhi villagers and, indeed, monks:

"More important, however, than the historical allusions are those related to The Tibetan Book of the Dead (Bardo Thodol), Padmasambhava's greatest work, which makes it clear that all the gods and demons, the forces of light and darkness, are within us, and those who want to conquer the Lord of Death will have to meet him and to recognise him in the midst of life." (Govinda 1966:177).

Ladakhi villagers bring all three themes to bear upon their explanations of any one cham. They talk of the victory of Buddhism, associated especially with Guru Rinpoche; the conquest of enemies, associated historically with Langdarma in particular and the process of rebirth. Villagers spoke only of the path to rebirth but monks may be engaged on a more thorough "conquest", of death and rebirth, that is, the realisation of enlightenment:

"The gradual domination of the groups of dancers by the central performer in preparation for the destruction refers to the gradual bringing under control of the different aspects of the personality on the path to Enlightenment and the final destruction of the lingam is the destruction of the ego." (Pott 1975:277-8 IN Samuel 1975:124)

The following account should not be read as a general discussion of 'cham for it is focused upon monastery oracles. These figures will be placed within the orbit described, which villagers represent as orthodox Buddhism.

b) Cham: monastery drama

Table 2 in Chapter 2 shows that cham are staged throughout the year in Ladakh (5) but, as noted in Chapter 3, the winter cham are considered to be the most important. These should be understood as merit-making rites and part of the New Year complex, associated with the activities described in Chapter 3. Cham, the religious New Year and winter go together. The most important drama, at Matho, occurs half way through the first month and it is critical for the successful transition of the state to a new year. References have been made to Ladakhi ideas about the victory of religion and the good rebirth that will be attained through attendance at cham. These suggest that cham bring about a renewal of the better side of life in the world. Further associations

between cham and the New Year suggest also an annual renewal. Gongma villagers date the more important winter cham in terms of the melt that will follow. They incorporate cham into the wider complex of winter religious ritual which are seen to bring about the new agricultural cycle.

Winter, in Ladakh, quickly becomes monotonous for the extreme temperatures mean long hours in bed, long hours at home and few at work. There is little fuel, the fields are frozen, schools are shut and offices shorten their working day. Cham relieve this monotony. The only regret mentioned by the lucky ones who escape to India are the festivals they have missed: complicated calculations are often made so as to catch just one at the beginning or end of the season. Villagers know the approximate dates of festivals and impatiently work out how much longer winter will last with reference to an occasion gone by and the next to come. The precise date is hard to know given the difficulty of marrying the ordinary (Western) calendar to the Buddhist one, which itself comes in different versions according to whether it is "run straight", without missing or adding any days, or adjusted to season and local circumstance. Consequently, villagers only know exactly when the festival will happen a few days beforehand and there are always some who turn up on the wrong days. For Gongma villagers, the most important dates concern Stok, Thikse, Spituk and Matho (6).

Most dances last three days. The first "practice day" is open to a lay audience but was largely ignored by the people of Gongma. On the second and third days, however, they would snatch a hurried breakfast, dress, call out to neighbours and friends and hurry down the hill to Leh. Men would go alone

or with a man friend but women would gather in groups of five or ten, dressed as for all festivals in hats, embroidered shawls and jewellery. Children would try their hardest to tag along but many were left behind. Convoys of buses and trucks would pick up the crowds from Leh and it was the best time of year outside the tourist season for taxis. Approaching the monastery, a "car park" would appear first and then a fair with stalls selling clothes, food and tea and with covered tents for gambling and alcohol. This fair is always set up outside and below the monastery. Then, a long straggling line up the mountain side. New arrivals join the fair or set off for the monastery. If there is time, they circumambulate the buildings and visit the interior to offer devotions, especially in the rooms opened only on these days. If there is no time, they go straight to the courtyard and visit the rest of the monastery later during an interval. The perimeters of the courtyard are packed with people, the centre is marked with one or two flagpoles and joined to the main assembly room by a steep flight of stairs. Facing the monastery, paintings and flags often hung on its walls, are a number of monks. Usually, the rinpoche is there in his throne directing proceedings; orchestrating the offerings and the movements of the ritual. It is usually he who plays the part of rDo-rje slob-dpon, "thunderbolt master":

"who sits outside the dance circle, often on a balcony overlooking the courtyard and who, by prayers and secret spells addressed to the deities appearing on the scene, directs the 'chams on a mystic plane." (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:68)

Spectators watching the drama are aware of the central position of the rinpoche. Most watch the opening with

interest, particularly where it is accompanied by the "setting free of animals" (tshe (m)thar): the lives of specified animals are "saved for religion", "through compassion", as Ladakhis say (7). Most are only hazily conscious of the series of dances that follow, mimed to music from the orchestra. Ten or more dance episodes occupy the better part of the day, introduced by loud music that conjures the gods into masked figures who then appear from the interior, concluded by music that sends the gods home. All sorts of figures appear; fierce protectors, animals, skeletons, grotesque looking people. Major gods can be picked out at the centre of a retinue which disperses to leave the god dancing with a consort and dancing alone. Subsequent dances may depict different forms associated with other events in the god's life history. The audience takes in a general atmosphere: the masks, swaying antlers, shuffling feet, moving with the music which is at one point slow and solemn and at another quick, sharp and loud. These features are much imitated by small children. Types of dancers are distinguished. There are the major gods with their attendants, also clowns who often speak and mime a burlesque, terrifying skeleton dancers and "black hats" (zhanag), who appear unmasked. Every sect and monastery features its own protectors and visitors will see 1Cam-sring at Spituk or the four-faced protector (mgon po) at Matho. In addition, some monasteries present their most local worldly defenders in the form of oracles. Their festivals are the best-known and the best-attended (8).

By late afternoon, so many figures have appeared that it seems as if all important gods have come down to the world.

The audience become bored by the pageantry only to be revived by the build up to a religious murder and, at the relevant cham, by oracles. Oracles appear with helpers who attempt to protect both the vessel and bystanders from the god's violence. Entranced men run barefoot along precipitous monastery walls, brandishing swords. Gods cut their vessels, sometimes drawing blood, and strike any onlookers in the way. When blood is spilt, the wounds have miraculously healed by the following day (Heber and Heber 1926:205-8, Brauen 1980a:141). Gods drink strong beer and spit it out in blessing. The revelations that an oracle gives further attract his audience. HE reveals the future and the past to the individual petitioner, who scurries behind, scarf in hand, hopefully shielded by the oracle's attendants, otherwise by judicious and rapid retreats, from the blows that ought to be welcomed as blessings. HE also tells the truth to the village and, in the case of Matho, the whole of Ladakh. All of this is in striking contrast to the peaceful beatitude of an immobile rinpoche on the edge of the courtyard (9). These scenes are amplified below.

The execution is the last and climactic act of the day at all Ladakhi 'cham that I have seen, often heralded by the black hats who reappear in the late afternoon. They are the most important ritual specialists, highly trained monks, led by a dance master who has prepared for his role by a week or sometimes a month of meditation. Black hats have no masks but their mouths are covered by scarves and their heads by large black hats, supposedly made of skin with a skull at the centre surrounded by fire and intestines. The story about

the origin of this dress has already been noted, according to which black hats are seen as Langdarma's assassins dressed in the clothes of "Bon priests". Villagers also describe black hats as tantric masters and as vessels for high ranking divine protectors.

At most 'cham, there is more than one enemy, often one male and one female, called drao (dgra' bo) by villagers and sometimes linga (ling ga) to specify the enemy killed ritually in a burnt offering. Thus, at Hemis, a linga is killed publicly and distributed on both days of tshes bcu but, at other 'cham, only one effigy of dough is destroyed in the courtyard. It is often brought on to the stage in a tray and it is just possible to see a human figure, often painted black or blue and red, with hair and, sometimes, sexual organs. Inside are intestines. Spectators close to the stage can see that the doll is naked, ugly and chained up on its back. Everyone knows that it is evil and must be killed. It is usually the black hats, especially their master, who purify the stage and then make the enemy real; bring it to life, conjure demons, devils, enemies, evil into the doll. Once the master of the black hats has brought the enemy to life, he or the main god, generally Yama, kills it violently with a sword, knife or hatchet. The human doll is chopped to pieces, dismembered and displayed to the audience in a striking dance. Sometimes, it is then distributed (see below) and, sometimes, it is carried off stage to join the storma which is carried out of the monastery at the end of the second day. The throwing of the gtor ma (gtor rgyab) draws the festival to a close.

c) Monastery oracles

The brief allusions made to possession in the monastery suggest similarities with village practices. Both types of oracle practice *zhugshes*, during which THEY reveal the truth. Both are described as *luya* (vessel) and *lha* (god) though monastery oracles are also described more respectfully as those with divine wisdom, (*yishespa*, *ye shes pa*). Both types of oracle recommend ritual cures for the individual petitioner or the wider congregation and make prophecies. They bless their audience, typically with violence, through beatings which drive sin or illness out of the body. This violence reflects the violence with which both monastery and village oracles were created. Both may change their own shrines where the gods live outside their human vessels.

Ladakhis tend to emphasise these similarities less than the equally striking differences. Monastery oracles fall into trance during collective festivals held to celebrate Buddhism and not at private seances; THEY have rarely been afflicted by an involuntary initiatory madness and THEY provide containers for named gods who belong, at least partially, to the monastery. The evocation of gods is also integrated with other monastic practices including the main 'cham tantra. Thus, the Matho oracles are said to visualise the two Rongtsan gods that visit them through their liturgy, which is recited during a retreat. On the 14th of the first month, other monks participate:

"the congregation of monks chants a text which evokes the vision of the Rong-btsan. The monks participate in making the Rong-btsan manifest by meditating on the gods emerging from their heart with a flood of light." (Dargyay 1985: 57-8).

The personal histories of the gods are marked through individualised clothes which differ from the village oracle's uniform (10). The gods do not extract pollution, poison or needles from clients.

Monastery oracles, like their village counterparts, prepare for trance appearances. The men, for all are men, are recruited in different ways. Some are *gyudpa*, such as the oracle at Shey who comes from a particular house every generation (11). Others are chosen by lottery, elected or appointed. Thus, each oracle is chosen at Matho by lottery every five years, so that a junior serves with a more senior oracle (see also Dargyay 1985:56) (12). At Stok, a delegation of villagers requests a man to undertake the role. In theory, anyone might be asked but, in practice, only three households have been involved in the last ten years and so it seems that an oracle, once chosen, is likely to be asked to appear again as long as he is willing and suitable (13). Only two of the widely accepted oracles are monks though the Thikse oracle is an ex-monk. In general, Ladakhi monastery oracles seem to be regarded with less esteem than their Tibetan counterparts. They do not have property, servants, temples and clothes of the same permanence or quality as Tibetan oracles nor are they elaborately graded (14).

Most Ladakhis, including the men who fall into trance, emphasise the voluntary nature of the occupation. In practice, many are elected in the same way as village oracles. The current Shey oracle as well as the claimant to Hemis and a man who recently appeared at Thikse festival were all afflicted unexpectedly. Election is followed by training; Matho oracles go into solitary meditation for a

year before their first trance. Every year, there are additional preparations. For reasons of space, an account of the preliminary preparations is confined to Matho and Stok:

At Stok, preparations are fairly cursory. Between one and two months before the festival, both oracles begin to recite ritual formulae, particularly om mani, and they stop eating meat, onion and garlic. They also refrain from alcohol and smoking. One of the current practitioners said that he then had to use his own cup and plate; ideally, he said, he should not eat in other people's houses. The other said he did not have sex during that last month. During the last ten days (15), each receives a daily ritual wash (trus) from the monastery teacher. Apparently, they sometimes sponsor their own private rituals too, to keep away jealousy and to raise their spiritual power. From the 6th to the 12th of the 1st month, both live in individual rooms in the monastery where they are fed by village contributions. Rites are performed on their behalf in the monastery.

On the 8th of the month, the oracles, in trance, take juniper and other offerings to their shrines in the valley. On the 9th and 10th, THEY join the 'cham (see below).

These preparations are similar but more rigorous than those of village oracles. Matho oracles are still more careful in their observances:

In subsequent years, following the initial meditation that lasts a full year or, in some accounts, nine months, Matho oracles seclude themselves for one month and 29 days. During this period, they read specific texts associated with Hevajra and the Rong-tsan gods. They follow a standard ascetic regime with weekly purifications, a special diet, little sleep and little social interaction - just two people visit the cells (see also Dargyay 1985:56-7) (16). Cleanliness is very important during this period and there are a number of preparatory ceremonies in the monastery that involve the monk-oracles.

Matho oracles appear in trance before the festival when THEY answer questions and complete their preparations by choosing four villagers to fetch juniper, which will be used later in the renovation of the gods' shrines. I did not see this trance on the 10th of the 1st month but I was told that the oracles appear with uncut hair, like others emerging from meditation, and THEY are apparently relatively calm on this, their first appearance.

The following day, their hair is cut and a ceremony to raise their spiritual power is performed. THEY fall into trance to answer questions from monk guests. Apparently, the gods now appear in full force for they are fierce

spirits, tsan, and, after they have answered questions, they emerge into the courtyard flinging barley and "golden drinks" (serkyem) (17).

From the next day, the 12th, a five day skangsol is performed in the monastery; the oracles appear in trance briefly on the 12th and 13th before joining the public drama on the 14th and 15th. A final and important trance episode occurs in the following month, on the 8th day, as described below.

I was told that the oracles also come into trance on auspicious days during their meditation; during two festivals in the 12th month and on the 8th day of the first month. On these occasions, THEY appear on the roofs of their rooms (18).

These preparations are intended to clean and strengthen the vessel, just like the more cursory preparations undertaken in the village. Public trance appearances are distinguished however by the wider setting in which monastery oracles appear with other incarnate gods to celebrate the victory of Buddhism. THEY join some of the dance episodes involving masked monks, incarnating monastery gods. Even so, oracles remain apart. THEY create their own dramatic space at the peripheries of the larger festival as THEY run along the perimeter walls with their swords, or displace the setting from monastery down to village and up to the pastures. Their activities may be summarised, again with reference to Matho and Stok:

On the first day at Matho, oracles join the other characters in the central courtyard. THEY wear little and appear with long matted hair, wielding swords. THEY appear after several dances have been staged, to a ripple of excitement and fear in the audience. THEY help a monk wearing a stag mask and the dance master to prepare the stage for the killing of the enemy. Before and after this central act, THEY run bare-foot across the stage, along the roofs and walls of the monastery. Attendants try to stay ahead so as to protect bystanders from attack and also to stop the gods inflicting damage on their own vessels, after drinking quantities of strong beer. Gods generally attack the forearms and mouths of their vessels. The oracle can often be seen spitting out beer and blood before returning to his tour. Several people were apparently hospitalised after the 1983 festival at Matho. When the oracles make their tours, THEY answer the questions of petitioners who offer scarves as they do to village oracles but no money.

THEY frequently make for the shrine rooms to their own gods, which houses images of the white and red Rong-btsan on horses. THEY hold a robe over their heads that is said to have belonged to the founder of the monastery. The rinpoche has reported that THEY used to fly with this robe in ancient times. On the second day, oracles appear before the great dance and the final procession. THEY wear very little, only a tiger skin skirt, bone ornaments and a thick blindfold with hanging yak tails (19). A fierce face is painted on their chests and backs through which THEY look, for their vessels' eyes are blindfolded. THEY carry a drum and a whip and THEY run to the village and back. Villagers line their route to ask questions. One of the most popular episodes, a prophecy for the nation, occurs at the end of this second day. The oracles throw barley flour in every direction and the amount of flour that falls in a particular area tells the audience whether the crops will be good or bad. Questions are asked on behalf of Ladakh by the radio station (and formerly by the king) (20). Apparently, the oracles wear red if there is to be war during the coming year (21). Eventually, the oracles begin to calm down, THEY pray for religious law and for the country, then THEY retire and come out of trance. Only Matho oracles answer questions for the benefit of the entire nation.

At Stok, oracles do not join the main dances nor do they help to kill the enemy. THEY do run around and above the stage and audience; THEY too answer questions, wield swords, drink and spit out strong beer and travel to and from village, castle and monastery. On the second day, the oracles are scantily dressed like those appearing at Matho. THEY have special duties outside the monastery on this day. First, THEY run to the castle in trance where THEY drink quantities of the strongest beer and give directives to the royal family (who have lived in Stok for 150 years). Then, THEY run to a field in the village, still in trance, where they join the villagers' chishu (tshes bcu) and proclaim on the future. THEY stand on a pot of beer and tell all the assembled villagers what must be done (in the way of ritual) during the coming year. THEY cut a large dough offering which, now that it contains divine blessing (chinlab), is distributed to every household and to some visitors (22).

The brothers at both Matho and Stok are related to church and state. On the second day at Stok, it is said that one oracle appears in the king's palace wearing a black wig while the other appears in the monastery wearing a red wig (Brauen 1980a:135). At Matho, one oracle is said to hold the king's god and the other holds the lama's. The lama's god is said to be much stronger than the king's today because the royal line has died out (23).

Monastery oracles come into trance before 'cham; they are also possessed afterwards. All but the Stok oracles change their own shrines (24). At Thikse monastery, the

shrine is changed at secular New Year by the oracle who is possessed during the ritual. HE provides the god with a temporary home. At Shey shrublha, which is not a 'cham, the oracle changes the wood and the pot of grain in his shrine with the help of assistants originally appointed by the king on the second day of the festival. At Matho, the oracles come into trance for the last time on the 8th of the 2nd month to change their own shrines:

Horses and servants arrive from the royal family of Matho and the royal monastery of Hemis (25). The oracles ride to their shrines in the high pastures; some say that they go into trance on the way while others claim that they are possessed when they reach their destination (26), the two shrines. The pot of grain is removed from the shrine and examined, in this case by the oracles themselves who predict the fortunes of the crops for the coming year. The juniper that was collected earlier by villagers is now used to repair the outside of the shrine. The oracles tie a cloth around the juniper and then the protectors leave the bodies of the monks and are absorbed into their renewed shrines (27).

Trance activities are explored below in relation to the broader drama of cham. The revelation of truth, especially in the future, the violence, the somewhat marginal position of oracles and the part they play in renewing the secular world are explored from the perspective of the killing of the enemy. The major stimulus to this analysis is found, however, in an aspect that has not yet been described, namely the biographies associated with gods who appear in monastery oracles. Villagers know little of the histories attached to most of the figures who appear on stage. However, they narrate the biographies of the gods appearing in oracles with great relish. Two examples show these gods to be recent additions to the monastery:

The gods who appear at Matho festival, Rongtsen Karmar (white Rong-btsan and red Rong-btsan) used to live in

Eastern Tibet. They became so attached to a Tibetan scholar there that they followed him to Ladakh, where he founded Matho. However, they were found to be very violent and so they were settled in shrines outside Matho in the upper valley. According to some of the Matho monks, the oracles were initially consulted only within the monastery but, later, the villagers petitioned for their help as well. The two gods were from a family of eight (sometimes seven) brothers. Two other brothers were settled at Stok. Alternatively, some versions claim that there is just one god at Matho and one at Stok, each of whom appears in two men (28).

While most of the accounts of Matho dwell upon the partial incorporation of the still very violent gods into the monastery, accounts of Thikse focus rather upon force with which the gods were converted:

"The god jumps, it doesn't walk. Long ago, it flew away. The people asked the Matho oracles and the Shey oracle what had happened. THEY said that it had tried to fly away to the country of gods (lhayul, see Chapter 3) but, failing to reach that place, it had returned. The monks did not want to lose their god so they put chains around its legs and around the legs of its statue in the shrine room where it also lived. Now, it can no longer walk or fly away." (Thikse monk)

All versions of the biographies of all monastery oracles tell of violent or uncivilised spirits who lived outside religion until they were brought into the monastery by Buddhas, saints or monks (29). These short Ladakhi biographies are reminiscent of the much more elaborate account of Pehar summarised in Chapter 4, who possesses the supreme oracle of Tibet. As noted in fn 10 above, a true medium of Pehar bears signs of his conquest just like the Thikse oracle. He bears the sign of the thunderbolt with which he was subdued upon his head.

Brauen quite rightly links these "oracle gods" with (other) place gods (yul lha). He notes that their shrines are found outside the monastery where they are tended by villagers and he notes that their human oracles (that is, the

vessel) had little to do with the monastery in the past; only today are monks gradually appropriating these roles. Brauen concludes that the oracle gods were local gods; over time, the Buddhists took them over and, as they gave local gods Buddhist names, so they proved that the gods belonged to them (1980a:145). Brauen has outlined the local view very accurately and it is his conclusion which provides the starting point for the following discussion. Brauen, like most Ladakhis, does not incorporate oracles into the wider drama enacted at cham. They are discussed below as part of this drama rather than a sideshow and it is suggested that their appropriation is not an isolated event; it repeats every other conquest back to the dawn of civilisation.

6.2 The enemy (dggra' bo)

As noted, the destruction of the enemy provides the major climax to cham, apart from the appearance of oracles in trance. Normally, the enemy is contained in a dough effigy which is likened to the corpse of a person and also the enemy king, Langdarma. It is also seen as a body for other types of evil. Heber and Heber quote a Ladakhi who says that the enemy is

"an evil spirit that had been made to flee but had come down from the hills to harm religion again" (Heber and Heber 1926:272).

Villagers say vaguely that the enemy is filled with "bad thoughts" as well as demons. Some said more specifically that the enemy contained sins (digpa) or demerits (mi gwa). At this point, I was always referred to monks for further discussion of chos. To monks, it is a matter of dogma that the enemy contains internal evils of which the external, such

as demons, are merely projections. Thus, Phyang rinpoche told me that here were ten internal evils in the enemy according to the new tantra and seventeen according to the old. When the doll is killed, he said, these evils are exorcised from living beings and it becomes possible for everyone to follow the path of virtue. Whilst this may lead to rebirth for villagers, the goal for initiates may be to transcend the world altogether, as noted above.

The gods which visit monastery oracles are recent converts, "ex-enemies". The destruction of the enemy, which is identified with Langdarma's corpse, the aboriginal opponents of Buddhism and a vessel for all that is bad in the world today, is explored from this perspective. If monastery oracles are recognised as ex-enemies, then the contemporary conquest can be related to their past conversion. This topic is addressed directly in the next section on the pantheon. However, the nature of the pantheon constructed at 'cham cannot be fully understood without looking at other important themes and, in this section, the nature of the ritual murder is explored.

Ladakhi comments about the enemy suggest that cham are actually death rites of a kind for the enemy is one's own future corpse which, from a village perspective, is travelling towards rebirth. Villagers say that they will die a better death if they are familiar with cham. They will make merit and acquire knowledge. Their comments suggest that they will learn especially to control the terror which will be generated through accumulated karma and experienced during the process of finding a new life. Cham are a preparation for death, a trial run.

A brief consideration of textual sources suggests similarities between the destruction of the enemy and other rites discussed previously. The word for the execution also means "to set free, release" (sgrol, bsgral) (Stein 1972:190). The murder is also a liberation. In fact, as Stein shows, the enemy is divided into two parts: one is murdered while the other is saved. The "black hat" brings the enemy to life but then he saves either the enemy's soul (Stein 1957:203) or the good parts of the soul (ibid:225-6) with the power of tantric gods evoked in meditation. The officiant separates the good part from the effigy and unites it with his own life and with the gods before sending it to paradise, purified (ibid:221-2). Only then is the effigy killed and dismembered. Stein notes that the bad part of the soul is called a dre, demon, and the good part a lha, god (ibid:219-29). Stein also draws attention to a more general association between this liberation and the transference of consciousness at death ('pho ba, ibid: 231-3, see also the discussion in Chapter 3). Accordingly, the murder/liberation of the enemy may be seen as as a death rite which, in some textual sources, is followed by rebirth. In other sources, the soul is fixed in paradise after the doll has been cut up (30).

Villagers are familiar with none of these texts but it is nonetheless relevant to draw attention to the parallels in ritual structure between cham and mortuary ritual. In Chapter 3, it was shown that a good death depended on merit. However, merit alone is not enough. The help of monks is equally critical and material was presented on selected

aspects of funerals which suggested that monks turned sin into a demon and merit into a god that were respectively murdered and liberated. Sin, in the form of a demon, is placed first in a paper body and then a human corpse before it is burnt. That body is bound just like the enemy at 'cham. Ladakhis say that the human corpse is bound "in prayer" but it might also be seen to be bound so that it cannot come back to life. Merit is enlarged in relation to the divinities assembled at death. It may be recalled that the corpse is dressed in the same clothes as the officiating monks and that, when the soul is saved, it is projected in the form of a god, either one of the tutelary deities or one of their followers. In this way, it was suggested, the merit a person has made can be magnified in ritual; it is visualised as a god which is, as it were, elevated in status. Although villagers always talk about rebirth after death, it should be appreciated that monks also attempt to fix the soul in paradise. Thus:

"when you do the first rite to transfer the soul, you pray to Odpagmed ('Od-dpag-med) who was the guru of Chenrezig (sPyan-ras-gzigs). You try to send the soul to Odpagmed's "paradise" (zhingkham, zhing khams)." (monk)

"You collect the soul and send it to Sangyas (Sangs-rgyas) "paradise" (two words were used: dewachen, bde ba can, and zhingkham). That is the place where Buddhas live." (monk)

Later, monks attempt to close off the path of rebirth to all six spheres of existence, thereby ensuring that the soul reaches enlightenment (31).

The parallels with the murder/liberation at 'cham are very close indeed. The physical body becomes a container for all that is bad which, according to some of Stein's sources, includes a bad part of the soul. But, the good part is

united with the officiant's own life and saved. It is turned into a god and liberated to paradise or nirvana and/or to an eventual rebirth. So too is the dead person's soul saved. It is separated from bad things, which are burnt; united with the officiant's soul and gods; sent to the intermediate state in a better condition, equipped to achieve a better life next time round.

After the enemy has been murdered and liberated, its remains attract attention. These are treated in different ways according to particular cham traditions. At Hemis, for example, the dough effigy clearly carries sacred power:

"The Demon-king then seizes the bleeding fragments, and, eating a morsel, throws them up in the air, when they are caught and fought for by the other demons, who throw the pieces about in a frantic manner, and ultimately throwing them amongst the crowd, which now takes part in the orgie, and a general melee results, each one scrambling for morsels of the fragments, which some eat and others treasure as talismans against wounds, diseases and misfortunes." (Waddell 1972:531)

Gompertz and Govinda both add further notes:

"the ghouls will clammer around and carve it (the enemy) into little pieces, which they stuff into their cavernous, skeleton jaws." (Gompertz 1928:220)

"a wild scramble ensues, in which the host of demons pick up the scattered parts of the effigy and, after having devoured some morsels of it, throw the remainder into the air and among the spectators, who likewise take part in the sacrificial feast." (Govinda 1966:178)

Godwin Austen simply notes that bits of the enemy are thrown into the air as an offering to gods (Godwin Austen 1865:73).

I did not see this episode at Hemis but, at Lamayuru, the monks put pieces of the enemy in their skull caps and threw them at the audience. People grabbed the bits and told me that they later fed them to animals at home. They also smeared pieces of the enemy on each other: "so as to stay well all year". At the "king's New Year", dosmoche (mdos mo

che), I also saw spectators grabbing parts of the mdos before it was burnt. Heber and Heber claim that these pieces would be put on the outer walls of the house, to protect from disease and death (Heber and Heber 1926:174) while Ribbach writes:

"everyone tried to snatch as large a piece as possible of wood and coloured strings, then carry home their prize and guard it carefully the whole year as a talisman against evil spirits." (Ribbach 1986:127)

The enemy is eaten at 'cham in other Tibetan speaking areas as well. Paul describes how the "black hat" stabs the linga, takes a bite out of it and passes slices to other lamas during the Sherpa "dumje" (Paul 1979:281). He also suggests that the linga brings life to those who eat it (ibid:288) (32).

In other Ladakhi cham, the remains of the enemy are not treated in this way. The drao (enemy) is added to a storma inside the monastery and both are discarded together. Usually, there is a procession, led by monk musicians with Mon drumming evil out of the monastery from behind. In between are masked figures, monks in their ordinary clothes and the rest of the audience. The procession circles the monastery and the village before reaching a spot where the gtor ma are thrown away or burnt. This spot is chosen through astrological readings so that none will be harmed. Even so, there is often a house close by which will have to perform some prophylactic ceremony, to avert harm. At such cham, it is the potentially destructive qualities of the effigy that are emphasised though some say that the bits provide food for gods (as they are burnt) and for other sentient beings (as they are thrown away).

At some cham, but not all, the remains of the enemy seem to have been transformed. They contain sacred, life-giving qualities which are eaten, digested and in other ways incorporated by gods, people and other sentient beings. The enemy becomes food to nourish the living. Before looking at other aspects of the murder which are related to the pantheon assembled on stage, some more general comments might be made on the central ritual action.

As far as villagers are concerned, 'cham construct a blueprint for other monastic ritual activity. Rites "to finish bad things" in the household or village carry a legitimacy, in village eyes, by virtue of 'cham. As noted, these generally conform to a basic ritual structure according to which bodies are constructed and powers created inside them which are then manipulated. Lower ranking powers are evoked through higher ranking ones. At 'cham, the enemy is summoned by higher ranking gods, in particular, by the senior black hat and the yi dam of the monastery concerned. Bad and good are then separated at exorcistic rites ("rites to finish bad things"). Ladakhis always emphasise this process of separation when they talk of exorcistic rites and I suggest that their focus raises issues about the analysis of sacrifice. Without entering into a debate about the distinctions between Tibetan ransoms, scapegoats and sacrifices (see fn 18, Chapter 5), it is possible to gloss gtor ma (gtorma) as sacrifices in order to make a comparison with just one classical account by Hubert and Mauss (1964). Gtor ma provide seats as well as food for powers which are then destroyed. Indeed, the term gtor ma is often translated

as "sacrificial cake" or "sacrificial offering". Some gtor ma, such as that used for the enemy at 'cham, are known more specifically as ling ga. When other "enemies" such as witches or ghosts are burned in a fire offering (zhinshrek), the effigy is also described as a linga, like the bodies that are destroyed during mortuary rituals.

The Ladakhi data raise a question about the distinction made between two types of sacrifice by Hubert and Mauss. Hubert and Mauss distinguish a sacrifice from an offering by at least a partial destruction of the victim. Sacrifices of sacralization transfer sacred qualities from the victim to the sacrificer (Fr. sacrificiant, the one(s) to whom the benefits of sacrifice accrue or who undergo(es) its effect). Sacrifices of desacralization pass sacred qualities in the opposite direction from the sacrificer to the victim and they expel dangerous sanctity. The same sacrificial procedure may both induce a state of sanctity (sacralisation) and dispel a state of sin (desacralisation) (Hubert and Mauss 1968:58). But, the first type of sacrifice is associated with elaborate rites of entry, the transfer of sacred qualities after the immolation of the victim and, often, a communion meal of food while the second type of sacrifice is associated with elaborate rites of exit and the transfer of sacred qualities prior to immolation: expiation is stressed more than communion.

At first sight, Ladakhi rites to finish bad things seem to provide clear examples of sacrifices of desacralization. At 'cham, for example, bad thoughts and enemies are trapped in a dough effigy which is then destroyed. The people watching and performing the ritual are thereby freed from

sin, impurity and evil. Yet, I suggest that such Ladakhi rituals can only be seen as "sacrifices of desacralization" through a static view of the ritual, which focuses upon one particular moment at the expense of the wider ritual process.

The Ladakhi stress on separation points towards this interpretation. At the separation rite for oracles, the first and most important step is to separate demons and gods; then the demons can be placed in one body and the gods in another. Similarly, demons and gods are repeatedly separated at mortuary rituals. At 'cham, according to the texts cited by Stein, bad and good are again separated, demons are placed in the dough effigy and gods are united with the life of the officiant. In each of these rituals, the victim is divided in two parts. Only then can either part become the object of sacrifice and, in most rites, both parts become objects for different types of sacrifice. At ritual murders, after the victim has been separated into two, the bad is put into one object and thrown away while the good is put into another and saved. Accordingly, the focus on rites of entry and exit may be equal and the alternating rhythm of expiation and communion becomes part of a single ritual.

Sacred qualities are transferred at several points during these rituals. Demons and sin are passed to the victim before immolation, as predicted by Hubert and Mauss' scheme for descacralisation. But, gods and merit are equally passed from victim to the officiant before immolation. Moreover, the bad sacred is subject to further transformations, at least, at some 'cham. A communion meal follows the killing of evil rather than the sacralising of a victim. The "food"

that is sometimes eaten comes from the body that contained bad things. Clearly, these remains are no longer associated with the "bad sacred". They have been transformed into "good sacred" through processes associated with religiously sanctioned executions (33).

The murder at 'cham, and other rites, involve a "double sacrifice". Both bits of the enemy are transformed. In some 'cham, the soul or consciousness is reborn, on the side of religion. The demon, killed and dismembered in a bodily state, is sometimes digested by the congregation. Enemies are only driven out initially; ultimately, they are incorporated in the "congregation".

Several objections might be raised to this interpretation. First, the enemy is discarded at some 'cham and, in some texts, the liberated god is fixed in paradise. In other words, the enemy is altogether expelled from the world and it is not reincorporated. This interpretation fits with many Ladakhi comments but the above reading is emphasised in order to throw light on the position of monastery oracles. Second, there are different interpretations of 'cham. Villagers focus on the destruction of evil at 'cham. Similarly, at the initiation of oracles, villagers emphasised the destruction of demons which leaves the novice cleaner, stronger and in closer touch with gods. The exorcism of witches is also explained in terms of the expulsion of demons.

While villagers often see these sacrifices in a way that corresponds with Hubert and Mauss' desacralising type, monks tended to stress the opposing perspective. When I talked to monks about these ritual murders, they generally stressed how

they saved the good part of the victim rather than destroying the bad. The murder was merely a prelude to liberation (34). In the last chapter, it was noted that witches are sometimes exorcised by burning (shrakches, sreg-). This is a dangerous procedure and I was often told that only those who had received the appropriate permission could perform the rite:

Both Thikse oracle and a man from Chilling independently described an occasion that illustrates the point. About nine years ago, it seems, Thikse oracle was called to the village of Chilling to perform tiṃṃ shrakches. An astrologer monk from Leh who happened to be passing was called to help. The oracle had the lama play musical instruments and perform certain dances. The oracle heated a pot of oil in the middle of the village and prepared linga to burn in the evening. The oil was blood, according to the man from Chilling, and the papers were burnt in blood. But, then, the monk's throat stopped, that is, he choked. He didn't get better and so he went to Hemis monastery where he stayed for 15 days. He could only drink soup because his throat was so painful. One day, he was outside and a mad (rabid) wolf bit him, after which he died. The people from Chilling and the oracle himself said that the monk died because he had not received the proper permission for this ritual. ...

The proper permission enables an officiant to first separate bad from good, then destroy the bad and finally liberate the good. A Sakti (Tak Tok) lama who sometimes performs shrakches said:

"Guru Rinpoche's advice is this: if you don't raise the gongṃṃ or baṃṃ to a high status, then you are no better than a hunter. The status of the gongṃṃ is raised by an "instruction" (tiṃṃ, khrid). It's like archery. You need a very good bow and a good iron. You need a straight arrow and fine feathers. If you're very strong and young and you shoot properly, then you can break the target. But you need all these things. Because I myself have received the instruction, I can make the soul of a gongṃṃ high."

Another monk from Leh stressed that only rinpoche can truly collect the witch and make its soul high by burning.

The soul, he said, is raised so high that it can never cause damage again, nor will it be damaged itself for it is taken to the place of the highest gods. If someone performs this ceremony who does not have an impeccably high spiritual status, then he might damage the gongṃṃ. The person/witch will have an accident, perhaps she will break

her leg. This is very bad in itself and also for the person who performed the rite because he will not be reborn for 500 lives.

Monks often explain their comments in terms of teachings that are adjusted to the appropriate level for the individual. What looks like an exorcism to the villager appears in a different light to the monk who has been taught that it is, in fact, a liberation, and so a rite is seen to have different meanings according to levels of knowledge.

In an almost paradoxical way, Hubert and Mauss' scheme could be preserved to explain Ladakhi interpretations. No Ladakhi suggested that the sacrifice was simultaneously desacralising and sacralising: monks described liberation as the final goal even though it involved the destruction of evil as a preliminary while most villagers emphasised the exorcism, as a preliminary to the renewal of life in this world. Were Hubert and Mauss' analysis to be relativised, it could be used to explain the different aspects of sacrifice that are stressed by different participants. Nonetheless, the transformations effected on the remains of the enemy (both "soul" and "body") in some dramas suggest that the sacrifice as a whole can be better understood in terms of a transformative model. Such a model also helps to explain the relationship between monastery oracles and the wider drama, as discussed below.

6.3 The pantheon and the oath-bound gods (dam can)

In the last section, one interpretation of the ritual murder was privileged over others, according to which a defeated enemy is reincorporated into the world rather than removed from it (35). This interpretation was emphasised

because of my focus on the gods which visit monastery oracles. The gods are "ex-enemies", converts. Their histories as well as narratives attached to other figures that appear at 'cham, known as the oath-bound (damcen, dam can), can be linked to today's defeat of today's enemy.

The word dam has been mentioned previously, in the form tam, as it is more generally pronounced. When rinpoche or senior monks ban the gods that possess village oracles, this is the word used (tam tangches). When rinpoche, monks or oracles ban "witches" from their victims, the word tam is used. When local spirits are bound to religion, "to work for the welfare of all", as they are installed in village oracles, the same word may be used. In the present context, the word tam is part of a term, damcen, which refers especially to characters described previously as monastery gods occupying the middle of a ranked pantheon as protectors and defenders of the faith. Pehar belongs to this group and his vessel should still bear the mark with which he was subdued (fn 10). Another oath-bound god, lCam-sring, appears at Spituk. He was once a worldly god antagonistic to religion. Ladakhi villagers did not know the details of his past but Nebesky-Wojkowitz suggests that he was defeated:

"when trying to obstruct the journey of the Dalai Lama... to Mongolia in 1575...(he) began to be venerated by Tibetans after bsod nams rgya mtsho (the Dalai Lama) had turned the defeated enemy of Buddhism into a protector of the Buddhist creed. ...

"At first, he lived in the world but he seems to have been promoted to the ranks of the enlightened in recent times" (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975:88)

These histories set the oath-bound protectors apart from the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and holy men who began the work of conversion. While lower-order spirits have been bound by

oath (dam), the supreme figures carry out a legitimate conquest described by the verb dulba ('dul ba). Dul means conquest, conversion, education, civilisation and it is a term used more by monks than villagers (36). It is almost always used in an active sense that refers to the process of carrying out a conquest or education. My discussion of the pantheon focusses on this activity and suggests that 'cham enact the process of creating a civilisation out of spirits and people from the beginnings of time to the present day. It depends upon a reading of the enemy which refers equally to prototypical acts of conquest in the past and today's conquest of spirits that cause trouble and the negative aspects of the individual.

The term 'dul ba applies to people as well as spirits. Langdarma was murdered. The extent to which the apostate can be said to have been incorporated into the Buddhist order depends upon the perspective taken in analysing the ritual murder. Today's audience consider themselves to be participants insofar as they too are subject to this process of 'dul ba which will culminate (for the time being) in their own death rites. While most spirit conversions focus upon the forceful conquest of adversaries, people are subjected to a more gradual process of education as they are taught the dharma. Both processes are, however, described equally by the same term.

Oath-bound gods were once enemies, with no Buddha qualities, antagonistic to religion and unwilling to accept the superior authority of Buddhas. But, they were defeated and joined to the Community (37). 'Cham recall this historical process. When rinpoche, continuing the work of

earlier Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, recite texts containing Buddhas' words and employ teachings handed down from Buddhas, they reassemble the order of gods created through history. This order may be ranked according to the time that has elapsed since conversion; those who were converted long ago stand above more recent converts and the greatest protectors who have left the world rank above those left in this world. As suggested by numerous narratives, defeated gods gradually accept the dharma and, through good work, move up the pantheon. lCam-sring, it seems, was not only once an enemy and subsequently a protector of the doctrine; he may have achieved enlightenment. Although the historical defeat creates a distinctive break in the pantheon between the supreme figures who began the work of civilising the world and the lower ranking gods who were once converted, this division becomes fuzzy over time as the oath-bound perform their religious duties, acquire merit and move up the pantheon. Narratives associated with 'cham show that the pantheon is a representation of history or civilisation; converts are incorporated forcibly at the bottom of the pantheon, they work their way up and, eventually, swell the ranks of the enlightened (38).

The principle of dulba might be said to explain the entire rank order of the pantheon constructed at 'cham, at least from a village perspective. Sacred oaths and actions have been repeated by religious figures through history in order to conquer native spirits (39). At the top are those who are binding enemies and, at the bottom, the most recently bound. At the top there are Buddhas or Buddha-like figures

and, at the bottom, the most recently converted enemies. In-between are previous converts stratified according to their time of entry into civilisation.

The process "binds together" Buddhas and enemies as well as intermediate ranks created through past conquests. Buddhas (in the form of Bodhisattvas or, more literally in the present context, rinpoche) are kept in the world by those which have not yet been converted. If there were no enemies, they might float out of the world altogether, as suggested by Ortner in a rather different context with reference to high ranking gods (40). Enemies provide the raw material for gods; they are fodder for religion. They constitute that metaphorical "last blade of grass" which keeps Bodhisattvas in the world, for Bodhisattvas have renounced enlightenment until that time in the future when they can take the last blade of grass with them.

This view of religion and of history carries an apocalyptic tone. Under the guidance of rinpoche, civilisation is assembled on stage to take in yet another enemy who will one day become a god as other gods leave the world behind. The pantheon expands upwards. The links between "Buddhas" and enemies carry an interesting implication: the whole world will be extinguished, enlightened, at the same moment, when there are no more enemies to be converted. Universal enlightenment lies in the distant future and contrasts with the beginnings of time in Ladakh when there were only enemies living in a state of barbarism. The present lies between these extremes and, I suggest, will continue to do so as long as there are new

enemies to be absorbed into the Buddhist order. The principle of 'dul ba isolates an image of constant transformation (41).

In fact, villagers are only vaguely familiar with the biographies attached to monastery protectors; they are much more interested in the histories of the most recent converts, the gods which appear in monastery oracles. These gods are not normally described as damcen; indeed, monastery oracles are often relegated to a marginal place in the exegesis of 'cham. However, my discussion suggests that the gods which visit monastery oracles may be given a central place in the dramas, as those which have joined the side of religion, yet are still like enemies, recently converted and sometimes physically imprisoned.

As noted above, Brauen suggests that the gods be seen as nature or village gods which have only recently been appropriated by the monastery. This is indeed the principle enacted at the festivals in association with the telling of histories. I suggest that their appropriation be seen not as an isolated event, but as a repetition of every other conquest back to the beginnings of Buddhism. Today, the gods on stage, ranked according to their time of conquest, are engaged in a new battle. The enemy can therefore be seen as an oath-bound god of the future and the civilisation marshalled on stage can be seen to extend beyond the order created through history to a picture of the future.

This interpretation minimises the differences between the various "bodies" that take part at 'cham. It has already been suggested that there are important similarities between the evocation or visualisation of deities in rinpoche and

monks and the incarnation of local gods in oracles (Chapters 3 and 4). However, a further example may make these continuities more evident. A Nyingmapa monk described his part in the festival at Tak Tok:

The cham, he said, features a protector called Tsemara (rTse-ma-ra) who came to Ladakh recently with the present Tibetan rinpoche. Before the festival, the god is invited to a room where clothes have been placed on a wooden model to which offerings have been made. During the drama itself, this monk was to wear these clothes as well as Tsemara's mask with its three eyes and three-cornered hat. The monk prepared himself with various purifications during the preceding week. He was then able to dance as Tsemara with attendants and to carry out the critical task of throwing the storma at the end of the festival for Tsemara is the "owner of the storma". Interestingly, the monk described his part in much the same language that oracles use. He said that he lost his mind; literally, that he had no life and remembered nothing afterwards.

This example shows once more that the differences between "meditation" and "possession" may become blurred. The monk, like oracles, became an empty vessel for the god; his own being had been displaced.

It is equally apparent that a single ritual process links the evocation of gods into human bodies to the evocation of enemies into a dough effigy. Human and manufactured bodies equally provide seats for other powers. "Possession" employs standard ritual techniques and cannot be set apart in terms of the ritual process but only in terms of the general status of ecstatic trance (which is discussed below). According to this interpretation of the oath-bound, civilisation is assembled on stage under the guidance of present day "Bodhisattvas", structured "historically" by the time that has elapsed since conquest. The rank of "other-worldly" powers correlates with the status of the ritual officiant. Rinpoche embody the upper reaches of the

pantheon. Monks embody oath-bound gods in the middle levels as well as tantric priests (the "black hats") and other figures mysterious to the villager. Monastery oracles, most of them male villagers, embody gods that are on the point of becoming civilised. And it is a figure in dough or paper that holds the enemy. In the last section, the ritual murder was presented as the dramatic climax to the day or to the festival as a whole. From another perspective, this murder appears as little more than a dramatic climax. It takes hours to collect all the gods but only a few minutes to dispatch the enemy. Minimally, the long prelude displays the weight of civilisation and suggests that the next conversion will be equally successful. Once civilisation has been properly assembled, there is no doubt that it will be victorious; the conquest of the enemy is a foregone conclusion, an automatic consequence.

My discussion of the oath-bound represents an attempt to generalise beyond the category of monastery protectors to the rank order of the pantheon overall and to one image of civilisation which, I have suggested, is created and set in constant motion by a process of legitimate conquest. I have attempted to show how this process applies to the oath-bound, to the gods possessing monastery oracles and to the enemy itself. I have implied that it is relevant also to the people involved as actors and spectators. In the concluding section, monastery oracles are reconsidered in the light of this picture. It should be emphasised, however, that this perspective is an analytical construct. Whilst it places monastery oracles firmly within the general dramas, it necessarily creates a highly unified picture out of a series

of episodes which are rarely integrated by Ladakhis. Ladakhi villagers do not describe the enemy as a future god, they do not necessarily agree that some of it is saved and they do not relate monastery oracles to the wider drama. The interpretation offered of 'cham makes it possible to integrate what initially seem to be oddly juxtaposed images of Guru Rinpoche's missions, the murder of the enemy king, funerals and the wild antics of monastery oracles. This integration is achieved, however, at the cost of over-systematising a drama that is enjoyed by Ladakhis partly through the disjunction between comedy, ritual drama, oracular frenzy and stately pageantry. As noted (fn 41), it also privileges an optimistic view of history ending in an apocalypse.

6.4 Monastery oracles "in-between"

Ladakhi villagers rarely describe the principle of conquest from the perspective of the higher ranking gods. Monastery protectors are individualised, with names, iconographic forms and biographies. Yet, little is known about them in the village and their past conversion is almost forgotten for they are now part of initiate monastic practice. Villagers point instead to the enemy or, at other times, to monastery oracles. Only the gods that take over oracles are still seen, like their village counterparts, both as enemies and as gods working for the welfare of the world. They are not yet fully integrated into the monastery and their shrines are often found outside, in the hills. Two points are emphasised in conclusion: first, the significance

of the wider religious backcloth that frames the appearance of monastery oracles and, second, the links between monastery and village oracles.

The gods that visit monastery oracles are a bit like (other) gods; they reveal the truth, they give blessings and they sometimes help prepare for the ritual murder. They are also a bit like (other) enemies. They may still bear the mark of subjugation; an impression of thunderbolt on the head or of chains around the legs, and they remain largely on the margins. This position "in-between" suggests that monastery oracles, like their village counterparts, dramatise the process of becoming civilised (captured by the term dulba) rather than the established fact of conversion and victory.

This process has been discovered in the biographies associated with monastery oracles. While the histories are similar to those of (other) oath-bound gods, they are attached to different ritual behaviour on the part of spirits who move in and out of the monastery and of officiants practicing possession. Possession is violent and uncontrolled. Ecstatic trance in Ladakh seems to evoke ambivalence wherever it appears insofar as it connotes the untamed and the at least potentially harmful or demonic. Mary Douglas anticipates this kind of interpretation when she sees bodily control as an expression of social control; to abandon the one is to be free of the other (Douglas 1970a). Ecstatic trance behaviour can not be fully accommodated to the ordered religious hierarchy and so it is dangerous and possibly disruptive. At the same time, the wild behaviour of monastery oracles provides a vitality that might be contained in the monastic hierarchy and provide a force for renewal.

This image of violence and of a lack of control is seen in the relationships established between vessel and spirit. In Ladakh, the vessel is not conscious during trance but it is clear to all that a spirit is moving and speaking in a human body and that some compromise is effected between the spirit and its vessel. The god may harm the person, as in the case concerning the Spituk oracle cited previously (fn 3). Monastery oracles complain of tiredness and pain, like their village counterparts. The dangers of this vitality are, however, balanced against an image of beneficial work for the welfare of all (42).

The position of the gods can be compared to other accounts of middle ranking spirits. Kapferer comments upon the position of *dēvatā* in the Sri Lankan pantheon as a transitional point between deity and demon and between culture and nature (Kapferer 1983:117, following Ames 1964). They provide, he claims, a major point of articulation in the pantheon and embodiments of ambiguity and instability. Trance practiced by monastery oracles at 'cham, I suggest, embodies just this point at which the vital force in enemies begins to be released as they are incorporated into civilisation. The trances provide an aesthetic form which embodies disorder in the process of being ordered (43). As noted previously, the "historical" dimension frames this point in relation to the past, when the spirits were pure enemies and the future, when these spirits will become pure divinity.

One key vision of cham concerns the victory of religion in the world and the consequent renewal of worldly life. In

other words, the long process towards enlightenment is associated with a temporary and contingent renewal that makes it possible for worldly beings to learn religion. This vision has been described both in relation to the religious New Year and the new life that will follow death for villagers. 'Cham bring snowfall and water for the crops (44) and a better life for people. Within the performances themselves, there is little direct focus on the process of renewal. I have stressed the production of food from the bodies of enemies in this context. At some 'cham, comic episodes are associated with renewal (45). Further specific features might be tentatively discerned in the activities of oracles.

Monastery oracles are visited by gods that still belong to the village (46). They might accordingly be related to the activities of (other) village gods which have been seen to play a major role in the agrarian cycle (Chapter 2). In the monastery, it is only possible to discover hints of the productive and creative role of oracles as far as worldly reproduction is concerned simply because chos in the monastery is never closely involved with the messy business of worldly life. During cham performances, it is the conversion of the enemy that is stressed rather than the life that results directly from this conquest. Indeed, Ladakhis said firmly that eating the drag ("enemy") was a custom not written into the religious texts. Although I have continually emphasised how "religion" reproduces the better side of life in this world, this emphasis requires qualification. The renewal of worldly life remains contingent and of a lower order, predicated upon the quest for salvation. Accordingly, oracles are portrayed as ex-

enemies on their way to enlightenment. Nonetheless, there are hints of a vitality in oracles that seems to have little to do with a specifically religious quest and more to do with partially distinct secular concerns.

During 'cham, monastery oracles make prophecies with violence. THEY strike their vessels and other people and THEY spit out blessings in beer, saliva and soemtimes blood. The blood that is spilt, the saliva mixed with beer that is spat out and the beer that is sometimes thrown from the rooves and walls of the monastery courtyard might be analysed as more than a god's blessing. They might be seen as sacrificial substances which actually fertilise the ground. The floor of the shrine room (mgon khang) to Rongtsan in Matho monastery is covered with barley. Apparently, the grain is brought after the harvest and, the following spring, some is used as seed for the lands of the king (Dargyay 1985:56). In the past, it is said, this grain was also used for the pots in the royal lha tho (Dargyay 1985:61). Oracles also predict the future of the year's crops and, at Stok, THEY distribute food. Embodied gods generally change their own shrines and are seen explicitly to renew them as well as predict the future. These features lead Dargyay to emphasise the links between oracles, kings and fertility in her conclusion to an article on Matho:

"Each religious phenomenon taken individually does not disclose anything remarkable, but when put together they tell a coherent story of gods epitomizing the fertile land with its abundant wildlife whose supreme guardian and lord is the king." (Dargyay 1985:63-4)

These few comments suggest that the ambiguities and instabilities associated with the religious position of

oracles' gods can be extended to their involvement in life itself. The tentative suggestions made about gods who live most of the year outside the monastery and who are closely associated with predictions about food and life in the coming year remain speculative. However, they point to more uncontroversial associations between the gods that visit monastery and village oracles.

It is suggested that monastery oracles construct an image comparable to that associated with village oracles, namely the building of a village religion discussed at the end of Chapters 4 and 5. Monastery oracles crystallise the unreconciled nature of that position in-between, in the present day, neither fully demonic nor fully divine; neither in the village nor in the monastery. Only with time and with movement up the pantheon and into the monastery will there be a reconciliation and by that time they will be a true part of civilisation. The conversion of village oracles was seen in terms of the conquest of village demons and village problems. Monastery oracles have been discussed in the context of their appearances at cham and it has been suggested that conversion is portrayed as a central Buddhist concern during these dramas. The narratives, then, show that where oracles are today is but a moment in a constant series of transformations that will become fixed and still in the distant future with universal enlightenment. Narratives and trance behaviour together give monastery oracles a central position in dramatising the motive force of dulba, which has made a civilisation out of people and spirits and which will keep that civilisation alive, in motion, as long as there are new

enemies to be conquered and absorbed. This process of conquest brings new gods to the pantheon and new life to the world.

Insofar as the divide between monastery and household orients perceptions of Ladakhi ritual, it also obscures important continuities between trance practice in and out of the monastery. Village oracles have also been seen "in-between". Initial and continually reaffirmed associations with the demonic are balanced against gradually constructed links with the monastery and with religion. This life trajectory is strikingly similar to the biographies of gods possessing monastery oracles. The vessels and spirits of village oracles are also "oath-bound", living out the process of dulba in the village context. Although village oracles attract much more scepticism than their monastery counterparts, a single model can be used to explain the dramatic action at cham and the making of a village oracle. A unitary vision can be applied towards the process of civilising people and spirits in the world (47).

The differences between life history and biography are as important as the similarities. I have suggested that the ambiguities associated with monastery oracles are sorted out over a long time scale with the consolidation of civilisation. But, this conversion is a much more certain affair than the very recent and partial transformation of the gods in village oracles. The histories of both types of oracle are concerned with conquest and the transformation of converts. Both types of god are moving slowly towards enlightenment but the timing is different: the monastery gods have travelled further and they are consequently ranked

higher. They are more fully civilised. Moreover, monastery oracles appear in the midst of great monastery gods, in the world and beyond, and the supreme figures of chos. As noted with reference to the enemy, victory is a foregone conclusion of the process of constructing a Buddhist civilisation on stage. The precarious position of those possessed and in-between, which is so evident in the village, becomes part of a wider fabric in the monastery, from the perspective of a lay audience. On the one hand, it is known that monastery oracles will continue to join the side of religion and so their position in-between represents just one moment in the march of civilisation. On the other hand, the position of all is seen in-between, between one life and the next or between life and enlightenment. The distinctive aspects of possession, which dramatise the unstable and ambiguous position of those in the middle, are therefore located in a larger framework that applies to all who live in the world.

Once links between processes inside and outside the monastery have been made, it is possible to recognise the centrality of this principle of dulba to many aspects of village life that have been discussed. For example, victims of "witches", who are "possessed" (zhugste), can be compared to oracles in very general terms. One point of entry is provided by an interesting episode at one of the festivals. It has already been suggested that the audience also participate at 'cham and the following illustration provides further support for this reading.

I saw nothing at Hemis of an episode that was described to me by several people. I was told that monks dress up as "witches" (bamg) and women sitting around the courtyard become hysterical or lose consciousness at the sight of

them. In other words, they are possessed. It is assumed that these people are already victims of jealousy from other people. They may not have known that they were affected but the power of the dancers causes the witches to materialise.

These bamo are not mentioned in other accounts of the Hemis 'cham, with the exception of Kaplanian:

"Ensuite ... quatre bhamo. Celles-ci, au masque brun-noir, sont chauves. Habituellement mauvaises et craintes surtout pour leur pouvoir de posséder les corps, ces sorcières sont ici soumises au gyapo qui les tient en son pouvoir. Elles portent dans une main des petits personnages articulés, de couleur." (Kaplanian 1981:297) (48)

It is more likely that monks are incarnating oath-bound gods (dam can) but this account shows that ordinary people who seem, at first, distant from the central action, join in and become "possessed" like those on stage. The power of great gods in rinpoche and monks is seen to evoke "demons" in some of those watching. These demons are then "converted"; they are liberated and, as the dough effigy is cut up, executed. Women victims emerge from Hemis tshes bcu cured. This example suggests further that the customary distinction made between rituals inside and outside the monastery become blurred for Ladakhis themselves in some contexts. Normally, witchcraft possession is seen as an affair of women in the village. Gongmo zhugshes is not discussed in the context of religion (chos) by Ladakhis. Nonetheless, this episode at Hemis suggests that the divisions are conventional and arbitrary; gongmo zhugshes can be accommodated to wider discussions of 'cham if only in the light of this single episode. Younger women too are in the process of being converted and civilised, most obviously in relation to the household but also in relation to that long path towards enlightenment.

If the three types of Ladakhi zhugshes are related to the central action of 'cham, it can be suggested, baldly, that monastery oracles are seen after conquest while village oracles are seen during conquest and those involved in witchcraft are seen beforehand. With luck and help, treatment will ensure that witches and victims become part of the wider order of transformation in the household and civilisation generally.

Much of this thesis has been concerned with the role of village oracles, which has been explored in terms of the links between different types of possession (zhugshes). My attempt to describe the general place of village oracles in Ladakh has caused me to neglect other important topics. The next chapter turns directly, for the first time, to everyday activities and common treatments.

CHAPTER 7

VILLAGE ORACLES AT WORK: THE EXTRACTION OF SUBSTANCE

7.1 Introduction

In the last two chapters, village oracles have been elucidated with reference to village affliction and monastic ritual. All three types of zhugshes in Ladakh have been characterised as privileged moments dramatising the process of transformation from the worse side of life in the world towards the better. This moment is, however, dramatised most completely in the life histories and practices of village oracles who sit precariously in-between a more definitively demonic possession, induced by "witches", and a more thorough-going divine possession, captured in the vessels of monastery oracles.

The discussion so far has focused primarily on local spirits. Yet, it may be recalled that village oracles work more often with bad substances than spirits; they deal with pollution, poison and bad magic more often than zhugshes. In this chapter, the everyday work of village oracles is explored. As the discussion focuses upon the body, it should be emphasised that neither oracles nor their clients make any radical distinction between bodily and spiritual problems. Ladakhi village beliefs show none of the individualism and dualism associated with a Western, Cartesian tradition even though many beliefs and practices discussed in this thesis suggest that bodies of various kinds can be separated from the souls and powers that they temporarily hold.

Village oracles deal with problems. Apart from the occasional periodic ritual such as the renewal of a village shrine and the revelation of truths hidden to people, they

deal almost exclusively with what has failed in the normal course of village life. By far the majority of their cases involve the extraction of bad "food", as shown by the introductory descriptions of trance in Chapter 4. A more detailed account has not been given previously for two reasons. First, as noted, my concern to document the role and position of village oracles within the wider context of Ladakhi ritual has led me to examine the relationships between different forms of possession in most detail. Second, it may be apparent from the initial accounts in Chapter 4 that the simplest trance is extremely difficult to understand without extensive knowledge of Ladakhi ritual and social life. For practical reasons, it has been thought best to keep more detailed accounts until this point. These will be simplified as far as possible and new terms for rituals and diagnoses will be kept to a minimum.

7.2 Trance

The following descriptions are organised in terms of the trance "session" and the treatment offered to clients by oracles in trance (1). Clients generally consult village oracles as individuals but it is also apparent from accounts in Chapters 4 and 5 that visitors are treated collectively. Supplicants are not differentiated during the opening and closing periods of a trance when they are often collectively harangued with a sermon and blessed. Sermons are seen both as "religious teaching" (see, for example, appendix 4 and the extracts from the chomo's trance cited in Chapter 5) and a kind of "fool's commentary". They attract a mixture of awe, mystery and, afterwards, scepticism. Blessings are

frequently received by all. The thunderbolt blessing may be administered with violence. Grain or rice is also often given or thrown around a room; this is to be cooked in water that will be drunk as a "purgative" of all bad things that have not already been expelled.

Treatment that reaches the whole room cannot be wholly divorced from individual consultations, first, because of the mood generated by incarnate gods and, second, because it is hard to remain a spectator. Even if an individual does not intend to approach the oracle, gods often force treatment on the unwilling or the uninvolved.

Some general aspects of individual treatment have been mentioned. It may be recalled that oracles are specialists in referral (Chapter 4). When oracles name a problem, they suggest a remedy which frequently involves a visit to a given specialist. In this way, they negotiate a particular image of the division of labour associated with problem solving. As noted previously, the performance of rituals of crisis also seems to be related to periodic ritual cycles insofar as particular solutions are regularised by incorporation into the annual repertoire (2). However, few overall associations could be discovered between recommendations for particular rituals and the cure of particular symptoms (some exceptions are discussed below). As Ladakhis say, similar symptoms are mediated by the wider environment affecting the individual and there are anyway 84,000 (with variations) different ways of executing an action in the world.

A number of trances are described in order to illustrate the range of treatments offered and the individual idiosyncracies associated with particular practitioners. For reasons of space, only a few examples can be given (see also appendix 4). These include trances of a relatively new oracle so that the differences between recently and long established practitioners can be seen. Passages that I could not interpret (with the help of a Ladakhi friend) are marked.

a) Three trances with Ayu lhamo

All three trances took place in the oracle's house and all three have been mentioned before: two were primarily concerned with the initiation of the Choglomsar novice (described in Chapter 4) and the third included the case of witchcraft possession mentioned in Chapter 5.

i) 13.6.82.

Dolma's initiation was not very successful. Her gods had come back without permission from the teacher, Ayu lhamo: they had been banned so that Dolma could take her exams. After the two lhamo had prayed, singing together, for five or ten minutes with bell and drum, Ayu oracle spoke in her characteristic high-pitched voice, very quickly but in short spurts, punctuated by the Tibetan style refrain, "have you understood?" Dolma said nothing to her clients though SHE did speak to the senior oracle during teaching (as described in Chapter 4). Both extracted substances, each dealt with about 20 people. At the end of the trance, THEY sang and prayed together and together THEY blessed the audience, one by one. Ayu oracle spoke and Dolma threw a blessing of barley and mustard seeds at the audience.

The kitchen was packed with people; a cosmopolitan atmosphere with Ladakhis from a number of regions, Indians and Tibetans, myself the only foreigner but not out of place; a close, smoky atmosphere; the family working hard to separate oracles from audience and supply the former with incense, water and fire; a rushed feeling, a sense of pressure, as the clients were hustled forward one after another, no more than two minutes spent on each. It was only at Ayu lhamo's house that there were ever so many people from so many places, who were dealt with at such speed. Typically, the oracle spoke to less than half the people she treated. On this occasion, SHE spoke to 14 while SHE and Dolma together removed "pollution" (jig or tip) from about 40. About 15 individuals did not go

forward. It is impossible to know who is a spectator during trance for there is no firm line dividing client from onlooker. Many intend to ask for help and are later too scared to ask. Many intend to stand back but are pushed or dared forward by their companions.

The two oracles sat side by side, facing outwards, once they had finished praying. The audience faced them in a semi-circle, the front rows sitting on carpets behind tables, the ones behind squatting, those at the back standing and moving around. The first client was called with a high-pitched "ci dug?", "what is it?" and a look around the room. It may be recalled that the oracle's mouth is covered so great attention is focused on the eyes, where the first signs of trance often appear in rolling eyes or an unfocused gaze. The first questions are invited by a more piercing, rooted look around.

There was a shuffling, a murmur, and the first man came up. He had a scarf which he draped on the oracle's crown. He then sat on his knees, mumbled an explanation that I could not hear and, in response to a gesture from Ayu oracle, uncovered his stomach while the oracle bent over him and sucked something out through a stick. SHE spat into a bowl on the altar. SHE said nothing but waved the man away. He tucked in his shirt and went back to his place. There was a plate for money on the floor but I did not see whether the man made his contribution then or later. About Rs 400 was collected that day. The scarf was left on the oracle's crown for a while but, as each client made his or her offering and as the crown and the oracle's face were gradually hidden in white scarves, the oracle's son-in-law removed them, to a pole on the carpet where the oracles were sitting.

Ii, pollution, had been extracted from the man, his treatment was finished. He was followed by others, who made their offerings to one of the two oracles, knelt before them, bared their stomachs, suffered the extraction and returned to their places. The basic or standard extraction is elaborated in various ways. At this particular trance, substances were extracted from the stomach, from around the eyes and the channels (tga). Both oracles removed the scarf from their mouths to suck out substances, either with their mouths or through a stick. The senior oracle also sometimes placed a "thunderbolt" or the yellow marker in her "prayer beads" ('phreng ba) on the affected spot before sucking from it. Some of the more extensive treatments given can be seen in the following examples with Ayu oracle as the officiant.

A boy from Leh came forward. I could not hear what he said. Ayu oracle sucked something from his stomach with her stick. SHE put it in the bowl of water and poked at it. It was a piece a paper which was gradually unrolled to quite a length. People around me said it was shugu, paper, that is, sorcery or "bad magic" (3), a substance that had been given to the boy by someone who wished him harm. The paper was red-coloured and my companion said it may have had writing on it once.

A child from a Leh suburb was brought forward, complaining of bad eyes. The oracle put her prayer beads upon his eyes and extracted something which SHE spat into the bowl. The extract from the child was not named nor prodded, it lay as black slime in the bowl. The child had not been deliberately harmed; he had fallen ill "naturally" (through pollution).

A woman from Leh had pollution extracted from her stomach. She was told that she was suffering from the pollution (tip) of lu. She should feast the lu.

An Indian woman complained of a painful leg. The oracle extracted something from her leg and told her that the pain was due to cold. SHE gave her an "amulet" (shrunga), a knotted scarf, and told her that her husband's transfer would proceed smoothly. An Indian man, her companion, complained of a bad stomach and, after the usual treatment, was told that he had eaten too much in the army.

A Tibetan man said he was ill (zumo yongs). This too was tip. A substance was extracted from his stomach. He should read a hagiography of the Dalai Lama and raise prayer flags (lungsta). The oracle's god remarked, "I come from the same valley as you", in other words, SHE too was a refugee from Tibet.

Others who complained simply of illness (zumo), like the Tibetan, also had tip taken from their stomachs but the illnesses were explained in various ways. To one, the oracle said:

"I forget what I said before (this, to a pregnant woman from Leh who had previously visited the oracle and could not remember what she had been told). But, you have ghosts (shinde) running up and down your house."

The god is very angry and beats the woman with her stick:

"I told you to do shangi dulzok (sp?) but you may do changbu gyaltsa (chang bu brgya rtsa) instead. These (storma) you should throw in the water or the cremation ground (4)."

Ayu oracle told another woman from Leh to pray and make prostrations. SHE told a woman from a Leh suburb to read a text "to clear the road of hindrances" (parchad lamsel), (bar chad lam gsal) which would help her rebirth. SHE told her friend from the same suburb, to go to a (Western style) doctor rather than an amchi for medical help.

There were a few who came before Ayu oracle who had nothing taken from their bodies. Near the beginning of the trance, the oracle addressed a woman from the same village who asked about the nature of her illness:

"You quarrel too much with your neighbours."

The woman asked, "What shall I do?"

The oracle replied, "You send "spies" to each other and you always quarrel. There's nothing to do but to stop. Has your son died? Do you hear him running up and down and shouting at night? He won't be reborn for 500 years because you're "mixing with your hands" (5). People who give poison won't be reborn either. I'm not keeping this a secret. I'm not a "house god" (khyim lha) but a god of the level of Buddha (Sangyas gi sa kosa tabkhan in). The first (god) is ..." (the oracle tells of some of her gods and where they came from before she addresses the next client).

Another woman from Lower Ladakh is beaten and accused of giving poison. The god says that if she does it again, SHE (the god) will punish her. Poisoning is a major theme of the day for the oracle also addresses the room at large on this subject towards the beginning and end of the trance. At one point, SHE looks around and begins to declaim:

"I'll kill that person who's brought poison (tuk) into my house. But not until you get home."

The vessel's son says, "Show me who it is."

SHE replies, "This time I'll not tell. But, if you bring poison here again, you'll not reach home alive. You may not know me but I'm Lhashrin Tsemara. This work isn't good. If it were a tipa, tipa, then it would be like a black shadow, you can't know what you do. But, with poisoning, you know. You even use poison against outsiders. You put poison in the higher water which is drunk by someone downstream. You wish dysentery (lit: blood-diarrhoea) on people. You stop the channels (rtsa) in their eyes. You may not be reborn for 500 years."

There were three other cases. Two concerned truths hidden to people and revealed by the god. The god advised her vessel's daughters on their schooling, recommending one school rather than another. SHE also revealed the truth about a theft of Rs 70 from a tea shop in a neighbouring village. A boy who sometimes stayed there and helped the Indian owner asked:

"Who stole money from the hotel?"

The god said, "Oh, you come to check up (6). You took the money yourself and gave it to somebody. You enemy (drag)."

The last case concerned the husband of the Sabu oracle. He brought an ill cow to be treated. The cow was tethered outside. The oracle suddenly got up and went out, carrying her thunderbolt, bell and drum. Her pupil followed. Others came too, one with incense, some to watch. The cow was held. The god sucked from its neck and flank and then raced back to the house in a fury. No-one had brought the bowl for her to spit in. Inside, SHE spat out an item which I did not see though I was told that it was a "needle", khap (7). SHE spoke to the man inside about his wife:

"She must make prostrations. She must recite (two kinds of "prayers"). If she doesn't recite these mantra (ngags), she

won't be able to help people or animals. You need more cleanliness at home. I'm a lha with a palace. (SHE gives some names). What did the teacher tell the lha (the man's wife)? The lhamo hasn't taken the lha. How can she look after people or animals?"

The man replied, "She is not making prostrations."

The god says, "If she's not prostrating herself, if she's not saying mani, how can she look after the welfare of animals and people? If she doesn't learn with a master, then she must go to another and then another."

The man interrupts, "She won't go."

Ayu oracle explains, "No-one has given her bad magic (jadu). There is no pollution (tip) or bad magic (ngan chos) in her. She is just lazy. If she doesn't make good relations with her teacher, perhaps the god will become difficult. That is Shemul Gyamo (the god afflicting this woman). Shemul Gyamo also foretold the future. She made revelations about the end of the world. She said there would be wooden houses at Melong Thang (a place nearby where the army are currently stationed). At T.P., there would be a gate. On the Indus, there would be an iron bridge and a Buddhist school close by. There would be a palace for the Dalai Lama. All these things have come to pass. What is the reason (for all this)? Do you know? It is the time that the world will end, the time of Sangyas Oshrung ('Od-srung)." SHE is interrupted by a question.

At the end of the trance, when the two oracles had been singing in prayer for a few minutes but before they had begun to bless/cure the audience with the thunderbolt, Ayu oracle drew the event to a close in a high-pitched and rapid voice, to the accompaniment of her small drum. It was nearly 4 hours since SHE had first spoken that day. SHE said:

"Have you understood? If you're Muslim, make alam; if you're Buddhist, make tarchok; according to your religion (8). These are bad times (kalpa tama). It is the end of the world. Stranger meeting stranger in the street beats him. One man drinks another's blood."

More was said by the oracle, not just to her pupil who was the centre-piece of the trance, but also to clients and the room at large. However, the rest was unintelligible to me, to my Ladakhi companion and, I suspect, to everyone else. In concentrating upon what the oracle said, I have perhaps biased the description towards the level of discourse. I should stress, then, that clients and gods were speaking for only half the time or less and, in the majority of cases, it was the extraction of substance that drew attention; the materialisation of bad magic, poison, pollution or, in one case, metal. My overwhelming impression was of two lines of people, shuffling forwards, giving scarves, kneeling and receiving treatment; shuffling forward again, kneeling and receiving a blessing. The scene was bounded by the altars, stove and the movements of the oracles as well as the sounds

and rhythms of drums, bells, strange voices and songs that were almost always high and eerie. Ayu oracle had some difficulty in coming out of trance, hiccuping, reaching towards her back and arching it. Water was poured on the nape of her neck and finally she slumped forward on her knees (9).

ii) 27.7.82.

On this occasion, the Choglomsar novice received another, more successful, initiation. SHE separated gods and demons and received permission to extract jig on the son of her teacher's vessel, as discussed in Chapter 4.

The arrangement of the kitchen was similar to the one described above but there was less of a crowd for it was not Sunday. There were about 35 people. 28 were treated and all but three had substances taken from them. The novice, Dolma, extracted pollution from just two clients. There was one Indian family, 2 women and 1 man from Da Hanu (10) and approximately equal numbers of Balti (Shiites) and Buddhist locals. Clients approached Ayu oracle after the novice had successfully received permission to extract substances.

The trance was opened and closed with commentaries from gods that possessed the teacher oracle. First, the two women washed at one end of the kitchen. They came into trance, prayed and offered a joint "golden drink" (serkyem). The monk passed a storma over their heads, which was thrown outside, and went to work upstairs in the offering room. Then, Ayu oracle took a glass of beer. SHE stood, with a scarf draped over her left arm, the beer in her right hand. SHE danced:

"These are bad times. Times when people do not believe in birth or death taboos (panga, ronga)."

Movements and expression change. The oracle is possessed by a new god, a crow:

"Crawk, crawk. (An incomprehensible passage.) The water and rain will come in time. Perform an offering (gyasol (11))."

There are further changes and the dance becomes quicker and more fluent. There is another god:

"Do you understand? (Another incomprehensible remark.) I'm not a gongmo or a bamo or anything. I'm Tsemara. Don't think I'm like a gongmo. I have to dance. I am a protector of religion, Sheza Traktung (flesh eater, blood drinker). I am the choskyong (religious protector) Sheza Traktung. (More that is impossible to understand)."

Then, Dolma's initiation began.

During the initiation, there were further episodes of this kind, when the teacher gods proclaimed their religious status and spoke of the times we live in. For example, there was a

brief altercation between a god and the monk present when the former spoke of prophecies which had come to pass during our time, the time of Sangyas Odpagmed. The monk interrupted to tell the god that this was not so. The god continued:

"It's the time of Guru Rinpoche. Nothing will be accomplished without Guru Rinpoche. He can solve any problems. All the protectors (choskyong shrungma) may not stay in the village now, they may live in the mountains. Now it is Guru Rinpoche's time, so everyone has to say many Benza guru. Now is the time for the opening of the Chang Shambala gate."

The monk still does not believe her.

"You go and make an enquiry. If I'm not right, don't call me a god, call me a demon. I'm going now. You (that is, Dolma) may also go and practice looking after the welfare of people and animals."

There were songs and prayers in what members of the audience described as Tibetan. The novice came out of trance but the teacher continued to speak as SHE took her clothes off. There was a description of the Potala in Lhasa, of the Dalai Lama who undertakes both religious and kingly rule. The audience was told that all the monks are quarrelling amongst themselves and using swords and knives. The god became very angry at this point. SHE referred to a current political dispute:

"The rinpoche of Hemis sent three letters to the monastery. (Incomprehensible passage.) These monks are cheating so much that he (the rinpoche) is coming from the direction of Darjeeling. The monks don't obey the advice of the "lamas of the three times" (12) these days. You've got a god (SHE says to the monk present) but you have made a ban."

Ayu oracle finished taking her god-clothes off and came out of trance, again with a marked effort.

Most of the time had again been taken up with the extraction of substances. On this occasion, the teacher oracle beat those who did not kneel before her quickly enough. The pipe was used for most cases and the substance extracted was generally spat into a small bowl, filled with water which was emptied into a larger bowl. The smaller one was shown to the audience. Ash was occasionally added from a third bowl.

Ayu oracle spoke to several clients after they had suffered extraction. SHE asked one man from Leh whether his visit to the hot springs last year had been useful. SHE told him to go again, with an amchi. SHE told a Balti that the tip he suffered was due to lu, he should throw a lustor. SHE talked to the couple from Da Hanu at some length, asking them why they were not following their traditional customs (lugs ngalma), why they were eating meat and eggs, why they did not believe in their gods. SHE beat the man and continued:

"Do you understand? Keep your outside and inside very clean. If you don't believe in your traditions, you will have a very difficult time. You people are very jealous and do harm to each other. Some of you bring lama panpon (13) and do bad things for religion. Why do you do this? These things aren't good. None is allowed."

SHE told an Indian couple that their work would go well. They were to throw a storma. SHE asked them why they were lying, they did not come from Nepal but from B. (an Indian town near the Nepali border). The couple had brought their baby for treatment. The god gave a knotted scarf, containing barley, as an amulet and said that the baby should not be washed. Then, SHE gave the three of them some uncooked rice. They were to cook the rice the next morning and drink the cooking water. All tip would be finished.

Another Indian woman was told to go to a doctor for an injection. The cause of my companion's condition was explained: poison had reached him from the south and it had been given by a student who said "brother, brother" (khagale) very respectfully and gave him tea in his home.

A further three people had nothing extracted from their bodies though they came before the oracle and were addressed by the god. There was a woman from the same village and she was told, "it is not a good idea, why are you thinking of this?" The god was angry. I could not understand the consultation but my friend, who knew the client well, thought that she wanted contraception but did not dare to ask the oracle's advice. There was a Balti woman who was beaten. The god mimed the action of writing and thus accused the woman of practising bad magic ("giving paper", shugu tangches). Finally, there was the man from Hemis, mentioned in the last chapter. Ayu oracle confirmed that the man was an oracle and attributed his problems to the monks and to poison.

iii) 25.10.82.

It was a Monday morning and Ayu lhamo agreed to go into trance because clients had arrived: there were 10 women, 7 men and 2 children from Lower Ladakh, Purig and local villages. Most were Ladakhi but there was one Kashmiri who lived in the Housing Colony below Leh and an Indian woman from Choglomsar. The god spoke about 12 of the 16 cases and she extracted substances from 13. One of the women was a zhugskhan, a possessed person, who has been described in Chapter 5. The oracle also spoke generally about the state of the world.

Some of the substances extracted were clearly more serious than a cumulative pollution. The god spoke of tuk (poison) in one case and jadu (bad magic) in another. The case of "poison" concerned a man from Lower Ladakh who complained of painful wax in his ear. The god sucked through her stick from his sinuses, neck and wrists, explaining that poison

(tuk) had caused illness but the man should consult a doctor too. In this example, there is nothing to show for sure that the man has not fallen ill "naturally".

The second case, which involved bad magic, was a complicated one involving an old couple from Purig. The god began by saying that the grandmother was ill because of jadu. SHE took her stick and extracted a long, black piece of paper from the woman's stomach. SHE took this paper on her stick, poured water over it and showed its full length to all in a small cup before throwing it on to a large enamel plate to which ashes were added. SHE turned to the man:

"A tsanlha has come to you but you haven't treated it properly. Why not?"

The man did not answer. I learned later that he came from a household traditionally associated with a Mulbek god. Ayu oracle said that the grandmother was suffering from bad karma (lanchaks). SHE shook barley on her small drum and read the signs (mo tabches). SHE told the couple to do one exorcistic rite and one offering (14). That was all for the time being. After the blessing at the end of the trance, however, the old man asked again, "What shall we do? Nowadays, all our fortune has gone." The god read the signs on her drum and told them again to do two (different) rites (15). Someone wrote down these names for the couple who seemed to think that they would have to sponsor all four rites.

The oracle advised and harangued some of her clients. SHE told one woman to go to a doctor and another to go to an amchi. She told one woman to make a pilgrimage and an offering or to make a statue of the goddess Dolma. A soldier was told to do a rite appropriate to his position in the twelve-year cycle (16). The mother-in-law of the zhugskhan was told simply to keep very warm. A man was told that he had been attacked by the eyes of a timo. He should get an amulet (tishrung).

The very first "client" that the god had chosen was a dzo, tethered outside by a father and son from Sabu. A "needle" was extracted from the dzo in the manner described previously: the oracle rushed outside, sucked from the animal's flank, breathed incense into her mouth and spat out the substance.

Two women from Sabu asked about the future. One had lost something, it was not clear what. She was told, "it is somewhere up-down, you will not recover it." The other woman asked whether it would be alright if she went to see the "lady" L., in other words, would her request for political help be successful. She was obviously very concerned about the answer for she asked the oracle twice and, on both occasions, the god replied, "yes, it will be alright".

Ayu oracle's manner of working is illustrated further through a comparison with other oracles.

b) Skarra chomo

The Skarra oracle has been described as an exceptional village oracle, who was initiated through a journey to death and back and trained by Bakula rinpoche (Chapter 4). Her trance equipment is distinctive. She wears many-coloured materials hanging from her crown and she rarely covers her mouth with a scarf. She also wears pieces of silk which hang down to her shoulder, joined by a thread over the crown. The strips of material, she says, form hair for the gods for, being a nun, she has no hair of her own. The oracle is relatively easy to understand in trance though not all of the gods speak. As one god departs, a hiccup or sneeze indicates the arrival of another. The nun rarely practices; during my entire stay, I do not suppose she went into trance more than ten times and, on all those occasions, she had only a handful of clients. The vessel refuses to practice, she is always turning people away. I only saw the nun working twice, once at a house in Gongma on the evenings of 4. and 5.4.82, and once at her own house on 7.5.82. Extensive extracts have already been given from the first event (Chapter 5) and so only a few comments about the overall structure of the the trance will be given. The second event will be described in more detail.

It may be recalled that the nun castigates all other village oracles, she says that they are counterfeits for they extract substances from people and animals. The following examples show how the nun performs and recommends rituals (skurim) instead of extractions.

i) 4-5.4.82.

The first evening consisted primarily of a sermon lasting 3-4 hours. It was given partly for the benefit of myself and three Germans I had brought who were anxious to see a trance. Thus, the nun gave a lesson in religion for beginners. SHE spoke of the triple jewel, the killing of animals, the ten sins and the ten virtues. SHE spoke of death and rebirth, our souls and our borrowed bodies. SHE spoke of prayers and compassion. Her eloquent and accessible sermon on religion, with the standard proverbs, aphorisms, myths and stories, was suddenly given a twist as the god moved into song or dance, or a strange recital about the past and future. Thus, the ghomo spoke cryptically of the evils of tobacco; SHE told of the blood of devil women, who vomited a snake and an elephant and, it seems, brought tobacco into the world (see Chapter 5), just before SHE spoke of the importance of understanding religion in typical teaching style (see appendix 4).

During the evening, gods gave general advice to those present as well as one specific solution to a neighbour there. It may be recalled that SHE told the boy how to cure his spots by resolving a quarrel about land and visiting the hot springs (Chapter 5). Then, the gods said that it was impossible to work or to listen in the polluted atmosphere of smoke, onions and garlic. In this way, SHE built up to the second trance which was far more private, indeed, exclusive to the household, and which focused upon the throwing away of bad things. The rite performed involved mikha, "harmful gossip" specifically. This second trance was more elaborate because of the preparations, the performance of the mikha ritual and also the structure of discourse between gods occupying the nun's body at different times.

The nun spent an hour praying, making prostrations, gossiping and preparing the storma. There were two dough men with hats, one seated and one standing. There were also two women, one with three arms and one with a beak which was described as the mikha storma. "Harmful gossip" takes the shape of a person with a beak or, sometimes, the entire head of a bird. The nun recited from a text which seemed to be a summary of the mikha text, telling of all the bad things attached to a man who was sent to one place and then another as directed by Guru Rinpoche until he was eventually removed and sent far away (17).

Eventually, the nun went into trance, signalled by a sneeze and the question:

"What kind of sorrowness do you have, shinde, sondre, bamo, tsan (see Chapter 5 on these terms), gyalgonq ("king demons"), mitunqe dra ("quarrelling enemies"), all of the work done by men in this bad world that is discordant, and all bad things?"

SHE makes everyone bow down before the altar. There is a song and a few gods appear, one of whom reads more of the text. The storma are thrown.

The trance begins on a high, excited note with the throwing of storma. Then, there are many diagnoses, discussions, songs and sermons. The diagnoses are accompanied by a sense of privacy, of things said that will remain within those four walls. Thus, the man responsible for harming the youngest brother is eventually named. The god says to the brother that he knows someone who is jealous of him. The man suggests a name. The god agrees but adds that there is a monk too who is specified in dismay, as a close friend; one who, the oracle says, sold him a watch.

The gods also refer to each other. For example, one rather fierce god was followed by a peaceful god, who called herself a khandoma (mkha' 'gro ma, a high-ranking goddess) and commented upon the previous god's appearance:

"Don't you understand what SHE said? You must believe her. SHE came and spoke to you because you sometimes feel sorrow, sometimes, compassion; sometimes, you are afraid and, sometimes, sympathetic. SHE said about you, S., that you are sometimes aware of danger, and sometimes you see people eating meat after suffocating animals and then you feel compassion. So that's why the god came and spoke to you. ..."

The nun diagnoses "medical" problems in words that are more commonly associated with amchi. Other oracles focus particularly on intrusions or undigested substances in the body but the nun speaks also of illnesses involving an imbalance of the three humours or of heat and cold both inside and outside the body. On the second evening, for example, SHE says to father's sister, after listing her symptoms:

"It's because of blood, serum (lit: yellow water) and bile. These are the main reasons. A person is made of bone, blood, bile, "phlegm" (patkan, bad kan (18)) and sometimes (these substances) increase and decrease out of proportion with each other. ..."

She tells N.:

"... You're also ill because of the weakness of your heart and you're ill inside and cold in the upper half of your body. This illness is because of blood and wind. ..."

The gods focus on the corporate household as well as the individual members and THEY comment briefly on the village as well. Towards the end of the evening, the oracle speaks of another household who, SHE says, have damaged the walls of her clients' house. Their cow had died:

"The mother isn't good for the children and the children aren't good for the mother. The mother goes like a tiṃo to her son and the son goes like a tiṃo to his mother, invisibly."

The trance is gently drawn to a conclusion after the

distribution of special amulets, called khandoma, formed of five coloured threads which had been wound round the thunderbolt and which were then cut into sections, a piece for everyone. The evening was protracted by further questions about the family. The final note was struck with a wish of power and fortune for the house and a last reminder that there remained one or two questions.

ii) 7.5.82

It was the fifteenth of the third month, Buddha's true birthday, so the oracle said, and the gods came especially to make their personal devotions. This summary focuses upon the central part of the trance, which was again based on a ritual performance more commonly associated with monks or astrologers than oracles. On this occasion, changbu gyaltsa (chang bu rgya rtsa) was staged.

It was evening. We were late and had to stay in the kitchen. We could see an Indian man, clutching a scarf, outside the locked door of the nun's glass room. After a few minutes, he was called inside for what was obviously a private talk. We could not follow the other comings and goings but, when we were called into the glass room half an hour later, the Indian was sitting close to the oracle with a Ladakhi friend. Three women sat in front and the nun's daughter/interpreter sat beside her, to her right. As we came in, we heard how the Indian's problems were to be attributed to his personal god (rangi lha, "own god"(19)).

The storma was on the floor. It was simply a bowl containing lots of changbu which, it may be recalled, are lumps of dough squeezed within a clenched fist and passed over the body to collect defilement. Although the oracle said that this rite was for the benefit of everyone in the house, it was clearly organised primarily for one client, a woman from Lower Ladakh. This woman received a khapko blessing from the god, who then felt her stomach and heart for a lump. She had illness in her bones, her head, her bile. Worst of all was the "heart pain", nyingka. She needed fire treatment from an amchi but not until the autumn for fear that the heat (given in the hotter time of year) would harm her. There were negotiations about the cause of illness. Was it a noise she'd heard? Was it a timo? There was also talk of food restrictions for herself and her child. Then, the woman was asked to put blood with her changbu in the central plate. She took a companion out of the room with her, holding a splinter of glass, and returned with a piece of dough around her hand. The god asked again about the woman's illness. The latter bared her breast. The god took a thunderbolt in her left hand, with which SHE had been about to bless her client, and held it as if it were a dagger. SHE struck her patient hard, praying the while. The woman was treated in this violent fashion three times in all. Later the same god returned and pushed the woman hard on her back and, again, on her stomach. At this point, someone rushed forward to support her. My friend said that the god was treating the nyingka. On the third occasion that this god appeared, SHE

hit the woman on her head with the thunderbolt with what perhaps was a divine curative power. The god said: "Anyway, most of your illness and most of the danger from the time will be cured by the (changbu gyaltsa)."

This god, who had pushed and beaten the patient, then circled the storma and the patient, praying to the sound of a bell. The circumambulation initiated a spellbinding interlude when a series of gods appeared, one after another, dancing and praying around the seated woman and the plate of changbu. At least seven gods appeared, each for a few minutes. Some were fierce. Some prayed. Some only smiled. Some danced to the sound of bells and drum, some to the sound of the god's voice alone. This dance displayed a divine repertoire sitting in Skarra nun. At other times, the repertoire is introduced through a list of names or simply a rapid succession of distinct voices and gestures. After about half an hour, one of the gods sat back on the carpet behind the table and started to light incense. SHE asked her main patient to wash her hands and then to light a lamp for the offering. More changbu were made by us (the latecomers) and from the animals below. The plate was put on the woman's head and then passed over everyone else before it was thrown at a crossroads, near water, according to instructions.

One or two episodes did not belong to the main business of the evening, which had been completed. A Tibetan god appeared and gave a prophecy. This god mimed what the audience agreed must be a war; cutting throats, firing guns, throwing bombs. It was like a charade, clients asking questions, the god answering with more mime. It was thought to be the Falklands war. The following actor, the major god who had done most of the work that evening, explained that war threatened, but could be averted, that fire threatened, but might be averted, that floods threatened but there was no plan to stop this danger. The danger was due to a star that appeared in the early morning. The god prayed in order to stop the imminent floods.

At another point, the nun spoke with some despair of the monks of today. This is a standard refrain in trance which reminds the audience that the speaker is indeed a god who has authority to offer commentaries on the parlous state of religion in our world today.

The oracle blessed her audience before SHE came out of trance. SHE threw barley around the room and at her clients (20).

These summaries illustrate much that is distinctive about the nun: instead of extracting substances like other oracles, SHE performs skurim and SHE gives sermons. The nun is a key figure in this discussion for her refusal to extract substance is simultaneously a refusal of one of the most

distinctive identifiers of village oracles. To most Ladakhis, these specialists are first and foremost the ones to bring bad things out of the body.

c) Thikse lhaba (Taklangsha)

Taklangsha is a poor man, a grandfather and a drinker who lives alone in an offshoot house. He presents a somewhat dishevelled and shabby appearance in contrast to the nun from Skarra and the Ayu lhamo. Because of his living conditions, he almost always works away from home and he is particularly well known for his work with "bad magic" and living demons, which he sometimes burns. The vessel said that he was almost always called to Chilling to burn timu and to Spituk, a village nearby, for poison and bad magic (tuk and shugu). In his own village, he said, he dealt mostly with harm caused by living demons, ghosts and tsan (time, tipe, tsan, shinde, sondre nodpa). Taklangsha has trained the majority of young oracles in the area. In trance, HE says very little by way of interpretation or analysis and HE rarely teaches religion. His trances are generally short and, though HE boasts the same range of gods as Ayu and Skarra oracles, their characters are less fully developed and they can generally be identified only when the work turns from a peaceful (zhiwa) to a strong (tragpo) mode. However, I was told that one god spoke of religion while another was responsible for extractions. Ladakhis often distinguish the gods, who are good, strong and fierce, from the vessel, who is poor, "irreligious" and a drinker. One trance at which the oracle diagnosed a case of possession has been mentioned in Chapter 5 and this is described in greater detail.

12.10.82.

We walked across the Indus and the marshy grassland to the village, arriving at the house just after the trance had begun: the oracle was praying and making the first offerings. There were 15 or 20 people in the kitchen. The prayers were almost spat out or thrown, like the grains of barley and the beer which were hurled at the wall, in an extremely high-pitched voice that might have belonged to a girl. The oracle held a bell and a spoon in his left hand; the spoon was used for offerings of beer, the bell for the prayers. HE held a drum in his right hand, which accompanied the bell. After an angry demand for juniper incense, the prayers culminated in a ci inda, an archaic Tibetan, "what's the matter?" As HE turned round, I could see only the whites of his eyes in the now hushed room, silent but for the sounds of panting from the oracle and rhythmic bellows at the stove. The first episode concerned the potential oracle, mentioned in Chapter 5. The second concerned the house as a whole. The god turned to the father and said:

"You're all suffering from bad magic (ngan chos) and I can't get rid of it. You must say 1,000 Dolma (a short prayer). You must do a "fierce fire offering" (tragpe zhinshrek)."

The father said that he had already asked the monks to do so but they had refused (21). The god replied:

"In that case, do an "increasing fire offering" (gyaspe zhinshrek). It will be better if you do stadul as well (rta 'dul(?), see below)."

The god placed a few grains of barley on his small drum, moved it about with his fingers, shook the drum and said:

"You're all ill in this house. You must do a yanguk (see Chapter 2) to stop this."

The father said that grandfather was ill in bed. He was seventy or more. Was his life good? The god said that he would be alright if he was kept warm but on no account should he be given fire treatment for it would kill him (22).

Thikse oracle turned away abruptly and a woman was told that she had tuberculosis. Did the doctor tell her this, HE asked. HE sucked something from her stomach and spat it on to a white enamel plate. HE gave some advice that I could not hear to another woman with a child. Then HE turned to a soldier who lived nearby. There was no talk. The god felt the man's pulses in his wrist, and HE felt his chest and the protective medallion there. HE took a brass tube, the same sort of size as the more common wooden pipe, and placed it just below the man's ribs. HE pushed very hard and the soldier was immediately given support from my friend. Then, the oracle showed the audience twice or thrice that HE was not about to trick them by opening his mouth and showing everyone that it was empty. The god sucked through the pipe

and spat black saliva and hair on to the plate. HE rinsed his mouth out with water. Finally, HE blew ngags, mantra, on to the affected spot.

The procedure was repeated with greater violence. The patient lay back on my friend. He was told again and again to arch his back. The god attacked a point low in the stomach, this time without the pipe, and eventually spat a piece of black paper or plastic onto the plate. Everyone gathered around to look, exclaiming diggadig, "poor thing", and marvelling at the evidence of two bits of bad magic. The god now spoke:

"This was given to you and to your captain. You were drinking together..."

There were hints about the identity of the poisoner which shocked the soldier.

The god spoke to me and asked, "Which way do you go? Right or left?" I quickly said right, the proper way to make a circumambulation. The god then performed what I suppose was a test. HE shook three grains on to the small drum which was placed on a plate of grain on the table. I had to choose one grain which was the only one to be left on the drum. The god shook bell and cymbals, causing the grain to move on the drum, at first, to the right and later to the left. The divination seemed to be satisfactory as I was told that the grain had travelled to the right.

Later, the father of the house was told that their problems had something to do with the masters of the earth (sadag) and the lu. He must sponsor a sadag dondol.

"Is everything prepared for the sago namgo?" (see Chapter 1)

The god began to recite from a religious text, using his gong for the first time. The words were incomprehensible. The skull of a sheep and dog were brought and the father began to plait the straw which would hold the skulls and to prepare the wooden sticks which would display the numbers and ages of the people in the house. The god interrupted:

"Can you do this? No, you can't. I'll send you the luya (empty vessel). Later on, the god will return to do chos (religion) (23)."

There were the usual prayers, and the oracle took off his special clothes, facing the wall, kneeling. The transition was marked by a sneeze and the man put on his glasses and looked round the room. He then made the sago namgo and went into trance briefly again. This time, the god gave "golden drinks" (serkyem) to all the Buddhas and gods and "consecrated" (rabnas) the doors to sky and earth.

Thikse oracle is distinguished by the violence of his gods and his skill in extracting a range of bad substances, particularly sorcery (jadu, see below). The example described shows that Skarra oracle is not the only one to perform skurim. Taklangsha directs a rite that is normally performed by astrologers but only the consecration is performed in trance; the preparations are made by the vessel.

The above examples concern well-established oracles; a final account is given of a recent initiate so as to illustrate further variations associated with the early period of accomodation between god and person.

d) Shey lhamo

Shey oracle, like her teacher from Thikse, lives in a poor offshoot house and so she too works in other people's houses most of the time. I attended two trances which were short and largely incomprehensible. The gods, a group of brothers, were violent to their vessel and to clients.

24.3.82.

It was morning and the second trance of the day in the village. Shey lhamo always practiced in the morning and, because the trances were short, SHE often held one after another, in different houses. The first indications of trance showed that the oracle was newly established for, as she was possessed, SHE started flailing around and throwing all that she could grab from the table into the room where we were sitting - there were about ten of us by the stove and the wall. SHE was held down until the violence subsided into a swaying movement and a petulant demand for a scarf. SHE then recited further prayers and threw offerings of barley at the audience. SHE treated several children, the woman of the house and a man. I taped the trance but, even with the help of a Ladakhi who had been there, I could translate very little that the oracle said. The trance was over within half an hour.

The woman came first, complaining of pain inside like a needle. The god took a plate and a bowl of water. SHE grabbed the woman's breast and sucked at her nipple with a wooden pipe. SHE spat blood into the plate and rinsed HER mouth out with water. The god began to speak quite amicably,

advising the client to visit a doctor, but gradually SHE became more and more heated. The woman, SHE said, was proud and quarrelsome. "I'll punish you", SHE said. There followed a comment about a lamp which, as far as I could understand, implied that this woman had lit a lamp in the morning after eating rather than before and had thereby offended the lu. She should light incense to the lu every morning. She should also visit the monastery on pilgrimage.

There were prayers. Then, substances were sucked from the stomach of each child. These attracted no further attention. I could not understand what was said and I do not think the children could either. They, and their mother who had just been treated, were too frightened of the gods to ask for clarification. Later, a man was told that it would be possible for him to change jobs.

The treatment of clients was interspersed with prayers but not with any general talk of religion. It was not possible to distinguish the gods who visited the person but the state of trance was strongly demarcated from ordinary consciousness. As the oracle emerged from trance, SHE rolled over. Like many oracles, SHE gave great attention to her back and neck as the gods were sent away. SHE shrieked, hiccuped, sneezed and pulled her clothes off violently, as if they were on fire.

20.3.82.

I found another more truncated trance of the lhamo's similar in most respects. I had been to see her a few days earlier at another neighbour's house. In trance, SHE sucked out "needles" (khag) from a cow. SHE also treated a man with "gastric problems" (patkan) who I knew. This man, a Muslim, told me that he had suffered for three years. He had been to a doctor but he had not been cured until he visited Thikse lhaba and, more recently, Ayu oracle who had sucked hair and spit from his stomach. She lhamo extracted only the standard substance, a black liquid. His abscess, SHE said, could not be cured, for it was caused by the heat in the bakery where he worked. He was to visit a doctor.

These two trances were probably typical of that period of work but I suspect that they changed as the oracle acquired further teachings and greater confidence. When I first spoke of the girl to people in Leh, no-one had heard of her. When I left, some ten months later, she was well-known and clients who could not find her guru, Thikse lhaba, or the Ayu lhamo, in the villages either side of Shey would sometimes continue their journey until they found the new oracle. The trances described seem to be typical of newly

established oracles insofar as the gods and vessel are still struggling towards a peaceful accomodation which will be of benefit to their clients. New oracles are also scared of illness. They oracle explained, for example:

"I used to go to (a largely Balti village across the river) but now they have to visit me here because there is too much poison (tuk) there. I'm afraid that I (the person) will be affected after I come out of trance."

"If the lha are polluted (tsetu), for example, by dirty things or things that don't agree with them, then I myself (the person) fall ill."

For reasons of space, further trances are not described although a transcript of one of the Skarra nun's trances and an account of the week's work of some oracles is given in appendix 4 so as to show more of both what is said in trance and what is done. These few examples show how gods refer their patients, cure them through extractions and rituals and reveal a truth hidden from people. They show an elaborate aesthetics to trance where a sequence of gods is internally differentiated in terms of their characters, the work they do and a discourse of song, speech, mime and dance. These examples also reveal elaborations of the ritual structure of trance described in Chapter 4. The use of different items of equipment is illustrated, including the fire (ashes) and water used to neutralise bad substances. As noted previously, I am unclear about the eventual fate of these substances. I gather that oracles often bury them outside. I suspect that they may also be added to other waste, in the toilet or elsewhere. On occasion, the oracle swallows bad substances.

The trance sequence has been shown to move from general commentaries on religion at the beginning to specific

connections that are drawn in the world around individual problems and the closing sermons and blessings. At the same time, the diversity of trance practice is illustrated through the contrastive styles of these four practitioners. It might also be noted that aspects of Ladakhi practice remain distinct from the Tibetan refugee oracles. In Chapter 4, a number of differences were mentioned with reference to training, both between Tibetan refugees and Ladakhis and between the refugees and other Tibetans. A similar pattern can be detected in the sphere of treatment. The four Tibetans interviewed in Ladakh suggested that the overall structure of trance and the range of problems treated were similar to Ladakhi practices (24) but the mirror seems to play a more important role among Tibetans (25) and all four Tibetans said that they were possessed by only one god (yul lha) (26). The reports contrast with Berglie's material on hero oracles (dpa' bo) in a number of ways (Berglie 1976, 1978, 1980) (see footnotes 24-6 as well as references made in Chapter 4). The differences may be related to regional specialisation for the dpa' bo described by Berglie all seem to have come from Northern and Eastern Tibet (1978:39-40). They may also be attributed to the very small samples involved. The four Tibetans that I met compare with six "heroes" discussed by Berglie (1976 and 1978). The extraction of needles from animals and the gradual acquisition of more and more higher ranking gods may be especially elaborated in Ladakhi practice. However, it is also clear that the Tibetans in Ladakh accommodate themselves to local practice; for example, they now bring out needles even if they did not do so previously (27).

7.3 The extraction of substance

The preoccupation with bad substances in these examples is striking and this is the only aspect of treatment that is discussed further. Only the nun refused to suck out pollution, poison and bad magic. All the others were busy extracting liquids and solids from various parts of the body, particularly the stomach, and constructing differences between the substances that were spat into a bowl or plate and occasionally swallowed.

The simplest extraction concerns a black liquid, sometimes mixed with blood, which is generally taken from the stomach. The liquid attracts little attention and the god rarely makes any further comment on its qualities. This is tip (defilement, pollution) or jip ('jib, literally, to suck but used only with reference to the extraction of an unmarked "pollution"; see Chapter 4). Iip, as noted previously, is ingested naturally in the course of life. It is related to the natural qualities of food and drink and to the problems of incorporating them into the body. Khag, taken from animals, are explained in similar terms. Every Tibetan oracle attributed khag in Ladakh to the poor quality of cattle's fodder. Neither tip nor khag are caused by the ill intentions of others. However, the term tuk (poison) is generally used to refer to deliberate poisoning by another person, who is often vaguely implicated by the oracle. Iuk is sometimes used to describe malice transmitted unknowingly and, more rarely, as a virtual synonym for tip. Poisoning is often associated with women who unknowingly harm others in the same way as they do during gongmo attacks. Likewise, women are seen to be more susceptible to poison than men. One

man treated by the Ayu oracle was told that the "painful wax" in his ear was due to poison (see above, 25.10.82) but there was no suggestion that this had been caused deliberately by someone who wished him harm. Iuk generally looks like pollution. It is usually a black liquid that is extracted from the stomach. Sometimes, however, solid objects such as hair or metal are described as poison. Iuk seems to describe a range of substances in-between the purely natural consequences of life in the world and a sorcery that is deliberately manufactured and administered.

Jadu, shugu or ngan chos is intentionally given. The sorcerer knows what s/he is doing and wishes harm to a victim. "Bad magic" is generally marked off as a solid object during trance. The substance usually turns out to be paper which is prodded and shown round the room. It is unravelled with a slow deliberation that draws gasps and exclamations from the audience. Bad magic is also found in house buildings, buried under the entrance or in the walls. Today, villagers speak primarily of paper magic which is said to be bought from a few skilled Buddhist and Muslim holy men.

Stories also tell of other kinds of bad magic ranging from particular larvae found under trees to hair impregnated with harmful spells. Ladakhis are particularly fascinated by the written formulae and I suggest that the present materiality of this particular magic is established largely through the trance practices described. Ladakhis talk less about the supposed sorcerer than they do about the substance itself. Their interest is apparent in many stories:

N. came back from a visit to Ayu oracle talking about two men from Lower Ladakh. He said they were ill from jadu. The lhamo had brought two birds out of their stomachs. They were very difficult to bring out because they were running around inside. Later, they were burned in a special fire while religious texts were read. If they had been allowed to stay (inside), they would have grown and grown and become very dangerous. Somebody must have hated the men and made jadu. Jadu is always made deliberately (lit: artificially), it is not like possession. He asked if I knew about the case in their household - an oracle had uncovered a piece of paper under the gate which would have grown and destroyed the house. It was burnt.

In clarification of this strange account, I was told by someone listening:

"Jadu or, in Ladakhi, zumtrul (rdzum sprul, counterfeit magic) is even more dangerous than tuk. Very bad or jealous people in high positions, that is, lamas and agas, make jadu. It's done with paper. After a year or so the paper, which is now inside the body or the house, grows wings. If it flies, you'll never be prosperous again though it doesn't always kill you. So, you have to stop the jadu before it flies and it takes about a year to get to that stage. Stadul (rta 'dul?) is the rite to do (see below) ... The lha can always find the jadu paper ..."
(28)

On another occasion, I asked Thikse oracle about his work. That very day, he said, he had been to a house in Leh and brought jadu out of a girl:

"the paper was already turning into meat and it already had hands and even feathers."

Taklangsha saw our fascination and continued:

"Once, I was called to treat a girl who sold apples in the bazaar. There was jadu in the house. It jumped from corner to corner, making bird-like sounds. First, I (that is, the vessel) went there and I saw the jadu going all over the place but I couldn't catch it. So, I went into trance and did stadul. I used five ritual daggers (phurba), which I had borrowed, and trapped the jadu in a corner. Then, the lha took a sword and cut down that side of the house. Afterwards, the monks did stadul. You need two horns from a red bull. They prayed and made mantra and so on for seven days. Then they buried one horn under a mani wall and the other under a spring to completely finish the jadu. Later, the house called me back to check up. The lha found that everything was alright.

"Jadu always turns into a tsanbi (literally, bird of the night but usually used to refer to a bat). It doesn't have many feathers. If it grows to the point where it can fly,

then it is bad for the whole world: wherever its shadow falls, it causes harm, for the house at that spot becomes very poor and there's no possible remedy."

Chanspa oracle explained how jadu grows:

"Jadu are birds but they can't have babies. Only very bad people make jadu, it's against the religion. They make a paper and deposit it in a room, on a doorstep or in some food so that people will quarrel, animals will die or the house will become poor, according to the accompanying mantra. If the bird escapes, the house becomes irreparably poor and everything is lost. People say that jadu is like a baby bird with wings and a proper life (that is, fully alive) so I imagine that the jadu just flies away but I do not know for I never saw it."

The fascination generated by the unravelling of a piece of paper can be better understood in this context, where jadu is described as an animate substance which erupts out of a person or a house in the form of a bird/bat and flies away. The evocative force of the image seems to derive especially from the idea of a deformed foetus; a bad life created in the wrong way. In some accounts, the victim is killed straight away while, in others, we are just told that the bird causes harm wherever its shadow falls. Unlike other problems taken to oracles, sorcery attacks are horrifying to Ladakhis and difficult to contemplate, based as they are upon notions of a strange creature that grows from paper and writing.

These terms were the ones used for the substances extracted. Pollution (tip) described black liquid, a by-product of everyday life in the world while bad magic (jadu) described solid objects, usually paper, associated with the malice of others. Poison (tuk) described both liquids and objects. The substances were seen as a natural consequence of eating, drinking and accepting hospitality from others who might harbour ill-feelings and unintentionally transmit them in food. They were also seen, at times, to be deliberately

manufactured and intentionally given, like bad magic. All the substances described are generally extracted from the stomach but some are taken from the "channels" especially around the neck and face and some are taken from the affected part of the body. Bad magic may also be extracted from a house. No-one could tell me exactly how different substances were made and transmitted, nor how they then circulated within the household and body. But the majority were assumed to have been given in food and then eaten. Two stories about poison illustrate different forms of transmission to food, through the fingernails and through breathing:

A common story about Bakula rinpoche reveals his infinite charity. One version reads: "a woman in M. gave him a bowl of milk. He said, "you have poisoned this milk from your fingernails." He showed the milk to his companions, it was now black. Bakula, however, drank the milk and came to no harm. He turned to the woman and told her kindly that she was not to blame, she did not know what she had done."

N. told about a recent visit to Ayu oracle: "there were two women quarrelling and each accused the other of poisoning. The oracle knew the truth but, to demonstrate it to all of us, she made each woman breathe over a bowl of milk. As X. breathed, we could all see that the milk had turned black. The oracle beat her. ..."

Poisoned food may then be eaten. Similarly, pollution and bad magic are ingested in food. The extracts taken out of the body by oracles are typically seen as the result of failed digestion and so ideas about digestion are explored in greater detail.

The dangers of eating and drinking have been discussed (see especially Chapters 2 and 5). The natural properties of food and drink may cause lethargy and greed; hospitality is accompanied by jealousy and quarrels. Elaborate etiquette associated with an initial refusal to eat or drink is seen to protect guests from a gongmo attack, from pollution, poison

and bad magic. The afflictions described in this chapter, like those associated with the making of an oracle or with witchcraft, are related to an initial weakness such as a failure in etiquette, low spiritual power, bad karma and insufficient religious practice. The same categorical distinctions between different types of people are made regarding susceptibility in the present context. As noted, women are more susceptible to poison than men. Laymen are more susceptible than monks or rinpoche. The story quoted above shows that Bakula rinpoche can drink poison without falling ill. He can digest or convert it to food. Holy individuals (and gods) can also neutralise or digest bad magic while ordinary villagers, it seems, must call in ritual help. It is sometimes said that monks do not suffer from tip.

The descriptions in this chapter show what happens when these protections do not work. In general, villagers should be able to incorporate, digest and turn food into bodily substance. Oracular treatment shows that, sometimes, they cannot. Oracles return villagers to the course of daily life once they have "unblocked" the digestive system.

Extractions might be described as "exorcistic rituals", like many of the others performed by village oracles. Images of digestion might even be said to echo the ritual process described in the last chapter. Ideally, bad and good food is first separated; then the bad is excreted and/or transformed while the good is incorporated in the body. This image of digestion was not described to me by Ladakhis but might well appear to them as obvious (29). It is formulated in this way so as to indicate parallels between images of ordinary

digestion and the great religious victories enacted at cham that were discussed in the last chapter. Before turning to this topic, it might be emphasised that the oracle is once more performing a particular kind of exorcism which has implications for his or her status.

The ordinary process of digestive transformation does not seem to have been effected by visitors to oracles who are said to suffer from tip, tuk or jadu. The oracle therefore takes out what can be neither digested nor excreted. This procedure attracts a certain amount of scepticism. It may be recalled that the Skarra nun dismisses extractions as trickery. Other Ladakhis question certain types of extraction and often look on the materialisation of needles or bits of paper in some disbelief. Whether or not Ladakhis believe that substances can be taken out of people in this way, the procedure itself seems to attract some ambivalence. Other ritual specialists might give medicines or blessings. They might recommend particular practices or perform the appropriate rituals. But only village oracles were ever said to make physical contact with the badness, suck it out and neutralise it through swallowing and oracular digestion or through the addition of ashes and water to a substance that might then be disposed of like other refuse. Ladakhis often set village oracles apart from and below other ritual practitioners, including monastery oracles, by reference to this procedure.

This ambivalence might be explained in terms of an engagement in the village world which has been described in Chapters 4 and 5. As suggested, the abilities of village

oracles to exorcise the bad and strengthen the good are uncertain, particularly by comparison with monks and rinpoche. Living as they do, village oracles can never prove that they too do not give or receive "poisoned gifts" or "jealous thoughts" for they belong to the same world as other villagers where social interaction and particularly hospitality threaten the integrity of the person. Their gods may likewise turn out to be demonic rather than divine. Yet, it is precisely this involvement in the village that seems to explain the popularity of oracular treatment. Village oracles in trance accept and indeed negotiate the shape of local spirits, pollution, poison, sorcery and witchcraft. When they extract substances, they formulate fears about hospitality or exchange and give them a concrete shape.

Oracles as well as their clients identify problems in the process of extraction. For example, Shey lhamo suggested that too much poison would damage her (the vessel) (see above). There is always the possibility that too much close contact with dangerous substances will harm the oracle. It is also possible that the gods who, at times, swallow and presumably digest bad substances, will be polluted and thereby turned into demonic spirits. Both vessel and (most of the) gods belong to a social world and, like other worldly people and spirits, they are gradually contaminated. These specialists are therefore compromised by the problems they deal with every day and their abilities to treat and heal other villagers must constantly be re-negotiated. Oracles must repeatedly demonstrate their ability to digest the ills of a village world.

7.4 The conquest of "enemies"

In Chapter 2, Ortner's analysis of rituals was discussed and extended. Ritual bodies were discussed subsequently in some detail (Chapters 3-6). Food has also been discussed but primarily in the context of secular hospitality. One section in the last chapter concerned the transformation of a ritual body of the enemy into food for a congregation or the Buddhist order more generally. In Chapter 2, it was also shown that the homes provided for gods were equally conceived as bodies and food supplies. It would have been possible to look at possession beliefs and practices in relation to the symbolism of "food" as well as "bodies" but, unfortunately, restrictions of space have caused this theme to be neglected. However, it is relevant to point out that the discussion in Chapter 2 and Part II of the thesis shows that village oracles provide gods with nourishment as well as a place to live. Witchcraft victims are sometimes recognised because they stop eating. This refusal to eat is related to the behaviour of an assailant who is consuming the victim as well as occupying her body.

The practices of village oracles in trance highlight images of the normal or everyday by showing what has gone wrong. It is possible to link extraordinary states in which gods or demons occupy a body/food supply (a person) with constructs of the ordinary person in which a soul or intelligence sits in the body. Problems with demons, gods and other local spirits that are addressed in trance have already been seen to bear a close relationship with the intelligence or soul (sems) of a person (Chapters 4 and 5), which is sometimes located in the heart. When spirits cause harm,

they cause confusion, loss of memory and madness as well as other symptoms. Problems with bad substances are located especially in the stomach. This association prompted the interpretation of failed digestion suggested above and it also prompts an exploration of the links constructed during trance between other spirits and the person.

The back of a person has been seen previously as a particularly dangerous and vulnerable part of the body. The sight of a tsan's exposed back causes madness while demons are located in the shadow of a witchcraft victim or in her back. Gods similarly seem to be associated with the backs of oracles at the beginning and end of a trance (fn 6, Chapter 4). Lu, by contrast, seem to be twinned with the body.

Kaplanian notes:

"Les lhu (lu) réagissent de manière quasi automatique aux blessures et aux souillures qui leur sont infligées. Ils renvoient, en quelque sorte, la blessure ou la souillure qui les a frappés. Les Ladakhi disent explicitement que les lhu font subir à l'auteur d'un méfait exactement le même méfait (12). Tout fonctionne comme si le corps des lhu était le doublet du corps humain. A des lésions réelles (blessures) ou symbolique (souillures) du corps d'un lhu va correspondre les mêmes lésions sur le corps de l'homme, auteur du méfait...

(12) On dit par exemple: lhua phogna lhui natang (s)notpa tanganok, si on frappe un lhu il vous donne le (s)notpa." (Kaplanian unpub ms (a):7)

He adds that lu are especially linked with the lower body:

"Ils (lu) sont aussi à l'origine de la majorité des maladies des membres inférieurs (en particulier les douleurs au genou) et des maladies de peau, (lèpre etc.). Ils provoquent l'apparition de pustules (shoai shuba)" (ibid.)

Kaplanian contrasts lu, which are located in the lower body as well as the container, with gods, which are located in the upper parts and the inner person (ibid.) (30). In the examples described, lu are associated with skin problems.

Rites to lu are advised to cure pimples (Skarra oracle, 4.4.82 and, in Chapter 4, Martselang oracle 11.3.82) and watery eyes (Martselang oracle, *ibid*). In one case, they are advised to cure illness in an entire household (Thikse oracle, 12.10.82) and they seem to be loosely associated with problems of eating in another example (Shey oracle, 24.3.82). It was impossible to assess the relevant symptoms in several cases treated by Ayu oracle when the lu were said to be polluted. Leprosy is stereotypically attributed to lu in Ladakh.

Lu are said to be responsible for bodily and particularly skin problems during treatment by village oracles. The background, sketched in Chapter 2, suggests that lu bear a generally close relationship to the process of growing, gathering, storing and preparing food. It takes no great leap of faith to see lu also in relation to cooked food in the stomach of the person. Indeed, the mythical sheep's stomach used at yangguk was seen as a body and food supply that might be identified with lu (Chapter 2). The process of digestion implies that lu will then be transformed again and re-constituted in the form of bodily substance. Accordingly, oracular extraction can be related to the separation and removal of bad substances from lu as well as the body and undigested food.

Trance practice draws upon many images of the person but this image is singled out because it is evocative of the partnership between gods and lu that was stressed in the first part of the thesis. The person can be seen as a union of god (soul) and lu (body/food), related to many of the

(other) ritual structures described, while the process of digestion, which involves the separation of bad from good, the exorcism of the bad and the incorporation of the good, can be related to (other) ritual processes that are applied to these structures.

If this interpretation seems plausible, it becomes possible to look at other rituals described in this thesis in a new light. Demons have been presented primarily as "failed" gods and they have been interpreted, in relation to gods, as vital and homeless spirits, manifestations of sin or ignorance and an aspect of the world. Both gods and demons have been described in terms of an insubstantiality that contrasts with the materiality of lu, which appear in the shape of lizards, fish, snakes, food and bodies. However, the above remarks suggest that the appropriation of food from the natural world can be likened to the incorporation of enemies, containing demons, enacted at cham. The similarities between these processes suggest that lu and demons can both be interpreted in terms of a natural vitality which is turned into the stuff of civilisation as it is transformed through processes of digestion and (other) ritual. It should be emphasised that this reading is one of several possible interpretations which has been selected in order to emphasise the parallels between what often seem to be discrete domains of life.

Every spring, lu are woken and, every autumn, they are sent back to sleep as the crops are taken into the house. In this way, lu belong to the natural flux of seasons and they are depleted and renewed over the course of the year. However, it should be noted further that lu are also grouped

with autochthonous masters of the earth and the place (sadag, zhidag), which own the fertility of particular territories but which are not depleted and renewed over the course of the agrarian cycle. Lu are mentioned along with sadag and zhidag in ritual recitals naming the owners of particular places. At times, lu and sadag are used as virtual synonyms (see Kaplanian 1985:137-8 for an example from a trance of Ayu oracle). The rite sadag dondol was always described as a rite for lu (31). This link between lu and fertile territories is evocative of imagery described in the last chapter.

At cham, it was argued, the murder and liberation of enemies under the supervision of Bodhisattva-rinpoche brings new and ordered life to the world. The enemy was seen as a body containing demons, sin and all negative aspects of worldly life. Demons were accordingly described as the "unconverted" which will, one day, become religious gods. However, demons can equally be seen as the uncultivated. Enemies were described as the autochthons of Ladakh (and Tibet) which drew forth the missionary zeal of figures such as Guru Rinpoche. They might be seen in terms of the land itself, upon which today's civilisation has been built. Civilisation does not only provide converts but also a place to live and eat. Many myths and legends speak of this process of civilising the land. For example, the first Buddhist king of Tibet, Srong-btsan sgam-po, is said to have built a temple upon the heart of a demoness lying on her back:

"The she-demon is Tibet itself, which had to be tamed before it could be inhabited and civilized. Her body already covered the whole extent of Tibet in its period of military greatness (eighth and ninth centuries). Her

outspread limbs reached to the present boundaries of Tibetan settlement. The conquering and civilizing function of the first king, once he was established at the centre, was performed in accordance with Chinese ideas: in square concentric zones, each boxed in by the next and extending farther and farther from the centre. Temples erected at the four corners of three successive squares stand for the nails driven, as it were, into the limbs of the demoness, crucifying her. The land is held firm and made fit for habitation." (Stein 1972:38-9)

In the monastery, the enemy represents both the negative sides of life and the uncultivated, unconverted virgin strata which will provide the basis for civilisation in the future. In the village, these senses are rarely merged. Lu may be related to fertility but demons are generally imaged in terms of their threat to life. My account has revealed a plethora of village spirits which possess fierce desires for homes, food, sex and children (see especially Chapter 5). Village spirits are depicted in terms of a chaotic vitality which seems to represent a problem to the ordered reproduction of worldly life because these beings have become "stuck". Their desires and attachments to the world have led to a failure in reincarnation; none has achieved a proper rebirth. At the same time, it seems that these village spirits can be converted through religion; through the oaths imposed by monks and rinpoche as well as the action of cham and other ritual. Sometimes, the oaths imposed by village oracles are also deemed effective.

Although lu and demons appear to describe two distinct categories in the village, they are brought into a closer relationship through two further terms; "women" and the "body". It has been seen that women stand in a close relationship to a number of demons and to lu. The links with lu have not been described in great detail but it has been

shown that women work closely with lu in the daily round of agricultural and kitchen production and, on occasions such as weddings, come to be identified with them. It might be suggested that women, through their relationships with both lu and dre, create a semantic field associated with the unconverted, the uncultivated and the virgin.

Similarly, the body, the focus of this chapter, is sometimes seen as a problem. The body is the seat of the three sins and, generally, the source of desire and attachment to the world. Although it is always emphasised that sins are committed through thoughts and feelings, there is also a tendency to equate the sinful with the physical side of life as shown in discussions of life cycle imagery in Chapters 3 and 6. Over the course of a lifetime, it is the body that is used up and eventually burnt as an embodiment of demons and sin while the soul is enlarged and liberated towards rebirth in the form of a "god" with a subtle body, scarcely a body at all as far as villagers are concerned. In village exegesis of Buddhist doctrine, the body is viewed with some ambivalence. Whilst the body/demon is seen as a problem and the source of sin, the body/lu is seen as the source of physical life.

Village oracles operate in an environment that is at once religious and secular. They have been described as villagers who become acquainted with religion through affliction. In trance, they deal equally with religious and social problems and so trance practice provides a particularly appropriate sphere in which to explore the continuities between these domains from a village perspective. One particular line of enquiry was prompted by

an attempt to understand what the extraction of bad substances had in common with other oracular treatment. Bad substances are usually related to a social disequilibrium; to poor food, bad relations with a poisoner or sorcerer, the cold, jealousy and so forth. But cures combine the extraction of bad substances with referrals to other specialists, advice on religious conduct or recommendations about the performance of particular rites. The brief remarks that I have made suggest that this seemingly jumbled series of treatments need not be placed beyond the sphere of critical enquiry because of the "non-human" logic and behaviour of incarnated gods. One image of the person was isolated that included just one image of the body, and just one set of correspondences between "religion" and "society" have been presented. The ordinary person has been seen as one further variation on the "ritual body" which, it has been argued, includes also the possessed villager, ritual specialists and a variety of manufactured objects. It was accordingly suggested that a model of successful digestion can be seen as yet one more variation on the ritual process outlined in this thesis, which includes the theme of "legitimate conquest" presented in the last chapter. Similarities were simultaneously suggested between what normally look like two distinct cosmologies. Lu do not figure prominently in the villager's religious universe in comparison with demons who are depicted and regularly overcome in grotesque detail. Yet, there is at least one sense in which the lu of a three-tiered cosmology, that has been explored through the household, and the demons of a religious cosmology, that has been explored through

village perspectives on the monastery and 'cham, come to look like two aspects of a single underlying reality. Accordingly, the distance between two seemingly distinct cosmologies, located in two different places, is narrowed.

It is hoped that this discussion suggests at least one context in which the work of village oracles can be seen to draw upon wider village concerns about the relationship between "religion" and "society".

This brief discussion has departed from the trance session itself. In conclusion, it should be reiterated that village oracles deal with what goes wrong in the processes described. Ideas about sorcery, poison and failed hospitality frame the trances of village oracles and distinguish them from all other forms of treatment. Village oracles deal with problems and they are compromised by contact with the ills of the world. The term namstok provides a useful way of looking at this process. It may be recalled that this word means superstition or scruple: if you believe in something, then you are susceptible to its effects (see Chapter 5). Village oracles materialise bad substances; they show that they exist and (therefore) demonstrate their personal vulnerability to a visible pollution, poison and bad magic. Only monks and others, who have left the village and its problems behind, and especially rinpoche, who have also left the world behind, are ultimately able to guarantee village life and make the crops (and everything else) grow.

CONCLUSION

The questions posed in this thesis were formulated by my first visit to a village oracle. The Ladakhi who accompanied me that first time was excited by the event and especially by the training which he had not seen before. But, when we were talking about the trance later at home, I heard that oracles could not be trusted, that some oracles could be trusted, that they dealt with bad things, that they did not know much religion, that sometimes they turned out to be incarnations of the demonic rather than the divine.

I began to try and make sense of these conflicting opinions and the general ambivalence shown towards village oracles. It appeared that oracles were damned by their initiatory affliction (Chapter 4) and further compromised by their style of treatment (Chapters 4, 5 and 7). Yet, it also seemed that oracles could partially transcend these negative connotations by speaking the truth in trance and practising religion. I tried to establish the position of village oracles within the wider context of Ladakhi ritual. In Chapter 4, the making of a village oracle was discussed in terms of the transformation from patient to healer. In Eliade's words:

"the shaman is not only a sick man; he is above all a sick man who has been cured." (Eliade 1964:27)

Trance practice reconstructs the initiatory affliction in a particular way so that the oracle is no longer seen as a patient who is mastered by spirits but still remains a villager whose spirits still belong to a village social world. The transformation that has occurred from patient to healer, affliction to ritual power and demons to gods cannot

be legitimised solely within the village. Accordingly, village oracles must continually turn towards the superior religious power located in monasteries in order to demonstrate that this transformation has occurred and has not been reversed (Chapters 4 and 5).

It was therefore suggested that village oracles are caught in the middle. Their training by senior oracles, monks and rinpoche helps them to shed the demonic or turn it into something better, settle local gods and, ideally, acquire a few religious protectors. When Ladakhis express doubts about the authenticity and ritual power of village oracles, it is the success of this transformative process that is questioned. As described in Chapters 4 and 5, village oracles make tentative and halting steps towards the monastery but they can never move very far without losing the base to their powers. Their unique attributes situate them between the worst side of village life, affliction, and the best, pious devotion.

Support for this conclusion came from an exploration of two further types of possession (zhugshes) in Ladakh. My initial confusion had been compounded by an introduction to monastery oracles, at the winter cham which were occurring at the same time as the initiation of Sabu novice. I learned that there were monastery luya as well as village luya. Not surprisingly, I grouped the two types together. I was soon disabused of this simple perspective. I had watched the Matho oracles in trance one day before visiting the Sabu village oracle. Back at home, I attempted to confirm my initial impression only to be told "but those luya are monks, they

meditate before trance, they are elected by their brother-monks not through initiatory madness, they do not suck out substances or burn witches".

Later still, I heard about witchcraft possession and learned that village oracles were both like and unlike these other victims of possession.

The discussion in Chapter 5 was intended to show just how far village oracles could transform their initial afflictions into ritual powers. On the one hand, a distance was revealed between the vessels and gods of oracles and the patients and demons they treat. On the other hand, specific continuities were demonstrated in the behaviour of possessed villagers and the attributes of their spirits. Although established oracles often distance themselves from affliction in the village, the limits to this movement were seen in trance practice - in the exorcism of witches and also, subsequently, in the extraction of substance (Chapter 7).

While village oracles maintain a precarious position above other possession practices in the village, they never attract the respect of the monastery oracles described in Chapter 6. The biographies attached to monastery oracles reveal a successful conversion but the life histories of village oracles reveal a process of transformation that can never be completed or stabilised. Similarly, the trance practiced by a monastery oracle is situated within a celebration of the victory of Buddhism while the trance practiced by a village oracle is compromised through contact with the worse side of life.

The position of village oracles in the middle becomes even more striking in relation to other Ladakhi possession practices. Witch and witch victim are returned to the status of ordinary villagers (but see below). The spirits settled in monastery oracles were once demons and are now gods in the monastery. Their vessels are seen to have chosen rather than been taken over by a particular ritual role in which they become vehicles for the gods just once a year. Village oracles sit above witch victims and below their monastery brethren.

This more general approach to possession caused me to look again at the division between monastic and secular life which had struck me so forcefully when I arrived. My first impressions introduce Chapter 1 of the thesis. The attention of every visitor is caught at once by the contrastive appearance and mood of massive monumental buildings at the top of a mountain in relation to those below as well as the dress and behaviour of those who live at the top in contrast to those who live at the bottom. These distinctions are self-evident to Ladakhis and they were soon assimilated to my own view of the place. However, I was forced to reconsider the divisions once I began to study possession, for it seemed that the practices and beliefs associated with village oracles, witchcraft victims and monastery oracles straddle the marked boundaries between "religion" and "society" presented in the first part of the thesis. One way of looking at these continuities was developed. I explored the processes associated with producing a good life in the world, as summarised below.

The major question in this thesis about the position of village oracles was thus answered by looking at life histories, trance practice and other types of possession. It should be appreciated that this presents a preliminary attempt which has been concerned only with one important aspect of Ladakhi society, namely the division into two ranked but mutually dependent components located in monasteries and households. Further research might usefully look at other ritual specialists in greater detail, including local doctors (amchi) and astrologers (ongpo) as well as yogins and monastic specialists, in order to refine this picture of "religion" and "society". Perhaps even more critical is a historical study. It may be recalled that the "traditional" Ladakhi state was disbanded in the mid-19th century. Oracles have not been discussed in relation to the organisation of the state. However, there are indications that they played an important role in the construction of kingship and local tributary powers. Thus, it seems that the cham at Matho used to be also a royal ritual at which oracles foretold the future for the king and were generally associated with the fertility of land belonging to the king (Chapter 6). Historical research might establish whether Ladakhi oracles in the village and monastery should be situated more generally in relation to secular power.

The contemporary ritual position of village oracles has been discussed but further research may allow this account to be refined and given historical depth. The limited perspective that has been employed nonetheless has implications for the study of Ladakhi ritual more generally.

In particular, the nature of possession as a ritual technique has been explored in relation to a general ritual process and the nature of the pantheon. Throughout this account, the term possession has been retained to describe a category of experience. Ecstatic trance has been used as a synonym, which is opposed to ascetic trance (a gloss for meditation practices). The retention of this term may have seemed strange in the face of evidence linking possession with other ritual techniques and experiences (Chapters 3, 4 and 6) but it has been retained for two reasons. First, it is generally used to translate the Ladakhi zhugshes, a term that links village oracles to their monastery counterparts and to witchcraft victims, and which is never used to refer to meditation practices associated with yogins, monks and rinpoche. The term is therefore used as a simple gloss. However, possession also has certain connotations in English which are, to some extent, continuous with Ladakhi images of zhugshes. Attitudes to possession in Ladakh have been explored in an attempt to understand why oracles and witchcraft victims should be classed together through the experience of possession and opposed to other figures who are associated with experiences and techniques that are sharply demarcated. In this context, the term possession cannot be seen as a simple gloss. One particular image of possession in Ladakh might be clarified by reference to the conclusions reached in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

The village oracle has been described "in-between" but it has been repeatedly emphasised that this position is also conceived in relation to the past and the future. Witch victims and monastery oracles are also conceived in terms of

movement. In Chapter 5, it was suggested that the cure of witchcraft possession involved a transformation comparable to the cure of a novice oracle. Cross-cutting informal ties among younger women were said to be turned into ties regulated by household relationships and religious piety. The proper initiation of an oracle ensures ordered social reproduction as gods-in-people work for the welfare of the world. So too does the cure of younger women ensure the social reproduction of the household. In both cases, chaotic and vital forces which have the potential for disrupting social life are turned into powers that sustain it.

The gods that possess monastery oracles have already been "converted". Nonetheless, it was shown that gods and, often, vessels move between the monastery and the secular world. They are seen as recent converts who have not been fully incorporated within the monastery and whose powers are directly deployed for the benefit of secular concerns such as the fertility of the land. It was also suggested that the wider logic of cham implies that these recent converts will become increasingly religious through good work and they will therefore move further into the monastery.

A discussion of cham imagery and, in the last chapter, social reproduction suggested that those who practice possession cannot be dissociated from other Ladakhis nor from other religious and social concerns. A principle of "legitimate conquest" was described according to which the possessed could be seen at different points on a chain linking religion and society as well as this world and the next through the transformation of the more worldly (demons,

enemies, the land) in the production of civilisation and, ultimately, the enlightened. (Successful) production, consumption, digestion and rebirth in the person parallel the process of religious conquest and incorporation of enemies enacted at cham. The predicament described with reference to the possessed and, particularly, to village oracles can therefore be seen as a general predicament for all of us who live in the world. We all sit between the demonic, vital and natural barbarism of our "past" and the fixed but sterile enlightenment, the ultimate product, that we shall all achieve together at the end of time.

Yet, it is also clear that possession practices dramatise and enact a particular image of or moment in this process. Seemingly bizarre behaviour and elliptical statements on the part of powers that do not normally reside in human bodies make it possible to recognise states of possession. This behaviour makes gods and demons palpable in the world. The spirits are angry and violent. As noted, witchcraft victims are seen in the power of stronger demons which are then converted, with equal violence. Oracles are seen after their conversion, as hosts to gods. However, their past tells of a violent conquest which is re-enacted in the present upon a congregation and, indeed, the vessel. Possession is associated with violence and with fierce spirits. However, the stories and histories that are attached to trance behaviour suggest that witches and their victims will ideally turn into life-giving mothers and/or seniors in the household. The gods possessing oracles will, it is hoped, work their way up the pantheon until they float out of the world. The anger and violence associated with possession

contrast with the image of peaceful (zhiwa) and blissful enlightenment, which villagers also associate with the higher reaches of the pantheon (Chapter 2). Possession behaviour plays an important role in constituting one aspect of the picture described, that is, the building of a civilisation and its (hopefully) ordered reproduction, which has been outlined with reference to many aspects of Ladakhi life. It can be seen to construct a concrete image of a chaotic vitality which produces life in the world once it has been "tamed" and which will ultimately be refined to the extent that it will pass out of this world. All three types of possession seem to construct a particularly vivid picture of the transformations necessary to a good life. All three types also create images of the difficulties of this process; the witch is "stuck", her victim is weak; the village oracle is always liable to re-definition as one afflicted by the demonic and the monastery oracle has not yet fully joined the monastery. Indeed, this point might be made more strongly. Possession behaviour creates a particular image of "legitimate conquest" which is concerned with the difficulties and hazards of converting an unordered vitality rather than the unquestionable victories associated with the action of a higher ranking religion in the world. As far as village oracles are concerned, it might be noted that even sceptical Ladakhis always emphasised one feature of training. Possession leads oracles to religion, characterised by an especially intense lay piety and devotion. The gradual ritualisation of the oracle's suffering out of what is often a perfectly ordinary village occurrence thus takes a

particular course: the building of civilisation and religion appear as an uncertain and precarious affair when it is viewed from the bottom up.

It can be seen that this image of possession relates as much to ideas about the nature of spirits as to trance behaviour. My attempt to place village oracles in the Ladakhi ritual context has involved lengthy discussions of the pantheon; more specifically, different village constructs of the pantheon. The in-between status of village oracles was explained partly in relation to the position of their gods. The demonic and the divine are complex categories. Demons were seen initially as gods without homes. Subsequently, they were described in terms of sin, the bodily, the physical. They were presented as unhappy or failed rebirths. The demonic was also seen to describe the polluted or dirty aspect of the world. The divine might be opposed to the demonic on each count. However, gods are subdivided into an infinite number of ranks and attention was focused particularly on two partially overlapping distinctions, between gods of the village and monastery and between worldly and enlightened gods. Worldly, village gods have homes; religious, enlightened gods have no need of them. Worldly gods may be associated with merit and happy rebirths; enlightened gods have transcended such states.

Demons and higher ranking gods were shown to define the status of worldly gods just as their "vessels" were shown to define the status of village oracles. Worldly gods gradually turn into demons through contact with the world and higher ranking gods make them divine once more during rituals. I have shown that none of these supernatural categories can be

given fixed identities; indeed, the discussion in the last chapter suggested that, in some contexts, demons might be understood better as autochthonous barbarians, similar to lu, rather than "failed gods", "unhappy rebirths" and pollution.

The discussion in Chapters 2, 4, 5 and 6 suggested that worldly gods which possess oracles can only be understood in relation to the demons below and the gods above. Images of the pantheon are suggestive of an unfolding "history" according to which lower ranking spirits eventually promote themselves up the pantheon. During rituals, however, their elevation in status is generally seen as a temporary affair which will be reversed gradually through their involvement in the world. During rituals, higher ranking gods are similarly brought down temporarily into the world.

These movements up and down the pantheon were explored in terms of a fundamental ritual process in Ladakh whereby spirits and powers are housed in ritual bodies and changed. It should be reiterated that this is not the only ritual process in Ladakh even though it is highly elaborated and probably the major type of ritual in which villagers participate as spectators or officiants. High ranking gods are, in Ortner's words, "polluted" and thereby engaged in the world. Their powers are used to "purify" lower-ranking gods and demons trapped in other bodies. This basic ritual process was refined in the context of possession practices and it was shown that much Ladakhi ritual is concerned with the separation of "bad" and "good" and the transformation of both. The bad may be expelled though some interpretations suggest that it is re-incorporated. The good is

strengthened. This model applies both to rituals that are described as exorcistic (that is, "rites to finish bad things") and to others described as offerings or feasts, such as sangs. Abstract images of the pantheon may represent the history of civilisation and the gradual conversion of enemies who then move up the pantheon through religious work but the effectiveness of ritual depends equally upon bringing the highest gods back into the world. In a sense, this ritual process involves the reverse of the one described above with reference to possession. While angry and violent local spirits might be tamed so that their vitality can feed the world; peaceful and blissful enlightened gods have to be made angry so as to mobilise their power in the world and perform the work of taming (dulba).

One conclusion might be emphasised from this more general exploration of Ladakhi ritual. Possession cannot be analysed in terms of a distinctive ritual process in Ladakh. It has already been suggested that "ecstasy" or possession is an aspect of much ritual behaviour and cannot be excluded from the discussion of techniques such as meditation. It has also been suggested that the conversion or conquest enacted so dramatically through possession also applies to other images of life in the world. It must be emphasised finally that possession practices describe just one elaboration of a central ritual process in which powers are embodied according to a rank order that enables the highest powers to be used to change the state of the world and the self. Attention was drawn to the incarnation and evocation of powers both in other human bodies (ranging from rinpoche and monks to witch victims) and in other ritual structures (shrines, chodpa,

storma and other objects). The analysis of the enemy in Chapter 6 depended upon recognising links between the evocation of gods in people and demons in dough effigies. The efficacy of ritual was also analysed in terms of the "externalisation" of internal states, that is, merit and sin, which are ritually changed in the form of gods and demons. A discussion of the wider ritual context therefore demonstrates convincingly that the generation and deployment of ritual power in oracles as well as the offerings made to them describe a process that is central to many other Ladakhi rituals.

Lambek has noted that the radical devaluation of possession in the West tends to lead to its association with peripheral counter-cultures (Lambek 1981:6-7). Possession itself comes to be seen as a marginal or peripheral technique. However, the term possession has been retained in this thesis precisely to capture the generally ambivalent attitudes to possession (zhugshes) in Ladakh, where it is associated with a lack of control and potential disruption. In this conclusion, I have attempted to show that possession cannot be seen as a separable ritual technique, either in terms of the generation of ritual power or its deployment. However, possession ranks low in Ladakh and an attempt has been made to explain the suspicion that Ladakhis show towards village oracles by looking at their position in-between, and the uncertainties and ambiguities associated with their particularly vivid dramatisation of the process of constructing a civilisation.

This account has been formulated in the context of lay perceptions about Ladakhi society and religion. It has been suggested that possession practices establish continuities between institutions which are autonomous in other respects. Accordingly, the division of Ladakhi society into two parts, household and monastery, might be said to provide a setting for the story or a stage for the drama that has been outlined, concerning the production of a good life in the world. The vision of civilisation that has been presented is not visible if the bifurcation of Ladakhi (Buddhist) culture into two parts is taken for granted.

It is possible to extend this approach by looking at discussions of spirit possession elsewhere. The division of "religion" into separate spheres in South East Asia seems to suffer limitations similar to the divisions described for Tibetan society. A few comments about Tambiah's accounts of Thai village religion (Tambiah 1968, 1970) and Spiro's book on Burmese supernaturalism (1967) indicate areas of interest.

Both accounts suggest clear analogies with Ladakhi lha. Tambiah describes how Thai phii range from the "demonic" to the "divine":

"their characteristics extend from benevolent and disciplinary guardianship to extreme capricious malevolence." (Tambiah 1968:54)

Spiro shows that Burmese nats range from the great Hindu protectors to what he calls "nature spirits" and a host of potentially malevolent spirits, produced from people who have died violent deaths, that must be regularly placated. The word nat can be used to refer to religious protectors, local spirits and capricious ghosts just like the Ladakhi word lha.

Spiro's ethnography of the local spirits is much more thorough than Tambiah's. In *Burmese Supernaturalism*, for example, he notes how the gods and spirits (nats) are converted, subordinated and given Buddhist legitimacy (1978 (1967):249). He writes that nats are upgraded (1978:277-8), that is, they move towards nirvana just like their analogues in Tibet. However, it seems that this movement is promoted through the merit that people make for spirits as documented in a number of Theravada societies (see, for example Obeyesekere 1963, 1966, 1977 on Sri Lanka). In Ladakh, the emphasis is rather upon the movement initiated by spirits themselves through good work.

Spiro devotes most attention to the so-called "37 nats" who are the focus of much religious activity. Stories attached to these spirits all tell of violent deaths (for example, Spiro 1978:93,113-6) which are often presented as sacrifices or self-sacrifices (1978:105,110). The details presented on one festival, Taungbyon, suggest that the conquest of nats brings vitality. Shamans officiate amidst much dancing, drinking and sexual activity (ibid:118). The festival ends with a tree-cutting ceremony which seems to re-enact a victory over the nats (ibid:124-5). A tree is cut by the main actors and then grabbed and torn to pieces by the crowd. The fragments bring good luck and good crops. Spiro simply alludes to Buddhist overtones when he remarks upon the feasting of monks which makes merit for the nats (ibid:125). Towards the end of chapter 14, Spiro notes an implicit threat that "animism" holds out to Buddhism and he notes how the former makes or permits the latter to "persist". There are several suggestive hints of the

relationship between nats, royalty and Buddhist institutions but there is not enough information to deduce the processes that I have described for Ladakh. However, it might be noted that Lehman claims:

"What Spiro fails to observe is that the matter is complicated beyond the capacity of his framework to describe. Thus, e.g., the canon not only defines spirits, it also requires of a Buddhist society (monarchy), as a necessary condition of the religion's social survival, that the spirits of the country be converted or subverted by the doctrine." (Lehman 1972:379)

These very brief comments hint at important similarities with the Ladakhi process of conversion and the Burmese material also suggests close links between this process and possession practices.

Lehman's remark, cited above, suggests that demons are conquered by religion and society (world monarch and Buddha). He continues:

"The paradigm, as Tambiah understands, is the Jātaka stories of Gotama's conquest of and preaching to the host of Māra and various demons who tried to keep him from reaching enlightenment." (Lehman 1972:379)

In other words, Tambiah operates within a framework that recognises the central importance of conversion but, in Lehman's eyes, he does not properly apply it to local spirits. Lehman emphasises how dissatisfied and malevolent phi may be converted:

"their power can be controlled and harnessed for protection rather than merely placated. They are the spirits who become guardians." (ibid:726)

One of Tambiah's analyses concerns Bun Phrawes and an invitation to Phra Uppakrut. Without going into the details of his interpretation, it is important to note one of the themes which concerns conversion. During the procession that opens the festival, images of conquest are prominent (see for

example Tambiah 1968:79). At the pond, where Uppakrut is invited, victory shouts and blessings are given. "Divine angels" (thewada) are also invited and the festival concludes with a sermon about the defeat of Māra ("the enemy") and what happens after death. The festival is the major calendrical rite of the village; it brings merit and rain and Māra, the enemy of Buddha and man, is held at bay (ibid:82).

Tambiah offers a number of interpretations of Phra Uppakrut. One involves aligning Uppakrut with naga (roughly equivalent to Ladakhi klu) which are analysed in terms of animality and sexuality harnessed by doctrine (1970, chapter 10). Tambiah therefore sees doctrine conquering nature:

"What was interpreted as "invitation" (to Uppakrut) by villagers seems to me the taming and conversion of the naga or spirit of the water to Buddhism. Note that the Buddha images were shown to Uppakrut, that he was then coaxed with puffed rice to come on to the sedan. Finally the kettle of water is carried to the sala (preaching hall). Cries of victory and the monks' victory blessing express the success of the encounter. Thus the ritual successfully recruits the power of the naga to protect human society and Buddhism, and it enacts the two phases: submission (invitation) and then protection." (1968:85)

Tambiah suggests that different messages are given simultaneously: the rite of Bun Phrawees dramatises conversion whilst the myths elaborate the service given by Uppakrut and his protection of Buddhism (1970:302). However, another reading is evoked by the Ladakhi material. It may be that the festival contains a dynamic similar to that suggested for Ladakhi cham in Chapter 6 where converts are bound to religion and gradually turned into guardians.

In chapter 16 of his monograph, Tambiah analyses guardian serpent spirits in a similar fashion, that is, in terms of the relations between nature and culture. The

regional spirit is not benevolent in the same way as Uppakrut; it is only temporarily placated and has to be treated delicately by its officiants, who fall into trance during the procession to the swamp where the spirit, Tapubaan, lives. Whilst the Naga is the servant of Buddhism at Bun Phrawees and the life over which Buddha achieved conquest, it becomes the spirit cult at Bunbangfai, a more autonomous nature that must be propitiated. Lehman has criticised the comparison between naga and the local serpent spirit for its structuralist obfuscation:

"Buddhism requires that nature, that is, spirits and deities, be continually subverted to doctrine lest religion be unable to flourish and social order as a condition for merit-making be impossible. Buddha himself did this preeminently, and Buddha was both a sacred and secular "wheel-turning" ruler (a king and a Buddha)... The conversion is never perfect: Upagutta (Tambiah's Uppakrut) must remain meditating in his watery abode until the coming of the next Buddha: guardian spirits must be regularly placated." (Lehman 1972:727)

The ethnography suggests that conquest and conversion are as important in Thailand as Ladakh. There are hints of a similar dynamic to concepts of civilisation.

Both the Burmese and the Thai ethnography associate possession with ritual conquest and conversion that brings life to the world. It is possible that possession in these places dramatises that position in-between outlined for Ladakhi oracles. This position may be associated with spirits which, like Sri Lankan *dēvatā*, occupy a transitional point between deity and demon and between nature and culture (Kapferer 1983:117, see above Chapter 6). Possession in these areas may provide an aesthetic form which embodies a vital disorder in the process of being socially ordered.

Further and more detailed comparison would require a much wider ranging review, including a discussion of the state. It would also be possible to compare the Ladakhi picture with Hindu India. A few parallels were suggested in the Introduction with reference to the status of lower ranking gods. These might be extended to the picture of a great tradition in the making, to the process of Sanskritization described by Srinivas (Srinivas 1952:30). As Parry notes:

"Sanskrit is far more than a language. It is a badge of civilization. Indeed the word itself means "cultured" or "refined". ... one can begin to appreciate the cultural appositeness of M N Srinivas's choice of the label "Sanskritization" for the process by which the lower castes come to take over the customs and style of life of their superiors. Sanskritization is something far more than is suggested by the dry sociological jargon "reference group behaviour". It took a Brahman anthropologist to coin a term which so perfectly captures the idea that it is above all a process of refinement and civilization." (Parry 1985b:205)

These points of similarity should not, of course, lead to the neglect of distinctively Ladakhi beliefs and practices. It should be recalled that the position of Bodhisattva-rinpoche at the hub of Tibetan society as a whole carries particular implications. As suggested in the Introduction, the continuities between ritual practices are much more evident in Tibetan Buddhist societies than Theravada societies to the south. Oracles themselves were seen to play an important role in the monastic system and techniques akin to possession were shown to be central to a high prestige religion in the monastery (Chapter 4). I have been concerned to extend the understanding of continuities between possession and other ritual practice. Much of this thesis documents the details surrounding links suggested in other accounts of Tibetan ritual.

This account has shown that oracular ritual is as much secular as it is religious. It has shown that village oracles spend most of their time in trance extracting bad food and dealing with the negative results of social relations among villagers. However, my analysis of the continuities between the secular and religious dimensions of oracular practice has privileged religious discourse. It has been based in some respects upon local exegesis and, as we have seen, this is coloured by the hegemonic qualities of religious discourse (Chapter 5). It is hard to imagine talk of illness, hospitality or other aspects of village life which is not permeated with the language of chogs, "religion". This quality to Ladakhi explanations of their world is even more striking at the higher levels of abstraction, concerning society and civilisation. The place of the household in Ladakhi images of society is inevitably described through the language of religion. Households are patrons; they provide food and sons for the monastery; they might even be described as mini-kingdoms responsible for turning the wheel and ensuring the social survival of religion. It is hard to imagine an account of Ladakhi Buddhist society which is not simultaneously an account of chogs and its history. Insofar as my analysis of "civilisation" and processes of reproducing the world have been built upon Ladakhi categories, my account preserves the bias that was discovered in other accounts of Ladakhi and Tibetan ritual. One important qualification must therefore be added to the conclusions reached. An attempt has been made to show that village oracles play an important role in constructing ideal images of Ladakhi life through their treatment of its negative aspects. As oracles deal

with the angry spirits, jealousy and bad food resulting from social relationships, they simultaneously help to build the positive picture, the proper village in which individuals practice religion, till the land and work in a developing modern sector in harmony with their neighbours. My discussion of the imagery of a proper life in the world shows that the secular and religious are inseparable but it must also be emphasised that the "secular" is not reducible to the "religious" in oracular practice. Village oracles situate themselves simultaneously and equally in different spheres of life. Their life histories and their sermons in trance may promote a Buddhist view of worldly life but their references to a particular poisoner, the pollution of a specific place, a recent problem at a social gathering or the jealousy of a close friend simultaneously construct a partially autonomous view of social life. Their trance activities are similarly grounded in a world of secular exchange as much as divine revelation for they suck out substances as they speak the truth. Because village oracles stand "in-between", they can only be understood through equal reference to the secular and religious aspects of their practice.

Spirit possession is a widespread phenomenon and the practices that have been described suggest similarities with many other parts of the world. Beliefs and practices associated with possession in Ladakh might have been explored in a number of ways. My approach, which situates possession firmly within general Ladakhi ethnography, is not intended to suggest that possession could not also have been understood

from a comparative perspective. Comparisons might profitably also look for universals in the structure of human cognition and experience.

Uncontrolled possession is very generally related to spirit attacks and contrasted to a superior communication with divine or ancestral figures. Much of the anthropology on spirit possession reveals a dynamic similar to that outlined: "good" and "bad" forms of possession are mutually constituted both within the career of a figure comparable to the Ladakhi village oracle and with reference to possession practices in different people. Moreover, possession generally establishes direct relations between people and their "guests", be these witches, ancestors or gods. Therefore, the ambiguities and uncertainties associated with Ladakhi possession might be related to properties of possession in general, constituted as an irruption of the supernatural into human society. As Lambek has said of possession in a very different context: "somehow, spirits always manage to disconcert" (Lambek 1981:xvi).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LADAKHI AND TIBETAN TRANSLITERATION

Ladakhi terms correspond to local pronunciation in the Leh area. All underlined words represent a rough phonetic transliteration. Some commonly occurring terms such as lhaba/lhamo or rinpoche are not always underlined. Where appropriate, the Tibetan spelling is also given after the Ladakhi. Transliteration in Tibetan is not underlined:-
 e.g. "enemy" (dgra (Ladakhi), dgra' bo (Tibetan)).

The Tibetan alphabet is transliterated as follows:

consonants

| | | | | | | | |
|------|----|------|----|-----|----|-----|----|
| ka | ཀ་ | kha | ཁ་ | ga | ག་ | nga | ང་ |
| ca | ཅ་ | cha | ཆ་ | ja | ཇ་ | nya | ཉ་ |
| ta | ཏ་ | tha | ཐ་ | da | ཏ་ | na | ན་ |
| pa | པ་ | pha | ཕ་ | ba | བ་ | ma | མ་ |
| tsha | ཅ་ | tsha | ཆ་ | dza | ཇ་ | wa | མ་ |
| zha | ཉ་ | za | ཏ་ | 'a | ཏ་ | ya | ལ་ |
| ra | ར་ | la | ལ་ | sha | ཤ་ | sa | ས་ |
| ha | ཏ་ | a | ཨ་ | | | | |

vowels

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|
| a | ཨ་ | i | ཨི་ | u | ཨུ་ | e | ཨེ་ | o | ཨོ་ |
|---|----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|

The "wa-zur" is transliterated as "w" as in

- grwa pa (traba), monk གྲལ་པ་

Hyphens are only used to separate syllables in proper names, where the root letter is also capitalised as in Spyan-ras-gzigs (Chenrezig).

The Ladakhi infinitive form is different from the Tibetan and the "ches" (ces) is not transcribed:

(Ladakhi) dam tangches - (Tibetan) dam gtong-

A question mark indicates that I am unsure of the Tibetan spelling.

(H) indicates honorific.

Dictionary citations are usually given by reference to name only (Das, Jaschke, Ramsay). Full details are:

Das, S Chandra 1981 (1902) Tibetan-English Dictionary.
Kyoto: Rinsen Book Co.

Jaschke H A 1980 (1891) A Tibetan-English Dictionary.
Delhi: Motilal Barnarsidass

Ramsay H 1890 Western Tibet: A practical dictionary of the language and customs of the districts included in the Ladakh wazarat. Lahore: W Ball and Co.

APPENDIX 2: GONGMA

1. POPULATION AND HOUSES

a) Summary

number of houses:-

28 khangchen (including between 2 and 13 residents)

1 khangba

1 trashak

26 inhabited khangun distributed between 17 households
(including between 1 and 7 residents)

population:-

khangun population - 76

total - 290 (including 2 servants and 1 monk from Tak Tok)

religious personnel - 2 nuns in house nos. 13 and 16 (6 monks, 2 novices and 1 nun do not live in the village)

These figures are much lower than the figure of 455 reported in the 1981 census. Some of the differences may be attributed to the definition of Gongma. There are 11 outlying houses (one of which is divided into 3) which Gongmapa do not include in the village but which may have been included in the census enumeration.

A figure of 328 has been reported for 1978 (Cambridge Undergraduate Ladakh Expedition 1979).

b) Distribution of Gongma population by house in 1982

Khangchen are numbered 1-28. They belong to the village tronpa which are sometimes said to number 28 and sometimes 26. In the latter case, the Mon and Gara households are enumerated separately. A 29th house is included in the village for some purposes. This is the Muslim khangpa which includes 5 people. The village also has a trashak where one monk lives most of the time. Landholdings range from nothing (trashak) to 10 kanal in the Muslim house and a maximum of over 100 kanal (house no. 25) (1 kanal = 1/8 acre). Only 7 households (tronpa) have more than 45 kanal and only one has less than 30. The houses are distributed between 16 phaspon based in the Leh area.

| <u>khangchen</u> | | <u>khangun</u> | | | | <u>other houses</u> |
|------------------|-------|----------------|----|----|----|---|
| | | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | |
| 1. | 8 | 1 | | | | |
| 2. | 6 | 5 | | | | |
| 3. | 7 | 2 | | | | 1 <u>yorsa</u> (summer house) |
| 4. | 6 | 3 | | | | |
| 5. | 10 | 3 | 3 | | | 1 <u>yorsa</u> |
| 6. | 5 | | | | | |
| 7. | 5 | | | | | |
| 8. | 10 | 4 | | | | |
| 9. | 4 | 1 | 1 | 5 | | |
| 10. | 10 | | | | | |
| 11. | 6 | 1 | | | | 1 <u>yorsa</u> |
| 12. | 8 | | | | | 1 <u>yorsa</u> 1 house in Leh 1/2 shop, Leh |
| 13. | 4 | 1 | | | | |
| 14. | 6 | 6 | | | | (1) |
| 15. | 6 (2) | | | | | 1 <u>yorsa</u> |
| 16. | 8 | 2 | 6 | 1 | | 1 <u>yorsa</u> |
| 17. | 9 | 7 | | | | |
| 18. | 7 | | | | | 1 <u>yorsa</u> |
| 19. | 10 | 3 | 2 | | | 1 <u>yorsa</u> |
| 20. | 13 | | | | | 1 <u>yorsa</u> |
| 21. | 4 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 1 | |
| 22. | 2 | 4 | | | | |
| 23. | 10 | 1 | | | | |
| 24. | 8 (3) | | | | | 1 <u>yorsa</u> |
| 25. | 9 (4) | | | | | 1 <u>yorsa</u> shop and houses in Leh |
| 26. | 11 | 3 | | | | |
| 27. | 7 | | | | | |
| 28. | 9 | | | | | |

Notes

(1) house no. 14 also rent a khangun in Leh containing 8-10 people (not included in Gongma enumeration).

(2) house no. 15 includes 1 servant in the khangchen. They also rent a khangun in a Leh suburb with 5 people (not included in Gongma enumeration).

(3) house no. 24 also rent a khangun in Leh with 2 people (not included in Gongma enumeration).

(4) house no. 25 includes 1 servant in the khangchen.

c) Internal household division

There have been a number of problems concerning the internal arrangement of households in the present generation.

house no. 2

When the senior generation died, the children consulted the tehsil office (rather than the courts) and divided the land equally among themselves, between three sons and one daughter. One son and one daughter married out and left their shares with the khangchen. The two remaining sons shared their land and the khangchen, to which they made two entrances. Recently, the younger son has made his own khangun to which about a third of the household land has been permanently alienated.

house no. 3

Their land was originally divided through the courts in the late 1960's between 2 sons and 3 daughters. The 3 daughters gave their shares to the eldest son. The younger son married out but has now returned to a "khangun" that he has built with land that may be permanently alienated.

house no. 7

In the absence of children, the father and mother were both adopted from other houses in the village.

house no. 9

In about 1975, the father divided the land equally between his two sons and retired to a khangun. The mother retired to a separate khangun. At first, the two sons divided the khangchen between themselves but, today, the younger brother lives in a separate khangun with his family.

house no. 16

Khangun no. 2 has bought land in Gongma which is held independently of the khangchen. The other 2 khangun will probably revert to the main house on the death of their residents (FyB and wife in khangun 1 and FyZ in khangun 3).

house no. 22

In the absence of children, a "son", related through the father's side, was adopted. He was married to a bride who was related to the mother.

2. HOUSEHOLD RITUAL

Gongma villagers sponsor a cycle of regular periodic ritual associated both with the month and the year. All but two houses sponsor the local Gelugpa monastery at Sankar. One house (no.9) sponsors the Sakyapa monastery at Matho and another (no.11) sponsors the Drugpa Kagyupa monastery at Hemis. A few rituals such as skangsol involve a number of monks from the monastery concerned but most are performed just by the regular officiant. Some rites listed below are also performed for houses by lay astrologers or the resident Nyingmapa monk.

The information below is derived from interviews at the end of 1982. While the details on regular ritual probably give a reliable picture of the situation at that time, the details on "irregular" or "crisis" household consultations are probably less accurate. First, the information could not be checked so extensively with neighbours; second, individuals were more likely to forget irregular occurrences and, in some cases, feel embarrassment about reporting them.

a) Regular ritual

27/28 tronpa sponsor a regular sangs and 11 households sponsor additional ritual, to a maximum of four regular rites per month. Some rites, such as sangs, may also be performed in khangun.

Figures for the most commonly sponsored rites of the annual cycle are given below. Regular sponsorship of rites by 7 or more households is listed individually while the total number of rites sponsored each year is given in the right hand column.

Annual cycle of ritual in Gongma households in 1982

| house no. | <u>solka</u> | <u>sadag</u> | <u>yanguk</u> | <u>skangsol</u> (*) | <u>tsantun</u> (+) | <u>gyazhi</u> | total no. |
|-----------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1. | | 1 | | 3 | | 1 | 7 |
| 2. | | | | 3 | | | 3 |
| 3. | | 1 | | 3 | | | 4 |
| 4. | | 1 | | 3 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| 5. | 1 | 1 | | 2 | | 1 | 6 |
| 6. | | | 1 | 3 | | | 4 |
| 7. | 1 | | 1 | 2 | | | 5 |
| 8. | | 1 | | 3 | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| 9. | 1 | 1 | | 2 | | | 5 (1) |
| 10. | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| 11. | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| 12. | | 1 | | 3 | | | 4 |
| 13. | | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| 14. | | | | 3 | | | 5 |
| 15. | 1 | | | 3 | 1 | | 9 |
| 16. | 1 | 1 | | 3 | | 1 | 6 |
| 17. | 1 | 1 | | 2 | | | 6 |
| 18. | | 1 | 1 | 2 | | 1 | 5 |
| 19. | | 1 | | 3 | | | 4 |
| 20. | | | | 2 | | | 2 |
| 21. | | | | 2 | | 1 | 3 |
| 22. | | | | 3 | | | 4 |
| 23. | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | | 1 | 7 |
| 24. | | | | 3 | | 1 | 4 |
| 25. | | 1 | | 3 | 1 | 1 | 11 |
| 26. | | | | 3 | | | 4 |
| 27. | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| 28. | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | | 1 | 8 |

(*) A number of rites are generally performed with skangsol. The figure 2 indicates that skangsol was performed together with yanguk (often for a second time that year) and the figure 3 indicates that it was performed together with dolma mandel (sGrol-ma man-dal) as well.

(+) Isantun is performed in the winter when the men of the household read texts associated with Guru Rinpoche all night long.

note

(1) Every year, this household is also given directions by the Matho oracles for the performance of a particular ritual. They sponsor Matho monastery.

b) Crisis ritual in 1982(*)

household number consultations

1. Oracle - "bad things" (zas ngan).
3. Oracle - "poison" (tuk).
4. Oracle - sick animals (khap were extracted).
Astrologer - ill health; lomgyak. He performed gumig.
5. Oracle three times - sick animals (khap were brought out and rituals performed).
Astrologer - same problem.
7. Oracle - sick animals (needles were sucked out).
8. Doctor (Western style) - ill health of grandmother.
Amchi - same reason.
9. Astrologer - ill health.
10. Oracle - sick animals and ill people.
13. Old sect monk - ill health (lomgyak). He performed gumig.
16. Doctor - injury to knee.
Rinpoche - to consecrate new building.
19. Doctor - nyingka, coughs.
Amchi - same reason.
20. Oracle two or three times - sick animals (he brought out khap) and zhugshes.
23. Oracle - illness in people and animals.
24. Oracle two or three times - illness.
25. Oracle twice - once for ill people and once for animals.
Rinpoche performed rituals for two days.
26. Oracle - problems related to a recent marriage.
Amchi - illness.
27. Old sect monk - lomgyak (he performed gumig).
28. Oracle twice - once for zhugshes and once for animals.

(*) These data only concern visits by specialists to the households concerned. The vast majority of problems are taken to the specialists. Thus, oracles are only likely to be brought to a house to deal with animals which can not easily be transported and, sometimes, because of the privacy surrounding the issue, zhugshes. Visits made to houses by rinpoche who were already in Gongma to perform village ritual have been excluded. Rinpoche visited at least 7 houses in this way in 1982.

Summary

Oracles were brought to at least 11 Gongma households on at least 18 occasions during 1982.

Lay astrologers and astrologer monks (Nyingmapa) were brought to at least 5 households on 5 occasions.

Amchi and doctors were each brought to at least 3 households on 3 occasions.

Rinpoche visited at least 2 houses on 2 occasions.

APPENDIX 3: VILLAGE ORACLES IN THE LEH AREA

Summary

The numbers refer to village oracles who are described in greater detail below:

Ladakhis

1. Kakshal or Kirzi oracle
2. Serchung or Chanspa oracle
3. Skarra nun/oracle
4. Leh Mon
5. Sabu oracle
6. Ayu oracle
7. Choglomsar oracle
8. Matho Ngabral oracle
9. Matho Tukchikpa oracle
10. Hemis oracle
11. Martselang lhamo
12. Martselang Korpon oracle
13. Martselang lhaba
14. Sakti oracle
15. Nang oracle
16. Thikse Beda oracle
17. Thikse or Taklangsha oracle
18. Shey oracle

Tibetans

19. Agling oracle (1)
20. Agling oracle (2)
21. Choglomsar Tibetan oracle
22. Agling oracle (3)

In addition, I was told of a Ladakhi oracle working in Leh and of another Tibetan in Choglomsar. There are a number of Ladakhis who have not yet been initiated or who have not been properly trained. An uninitiated relative of the Thikse teacher was mentioned in Chapter 5. An Indian in the army, who was trained by Thikse teacher and who works as an oracle, was mentioned in Chapter 4. A woman in a house below Gongma has been recognised as an oracle for about a year. Kushok Bakula recognised the god. The woman has not had a separation because, she says, she cannot afford the training. Another middle aged woman in Leh is described as a novice but she does not want to work as an oracle and "the god is not very good". A young man in Chushot is also described as a "novice". Doubtless, there are a number of other oracles in the area as well as individuals who have been "elected" but not (yet) undergone any training (1982). There are also at least three oracles working in the army which is often based in the Leh area.

The Tibetan refugee from Choglomsar (no.21) stopped working in 1981 and Sabu oracle (no.5) does not practice.

It can be seen that there are at least 23 oracles working in the Leh area. The following table concerns the oracles numbered above. The 4 Tibetans are men. The 18 Ladakhis include 9 men and 9 women.

| <u>Oracle Gyud no.</u> | <u>Gyud</u> | <u>Validated by rinpoche</u> | <u>Training by oracle (*)</u> | <u>Current trance practice (1982) (+)</u> |
|------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. | Y(es) | Y | S,K,T,Sh | Ex (1) |
| 2. | Y | Y | S,T | Ex (2) |
| 3. | -(No) | Y | - | performs ritual |
| 4. | Y | - | - | Ex,Lh |
| 5. | - | Y | S,T | - novice |
| 6. | Y | Y | S,T,K | Ex,Tr |
| 7. | - | Y | S,T | Ex (3) |
| 8. | Y | Y | S,T,K,Sh | Ex,Sh,Lh |
| 9. | Y | Y | S,K,T | Ex |
| 10. | Y | Y | S,T,K,Sh | Ex,Sh |
| 11. | Y | Y | S, DK | Ex |
| 12. | Y | Y | S, (T?),K | Ex (4) |
| 13. | Y | Y | unclear | Ex,Sh,Tr |
| 14. | Y | Y | S,K,T | Ex |
| 15. | - | ? | S | Ex |
| 16. | Y | Y | S,K,T | Ex,Lh |
| 17. | Y | Y | S,K,T | Ex,Sh,Tr (5) |
| 18. | - | Y | S,K,T | Ex (6) |
| 19. | Y | - | - | Ex |
| 20. | - | Y | Y | Ex,Sh |
| 21. | - | Y | - | - |
| 22. | Y | Y | - | Ex,Sh (7) |

(*) The order of training is given in the following abbreviations:-

- S - separation with arrows and/or stones etc.
- T - tip lung (also described at jip lung)
- K - khap lung
- Sh - shrakches lung

eg no. 14 (Sakti oracle) - S,K,T. In other words, once the gods had been recognised and tested, the novice first had a separation, then khap lung and finally tip lung.

(+) In addition to revealing the truth through speech and divination and referring clients:-

- Ex - extraction (unless otherwise specified, includes the extraction of tip (pollution), tuk (poison), khap (needles) and jadu (bad magic)).
- Sh - shrakches (burns troublesome demons)
- Lh - changes or has ever changed lhatho (shrine) to local god who also possesses oracle at that time
- Tr - trains novices

Notes

- (1) Does not yet extract bad magic (jadu)
- (2) Does not extract needles
- (3) Only extracts pollution and poison. Still training.
- (4) Unclear whether god received specific permission for pollution
- (5) Also had permission to extract bad magic (jadu). Unclear whether shrackches lung was given.
- (6) She says that she will change her village shrine in trance.
- (7) Three of the four Tibetans said that they were recognised by lama. These may have been rinpoche or monks. One mentioned some training by an oracle but this does not seem to have conformed to Ladakhi practices.

Ladakhi oracles in the Leh area

Brief notes are given on the process of election and the gods present during trance. The gods are not listed individually because of the problems of producing a standard list. Oracles, both in and out of trance, name different gods on different occasions and onlookers are often sceptical about the presence of high ranking religious protectors. An example illustrates the problems:-

7. Choglomsar novice.

gods: Nezer gyapo (Ne-ser rgyal-po)
Murtse gyamo (dMu-rtse rgyal-mo)
Khartse gyamo (mKhar-rtse rgyal-mo)

All three are local gods with village shrines in the area. They were all, for example, named by Migi grandfather in the New Year offerings to the local gods of the area. Khartse gyamo has a shrine in Skarra, a suburb of Leh. Murtse gyamo has a shrine in a place of the same name near Choglomsar, which the novice is supposed to change in trance. Nezer gyapo is a local protector of several places in the Leh area, including Gongma village. A number of these gods also visit other oracles; for example, Nezer gyapo and Khartse gyamo visit Kakshal oracle in trance.

There are possibly other gods. Choglomsar oracles thinks that she is also possessed by Thanglha (Thang-lha). She thinks that this is the god that originally visited her at school and later possessed her husband. The god said that he came to the novice after he had been made free by an old Skarra oracle (not the one in the text), who had banned him.

On another occasion, three local gods were again named but Khartse gyamo was replaced by Yuron gyapo (gYu-sgron rgyal-po).

The picture becomes even more confusing when trance practices are included. Dolma tells her teacher in trance that she is possessed by:-

Nezer gyapo
Murtse gyamo
Khartse gyapo (note change of gender).

The teacher says that the novice is not possessed by Khartse gyamo but by Trashi Yuron.

At another trance, the god in the novice describes herself as Shemul. Ayu and Sabu oracle also possess Shemul gyamo (Sha'i-dngul rgyal-mo) who has a local village shrine. The teacher tells her pupil that it is not Shemul but Shemul ma tid song. Out of trance, the teacher remains unconvinced that Dolma is possessed by this god at all.

Because of these kinds of problems, I have simply indicated below whether gods are described as local Ladakhi or Tibetan gods or high ranking protectors. Most of the local gods also have shrines in villages, towns or village sections, phaspu and sometimes monasteries. A number are claimed by more than one oracle.

1. Kakshal lhaba (Kirzi)

He was elected about five years ago (1976) through illness and madness.

He was trained by Thikse oracle over about 2 years - lhadre pheches, then khap lung, jip lung and shrackches lung. He has not had permission to bring out bad magic (jadu) but plans to do so.

Cost approx Rs 1300 (Rs 400 in cash and full dress for the god).

He describes himself as gyudpa, "hereditary" (as there were oracles in his family 4-5 generations ago).

14-15 gods come, most of them Ladakhi and all local place gods. One of his gods lives in a local shrine. The oracle does not change the shrine but becomes possessed for the whole day. Another god is a tsanlha who possesses him once a month. He stays in bed all day because he can not do anything and has to make sure that no-one sees his back.

2. Serchung lhaba (Chanspa, Leh)

He was elected at about 40 years of age (more than 30 years ago), after his father died. He was ill for a year (unsettled, mad), until he received his initiation and practised meditation.

He was recognised by Bakula rinpoche who consecrated (rabnes) his clothes.

He was trained by Mulbek oracle (now dead). The training only lasted one day; it was an exam. He also accepted jip lung. The teacher showed him how to take out substances and how to pray and he told him the names of his gods. Later, the teacher said that he had given permission to extract needles but the god replied that it would not accept this permission. He paid the teacher Rs 20 and gave him a scarf.

He is possessed by two local place gods. Usually, the gods swallow the substances that are extracted.

Gyudpa.

Although he has not trained any novices, he did welcome the nephew/grandson of the old Mulbek oracle when he was first possessed.

3. Skarra nun

She was elected at about the age of 29 years ("when the Baltis came", i.e. around 1947). She was recognised by rinpoche Bakula and by the gods themselves through a journey to death and back.

She has had no training by other oracles.

She performs no extractions.

Her status is not hereditary.

In the early years of her practice, when she was based at Sankar, she was possessed by 5 gods. Nowadays, she names 15 (sometimes 12) gods, including many high ranking protectors and some Tibetan goddesses. One visits just on the 15th of the 1st month. One answers questions, one deals with enemies (drag), one performs blessings and one recites mantras.

4. Leh Mon oracle

He was elected through ill health that lasted for 3 years from the age of 11. One god came before his father died but the novice did not work until the age of 30, after his father's death.

The gods revealed themselves and were settled through religious practice. There was no special training.

Gyudpa. He wears the clothes that his father used.

The oracle names 5 gods. One extracts pollution and needles. Another very fierce god does rituals. A third is peaceful. All five answer questions. Sometimes, he changes the shrine to his phaslha on the ninth day of New Year, in trance. The phaslha does not however normally possess the oracle.

He claims that he has initiated three novices. His status as a teacher is not generally recognised and so the oracle has not been described in the text as a teacher.

5. Sabu lhamo

She was first elected at the age of 30 years, 13 years ago, when she was mad and unsettled.

She has had an incomplete initiation from a total of three oracles:-

- 2 unsuccessful attempts by Ayu teacher.
- 4 lhaphok from Thikse oracle.
- 2 lhaphok so far from Martselang oracle.

The oracle has given Martselang oracle a cow and calf worth about Rs 1,000, some clothes for the god worth about Rs 250, a ringa worth Rs 150 and a drum worth Rs 70 as well as other items.

She has received permission to extract pollution but not needles.

Her training has been interrupted by seven attempts to ban the gods by rinpoche from Hemis, Spituk, Thikse and Tak Tok.

Her status is not hereditary (but see p.270). The oracle names one local god that also visits Ayu oracle.

6. Ayu lhamo

The oracle says that she was first elected at the age of 4 years and suffered intermittently for the next 20 years. Early on, gods were banned because of danger to the person.

She was validated by Stakna rinpoche (lhalung, lha lung). Stakna and Spituk rinpoche both tested her and asked the gods why they came and what they were called. They separated and banned the demons.

Training by 3 senior oracles:-

She first received permission to extract pollution from Tanglha, a Leh oracle who moved to Manali (mentioned above in relation to Choglomsar novice). She had to say what the five colours on five arrows represented and separate them. She also made offerings to the gods. There was a welcome cake and a number of witnesses, including a monk. This permission was not completed for many years.

Eventually, after 10-15 visits, she successfully received permission to extract pollution from Thikse oracle. She paid him a total of Rs 3,000. She then requested permission to extract needles, unsuccessfully, and turned to Martselang oracle. On this occasion, the guru put a needle wrapped in

the five coloured threads into a ball of dough. He forced an animal to eat it and the novice had to bring it out of the animal.

Ayu oracle is one of the three teachers who are generally recognised in the Leh area. She has trained two men and one woman as well as attempting to train Sabu oracle. The two men were referred to her by rinpoche.

Hereditary.

Possessed by 7-8 local gods and 5-6 Tibetan gods.

Originally, she was possessed by just one local god and later by three. All the local gods had previously visited oracles in her "lineage". They perform most of the extractions. One fierce god who came early on in her life as an oracle has been banned. Another local god extracts jip and comes most frequently. A third is described as a thebrang.

All five Tibetan gods were acquired in India and these did not previously visit any of her relatives. For example, about 2 years ago (c. 1980), 2 or 3 new gods came in India. One is called Bodlha, a Tibetan refugee. The Tibetans mostly answer questions.

7. Choglomsar lhame

Her election probably began with episodes of illness during school nearly 10 years ago (in the early 1970's).

The novice was recognised by Ayu oracle and validated by Stakna rinpoche.

She was initiated by Ayu oracle - lhaphok and permission to extract pollution. She has not yet received permission to extract needles. Initiation and training started 3-4 years ago. So far, she has had 10 lhaphok and will probably have another 5 or 6 after meditation. She has had two separation rituals with witnesses and monks; the first was unsuccessful. She has already paid her teacher Rs 600.

Not hereditary.

The novice usually names three village gods. She has occasionally seen them in meditation with her teacher.

She is supposed to change the shrine of one of her gods near Choglomsar on the 14th of the 4th month. In the past, she has changed the shrine to the phaslha in Chushot. She comes into trance after a ritual wash and plays the drum. This is the only time that she is possessed by that god, he does not belong to her normal working repertoire.

8. Ngabral lhaba (Matho)

This man was elected about 35 years ago (he is now 55 years of age) during an illness that lasted 4-5 years and through "madness", when he ran to the mountains.

He was diagnosed by Matho monastery lha. He also visited Spituk and Stakna rinpoche.

His lhaphok was given by Sakti lhamo (now dead) during a period of 5-6 years when he first received a separation, then permission to extract pollution (tip pingches), khap and finally permission to burn (shrakches). The separation took place once in Matho and once in Sakti when the novice had to separate white and black stones in front of witnesses, including a monk from Tak Tok. Tip pingches was learned on a patient under the supervision of the teacher and khap pingches was performed in the same way, on an animal. The teacher told him to go into meditation for a month and to practice religion.

The teacher was a relative and he only paid about Rs 5 and some barley and wheat (to perhaps a total value of Rs 100).

Gyudpa (possessed about 20 years after his father's death).

The god is his phaslha. He changes the shrine in the high pastures at New Year. He used to come into trance for this ritual but does not do so any longer.

9. Tukchikpa lhamo (Matho)

This woman was elected through illness (unsettled, fits) at about the age of 25 years, 2 years ago. She made pilgrimages to all the local monasteries and practiced religion on the advice of rinpoche.

She was initiated by Thikse oracle during 11 or 12 visits; 6 or 7 times in Matho and 5 times in Thikse. During the first 2 or 3 sessions, she was taught how to make offerings. Then, she had a separation and the god was tested in the presence of witnesses. She had to separate a group of arrows and black and white stones (digu karnag pheches). Afterwards, she had the training. She was taught how to pray. Then, she had the permission to extract needles from animals and, later, pollution from people (tip lung). The god can extract bad magic but can not yet exorcise demons by burning (shrakches). She may still receive permission to burn. The total cost so far in money and goods is approx. Rs 2,000. She has been on pilgrimage with her teacher.

Hereditary (her house name is the same as one of her gods).

She is possessed by two gods. One speaks Tibetan and is probably a Tibetan god. She cannot remember his name. He is one of a group of 6 brothers. Maybe, she says, he came to Matho with one of the monks. The other is a local goddess who does peaceful work but does not visit very often.

10. Hemis lhamo

She says that she was very unsettled for about a year during her election in the late 1970's.

The lha diagnosed the condition herself though the woman also visited rinpoche. One of the rinpoche attempted unsuccessfully to ban the god as she did not want to be an oracle.

She was trained by Thikse teacher during the last year. Most sessions have been in Hemis. During the separation, she had to take white stones away from the black in the presence of many witnesses. She took permission to extract pollution next, by imitating her teacher and curing a client. Then, she received permission to extract needles by copying her teacher and sucking out needles from an animal. She also claims to have received permission to burn witches and to cure through moxibustion (no-one else agreed).

She has only paid Rs 3-400 because, she says, the Thikse teacher is a relative. (He repudiates this relationship.)

Hereditary. She names one Ladakhi god but not the same one that visited her father.

11. Martselang lhamo

This woman says that she was elected through illness (mad, unsettled) at about the age of 18 years (20 years ago).

Diagnosed by Tak Tok rinpoche.

She has been initiated by two oracles:-

first by her niece in Upshi, which was unsuccessful, and then by her (future) husband (Martselang oracle). She reports only one lhaphok at which she received permission for whatever the god requested. A monk was present.

Hereditary.

She named only one Tibetan "refugee" goddess.

12. Korpon lhaba (Martselang)

He reports an election about 5 years ago (he is now in his early 30's) through illness and madness - he was unconscious for 4-7 days, sick, mad and always quarrelling.

He was recognised by a number of oracles and rinpoche.

He was initiated by Thikse oracle.

He had one session with Martselang oracle initially, when the guru attempted to ban the god.

He has had 4 training sessions so far with Thikse oracle.

The first and second were to test the status of the god. He learned to use the drum and perform divination. At the fourth session, he learned to take out needles from animals. His training is not yet complete. Two monks from Hemis and "witnesses" were present for the lhaphok. He says that only the permission to burn (shrakches) remains but it is unclear whether he received a special permission to extract pollution.

Gyudpa (a distant relative used to be possessed by one of his gods).

He names three gods. Two are khyimlha (household gods); one does peaceful work and the other fierce work. The latter (Kangri Lhabtsan) is like a tsan and comes from Chang Thang. The third god is a religious protector (shrunqma).

13. Martselang oracle

I have no details on the recognition or training of this oracle. In trance, he performs all types of extraction and shrakches.

Gyudpa (his house name is Lhaba; he carries with him a personal shrine that was given to his forefathers by Hemis monastery).

He named only one local, fierce god in trance but I failed to ask him to name all the gods.

He does not change the village shrine but appears there in trance on the 15th of the 4th month to treat ill people and animals.

He is recognised as a teacher in the Leh area and has trained a number of novices, including Ayu and Sabu oracles and his wife (Martselang lhamo).

14. Sakti oracle

This man was elected about five years ago at the age of 34 years through illness - he was unsettled and then mad; he went in the water, climbed mountains and jumped from the house.

He was recognised first by rinpoche and he received purifications at the monastery. This was followed by four months' meditation.

He was then initiated by Thikse oracle (lhaphok) according to the rinpoche's suggestion. First, he was tested and had to find hidden things. Then he received khap lung and then tip lung. 15-20 witnesses were present on these occasions. He had khap lung two or three times in both Thikse and Sakti. Needles were fed to dzo in dough, wrapped in the five coloured threads. The novice had to recognise the affected 2 or 3 animals in a group of about 30 and then extract the

needles. Permission for ti also took place in both Sakti and Thikse in front of witnesses. He has decided not to have permission for shrakches. This training took about 3 years. He paid his teacher Rs 230.

Two gods are named; a Tibetan god which also lives in a lhatho in Sakti who does the peaceful work and a Ladakhi god who does the "serious" work. This latter god possessed his relative previously.

Gyudpa (first possessed two and a half years after his relative, ani lhamo, died).

15. Nang lhamo

The oracle was elected about 50 years ago at the age of 30-40 years through illness and "madness". She went on pilgrimage.

She was initiated by the older brother of the current Thikse oracle (now dead). All she remembers is that she had to make offerings and separate red, yellow and white prayer flags. She also remembers that she paid 4 khal in barley (a khal is a variable measure but it is sometimes described as 13.5 kg).

She does not think her status is hereditary. She is possessed by a follower of Dorje Chenmo as well as two other gods. She always swallows pollution, poison and needles in trance, when she is no longer deaf.

16. Thikse Beda lhaba

He was elected at the age of 20 (65 years ago) through illness - he was mad and ran everywhere.

He was recognised by a Hemis rinpoche who, he says, made a sagö namgo (see Chapter 1) to separate the gods and demons. He spent 7 days at the monastery for purification. Another separation orchestrated by the rinpoche involved 2 black and 2 white stones. When the rinpoche said mantra, these stones quarrelled. Eventually, the white ones were on top and the black below. The white were on the right and the black on the left. The black stones were thrown away as if they were storma. The novice had to carry the white stones on his person for 7 days, together with an amulet that the rinpoche gave him. Only then did the novice go into trance when he had to prove he was a god by finding some clothes that the rinpoche had hidden. The rinpoche also asked the novice a lot of questions. He gave him permission (lung) to use the clothes and to say prayers. He told him to go on pilgrimage and later the novice went to Lahul, Sham and Nubra.

The rinpoche sent him to Igu nun (now dead) for the rest of his initiation. First, he received khap lung. During the permission, a needle wrapped in yarn of one colour was eaten by the guru and the novice had to extract this from her stomach. Next, he received jip lung. He had to diagnose the problem in a client and then suck out the substance in front

of his teacher. Then, the novice had to answer general questions (tugstag) and he was told that he could go anywhere to practice.

He paid the rinpoche Rs 15, "a lot of money in those days". The rinpoche returned Rs 5. He paid the nun Rs 10 in kind; he gave her a belt.

Gyudpa (first possessed about 3 years after his grandfather died, by the same local god).

He says that he is possessed by two gods: a follower of Kangri Lhabtsan and the local village god. The first does peaceful work and the second fierce work, including all the extractions. On another occasion, he describes the local god as his phaslha and says that he changes its shrine on the first day of New Year in trance.

He says that he has given two initiations; one to a lhamo in Sakti who is now dead and one to a lhamo from Nubra. Both were referred from rinpoche. He received a goat and a measure of cloth from the Sakti oracle while the Nubra oracle paid for the keep of his horse one winter when he was there. Because his status as a teacher is not generally recognised, it has not been mentioned in the text. In general, his history has not been confirmed by other accounts as the oracle is not well-known, even in his own village.

Now, because of his age, he hardly works.

17. Thikse oracle (Taklangsha)

He was elected at about the age of 40 years, "at the time of the Chinese invasion". He was ill - he lost consciousness, ran into the river and into a well.

He was recognised by a high lama and then confirmed by rinpoche from Stakna, Spituk and Hemis. On their advice, he went on pilgrimage.

He was initiated by Sakti oracle (now dead). Her father had given his father lhaphok. The present oracle's father had given the Sakti oracle an initiation. She then initiated his older brother. He himself (the present oracle) gave lhaphok to her tsawo (either nephew or grandson).

His "test" took place on 2 or 3 occasions and was witnessed by 5 men and 5 women as well as 3 lama. At first, he had to prove he was a lha by finding things that had been hidden. Then, he had lhadre pheches and the specific permissions. First, he had khap lung, just once, also in front of witnesses. A man with both father and mother alive wrapped a needle in the five-coloured threads and fed it to the teacher with a drink of water. The novice sucked it out and showed it to the lama present in proof. Later, he had jady lung which involved a similar process although he had to learn a text. Last, he had jip lung. The teacher gave him a pipe and he extracted pollution from clients. The whole

initiation took three or four months. It is not clear whether his teacher also gave him permission for shrakches.

Gyudpa (first possessed about 10 years after his older brother, who was an oracle, died).

He names 5 local gods. One does fierce work, including shrakches. In Brauen's account, this oracle is associated with only three gods - rGyal-po dkun-dga', Tshe-ring mched-linga and Shang-kong-ka (Brauen 1980a:152).

He has initiated 7 novices (Ayu, Sakti, Martselang Korpon, Matho Tukchikpa, Shey and Kirzi oracles as well as an oracle from Chushot). All were referred by rinpoche.

18. Shey lhamo

The oracle was elected five years ago at the age of 20 years through an illness that lasted three months (or, she said on another occasion, two years). She says that she was unpredictable, stole things, suffered fevers and shivering; she was very angry. It was 2 years before a diagnosis was made.

She made many visits to rinpoche and monasteries. Eventually, she was recognised by Ayu oracle.

She was initiated by Thikse oracle - permission to extract needles and then pollution. She was taught in the same way as other pupils of this teacher (see, for example, Matho lhamo). So far, she has had 4 lhaphok (involving about 10 visits) but her training is not complete. She has to meditate one winter in preparation for the permission to burn demons. So far, she has paid her teacher Rs 1,800. When the training is complete, she will make him a set of clothes to wear in trance. She has been on pilgrimage with her teacher.

She is possessed by a group of brothers, local place gods, variously said to number between 3 and 8. She says they all do the same work. She also says that next summer (1983), she will change her own shrine in trance for the first time.

Not hereditary.

Tibetan oracles in the refugee camps near Leh

1. Agling lhaba (1)

He was elected at the age of 15 (he is now about 68 years of age) through illness. He was ill in his back and chest, he could not breathe and he fell unconscious.

He was initiated by the god himself although a monk gave him advice according to which he went into meditation for about a year in total. The god told him what clothes to wear, what equipment to use and how to perform divination. He wears one set of clothes that his mother had and one set of new clothes.

Gyudpa (his mother died two years before he was first possessed by the same god).

His god is named Kangri Lhabtsan, who is described as a worldly protector (dzamling shrungma).

This oracle seems to be the one who is also described rather differently and in more detail in Brauen 1980a:155-59.

2. Agling lhaba (2)

He was elected around the age of 25 years through a brief spell of ill health when he was unsettled. He is now 54 years of age.

He was recognised by lama and lhaba. The lama banned the demons by means of ritual and the throwing of storma. An old lhaba also checked the status of the god but there was no special training. (On another occasion, he said that he received permissions - a separation and the permission to extract pollution and needles - in one day). After 3 or 4 months, he began to work as an oracle. At the beginning, he had to practice much religion.

He is not gyudpa. He is possessed by one god from Chang Thang, a dergyad.

3. Choglomsar Tibetan lhaba

He was elected around the age of 13 years, about 35 years ago, in a pastoral area of Gerge. He suffered an illness lasting several months during which he had "heart pain" (nyingka), ran away from home and acted as if he were dead.

He was recognised by a lama who did a purification and separated demons from gods by drumming. The demons were banned. This was his only training apart from the practice of religion and it lasted one day,

He is not gyudpa.

He names one god, Kangri Lhabtsan.

He stopped practising one year ago. He says that he just stopped doing the rituals to bring the god; no ban was necessary.

4. Agling lhaba (3)

This man says that he was elected nearly 60 years ago at the age of 13 years. He was elected through an illness during which he was unsettled for a few days.

A lama recognised the god and performed a consecration and a thunderbolt blessing. The novice went into meditation for a year and then on pilgrimage. The lama accompanied him to check if it was a proper god. He then gave him permission to practice but there was no special training.

Gyudpa. He is possessed by the same god that visited his father, a follower of Kangri Lhabtsan who is described as a protector (gonbo, mgon po). He was first possessed after his father died and uses the clothes that his father wore in trance.

APPENDIX 4: TREATMENT IN TRANCE

1. One week's work reported by some oracles in the Leh area during October 1982

Chanspa oracle, Leh

8.10.82. The oracle was called to the house of a Muslim man in the Housing Colony below Leh. The oracle sucked out pollution and recommended a curative rite. He told the man that he was ill because he drank too much alcohol and also because he was not properly converted. He had married a Buddhist girl.

12.10.82. A woman from Likir who was working as a servant in Sankar came to the oracle's house. She complained of stomach pain. The oracle sucked out pollution and told the girl to go to an amchi, not a doctor.

15.10.82. A child from Gangles was brought to the oracle's house by his mother's brother, who lived in Chanspa. They had met the oracle the day before on their way to hospital. After visiting the doctor, the child had deteriorated. The following morning, they visited the oracle. In trance, the god said that the child was ill because of the bad karma (lanchaks) of the older generation. They should do changbu gyaltsa. The child should have a ritual wash. The oracle said that they brought an astrologer to perform the ritual that evening. The child began to get better.

Leh Mon oracle

He said that he came into trance just once that week. A man from Skarra had brought a sick dzo and the god had extracted needles (khap).

Choglomsar oracle

The woman said that she had little work:-

She treated her relatives-in-law in Chushot. They were all ill. One had miscarried.

She was called to Stok because two boys who had cut down a tree of the gods (lhachang) were ill. They were both lame. She sent them to the rinpoche for a ritual wash and blessing (chinlab).

At home, in Choglomsar, she was sent a child from the Choglomsar Skyabgun rinpoche. It was a problem with the masters of the earth (sadag). The god recommended a performance of sadag dondol.

Matho Ngabral oracle

The oracle said that he had worked twice in the week. He was called to two houses in Matho and he extracted tip on both occasions.

Matho Tukchikpa oracle

She said that she had worked once a day in Matho that week. She came into trance seven times and all the problems were to do with illness. The only episode that she remembers in any further detail concerned a trance at which she extracted tip due to food.

Hemis oracle

That week, she said, she only came into trance once because she was at a wedding in Martselang. Normally, she said, she practices every day. The one case concerned illness in her neighbour's house.

Thikse oracle

25.10.82. He worked at a house in Thikse where he extracted a needle from a dzo. There was illness which, he said, was due to time (time nodpa). He gave amulets (shrunqa).

26.10.82. He worked at a house in Thikse where he simply extracted pollution (tip). He said that the god gave no advice.

27.10.82. He worked at three houses in Spituk. At one, he treated an ill dzo. A person was recommended to get an amulet from a monk to cure problems due to tsan and time. At the second house, he extracted pollution from a man and the god did not give advice. At the third house, there was a coolie suffering from bad magic (jadu). The god extracted the magic but did not speak.

30.10.82. The oracle worked at one house in Spituk where he extracted needles from two dzo and pollution from people.

31.10.82. He brought out pollution from a sick child at a house in a suburb of Thikse.

Agling oracle (1)

He said that he had only worked once that week. He had extracted pollution from a man. He does not come into trance very often now because of his age and because he, the vessel, is ill.

2. Transcription of a trance by Skarra nun, 4.4.82.

(transcribed with the help of Mutup Tsering).

Offerings were made and a song sung to a Buddha, Lama Dorje Chang. The oracle was fully possessed and addressed grandfather:

"You, old man, what illness do you have? At that time, you made the life of an animal free (tshethar); now you must pray and think constantly of your gods. You were made ill by food (zogs phok) so be careful what you eat. No doubt, you'll be ill again. You must make sure that you pray from your heart. Unless you pray properly, you'll have a difficult time after you die (chime lam).

"After someone is born, he has to die. But, death is like rain and we can't tell where it will fall. Death is like a rolling stone falling from the mountain top; no-one can say when it will arrive. You can't return the stone to the mountain top while you get ready to die.

"Everyone has religion and everyone has goodness but ... (*). Buddhism will help us most. If we don't follow the teachings of the "three gods" (konjok sum, triple jewel), then there may be fighting, war, theft and internal discord. If you don't control this internal trouble, there will be many external problems. There is a chance of danger from outside. First, do skyabdro (the refuge formula). Second, do not speak ill of anyone; if you do, you'll accumulate great sin (digpa). Instead, say many om mani and you will gather the fruits of your labour. Om mani are the summary of all the 40,000 religious books. Even a very wealthy man cannot get rid of an illness or a sorrow without practising religion in this way. Do you understand?

"To stop all these evil things - damage from ghosts, from living demons, from lu, from masters of the earth - we have to pray to Padma Jungnas, benza guru (prayer, om ah hum).

"Some people smoke, some drink beer and then they decide to pray to the lhamo. However, it is not for the lhamo but for your journey after death that you pray. After you die, you'll stay in the intermediate state for 49 days. On the 50th, you'll be born somewhere (- a list of places including the cold hell). There will be a new life on the 50th day from blood and flesh. It is very very difficult. If you can't face up to your illness now, how will you be able to deal with the problems of rebirth? You can never avoid the pains of rebirth.

(* ... represent passages that we could not understand.

"When you're ill, if you do anything for yourself, you must still remember the gods - don't forget the lama and konjok sum. The first lama is Lama Dorje Chang himself. Then, there is Sangyas who has already reached enlightenment. One who prays from the heart without any mistakes can understand Lord Buddha's teachings with the help of lama. You'll find the way of religion. For this teaching, Phakspe Gyendun can show the way. Many people can read and understand the teachings and, if they practice properly, they'll gain merit (phayon). But, it is better to have a lama as teacher and then more merit will be gained.

"If you ask how consciousness (sems) comes about, it is from the father's bones and the mother's flesh together. As the bone and blood mix, a flower forms inside the body which gives channels (tṣa). The flower grows in the body and, after about nine months and nine days, it emerges in the shape of a child. After birth the child is so soft that it suffers many hardships from heat and hardness. Some are happy and some sad. Then, they acquire a human body (mi lus). After a while, some children will become educated, some will be doctors (it may be recalled that a German doctor was present - I doubt that this would have been said in normal circumstances), some will be amchi, some carpenters, some pious and some against religion. Everyone thinks that they'll succeed if they pray to the triple jewel.

"You, father (that is, the same man - grandfather) have made a life free (tshethar) but you made a mistake. You put some bad medicine on your hip. You thought it would get rid of the "yellow water" (chuser) but the infection didn't heal. A few days before your illness, you were ill at ease and you didn't sleep. Someone heard a bad sound (skad ngan). (The man's son interrupted to say that he had heard a fox in the morning and a crow.)

"Your father (addressing the son) is ill because of a blood condition. Nothing worse will happen if he eats properly. If you (grandfather) eat bad food, you'll fall ill again.

"You (to a new client) are saying many mani, but in a daze. It will be good to continue your mani but it will be much better if you count from your heart very clearly (SHE prays). You must think about the meaning of each of these words and imagine Sangyas standing in front of you. These mani are for the benefit of everyone. You must think of your father, your mother, of men, gods, "not gods" (lhamayin), animals and of those who suffer. You must think of another three things. Lama Odpagmed, Chenrezig. From your hand. Pray completely from your mouth. Mind, speech and hand must act together, they must be kept together. Then, the mani will bring most merit. You must not look in one direction, finger the beads and talk about something else. You must concentrate/meditate (gom) as you say your mani. We have to think that Phakspa Thukje Chenpo and Sangyas Odpagmed are really in front of us and we have to pray for every human,

animal, insect and any suffering being who we might save. Then, there'll be more merit than if you pray just for yourself.

"All living things are like a family with a father, mother and children. You should pray with a very clear mind. We have to offer the refuge formula, om mani padme hum and benza guru to the triple jewel. We have to remember this always. Don't think badly of anyone. Don't feel jealous. Don't make gossip. Don't keep something that you borrowed. We must have compassion for all. Even to kill ants or lice is to act badly. All this is important in preparing for your rebirth.

"If you have a child who is ill or badly hurt, what do you feel? My advice requires the same dedication and feeling. We have to have that compassion. If you ever kill or damage anything, even in speech, it is critical: Lama Yuthog Jalna said, "if someone acts against religion, there are many repercussions/hindrances. The lama tried to suppress bad things to protect the community - first with a spear, then with a sword and with fire - but, even so, he could not control them. Then, the lama prayed to the eight religious protectors, like Chenshrin, to summon them. Then, Geshe Wang Gangpo was possessed by some of the religious protectors and THEY said: "Whoever attempts to damage your religion will be destroyed. If a tooth hurts you, pull it out."

"It is a turning point now. That is why I talk to you. Otherwise, I am unable to speak; even when I do, most people don't listen and they don't understand. This is the critical point now.

"A lot of monks can't drink beer or eat meat; still, a lot have died of swelling(?) (shrangste). So, they asked Buddha if they could eat meat at the critical point. They used to swell all over their bodies and so many monks died that they implored Lord Buddha again and again. Finally, he allowed them to eat meat at that point. If the animal has completed his allotted time, then it is alright. If they are not cured, then this meat can be given to a pig and then they can eat the pig (?) This, Sangyas Buddha did against his better judgement.

"These things are not far distant but near at hand and you will see all this as you are about to die. Everyone can see and your soul leaves your body and you are in shima. One soul (sems) goes downwards and one upwards. But there are not two souls - it is our own power (rangi shuks) that makes the soul act in different ways. If we follow the advice of guru, follow the ten merits and stop the ten demerits, follow our lamas' advice, then our soul will leave straight from the top because of our spiritual strength. If we behave badly and go against the advice of the lama or lha then the soul may go straight downwards.

"At the time of phoa (taking the soul out of a corpse), if the dead person has behaved well, when the lama makes this sound - "chargh, hop, hop, hup" - to encourage it, then the

soul goes straight upwards. The soul goes up with the lama to catch the feet of the lama. Then, he'll get a good path, thinking that he (the lama) is his guru.

"If someone is against the religion, speaks against the lama, does damage to animals - after death, through greed, he won't find the proper road and the soul may stay at home, inside. It may go by the earth road or the water road. Staying at home may be due to wealth or to the pull of children.

"Someone who is half sin and half merit faces many difficulties. It is much better for a person to read the phog texts before he dies to a lama and then the lama can explain the parts he doesn't understand. The text explains how the soul can go from the bottom or from the heart and all this must be kept in mind as you die so that you have the power to send your soul where you will. So, familiarise yourself with the text.

"After you die, it is important to read todol ("the book of the dead") every seven days. It is important to be familiar with this too so as to find the right path. Have you ever read it? (SHE prays and recites the text.) (There are) 84,000 religious books and some of these must be learned by heart. (SHE prays). All the books are the same and if someone gives you advice about religion, you must look and listen. Even if you don't understand but if you watch/listen, then you will get the fruit (reap the rewards).

"If you make these offerings (chodpa), there is no need of atonement. The offering of thought is that which is offered from the heart and accompanied by prostrations. And then you give alms to the poor. The heart becomes so clear that it is like Sangyas'. This offering is concerned with the welfare of all. If there is no doubt at all, then you will be reborn with such a mind. This will give you the power of Dorje.

"The vessel is very old now and the god can not come again and again. Some people speak badly of me and we are not all in harmony. Have any of you smoked? Smoke tastes good in the mouth and puts the mind at peace. But, if I tell you where it comes from: - it comes from the blood of a menstruating devil woman. She prayed, "if the smoke does not cover the whole world, then may I vomit a snake and an elephant". Then, she vomited a snake and a big elephant which breathed fire from its mouth. Why is it a sin? The leaves of the grass are sinful and the prayer that devil woman made was bad.

(to a German tourist, a medical student) "When you give medicine what do you feel? Your mind is very clear. The amchi says "take this as Buddha's medicine" and the doctor must feel as he would giving medicine from his heart to his own son and daughter. You must work so that your heart will be helpful for all. Now you think I'm unreasonable but after you die, you'll find the truth.

"Most of you have eaten onion and garlic. If I say more now, you will not understand, the advice will not penetrate your mind and you will become anti-religious.

"Because of the deeds of the gods, our bodies are borrowed. Your body is just borrowed. If it were not like this. If a stone is rolling down a steep mountain, we cannot turn such a big stone back. When we die, we cannot take our bodies (with us), nor money, jewels, diamonds, wife and so forth. (We cannot take) even a single grain of barley. This borrowed body may be burned, buried, thrown in the water or given to the birds. Everyone has to leave their body though the paths may be very different. Is this true? Everyone is the same, whether Hindu, Christian or Muslim. They may have different roads but everyone tries to search for a way. No-one is thinking of what will happen after they die but they are all making themselves comfortable in this life. With Buddhism, if our hearts really hold faith with the lama, we can be comfortable in both the present and the next life and for generation after generation.

"Whether it is a lama, a Buddha, a hungry ghost (yidags), a domestic animal or even a small insect. After you have died several times, after you have gone through the very hot and the very cold world, we can get the power to show the road to all of them and escape from these difficult paths.

"I am not allowed to say that my religion is good and yours (i.e., mine) bad. If someone wants to understand, then it is like this - you don't have very long to wait because you will die after 50 or 60 years. Then you can see the road of death. You must have faith in someone like a lhamo or a lama, you must do as they say and you can reap the fruit. We cannot avoid going to the road after death. If someone gives advice to drink beer, to smoke, to steal, to snatch things, to keep borrowed things. Why isn't it good to be greedy? Because you will suffer after death. You must repent for having smoked.

"After death, our soul is still alive. The number of souls is always increasing. The thought of enlightenment (chang chubi semba) is the most important thing to have. It means not damaging anything, not eating meat, not killing anything, not smoking, not eating fish or poultry, not damaging a soul. We have to give up the ten sins and obey the ten virtues. If you follow the ten virtues, for the welfare of all with life, you will be reborn just as if you were moving to the house next door and moving from a poor house to a rich house. If you keep this in mind, I may say some more but if not it will be harmful to you for me to speak. Keep this in mind like milk, like a light ray in the mind, like a palace in the eyes. If someone believes thus, then he has much religious knowledge that can be explained to you. If people have nothing in which to keep all this advice, then there is no point in speaking. If someone has the capacity to listen, then I shall tell them and I have a lot to tell. What is the capacity? If you turn large cymbals upside down and put water in the bottom, the water will not stay there and it

will not go inside. If it is made of good material but has holes in it, the water will flow through. If you have a pot with dirty things like saliva in it, any pure water in the pot is similarly useless; it cannot be used.

"Here are three examples. the upside down cymbals are like someone who goes for advice and stays but does not listen. The second example is like visiting a religious ceremony for blessing but forgetting what you have been told like the beer or milk that passes through the pot. The third pot, the dirty one, is like someone who won't go to the ceremony because he thinks it dirty and a waste of time. If you try to understand very hard, I have given you three clear explanations.

"In your case (the German), you have to take the names of the gods when you give the medicine to make it efficacious. At this time, the heart/mind medicine is much more useful than actual medicine. Everyone, whatever their work, has first to take the names of the gods. In your case, if you practice virtue, if someone has nothing to eat and you give one changbu (a piece of dough clenched in the fist, passed over the body and thrown as a storma), then when you die you will get one hundred times the merit.

"You have to say prayers but, if you do not know, how can you? It would be good if you prayed. There would be some virtue if you knew. People who read texts and mantra and belittle their virtues will go to hell. Even if they understand the text but do not believe in it, there are so many people like this, they will all go to hell. If we make prostrations or say prayers or perform circumambulations to the triple jewel, we must pray thus from the mind/heart. If we do not, it is like the wind or like dust. No-one knows where it comes from. It is a formality. The god, Jigshed, and all the religious protectors will become angry and there will be a communal disturbance in the world between Buddhist and Buddhist, Muslim and Muslim and many people will be killed. There will be no comfort. No doubt there is a lot of luxury. People now are becoming richer - all have clothes, animals, music and entertainment. Then we will not be able to find even a stone in the mountains because people have made so many houses. There will come a time when there are not enough people to live in these houses. After 90 years, this will come to pass. The time is very near. I might come tomorrow if you are interested but today you have eaten onion and garlic and some have drunk beer and smoked. You may understand if I speak now but you will not remember my advice.

"Our hearts are a sphere and we have to open it to receive advice. Then we have to close it again and tie it up so as to retain all the advice. After we have kept it inside, we have to avoid doing anything wrong by always asking the advice of the lama. Tied does not mean "to tie" but "to control".

"What is your religion? Christian (where there is) one god for all. As far as Buddhism is concerned, we have three gods (konjok sum) while Muslims and Christians may have only

one. This one god is said to have come from a monkey. The origin of these religions is the same. This one god came from a monkey on the father's side. Originally (the one) who became the first god was just like a monkey with hair on the face and his heart was a Bodhisattva's. He pointed out the way of religions. Afterwards, the people showed the way. The monkey figure had a lot of trouble from other religions and he held them back on either side and punished them with iron nails. He had three reasons to punish these religions but I won't describe them now because you would become very sad. He did not want to cause any damage, his mind was not like that. He had a pure mind. In Shiah Islam, there are also three causes. Shiites are not afraid of sin, they are not doing more virtue. The religion does not agree with other religions because the people eat meat and kill animals. In Shiah Islam there are three contentious religions: meat religion, bad religion, angry religion. If you kill an animal, the Shiite says that there is no sin but how can you say that it is not a sin when you see a young animal about to be sacrificed? How can that become a virtue? There are no animals or insects which have not been our fathers and mothers. These are simply people who have not found the right path. It is like a blind man who is left on a huge plain. If someone of good mind comes along and asks, "what are you doing?" the man may reply "I can't see so I can't go anywhere". Then, the second man guides him and explains, "here is water, come this way", "here is a big stone, follow me". Then the blind man can find his way. Then the blind man and the sighted one are just the same. If the blind man does not follow his guide, he will stay in the same place. When the guide says "come with me", the blind man (might) say "I'll stay here. If there is water, I might fall into it and if there is a stone, I might walk into it. If there is a narrow path, I might fall down." Then the person with good eyes will not fall and the blind man will. Religion is like this and the blind man is the one without knowledge while the sighted one is a religious person. The man who will not follow others will meet obstacles.

"If the blind person goes toward the sighted one, he can go everywhere with his help. If you do not drink beer, smoke, eat onions then maybe I'll return. If someone has the mind of a Bodhisattva (chang chubi semba), that is the main religious requirement and there is no need to study the texts. If someone does not have such a mind, it is more difficult to perform religion properly. With the mind of a Bodhisattva, you do not have to search anywhere for religion. The enlightened one (chang chubi semba) is the one with belief for the benefit of all humanity - all living beings, animals, and to think nothing sinful of anything. You have many questions and I may answer them tomorrow. Now I am going.

(to a boy) "What is your question?" ... Have you just had an exam or what? In your house, there has been a quarrel. What kind of quarrel was it? It was about land. There were many reasons for the quarrel. You have sworn many oaths and you need to make many excuses. ... You may succeed in your exams but there is somebody in the middle (causing trouble). If you behave properly, you will do well. You were

disparaging about the religious protectors so light a butter lamp. Put up a big prayer flag (tarchen) and do lungsta (raise prayer flags). You are very hasty. You sometimes do not feel well because of gossip (mikha). Sometimes, you get very angry. There are very many big and little problems. But I have already spoken with you and given you a lot of religious advice so now you should understand. Internal problems, external problems and illnesses, all may be finished with consultation. I'm not a household god (khyimbe lha) but a goddess who protects Sangyas' faith, a religious protector. I'm not a household god who sucks out poison and needles. I have come to the people of this land to give advice about the people's religion and enlightenment. You've got a lot of pimples. How did they start?"

(reply) "I've had them a long time."

(the god) "This is first of all because of the lu. You did something in a place where lu live. It would be good for you to visit the hot springs."

(client) "Which direction is best?"

(the god) "The east side is better. After crossing a mountain. ... After crossing this mountain. ... Go to Panamik and it will provide an effective cure."

(to grandfather) "Your hip hurts and it is swollen. You put a poison grass on the skin when it was raw. Put a powder on it to make it better. You do not feel well at night. You say mani but sometimes you forget."

(grandfather) "I can not do it."

(god) "If you cannot do them from the mouth, then think from the heart. You don't have to prostrate yourself. You can accomplish the same with your heart. You must say from your heart, "I am a person whose sin has not been atoned" and also, with the refuge formula, you must offer to the three jewels. With your mani, remember that they are for the whole of humanity, for the gods, the "not gods", animals, hungry ghosts and everyone in hell. If you say just one mani, you must think that you are saying many and that they are for the welfare of all. You should read todol (Book of the Dead) and then, if you eat well, you will have a long time to live and you will be better off if you read todol before you die. I'll make a prayer for your death road but meanwhile don't scold others. If you do, maybe I will scold god. Do you understand? Don't upset him by teasing.

"One or two of you have not eaten onion and garlic but the rest of you have and so you may not understand religion properly and you may speak against the religion.

(to a boy) "Sometimes you do the opposite of what you are told and sometimes you behave badly to people. (prayer). (The boy is blessed, a text is read). Don't ever smoke or even handle cigarettes. You must make an offering of hair (shraphud). Do you understand? (Another prayer).

"Now Jetsun Dolma may come for a little while to do the work of Nاستان Bakula. Then Dorje Trakgyal, I call this name. Jigsten Odzinma is to do the work of the whole world, that is why I was called. Then I call Tronyingma. I call Jetsun Padma Dolma for the work of the gods. SHE is also for enlightenment. Then I call Kachodma to get rid of devils (drashrin). Then I call Uljangma who interprets what Jetsun Dolma says. Chezungma comes to work with lu. Khandro de chokma gets rid of bad people who damage the world and SHE protects you against them. There are 12 goddesses altogether. Kolo de chenma is for the welfare of animals. SHE teaches religion to animals. Chuchodma is for offerings to the gods. Norgi Kapelma is for the benefit of all; eyes, stomach. If it is possible, you should have a second trance in the morning because people may have eaten onions or garlic by the evening and that is not good.

"I may throw a storma tomorrow. There are two kinds of ... storma. ... Timo, mikha, gyalgong ("king demons"). Mostly, timo ("living demons") are coming to you because people are jealous of the animals. Near here there is great mikha (gossip) as well. You need nothing apart from faith and then I can throw these two storma. Without faith, it will not do you any good even if Sangyas comes."

Jetsun Dolma appears: "Jetsun comes for the welfare of all. When people visit you, they sometimes reach enlightenment.

(to another German) "What are you thinking?" (three sneezes, bell and drum, two sneezes and a new god appears).

Kachodma: long prayer and song.

Jigsten Odzinma: prayers, songs, finishing with:

"Now the time has come for me to go. Life is limited and we have many sorrows. There are many internal things at variance with religion. There are many channels (tsha) inside which are also at variance with one another and so there are many diseases in the body. There are many enemies (dra) which interfere with our work. Because of the lama's work (lit: plan), we can get rid of all these problems. If we don't work well now, we might repent after death. We have prayed in such a way so that we may reap the fruit. That is the way to acquire merit. You don't know now, but everyone has to face problems after death. If you don't repent now, you will have to on that road. Try and harvest the fruits of what I have told you."

FOOTNOTES

Footnotes to Introduction

(1) See Brauen 1980a, Dargyay 1985, Kaplanian 1981, 1983.

(2) See appendix 1 for an explanation of Ladakhi and Tibetan transliterations.

(3) This usage is in keeping with standard anthropological classifications. Firth, for example, proposes a three-fold classification that discriminates between spirit possession, spirit mediumship and shamanism in terms of the increasing control that a human agent wields over spirits (Firth 1964). Such typologies are not explored below because they may lead to over-rigid distinctions. As shown in Part II of the thesis, Ladakhis link possession, mediumship and also shamanism in central ways. Ladakhi oracles are "spirit mediums;" they do not, themselves, travel to other worlds in trance (in contrast to shamans). Yet, many of their songs and items of clothing are tied to images of movement and flight. Their gods travel widely outside their vessels. Moreover, closely related trance practices in the Tibetan area sometimes involve travel when the "shaman" goes in search of a lost soul for example (Holmberg 1980). Ladakhi "mediums" are also difficult to distinguish unambiguously from other people suffering "spirit possession" which they cannot control (see Chapter 5). In Ladakh, at least, a classification of the kind proposed by Firth is not very useful.

(4) Furer-Haimendorf uses two terms: "spirit-media or oracle-priests" (1964:254).

(5) Fuller has recently argued that low ranking practices in the Hindu context may define themselves as inferior while high ranking practices establish no relationship with the lower (Fuller 1988). His argument should be seen as a rebuttal of Dumont's view which is discussed below. A similar point might be made of the Ladakhi material in a more limited way for, as shown subsequently, monks may dismiss local beliefs and practices as the results of superstition and ignorance. However, it is also true that aspects of monastic Buddhism are based upon the incorporation of the lower ranking (as discussed in Chapter 6). The issues raised by Fuller are not directly relevant to my point about the mutual definition of low and high ranking practices for I restrict my comments to a village perspective.

(6) This perspective is only one of several that might be utilised in a discussion of village oracles. My account of ritual is based upon a central Ladakhi image of division between the monastery and the rest of the village, which is described in Chapter 1. Other accounts of "religion" divide the field into three parts: Buddhism, Bon and the folk or nameless religion (Tucci 1980, Stein 1972). Samuel describes a simple four fold division (Samuel 1978). My perspective is

intended to illuminate the position of oracles in particular. Some of these specialists belong to the monastery and some to the village. Sometimes, they are described as a single group but sometimes they are sharply distinguished. The ambiguities surrounding oracular practice relate closely to their place within this image of a society divided into two parts.

(7) See, for example, the collections on recent research in Ladakh (no.1, 1983; no 2, 1985; no. 3, in press); Brauen 1980a, 1983; Cambridge Undergraduate Ladakh Expeditions 1977 and 1979; Dollfus 1988; Kaplanian 1981; Murdoch 1981 and Phylactou 1989.

(8) See Chapter 4 for further comments on the distinction between shamanism and spirit possession. For the purposes of this introduction, the differences are not important.

(9) I describe the Buddhism practiced in Ladakh as Tibetan or Mahayana Buddhism. Sometimes, Tibetan Buddhism is specified further in terms of its tantric practices as Vajrayana. Tibetan Buddhism is also practiced in Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal although Theravada Buddhism has also become popular recently in Nepal. Mahayana Buddhism is opposed to Hinayana, the lesser vehicle, whose only remaining branch is the Theravada Buddhism described in accounts of Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma. Buddhist and tantric practices in other places such as the Western world, East Asia, Indonesia and India are not mentioned in this thesis.

(10) Cunningham discusses a number of estimates for the early 19th century before the smallpox epidemic and the Dogra wars. He suggests a figure of about 12,000 monks and nuns for a population of about 165,000, which is the figure suggested by Moorcroft, but perhaps as low as 146,000, as suggested by Csoma de Koros, or as high as 172,800, as estimated by Cunningham himself in 1847 (Cunningham 1977 (1854):285-6). Ramsay suggests that one sixth of the population were monks and nuns (1890:83).

(11) Evidence of a Tibetan presence in Ladakh in the 8th century is found, for example, in Denwood's analysis of a rock inscription near Alchi. The names in the inscription resemble those in documents from Tunhuang and Khotan. The term stong dpon (commander of 1,000 men) suggests a military presence (Denwood 1980).

(12) In order to make it easier to read Tibetan words, spellings are altered so as to conform to the transliteration described in appendix 1. Thus, Petech writes p'yag-mdzod which, in my citation, is altered to phyag mdzod. However, phonetic transliterations used by writers on the various Tibetan speaking areas reported in this thesis are not altered. If these transliterations seem to be difficult to understand, I include either the Tibetan spelling or the Ladakhi equivalent alongside.

(13) These brief notes are intended simply to introduce monasteries that will be mentioned subsequently and to emphasise the importance of links with Central Tibet through the monastic hierarchy. Further details can be found in many sources. The best are Petech 1977 and Snellgrove and Skorupski 1977. Petech also discusses Drigungpa history in Ladakh (Petech 1978). The Tibetan spellings of the monasteries can also be found in these sources.

(14) Sven Hedin reported in 1910 that 400 of the 3,800 monks at Tashilunpo in Tibet were Ladakhis (Sven Hedin 1910 (vol.1):352). Today, at the monastery of "Kyilung" (a pseudonym) near Leh, only 2 of the 20 monks over 40 years of age have not visited the main monastery of their sect in Tibet for further training (Goldstein and Tsarong 1985:18).

(15) It might be noted that Lewis too questions rigid typologies of spirit possession in another chapter in his recent book, which extends a paper originally published in Folk 23 (1981) (Lewis 1986). He questions the distinction between positive and negative trance experiences and suggests that these are better applied to different stages in a shaman's career. This more dynamic approach might have been extended to the related distinction between "peripheral" and other possession cults, presented in an earlier chapter of the book.

(16) This figure includes the population of outlying villages such as Gongma (see appendix 2).

(17) The pattern of trading is described in many accounts. See particularly Cunningham 1854, Moorcroft and Trebeck 1837 and Ramsay 1890 (pp.78-9,136) for the 19th century. More recent accounts include Carrasco 1959, Heber and Heber 1926, Pallis 1974 (1939), Rizvi 1983 and Grist 1985. Lamb 1960 gives a good description of the trade between Ladakh and Western Tibet in the 18th early 19th centuries. Accounts based on those involved in the carrying trade are also available (Joldan 1985, Radhu 1981). Similar patterns of short-distance internal trade that fed into the long-distance networks can be found in accounts of Nepal. See, for example, Furer-Haimendorf's work, including Furer-Haimendorf 1975; Goldstein 1974, Jest 1975.

(18) Francke 1926:350. See also Petech on the treaty with Tibet in 1684 when the details of the reciprocal cha pa and lo phyag missions were fixed (Petech 1977:77-8). Ramsay describes the trade goods involved in these Ladakh-Tibet trading missions in his dictionary. He suggests that the "lapchak" leader always belonged to one of the noblest Ladakhi families (1890:86). Petech, however, suggests that the lo phyag was organised under an ecclesiastical official, either a Ladakhi or Tibetan resident in Ladakh (ibid:161).

(19) See, for example, Fisher, Rose and Huttenback 1963, Rahul 1970.

(20) A Cunningham 1854, Drew 1875, Moorcroft and Trebeck 1837, J D Cunningham 1844, Ramsay 1890. See also Lamb 1960 on the period from 1767-1905 and Carrasco's discussion of these 19th century sources (Carrasco 1959).

(21) Well-known travellers include Chinese pilgrims such as Hui-ch'ao (see Petech 1977 chapter 1) and Jesuit missionaries (see Wessels 1924). The first Jesuits arrived in the 17th century but it is not until Desideri's visit a century later that any extensive impressions are recorded (Filippi 1932). In the 19th century, a number of British explorers visited Ladakh; Vigne's account was published in 1842, Thomson's description of the geology and botany in 1852 and Drew's account in 1875. See also Izzet Ullah 1843. In the latter half of the 19th century, a new type of missionary was introduced to Ladakh, namely the Moravians who established themselves in Leh. The Moravians provided much of the early research on Ladakh. Important works include Jaschke's Tibetan-English dictionary (1881), Ribbach's biography of a Lower Ladakhi villager (1940) and Francke's voluminous works (see Brauen's 1980a bibliography for many of these; some are cited in the references to this thesis). The Hebers published a general account (1926) and Asboe wrote on many aspects of village life (for example, Asboe 1938, 1947). The literary activities of the Moravians have been discussed in Bray 1985.

(22) Petech 1939, 1977; Francke 1926; Marx 1891, 1894, 1902. A Ladakhi version of the chronicles and a number of other sources has been published by Gergan 1976. Fisher, Rose and Huttenback also make use of the Ladakhi material in their discussion of Sino-Indian rivalry in Ladakh from 600-1962 (Fisher, Rose and Huttenback 1963).

(23) Petech discusses different versions of these events (Petech 1977:14-17).

(24) A son of the king Tshe-dpal rnam-rgyal, who ruled until 1840, was also recognised as a Hemis incarnation. He married and seems to have been king for a short while (Petech 1977:135-7).

(25) Ladakhi households no longer pay tax apart from very minor dues on animals, fruit trees and vegetable gardens.

(26) This figure rose rapidly in the early years. 1,980 tourists visited Ladakh in 1975 as compared to 10,000 in 1978 (Leh Tourist Office).

(27) Reincarnate lamas are also described as tulku (sprul sku) (see Chapter 3) and they are generally addressed as skushok or kushok (sku gshogs), "excellent body".

Footnotes to Chapter 1

(1) See Kaplanian 1983:93-4 for a slightly different version of this myth, apparently from the same source. Similar stories are told about the founding of particular Ladakhi villages. For example, the Dard people of Da tell of their beginnings:

"The Dah people say that their ancestors, when they first came, lived by hunting, not by agriculture. One of their mighty hunters dropped his bow (called in their language Dah) on the hill-side. It became a water channel which fertilized the fields of what afterwards became a village. One of their Chiefs found certain seeds growing wild which he sowed near the water-course. These seeds proved to be those of wheat and barley. Thus the village was founded." (Shaw 1878:33-4)

See also Clarke 1977, Vohra 1983, 1985 on Da and Rigal 1983:172 for a story about the foundation of the village of Chilling.

(2) The association between lu and natural fertility is made by many other Tibetan speaking peoples. Jest, for example, quotes Kagar Rinpoche from Dolpo:

"il faut les (that is, klu) respecter puisque nous sommes agriculteurs et (que) toutes les récoltes dépendent de leur bon vouloir" (Jest 1975:299).

(3) This term sonyom may be translated as charity (bsod snyoms). Dollfus also suggests the term "gso-nyung", "a little to eat" (Dollfus 1988:81).

(4) But see section 1.3 for an alternative image where two of these sponsors are denied full village status.

(5) The details of sponsorship by Gongma households are not given below but it should be noted that Gongma also contributes to a number of regular rituals and other collective activities staged in Leh because it is a suburb of the city. Details on chindag relationships in Lower Ladakh can be found in Grimshaw 1983 and Dollfus 1988.

(6) As noted above, a village is defined partly in terms of its monastery or temple and so the monastery should be seen as part of the village. However, the term "monastery and village" is used for convenience to refer to this contrast between monastery and the rest of the village.

(7) It can be seen that the context of discussion influences the way in which these relationships between monastery and village are portrayed. The image of reciprocity is not simply an artefact of the outsider's perspective; it is elaborated by Ladakhis themselves when discussing their social organisation. Should the conversation turn to religious matters (chos), then it becomes a question of disinterested gifts rather than payments on the part of the villager and dedication to the salvation of all rather than a

ritual service on the part of the monk. The term mentioned above, sonyom (fn 3) can be translated as payment, gift or charity but its particular sense is often clear from the wider context of the conversation.

(8) Kinship ties are also important inside the monastery. Goldstein and Tsarong note that the teachers of novices who join the monastery of "Kyilung", close to Leh, are generally FB, MB, grandparent's brother, or the child's family are sponsors of that teacher:

"In Kyilung, at least 21 (62%) of the monks were related to at least one other monk in the monastery ..." (Goldstein and Tsarong 1985:20).

(9) In Ladakh, tsan are the spirits that are first mentioned at this middle level, in relation to gods above and lu below. Accordingly, parṣam is generally transliterated as bar btsan; the intermediate space or middle level of tsan spirits. However, the term seemed to be pronounced most often with a final m and so bar mtshams, "the middle space", is tentatively suggested as an alternative spelling. tsan are often described as beautiful women from the front. But, should they be seen from the back, then the beholder will be struck ill by the sight of a being whose insides are exposed (see Kaplanian 1981 for further details). tsan are also associated with movement; they have their own roads and they are often depicted on horseback. Phylactou has suggested that their appearance from behind indicates the problems associated with departure (Phylactou 1989). tsan are related to a host of capricious beings that share the world with people, which are discussed in Chapter 5. In other Tibetan speaking areas, tsan (btsan) take on many different roles. Jest, for example, writes about btsan as spirits occupying the rooves of houses, in altars (Jest 1975). They may be produced from bad deaths as in Ladakh (ibid:300). They may also have the status of local deities, protecting given territories. In some Tibetan speaking areas, tsan are embodied in oracles.

In some Tibetan speaking areas, gnyan are somewhat comparable to btsan in Ladakh (see, for example, Tucci 1966). Among the Dolpo of Northern Nepal, a four-fold cosmology is described with gods (white), gnyan (yellow) and btsan (red) above and klu (blue) below (Jest 1975 chapter 21). Nyan are certainly not central to the local cosmology around Leh, although I have heard them mentioned. But, they have been given greater prominence in some accounts. Ribbach, for example, wrote:

"The most feared spirits are the Nyan (gnyan) which wander round mountains and valleys dwelling in first this and then that mountain or tree. If they are angered, even unintentionally, they send sickness and death to human beings." (Ribbach 1986 (1940):118).

(10) I watched Thikse oracle making one such device. He said later that two should be made; a dog's skull for the earth door over the back entrance to the house, sometimes replaced by a wolf, and a sheep's skull for the sky door over the

front entrance, sometimes replaced by a goat. Dollfus reverses this association and says that the skull of a sheep/goat guards the earth door while the skull of a dog guards the sky door (Dollfus 1988:236). Around Leh, only one device is generally visible and I was told by an astrologer that the earth door is buried under the front door step. See Kaplanian 1981:225 for yet another version.

(11) The horizontal part of the plough which joins the yoke to the vertical section is called a plough arrow (sholda). The vertical section is guided by a man behind and finishes in an iron point at the bottom which pierces the soil.

(12) This gender complementarity is symbolised similarly in many other contexts. For example, the "plough arrow" is used first of all in the "mother field" (mazhing).

(13) On Ladakh, see, for example, Kaplanian 1981, Dollfus 1988, Pommaret-Imaeda 1980, Murdoch 1981. Corlin has described the domestic use of space in rGyal-thang and among Tibetan refugees in Nepal (for example, Corlin 1978, 1980).

(14) I have mentioned 28 households in Gongma previously. Two households, Mon and Gara, are not generally seen as true tronpa. This information comes from Migi meme or grandfather who was describing the situation in the 1920's, 30's and 40's.

(15) See also Ramble 1984 part 3 on Lubra household organisation. Schuler's discussion of single women in Chumik is based in the same area (Schuler 1987).

(16) Similar material can be found on other groups in Nepal. Clarke, for example, describes class relations between Lama and dependent Tamang households in Yolmo. He relates Lama households in Yolmo to the Tibetan tax payer (khral pa) status and Tamang households to the Tibetan dud chung status. Tamang cannot join temple communities which are financed by Lama households (Clarke 1980).

(17) It may be recalled that Mon and Gara live in houses which are sometimes seen as households. In Gongma, both own land. These "low castes" are not found in all parts of Ladakh. Beda are even lower ranking wandering musician-beggars.

There are other enumerations of rigs. See, for example, Ramsay who lists five types with sub-divisions: the royalty, monks (who are not often described in these terms), upper class officials, zamindars and finally, artisans, musicians, dancers and jugglers (Ramsay 1890, under "caste"). In Ladakh today, only the distinctions between aristocrats, peasant smallholders and low-caste artisans are important.

(18) Schuler has argued that "non-marriage" in Chumik, Mustang, North Central Nepal, should be understood in relation to the provision of labour. She suggests that single adults, particularly single women, are socially and economically peripheral. They provide cheap labour for the entitled (Schuler 1987:59, see also pp.60-64). In 1978, 22-3%

of women aged 35 years or over had never married as compared with 28% of women aged 45 years and over (Schuler 1987:47). The numbers cannot be explained purely in terms of the incidence of polyandry and religious celibacy (ibid:3).

(19) See also Ramble 1984:194-202, Schuler 1987:56

(20) Francke has published material on Khalatse to the west of Leh in Sham which shows that the holdings at the end of the 19th century were the same as those of the 17th century (Francke 1906-7a:239-40).

(21) The irrigation system to which Gongma belongs actually waters the whole Leh area and the Gongma churpon works with others in Leh. A distribution system is negotiated and Gongma generally has access to water from 4.00 to 10.00 am.

(22) See Prince Peter 1956 and Carrasco 1959 among others. See Brauen 1980b for a brief review of this literature. In contrast to the Leh area, phaspun in Zangskar seem to be recruited through patrilineal links (Dargyay and Lobsang 1980 in Crook in press).

(23) Tibetan kinship terminology has been described as Eskimo or Hawaiian type where relatives are counted bilaterally up to the 7th generation or "rib" (in theory). See Benedict 1942 for an early description of the terminology which is linked to cross-cousin marriage.

(24) Such exchanges involve women of the same generation travelling in opposite directions.

Footnotes to Chapter 2

(1) The opposition between a high ranking priesthood which worships high ranking deities and lower ranking mediums who embody lower ranking worldly gods is well-established in the Hindu context as well as the Tibetan. See, for example, previous references to Dumont in the Introduction. See also Hofer 1974b:162-3, Aziz 1976, Samuel 1978.

(2) See also Ortner 1978a on the Sherpa use of the term, sku rim:

"In the broadest sense, kurim could be glossed as "rites of protection" (in this-worldly endeavours). ... The only rituals that are probably not categorised as kurim are those enacted almost entirely for merit making, whose focus, in other words, is other worldly." (Ortner 1978a:179)

Kurim are restricted to "religious work" and do not include rites performed by shamans (in my terminology, oracles) (ibid:fn 2). In Ladakh, skurim are generally performed by monks but oracular ritual may also be described by the same term.

Sku rim sometimes refers to ritual in general:

sku rim "reverence, respect, particularly in the special sense of a solemn sacrificial ceremony, performed on public and private occasions, e.g. in cases of disease" (Jaschke p.22)

But, the term may be used more narrowly and contrasted with choga; prescribed rites and observances, such as the ten kinds of religious rites observed by Buddhists (Das p.426) or rituals performed by initiates, generally monks (Tucci 1980:169). See also Jaschke who understands cho ga to refer to magical performances (Jaschke p.161).

(3) A standard list of the guests who are given gtor ma includes

"(1) the main deity, who represents as well all the gurus, high patron deities, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and so on; (2) the protectors of the Law in general; (3) the "lords of the soil", the local spirits who rule over a particular spot ... and whose influence for good or ill can have a profound effect upon the success of the Law in any locality; and (4) the sentient beings in all the six destinies." (Beyer 1978:217)

(4) Beyer cites the relevant parts of the text during the offering to hindering demons:

"I give this tormas, inexhaustible as a space-vast treasury of all sublime desires, agreeable to each individual mind, to the 80,000 families of hindering demons, ... may there arise and increase - in accord with their various wishes - endless enjoyment until this world is emptied out! may they

all be freed from their sufferings, and have the opportunity to quickly attain the precious rank of omniscient Buddhahood! may all their enjoyments be inexhaustible as a space-vast treasury! may they be without contention and without injury! may they practice in self-sufficiency!" (1978:343-4)

(5) There are other problems to Ortner's analysis which are less relevant to my theme. For example, the specifics of the argument depend upon an analysis of three steps to the altar, progressing from the outer offerings at the bottom to the inner and secret offerings at the top. Ortner reads this series in the opposite direction to the actual ritual sequence and suggests that once the gods have been forced into their bodies at the top of the altar, they are given senses (the inner offerings) and delights for the senses (the outer offerings) and finally a meal of real human food shared with worshippers in the feast that concludes Sherpa ritual of this kind. This specific sequence is not necessary to the general argument and makes it difficult to generalise to other examples such as the ritual described above where only the outer offerings are presented to the main gods.

(6) In other Tibetan speaking areas, oracles may be more closely associated with the performance of periodic ritual. Aris, for example, describes the place of oracles in Bhutanese New Year celebrations and Aziz describes their role during D'ingri marriages (Aris 1976, Aziz 1978).

(7) The construction of the annual cycle varies in different Tibetan speaking areas. For example, monastery festivals are especially associated with the winter ritual season in Ladakh. Aris's account of Bhutanese New Year celebrations suggests that winter is the great ritual season in Bhutan as well:

"(New Year is, for the areas described in southern Bhutan) the culmination of the intense religious activity which is apparent during winter throughout those areas of the Himalaya where Tibetan forms persist. .." (Aris 1976:635)

Among the Dolpo, however, religious rituals cluster in mid-summer and include the expulsion of demons as well as monastic dance-dramas (cham) (Jest 1975). In Ladakh, exorcisms should not be performed in the summer.

These variations show that the significance attached to Ladakhi cham or to other rites of the the annual cycle cannot be generalised to other areas.

(8) The Ladakhi year presents a compromise between lunar and solar reckoning. There are usually several competing versions of the calendar as different areas add or subtract days and, every third year, whole months are added in an attempt to match the lunar year with the passing of the seasons. Some reference is also made to the solar cycle in calculating

agricultural tasks. The winter and summer solstices are ritually elaborated as the points "when the sun turns". The year in turn belongs to larger cycles, of 12 and 60 years.

(9) Leh storlok (gtor zlog) is described in a number of accounts, including Brauen 1980a, which also refers to a number of other rituals that are not discussed below.

(10) See, for example, Francke 1902 (song 22 for example) and Hanlon 1892 (songs 7, 97, 113 for example) on Ladakhi wedding songs. More general references can be found in Brauen 1980a and 1983 and Kaplanian 1981 and 1983.

(11) Kaplanian builds his analysis upon the contrast between arrows with points and those without (1981:287-9). I did not discover such a systematic contrast but it is difficult to distinguish these two types of arrow as the point is frequently invisible in a pot of barley.

(12) Sur (gsur or bsur). A tsha gsur ceremony is discussed by Jampa L. Panglung (1985).

(13) See Chapter 5 for a further discussion of these terms. The English "spiritual power" is chosen to translate parka because it is the preferred rendition as far as English speaking Ladakhis are concerned. Parka might also be described as strength though it has a further more restricted meaning associated with divination.

(14) Different types of bsangs are described in Nebesky-Wojtkowitz 1975 chapter 17. See also Tucci 1980:199-202. In Jest's account of the Dolpo, bsangs refers to a fumigation with juniper incense (1975:78, 82, 92) and to aspects of more elaborate rituals that sometimes involve the recital of the lha bsangs text to local gods (ibid:299, 321, 331). Dollfus lists the relevant texts in Ladakh: for Drigungpa households, bsangs rnan gi cho ga nyis pa rnam sel / mnam med gsol bskad / dam chos dgongs pa yan zab; for Drugpa households, bsangs dpe bkra shis re sgon ma; for Gelugpa households, bsangs kyi cho ga dngos grub kyi gzhi od 'bar ba no ma tshar rin po che'i phren ba shes bya ba / nam dag chos sku ma. Some of the issues that have featured in this discussion have been raised by Ortner (Ortner 1973:59-60).

(15) Ladakhis, in fact, "cheat". They transform the sickle into another instrument with another name by adding a long handle to it. It is used to prune trees.

(16) Compare with the descriptions in Brauen 1980a, Kaplanian 1981 and Dollfus 1987, 1988. Dollfus' account of a village in Lower Ladakh describes a very different saka from that performed around Leh. Note especially the role of the "dumb" (han ldang) boy, dressed in white, whose mouth is stuffed with dough so that he cannot answer the questions put to him. He ploughs the field in the village rite and leads the dzo in the subsequent household rite. See also Ribbach 1986 for an earlier account of the "king's first ploughing". Saka is given the full name of "sa kha phyé", and the ritual is described in terms of the opening of the earth-doors:

"which were closed in the winter. ... the Earth is now ready to pour out from her womb her fertilising power" (Ribbach 1986:134)

(17) The Gongma natitpa did not hold an arrow. See, however, Kaplanian's comments on this figure:

"coiffé d'un long chapeau noir en form de lâme de poignard et portant une flêche à la main" (Kaplanian 1981:68).

(18) Such kalchor or karchor (dkar 'byor, "white" or "good" riches) often consist of butter milk or even water rather than beer but, at saka, beer was used to "irrigate" the land.

(19) This title seems, in fact, to describe two separate texts: gnam sa snang gyas and bkra shis rtsegs pa (Dollfus 1987). See also Ribbach 1986:135 and, for an example outside Ladakh which involves the gnam sa snang rgyas text, Ramble 1984:209.

(20) See for example Brauen 1980a, Kaplanian 1981, Karmay 1975:209-11. See Lessing 1951, among other accounts, on the ritual of tshe 'gug which calls back the "soul" rather than "fortune".

(21) The monk told me that the text also listed earth from a palace, earth from the assembly room of a monastery, old clothes from a mother of seven sons, old clothes from one with power (a king or a minister), wool from a good animal, with much milk and many offspring (and not from a dog or a donkey).

(22) The bag does not only contain grain. It contains hard, precious jewels and coins which will not rot away as well as potent foods such as medicine, butter, tea and salt.

(23) Other versions are more elaborate. The ice is described first as gold, then as a series of other valuables: a house full of people, a shed full of cows, a shed full of sheep, a stable full of horses, a stable full of yak, a stable full of donkeys. Another version that describes precious minerals can be found in Rigal 1985:191.

(24) Grandfather began:

"I am making these offerings because of the pollution of men and gods. Excuse me if I say too much or too little. I purify (bsang-) all the place gods (yul lha). I purify all the castle gods..." followed by a list of 30 odd names and a repetition of the opening dedication.

"An auspicious day has arrived and the stars are good. These are offerings for all the gods, lu, masters of the place who hear at this very spot. These offerings are for our phaslha..." He recites a similar list and finishes by offering to the spirits of this place again.

(25) Grandfather also forgot to make an offering to the cross beams and the pillar itself.

(26) These dough figures are not killed or dismantled if someone is pregnant, not until the child is born.

(27) Bad luck translates bala which connotes misfortune akin to the evil eye. Misfortune translates skyen (rkyen) which also means the reason for misfortune. These terms are discussed in Chapter 5.

(28) An arrow is often shot instead. The symbolism of the arrow and spindle are important to the rite and certain aspects are discussed in Kaplanian 1983:98-102. See also Asboe 1938.

(29) They sing:

"Greetings, mother, please give all of us butter lamps, give butter lamps to all of us Gongma children. The body of meat brought by the kid with tiny ears. The butter brought by the kid with tiny ears. That large, heavy plate, circle it and bring it here. The yak stable is full of yak. The dzo stable is full of dzo. There is a store full of gold. Your left pocket is full of silver. The stove is the colour of gold. The room is the colour of silver. What is father's pigtail. It is gold and a shower of gold powder falls from it. What is mother's pigtail? It is silver and a shower of silver powder falls from it."

If no-one answers, they continue:

"If mother does not give, who will give? If father does not give, who will give? If daughter does not give, who will give?"

There are further standard refrains if there is still no answer:

"If you are going to give, then give and excuse us. If you are not going to give, then don't and excuse us. Be there only one dog and one person inside, still we have to ask. Don't make us late."

And, worst of all:

"What is father's pigtail? It is a donkey's tail and a shower of farts falls from it. What is mother's pigtail? It is a horse's tail and shit falls from it."

If someone comes to the door with food, the children sing:

"The meat is not good. Give us more."

(30) A far more complete account can be found in Dollfus 1988. See pp.331-6 on the renewal of shrines to phaslha; pp.317-320 on the renewal of shrines to the gods of the village division; pp.228-230 on the renewal of the shrine to the village god. Dollfus' account of these rituals makes an important contribution to Ladakhi village ethnography.

Other ritual structures are similar to shrines in some respects. One example describes the finishing touches made to a statue for Gongma temple recently:

"A soul wood was made of sandalwood. If you cannot get sandalwood or if it is too expensive, juniper is alright. It was put on top of the insides (zungs, gzungs). ... The soul wood and the insides make (the statue) live and the monks made a consecration (rabnes) to bring her to life."

(31) Ritual pots also seem to be the most important component of shrines to lu in other areas. Sherpa shrines, for example, are said to contain similar pots:

"A lu pot contains various substances symbolising the eyes, hands, heart, liver, kidneys, lungs and intestines of the lu, as well as grains of maize, wheat, barley and rice, and pieces of gold, silver and beads." (Furer-Haimendorf 1964:267)

(32) The feast for relatives (nyendron) varies together with the entire marriage process. In the most prestigious weddings (bagston):

"you have a feast for the relatives after the wedding in the boy's house first and then the girl's. But, in "stolen weddings" (skuste), you only have the feast in the girl's house." (woman from a village outside the Leh area)

Chorol had eloped (shorches) and elopements can be assimilated to stealing in this context.

In the Leh area, the feast for relatives is the last of the wedding. But, elsewhere, there is a final feast at the groom's house which "shows (the bride's relatives) the door" (rgo tangches) and repudiates any further claims.

Nyendron is also described as a feast that involves the newly married less than all the others who helped stage the wedding. Ribbach, for example, describes this feast as an entertainment for all who have served in any way during the festivities (Ribbach 1986:102).

Just as nyendron varies according to the wider context, so do the accompanying thabzan links.

(33) New Year celebrations would provide this chapter with more continuity but the entertainments at Mig were either specialised or informal and so they are not appropriate to a basic and brief description of hospitality.

(34) Pollution: tip (grib). Poison: tuk (dug). Jealousy translates a range of terms which will be described in Chapter 5.

(35) This is the term used by M. Phylactou 1989.

(36) Not surprisingly, drinking also leads to quarrels and ill-feeling. As mentioned, these problems are blamed on men while more "surreptitious" harm, such as the case involving Sh. house cited above, is generally blamed on women. Drinking has been seen as a means of bringing about social life. It also has negative connotations, particularly in religious discourse, where it is seen to engender the three sins in the Wheel of Life (see Chapter 3).

Footnotes to Chapter 3

(1) "Monastery" translates the Tibetan *dgon pa* which itself means "solitary place". It refers to a range of religious institutions which are not all monasteries: to small uninhabited temples and hermitages as well as great training establishments.

(2) The importance of charity was noted in Chapter 1 where it was also shown that the household is constructed partly through gift-giving to monasteries. The role of gifts in making merit has been well documented for other areas, particularly to the south. See, for example, Tambiah's account of a Thai village (Tambiah 1970).

More detailed accounts of Tibetan Buddhism from the village perspective, which include discussions of charity and non-monastic religious specialists, can be found in Ekvall 1964; Aziz 1978 on the D'ingri; Furer-Haimendorf 1964 and Paul 1982 on the Sherpa.

(3) See Crook 1985 on some Ladakhi yogin traditions. Many Gongma villagers know about the centres at Gotsang (Drugpa) and Lamayuru (Drigungpa).

(4) See Furer-Haimendorf 1964 and Paul 1982 on Sherpa religious personnel. See also Ramble 1984:20-39 for a discussion of the problems of classifying "secular clergy".

(5) Corlin also reports a division of labour between Gelugpa and Nyingmapa in *gYal-thang* (Corlin 1980).

(6) *Cham* are not discussed until Chapter 6. Other rituals associated with the king, such as *dosmoche* (*mdos mo che*) and *storlok* (*gtor bzlog*), can be assimilated to that discussion in general terms. As noted (fn 9, Chapter 2), accounts can be found in Brauen 1980a. *Bumskor*, mentioned in the last chapter, is not discussed further. Remarks made about monastery oracles in Chapter 6 draw upon the heterodox Shey festival of *shrublha* but this event is not described in detail.

(7) This rite is more closely associated with the elderly in Ortner's account (Ortner 1978a) but March reports a preponderance of younger women at the event she attended among the Sherpa in Solu (March 1979:284).

(8) Merit-making is often seen as an individual pursuit in discussions of Tibetan Buddhism (see, for example, Ortner 1978a). *Rulo* and many other calendrical rites suggest, to the contrary, that merit-making is above all a collective quest for Ladakhis.

(9) Buddha's return from the world of gods is also celebrated in a smaller way on the 22nd of the 9th month.

(10) Infants are buried in the walls of the house and children up to the age of 8-12 are buried in the mountains or thrown in the river. Participation in the funerals is

truncated; for example, there are no food distributions for children who were too young to eat and a special distribution is given just to children for the older age group. The religious rites are also cursory; it is said that the soul (sems) of the child has an easy transition between life and death, it returns to the same condition in which it existed before its (last) birth in the world and it will achieve a similar life again. Indeed, infants who are buried in the walls of the house are often said to return to the same mother. See also Asboe 1932. Brauen suggests that burial inside the walls of the house is to retain luck (1982:319).

Child deaths are often attributed to lan chaks (lan chags) or (bad) karma. This is not associated with the child especially but often with the mother, especially if she has suffered repeated miscarriages or child deaths. Steps may then be taken to prevent the rebirth of an infant and the corpse may be buried in the mountain or outside the house, weighed down with a ritual device.

(11) Other "bodily" imperfections such as small pox may also lead to burial rather than cremation. Saraswati notes burials for those dying of cholera (1967:266). He suggests that those who have committed suicide are cremated (ibid) but I was told that people who died violently, including suicides, are buried. Moorcroft and Trebeck noted that wealthy Rupshu individuals are burnt but poor people are left where they died with their faces covered (Moorcroft 1971 (1837), vol.2:49).

(12) It is particularly unfortunate to die during mid-summer "when the sun stays still" for, then, there can be no mortuary ritual at all for fear of pollution. Similar prohibitions apply in other Tibetan speaking areas. See, for example, Ramble 1982:356-7.

(13) Aziz notes how elderly D'ingri join religious communities; old retired ascetics are known as rgas chos (Aziz 1978:247). There is a large literature on old people as a special religious category. An example can be found in Ortner 1978a on the Sherpa.

(14) See, for example, Ortner on gift-giving. Merit is made when gifts are given unselfishly and according to a universalistic moral idiom (Paul, S.O. (= Ortner) 1970).

As noted previously, the material organisation of religion and the place of charity in particular is central to a discussion of merit and neglected in this account. It might be noted, however, that gift-giving is interpreted in terms of intentions. The following comment is typical:

"A villager can do better work through lighting a single lamp on behalf of all than a monk with superior knowledge who nevertheless uses that power only to achieve his own enlightenment." (monk)

(15) Parry's discussions of death in Hindu Benares are relevant to this section. Parry analyses death as a self-sacrifice (Parry 1981) and he also discusses gifts as containers for sin (Parry 1986). It is suggested that the impure sins of the deceased are ingested and digested during mortuary ritual (Parry 1985a). It is interesting to note that the metaphor of digestion involves an initial emphasis on the separation of bad and good. This is discussed further in Chapter 7 below.

(16) In Ladakh, villagers do not use this term for ritual generally but for funerary rites and occasionally for a particular set of rites for the living.

(17) See for example Obeyesekere 1968, Gombrich 1971a. Re-evaluations of these themes can be found in Keyes and Daniel eds. 1983. Merit transfer is also discussed in the context of death ritual (Gombrich 1971b) and ordination ritual (Keyes 1983).

(18) Note, for example, this account of smyung gnas (described under the Ladakhi term, nyenes, in the last section):

"smyung-gnas is a ritual observance of fasting, silence, and abstinence in general, the object of which is the transfer of merit. By transferring merit to the sinful, participants in smyung-gnas hope for specific results appropriate to their vows. ... In Tsum, one young man explained smyung-gnas as merit for the yi-dwags (pretas)." (Lichter and Epstein 1983:236)

(19) See Brauen 1980a for a general summary of Ladakhi death rites. The summary has also been published in English (Brauen 1982). Earlier sources include Asboe 1932, Heber and Heber 1926, Saraswati 1967. On Tibetan death rites, see, for example, Wylie 1965 and the articles in Kailash 9 (4), 1982. Corlin 1988 discusses both texts, especially the Tibetan Book of the Dead, and rituals. See also Furer-Haimendorf 1964:224-250, Downs 1980, Macdonald 1980 and Snellgrove 1957:262-74 on Sherpa death ritual. Bonpo mortuary ritual is discussed in Snellgrove 1967:116-123, Brauen 1978 and, in a particularly detailed account accompanied by photographs, Kvaerne 1985.

(20) Wang also means consecration or initiation.

(21) The soul is in fact housed in a special bardo body but few Ladakhis spoke of it. The consciousness of the dead person is thought to be "numb" for the first three and a half days after death, when there are no mortuary rituals. Then, it "awakens" to the second stage of the intermediate state when the bardo body, which is radiant but otherwise just like the physical body, is born (Corlin 1988). "Death" is recognised after 3 1/2 days (Stablein 1980:203).

Ladakhis generally use the word sems to refer to the rnam shes specified in the texts. Seems can be translated in a number of ways and, in this thesis, the terms soul, intelligence, mind and consciousness are used.

(22) Monks often see local gods and demons as reflections of karmic states rather than independent entities.

Ames makes a similar distinction between internal and external states in his discussion of Buddhist and magical ideas about purity and pollution in Sri Lanka:

"Buddhism is concerned with purity of a psychological nature - the eradication of mentally defiling attitudes (kleśa). This is purity akin to virtue or morality. Pollution in a Buddhist context - that condition negatively affecting one's store of actions (karmaya) and balance of merit - is denoted by the presence in the individual's thoughts of greed, anger, delusion, conceit, or any of the other defiling attitudes. This is pollution in the sense of "sin" or demerit; kleśa is in fact a synonym for pava (demerit or bad action).

Magical-animism, the propitiation of spirits, is concerned with polluted (kiluṭu) entities external to the psyche - none of which directly affect one's karmaya - such as food, meat, fried foods, oil cakes, excrement, poison, possession by a goblin. Much of magic ritual is devoted to "purifying" an individual who has somehow come into contact with one or more of these polluted objects and thereby been made sick..." (Ames 1964:38).

With reference to the Ladakhi material, however, I am suggesting that this most Buddhist of occasions, mortuary ritual, works partly through the transformation of the "internal" into the "external", which can then be "magically" enlarged or destroyed.

Others have also noted that karma can be changed ritually in Tibet. See, for example, Stablein 1980.

(23) According to Corlin's account of death rituals in Tibet itself, the rigs lnga crown is worn only by a man. A deceased woman wears a rgyan cha "noble hairdress" to the dismemberment site (Corlin 1988).

(24) Strictly, 52 1/2 days later (Corlin 1988).

(25) Two translations are widely available in English: Evans-Wentz 1960, Fremantle and Trungpa 1975.

(26) Village accounts generally stressed the terrifying visions although it was sometimes said that those with good karma would not be afflicted in this way. Textually, the "wrathful bar do" is specified for the 8th to the 14th days (Stablein 1980:203).

(27) S/he is also subjected to a shamanistic experience of dismemberment before moving into the chosen womb (Corlin 1988).

(28) As noted, Ladakhi villagers are not particularly aware of bodies other than the physical, gross body and so they may speak of bar_{do} as a disembodied state. A number of "souls" might be distinguished, including the three mentioned so far in the text. Ladakhi villagers distinguish the "breath" (dbugs) which expires at the point of what we would describe as death, the sems or "intelligence" which is reborn (Sherpa similarly describe that which is reborn as the sems, Paul 1982:40) and the srog or "soul" which has been described in the last chapter. This soul is indivisible from the (current) person like the breath and is sometimes translated as a life-principle. Only Tibetan speaking Ladakhis use the term rnam shes. However, it should be emphasised that the bar_{do} consciousness is not disembodied from a textual, religious or medical perspective. See, for example, Stablein 1980 for a discussion of the bar_{do} body, the primordial karmic body, in terms of the three channels of the inner body and tantric practice. Moreover, from this perspective, bodies and soul are equally and mutually created through karma during the intermediate state.

(29) Dge ba, merit or virtue. The Tibetan bsod, bsod pa and bsod nam are not used in Ladakh to describe merit in general.

(30) See Southwold 1983 on this central Buddhist tenet.

(31) Lam-rim chen-mo by Tshong-kha-pa, 1357-1419, who founded the Gelugpa sect. This is a commentary on a work by Atisa. See Samuel 1975, chapter 3; Tucci 1980:37.

(32) Similarly, Sa-skya individuals of higher social or religious rank are cremated in the "Heruka posture" (Wylie 1965:235) and the Book of the Dead is not read to individuals from the ruling monastic lineage, since they are already enlightened (ibid:238).

(33) Many authorities suggest that the tulku tradition evolved with the second rather than the third Karmapa, as Wylie argues (see, for example, Ray 1986:49. fn 39).

The term lama (bla ma) is often used for all monks in Ladakh. However, the more important bla ma are generally tulku. See Wylie 1977 or Samuel 1975 on the etymology and significance of this term.

Sprul sku has also been translated as "magically produced body" (Samuel 1975), a term which captures the idea of a body chosen at birth (reincarnation) as well as the idea of a body produced from divinity (emanation). It also conveys a sense of the powers which a rinpoche has in the world for he can produce all sorts of "bodies" in ritual and evoke deities into them. Brief examples are given in Chapters 5 and 6 below.

(34) Michael estimates well over ten thousand reincarnations in Tibet at the turn of the twentieth century who were divided into four broad ranks (with the Dalai Lama occupying one category on his own) (Michael 1982:43).

(35) Processes of selection do not necessarily conform exactly to this pattern. Some tulku do not remember their previous lives nor do they all perform tests. See, for example, Norbu and Turnbull 1968:228,236,243).

(36) See also Paul's description of Sherpa tulku:

"Reincarnate lamas, especially the high ones, do not so much possess ong (that is, dbang) as embody or express it. They are themselves sources of this power for others, partaking as they do of the absolute. They are like an eruption into the conditioned world of absolute Buddhahood, and thus become a source from which flows a continuous supply of the ong stored in the limitless ocean of the void. Thus, it is said, for example, that a single reincarnating being meditating in a community can not only magically heat his own body, but also provide enough heat for the whole village. In other words, that to which he has access is indivisible and in infinite supply, and not obedient to the economic laws of the conditioned world." (Paul 1982:85)

As noted above, the normally polluting remains of a corpse become invested with spiritual power in the case of rinpoche. During life too, bodily excretions are invested with spiritual power:

"L'urine de lama vénérable est particulièrement efficace, c'est un remède contre le rhumatisme, bam." (Jest 1975:325)

As Ramble concludes:

"Dead flesh and bodily excretions may normally be sources of pollution, but in the case of high bla-ma foul becomes fair, and means are sought to extract and benefit from their sacred properties." (Ramble 1982:353)

(37) A good account can be found in Samuel 1975.

Footnotes to Chapter 4

(1) See p.271 below for a qualification.

(2) Personal pronouns are capitalised when a god is speaking or acting through an oracle. I reserve capitals for unequivocal cases of possession, excluding the few in-between times when an oracle is coming into or out of trance. As noted below, an oracle may be possessed by several gods in succession.

(3) References to the Kesar epic in Tibet include David Neel & Yongden 1933, Helffer 1977, Roerich 1942 and Stein 1959. Lorimer has told a version from Hunza (Lorimer 1931). References on Ladakh itself include Francke 1901-2, 1905b, 1906-7b, 1905-9 and Tsering Mutup 1983.

(4) In this case, the monk offers drinks (serkyem) to thank the gods. As noted below, oracles also offer golden drinks to gods while or immediately after incarnating them at the beginning of a trance, during the invitation (schenden, spyan 'dren).

(5) In other Tibetan speaking areas, the mirror is perhaps the single most important item as it provides a place for the spirits to stay (Berglie 1976:94, Jest 1975:325). Berglie's articles describe the trance practices of dpa' bo, "heroes", in some detail and these contrast with Ladakhi practices in several respects (Berglie 1976, 1978).

(6) Spirits are associated with the back elsewhere in the Himalaya as well and not just in Tibetan speaking areas. Macdonald, for example, notes that spirits alight on the back among jhakri of the Muglan in Nepal (Macdonald 1976a).

In Ladakh, the back of the person is associated with dangerous spirit attacks in general. A person's back is always covered and it is extremely rude to point your back at anyone (Chapter 1); indeed, this is the expression for "to quarrel". "Bad back" also refers to supernatural damage (Chapter 5). During treatment for witchcraft possession, a demon is sometimes located in the shadow of a victim whilst, it is implied, the soul (sems) remains inside but obscured. Witchcraft victims often complain of painful backs. The gongmo ("witches") described in the next chapter are seen as spirits behind or in the back:

"You don't know why you're possessed or what happens when you're possessed because the spirit is at your back. You usually beat the shadow of a person possessed" (layman).

tsan, it may be recalled, expose what lies inside from the back view and the sight of a tsan's back causes madness or other illness (fn 9, Chapter 1). The attention that village oracles pay to their backs as they come in and out of trance should be seen in this more general context, concerning the relationships that are established between people and spirits

in the village (for further examples, see Chapters 5 and 7). Many oracles also complain of back pain when they come out of trance.

(7) Berglie describes a concluding "game" with this crown among Tibetan "hero" oracles (Berglie 1978:47).

(8) Das comments of the "thunderbolt rite" (bka' bsgo) in his dictionary:

"When any one falls ill either naturally or from the supposed malignity of an evil spirit, he goes to a lama or Tantrik priest and begs of him for a bkah bsgo - permission to invoke the deity. The lama touches the patient's head with the consecrated sceptre called Dorje (vajra), with the sacred dagger called the phurbu, a string of beads, an image of a Buddha or a deity or a holy book, and repeating some charms exhorts the deity to be propitious to the patient. Those who do not actually suffer from any kind of illness also ask for such protective religious measures."

Village oracles often perform this rite and generally describe it as a kind of blessing. It is accordingly described in shorthand as the "thunderbolt blessing" in this thesis.

(9) I was told that this was a less serious illness than the yenak mentioned above. See also Kaplanian, who was told that yama meant pus in the ears and also a humoral imbalance (Kaplanian 1985: 140, 145).

(10) There are numerous examples of more elaborate imagery in the Himalayas. Compare, for example, with the Sherpa lha pa whose consciousness stayed in the heart while the gods spoke through him (Peters and Price-Williams 1980:404) or with the Tamang bombo who begins to gain some control over the possessed state as he is "ridden by the guru" (or has the guru upon his shoulders) and becomes a shaman who can perform ritual when it is he who rides the guru (Peters 1982:25-6).

(11) See, for example, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1954, 1975 & 1976, Prince Peter's numerous articles, for example, 1978a and 1978b (see bibliography), Rock 1959, Stein 1957 & 1972, Govinda 1966 on Tibetan monastery oracles. These monastery oracles, and Nechung especially, are also mentioned in many travellers' accounts. See, for example, Harrer 1953:180-3, 273-4. See Ribbach 1986, Brauen 1980a, Dargyay 1985 on Ladakhi monastery oracles.

(12) Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975 list many of the references.

(13) Thus:

"after building Samye monastery, Padmasambhava decided to appoint a deity as guardian of the shrine's treasures. He addressed himself first to the king of the klu, named Zur phud lnga pa, "the one with five toupets of hair" - a deity mostly identified with the mountain god gNyan chen thang lha -, who refused, however, this position. Then

Padmasambhava himself, in accordance with a suggestion of Zur phud lnga pa, went to Hor (Mi nyag) with an army, bringing eventually the deity, which became from then on known as Pe har." (Nebesky Wojkowitz 1975:100)

An interesting variation in popular belief replaces Guru Rinpoche with Kesar:

"Pe har had acted at one time as the personal protective deity of the king Sa tham of lJang, who was defeated by the legendary hero-king Ge sar of Gling. In order not to displease Pe har by reminding him of the defeat he had suffered, it is forbidden to sing the Ge sar epos at Nechung (gNas chung) monastery, Pe har's present main seat, and also not at the neighbouring Drepung monastery ('Bras spungs dgon pa). This verifies an observation made by Waddell (1895:719), though the latter author gives a different reason for this peculiar prohibition, claiming that Pe har had been subjugated by Ge sar while being a deity of the "Turki" tribes." (Nebesky Wojkowitz 1975:101)

In Ladakh, I also heard accounts that featured Kesar. Kesar has been encountered in the initiation rite that opened this chapter. Although he is not discussed in detail, further references will be found below.

(14) Prince Peter 1978a:288, Lama Chime Radha 1981:30. Nebesky-Wojkowitz has three variants, 1975:105-6. See also Tucci 1949 (vol.2):643, 734-6.

(15) The earlier references on Ladakh suggest some differences from the present day. Thus, Ribbach reports "an unusual means" of investigating a theft in his biography of Drogya Namgyal which suggests that oracles could be consulted at any time in the past, at least by the highly placed (Ribbach 1986:191-2). Today, it is very common to consult an oracle about a theft, but it is always a village oracle. Monastery oracles are consulted only on the occasion of the annual festival.

Not all monastery oracles are elected or appointed. The Shey oracle seems to inherit his position in much the same way as village oracles. Many other ecstatic practices can be seen in the monastery. For example, the election of a rinpoche, described in the last chapter, suggests interesting parallels: the birth of a tulku is accompanied by miraculous portents and the young child has extraordinary non-human powers.

(16) Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975 again provides a central reference on Tibetan village oracles. The other main source to be cited is Berglie who has written three important articles on the subject (Berglie 1976, 1978 and 1980). See also Lama Chime Radha 1981, David Neel 1965, Govinda 1966, Stein 1972, Tucci 1980. Interestingly, Govinda notes an association between oracles and blacksmiths in Western Tibet, which I have not found in Ladakh (Govinda 1966:277). There are a number of recent descriptions of Ladakhi oracles, for example, Brauen 1980a and Kaplanian 1981 & 1985. Some of

these focus on life history; Brauen, for example, records a number of histories; while others focus on trance; Kaplanian's 1985 article describes a single trance. There are also a number of passing references in the earlier literature (for example, Shaw 1878:30).

The Nepali literature is vast. Much of the work on Sherpas adopts basically the same perspective as the work on Tibet. Berglie refers to Sherpa lha pa. Other references are found in Furer-Haimendorf 1964, Ortner 1970 (= S Paul) and 1978a, Paul 1976 and 1982, Samuel 1978 and Schmid 1967. See also Jest 1975 on Dolpo trance. Work on other groups includes Hofer 1974 & 1981, Holmberg 1980, 1983 and 1984, Peters 1982 on the Tamang; Gorer 1938, Morris 1938, Siiger 1967 on the Lepcha; Aris 1976 on Bhutan.

There is also a large literature on groups with "Buddhist elements" in Nepal. In addition to those cited, see Miller 1979 and Jest 1976 on a variety of ethnic groups in Nepal; Pignede 1966 and Messerschmidt 1976a and b on Gurung specialists; Fournier 1976 on Sunuwar specialists; Allen 1976a on the Thulung Rai and, on the Limbu, R Jones 1976, S Jones 1976 and Sagant 1973, 1976. Allen gives a brief general overview of the anthropological literature on Nepalese possession and the division of labour among the Thulung Rai, Sherpa, Limbu, Magar, Tamang and Gurung (Allen 1976b).

(17) Allen has described this as a general problem in Nepali studies. He describes the image that emerges from the anthropology of Nepal as

"a mosaic of sub-areas, each with its own language, customs and ethnonym" (1981:168)

that makes appropriate comparison difficult.

(18) See, for example, Furer-Haimendorf 1964:255 on Sherpa "soothsayers" or mindung. Paul's account of trance among the Sherpa does not clearly separate these mig thong from lha pa:

"There is in Sherpa culture the role of a non-clerical curer who heals by entering into trance or altered state in the course of which he journeys to the other world, manages to make direct contact with the gods for purposes of discovering the supernatural source of illness and its possible cure, and may also exhibit other oracular powers. Such a person may be known in Sherpa as hla-wa (God One); min-dung (corruption of mik-tong, to see with the eyes); or pen-bu (Bon-po, practitioner of the Bon religion, the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet, still surviving in some areas of Nepal, and identified by the Sherpas with shamanism.)" (Paul 1976:144).

(19) A biography of one such Ladakhi daslog is given below. Among the Sherpa, these people are known as da-lo-ma (Paul 1976:143). See Epstein 1982, especially pp. 58-62, for a number of biographies of daslog and a discussion of their shamanic characteristics.

(20) See also Roerich who notes that rhapsodists often sing the epic in a sort of trance and are often well known as exorcists as well as story tellers (1942:285).

(21) Restrictions of space prohibit a discussion of Bon, and its relationship with Buddhism, despite its importance to the present topic. A brief overview can be found in Ramble 1984:14-19 where the major sources are cited. See especially p.19 on the use of the term bon po for "shamans" in the Himalaya.

(22) Amchi are discussed in Alice Kuhn's Ph.D. on healing in Ladakh (Kuhn 1986).

(23) See Ramble 1984:34-37 for a discussion of the literature.

(24) Exact numbers are difficult to calculate. According to one set of published figures, there were 3,000 monks in Ladakh district; 2,800 in Leh Tehsil and 200 in Zaskar Tehsil in 1971 (from a memorandum of All Ladakh Gumpa Association 1971, quoted in Singh 1977). Singh calculates a ratio of 1 "priest" to 18 laypeople for Leh Tehsil from these figures (ibid). The area in Map C includes most of the major monasteries in Leh Tehsil; namely, Phyang, Spituk, Matho, Stakna, Thikse, Hemis and Tak Tok as well as most of the associated sub-monasteries. It does not include Likir, Lamayuru or Rizong. Working from the figures and sources quoted above, there would be nearly 2,000 monks in the area corresponding to this map.

In fact, the numbers are probably smaller. Singh's estimate is conservative and numbers have been declining. Over the last decade, fewer boys have been joining monasteries and more monks have been leaving. Other estimates might be compared with Singh's but this is unnecessary to my general point which concerns relative numbers. There must be 1500 monks in the area represented by Map C as compared to 25 village oracles.

(25) Grandfather from Mig, for example, said that he knew of 23 practising oracles today as compared with 15 thirty years ago and 12 sixty years ago.

(26) The falling number of monks is not thought to imply a decline in Buddhism. There seems to be an increasing stress on lay religiosity in the form of a protestant Buddhism, fuelled and, to some extent, formed through Western interest in the area and constructed in opposition to a growing Islam fundamentalism. The Chinese takeover of Tibet in the 1950's has also played a role. Monastic training has been gradually relocated in India. Tibetan practitioners have been absorbed into Ladakhi institutions at all levels and the current "protestant" strand to Ladakhi Buddhism seems to have been encouraged by Tibetan attitudes to what they consider corrupted Ladakhi versions of Tibetan practices.

(27) The recognition and training of Tibetan oracles varied in a number of ways from the Ladakhi, as indicated below and in appendix 3.

(28) Similar links with monasteries are found in other areas. Gorer, for example, notes how the Mun (equivalent to the Ladakhi oracle in this context) is validated by the Lepcha lama (Gorer 1938:219). Berglie writes of tests given by lamas in a Tibetan refugee camp in Nepal (Berglie 1976 and 1978).

(29) Furer-Haimendorf implies a greater reciprocity among the Sherpa than my data suggests for Ladakh:

"Lhawa often advise their clients to commission the recitation of sacred texts by lamas as one of the means of averting the wrath of an offended spirit or deity, and similarly lamas may suggest the consultation of a lhawa, if an illness does not show signs of improving as a result of the recitation of the appropriate scriptures." (1964:261)

(30) Eight of the 9 oracles described in detail by Berglie come from such "lineages". The exception was one of the Sherpas in the sample (Berglie 1978:40).

(31) Bell mentions that women oracles are possessed by klu mo in Tibet. Apparently, a daughter inherits the calling from her mother (Bell 1928:169).

(32) Chod is a word spoken by the pious before eating, as a morsel of food is thrown in offering. Chod means "to offer" and is commonly said in rituals as offerings (chodpa) are made.

(33) Permission translates the Ladakhi lung. It is one of the three stages of a teaching; instruction (khrid, khrid), permission (lung, lung) and empowerment/consecration (wang, dbang). Authorities differ as to the precise order of these three stages to a teaching. Compare, for example, Samuel 1975:253-4, Stein 1972:179 and Tucci 1980:44-5.

(34) Lha bdag generally refers to individuals who inherit particular duties concerning the worship of local gods. In Hemis Shukpa Chan, for example, lha bdag pa are also called mkhar dod pa, "representatives of the palace" (Dollfus 1988:103, 230) and, in Da, they are responsible for worship of the village deity (Vohra 1985). Vohra has written of the priestly class where the role of lha bdag is passed from father to eldest son. One plays a central role in the Bonona festival, where he is said to fall into trance and to bring the gods down to the trees. He is not, however, possessed by god(s), nor does he reveal the truth. At the time, there were no practising lha pa (Vohra in press) (see however Francke 1905a). Ramsay suggests that lha bdag are a subdivision of the "caste" of upper class officials (Ramsay 1890:18) while Erdmann translates lha bdag as temple guard (Erdmann 1983:146). See also Asboe 1933:196 on Lahuli lha bdag. My Ladakhi friend understood lha bdag to refer to an individual who interprets the pronouncements of lha pa. However, it is possible that Kirzi oracle is referring to one who makes offerings to gods or, more likely, to a Mulbek

oracle. In some contexts, both lha bdag and lha pa seem to refer to "priests to the king" (see also Dargyay and Lobsang 1980 cited in Crook, in press).

(35) This refers to the decision to become a nun. Only lay women wear these shell bracelets; nuns wear no jewellery.

(36) Oracles in other Tibetan speaking areas are also elected through an initial affliction when they lose control and "go mad". Berglie reports on Tibetan "heroes" (dpa' bo):

"Having the heritage of a spirit-medium, however, is not enough. If a person is to become a spirit-medium, this has to be confirmed by an election, or a call from the gods. Atutu ... saw things no one else saw ... He wandered in the wilderness without being able to take care of himself... Rig-'dzin ... was often angry and irritated for no apparent reason. He did not eat for days, he walked in his sleep and so forth. (Berglie 1978:40-41)

(37) The nun repudiates these associations for she claims that she has only ever been possessed by high ranking protectors. High ranking gods do not attack people in this way; indeed, Ortner has argued that their anger and involvement with the world must be incited ritually (Ortner 1978a; see also above, Chapter 2).

(38) The term, Penpe, is probably a version of Bon.

(39) One of the Tibetans described how he had to meditate upon his tutelary, represented in a print of a religious painting (thangka), to go into trance. Ayu oracle says that she has to make herself believe that she is the god represented in the painting, at least during rigorous practices in her meditation hut. She then offers her body to demons and other beings for the welfare of all (chod kukshes, good 'gugs). In meditation, she notes that she sees all the gods. One wears the turquoise headdress (perag), another looks like a nun. A third, a blood-drinker and flesh-eater, appears in the form of a skeleton.

(40) Nebesky-Wojkowitz mentions three ways of dealing with these troublesome spirits; driving them away, swearing them to oath and burning them. (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975:417-8.) In Ladakh, they were supposedly sworn to protect the faith in all cases, whether they were then driven away or installed in a vessel.

Oracles do not necessarily accept the authority of rinpoche in all cases. Note the following account from Ayu oracle:

"As a new oracle (lhasar), the lamas welcomed me (schenden) in the local monastery. When I was in trance, Kushok Bakula asked me whether he should ban the god. The god said, "No, why should I accept a ban from you when I've already refused Stakna rinpoche?" Bakula answered that the god would have to accept; "You're a god and the gods are servants of the lama." The god refused again and said, "No, I'm of the status of Sangyas. Do you forget that you

were born in the broken palace of Matho? I'm the god who recognised you as a rinpoche of the monastery." Bakula laughed, gave me a scarf and welcomed the god."

(41) Lhadre (lha 'dre) are both "gods and demons" and a particular type of local spirit, a "god-demon" (see also Blondeau 1971). The term is translated below as "gods and demons" because this is the most obvious sense in the initiation rite. However, it is not clear whether the Ladakhi lhande (lha 'dre), mentioned in the next chapter, should be treated as a distinct spirit, a "god-demon", or simply an alternative pronunciation of the same term. Ramsay translates lhande as demon, devil, ghost and phantom. Hlandrey tsoks is said to mean "ugly" (Ramsay 1890).

(42) These are clothes and equipment for oracles.

(43) It should be emphasised once more that Ladakhi oracles do not actually travel in trance, with the rare exception of "journeys along the death road" or daslog. In this song, it is the god alone who is addressed and summoned, in effect, told to stop travelling.

(44) This phrase, dus sumi lama, dus gsum gyi bla ma, was explained as lamas (tulku) who know the past, present and future.

(45) These are presumably four of the five Buddhas of the rigs lnga, the Dhyani Buddhas: in the East, rdo rje sems dpa' (blue); in the South, rin chen 'byung ldan (yellow); in the West, snang ba mtha' yas (red) and in the North, don yod grub ba (green) (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975:525). The central Buddha, rnam par snang mdzad (white) is omitted, at present. It is always difficult to be sure of the names spoken in trance because of the oracle's "non-human" voice.

(46) The brackets enclose words which I have added to make the sense easier to follow.

(47) It may be recalled that there were arrows in the first rite, described at the beginning of the chapter. They were never used, probably because the oracle was not fully possessed for long enough to perform the appropriate separation.

(48) Alternative actions with these arrows have been reported to me. Thikse oracle described an initiation that HE performed:

"There is a Hindu soldier at Spituk who possessed Paldan Lhamo (dPal-ldan lha-mo is known as the major protector of the monastery there). Everyone thought he was mad. I was called eventually and the Hindu prostrated himself. I was possessed and the soldier began to shake and shout. I threw barley at him to make the spirit go away. Then we arranged the room properly for a second trance. I gave golden drinks to the new god. ...

"On the second visit, I gave him an initiation (lhaphok). Five arrows were arranged on the carpet and the captain

separated them in trance. He threw away the blue and the green arrows and kept the black, red and white. The black arrow was himself (herself), Paldan Lhamo, the white were lha in general and the red, tsan.

"We repeated the separation ritual four times. Once we brought an astrologer from Spituk, some army officers and thirty or forty villagers as witnesses. ..."

This is the only occasion on which I was told that the black arrow was kept and described as a god. Perhaps, the black symbolises Paldan Lhamo's ferocious nature or perhaps a non-Ladakhi (Hindu) understanding of the rite. Red and white are the normal colours of tsan and lha respectively.

Thikse oracle mentioned associations of the coloured arrows with reference to his own initiation, in which the black once more represented devils:

"The arrow with the black cloth is the devil (bdud). The other four arrows (red, blue, yellow, white) represent the four cardinal points and they correspond to the colours of the "four great kings" (rgyal chen bzhi) who guard the four directions and protect the entrance to all monasteries. (He is trying here to teach me.) Also, the red, blue and yellow arrows are earth (par~~s~~am), the underworld (yoklu) and the world above (stanglha) while the white is gods present in all three worlds."

This account conforms more closely with that given in the text and it can be seen that the four arrows generally stand for religious protection.

(49) These comments apply to the Ladakhi rather than Tibetan oracles. I met four Tibetan oracles in the Leh area. I was told of a further one or two living in the camps but I never found them. All four had practiced in Tibet and all four claimed that no Tibetan had been initiated in Ladakh. One of the four, from a pastoral area near Chang Thang (Agling oracle (1)), described a ritual journey and meditation. He spoke of his god, Kangri Lhabtsan, and how he had to meditate when the god first came. He spoke of the holy site, Kangri Rinpoche (Mt. Kailash in this context), where corpses are left for the vultures. Nearby are many meditation huts. The oracle described how he had to stay in one of these huts, in front of the corpses, meditating and learning how to perform cod kukshes, a rite in which he learned to offer up his own body to hungry spirits and later reconstitute himself. It seems that this is the same oracle as the one described by Brauen in a rather different account. According to Brauen, the man first learned the epic of Kesar in a trance state, when he suffered "madness". He made a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash (Kangri Rinpoche) where he was initiated by a senior oracle (Brauen 1980a:155-159). A second Tibetan, from Chang Thang (Agling oracle (2)), said that he had been recognised and trained by a senior oracle and a monk. However, nothing like the separation rite described above was mentioned. The other two Tibetans I met had received only a blessing, a permission to practice.

The ritual journey of one Tibetan to the place of his god shows some similarities with the pilgrimages of dpa' bo ("heroes") (Berglie 1980). Tibetan dpa' bo used to travel to Mount Targo and Lake Dangra to discover whether they were truly oracles. The associations of these places with Guru Rinpoche have been noted above. In one account, a true oracle is said to find a treasure on leaving the cave such as the flat bell, a drum or a powerful medicine that can be used in trance (Berglie 1980:40). These places are the homes of incarnating spirits, just like Kangri Rinpoche is said to be the home of Kangri Lhabtsan.

It should be noted that a number of other oracles I met (Tibetan and Ladakhi) also named Kangri Lhabtsan (Gangs-ri lha-btsan) as one of their gods and it is not clear whether all are referring to the one god, associated with the same sacred place.

(50) This doctrinal interpretation is not necessarily the only salient one for monks. It is possible that village notions about spirits are also important to monks, perhaps at an affective rather than a cognitive level (Gombrich 1971a).

(51) This song or dream is generally sung separately from epic recitals. The dream fits better with Druguma's second marriage to Kesar, following her recapture from the Hor enemy king.

(52) These are the two arrows described previously, in Chapter 2. A multitude of ritual arrows are described in other Tibetan speaking areas. See, for example, Nebesky-Wojkowitz on the various mda'-dar which he calls "divination arrows". The "wedding arrow" is seen as a special sub-type, a luck arrow or gyang mda' (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975:366). See also Karmay 1975:211-12.

(53) The white of the welcome scarf is added to the four colours of the Buddhas. See fn 45, above.

(54) Very occasionally, khap are also taken out of people. Every year, apparently, Ayu oracle extracts khap from an old Sankar woman. In the past, an oracle from Leh used to do the same. Ayu oracle imagines that this woman must have given needles, bones, nails and so forth to animals in her last life and so now she suffers from these substances herself.

(55) One practitioner told me that the training must take place on a particular day of the week, at night, in winter, when the lu are asleep. It will be recalled from Chapter 2 that rites to finish bad things are clustered in the winter for this reason. Some astrologers (monks and laymen) also perform this rite privately in order to expel troublesome spirits. It is usually "witches" that are burnt, as noted in the next chapter.

(56) Pregnancy, childbirth and small children were said to pollute the spirits in several accounts and so the god(s) are temporarily banned.

(57) Ayu oracle says that her initiation was very hard because of the jealousy of her teacher:

"I had received the teaching to suck out pollution ten or fifteen times with Thikse guru and I was finally qualified about nine years ago. I then asked for khag lung, to take out needles. An ill dzo was brought to Ayu, the guru sucked out half a needle and I sucked out the other half. Since the performance was successful, I imagined that I was qualified to treat animals in this way. However, the god itself refused to take out needles on subsequent occasions, claiming that the proper permission had not been given.

"I consulted Bakula rinpoche and he explained what had gone wrong. Apparently, Thikse guru had made a ban (tams, dam) (which involved a knotted cloth on an arrow at the village shrine). We were told how to "undo" the ban (by untying the knot).

"I also visited Stakna rinpoche. He too said that my guru had placed a ban on the training. Perhaps I had not paid him enough. It would be better to have another guru. The rinpoche gave me a message (chagdam) for Martselang guru and he told me not to worry about pollution even though the man himself was poor and dirty.

"I followed the advice of both rinpoche and I eventually received my teaching at Ayu when I successfully sucked out a needle wrapped in the five coloured cloths, fed to the animal by a witness, wrapped in barley dough."

Footnotes to Chapter 5

(1) I use this term loosely to refer to possession by living demons (gson 'dre) in general and by 'gong mo (gongmo) in particular. See below for an explanation of terms.

(2) Nodpa does not necessarily have the same meaning in other Tibetan speaking areas. In classical Tibetan, nodpa refers to harm in general. Lichter and Epstein translate gnod pa as I have here, writing about Tibetan refugees and an area in Northern Nepal (Tsum) (Lichter and Epstein 1983) while Aziz implies that gnod pa are a spirit amongst the D'ingri:

"Of course, Tibetans believe people are bad because they are possessed by malevolent spirits;" to which is appended a footnote -

"Two common names for these spirits are no-pa (gnod-pa) and lu (klu)." (Aziz 1978:40)

It should be emphasised also that Ladakhis may use these terms in different senses drawing, for example, on the literary Tibetan and the local Ladakhi in different contexts. Usage is also highly localised.

(3) This classification has a textual history but I quote it as a Ladakhi, village typology. Villagers are not interested in refinements of these typologies; I never heard, for example, this further note (taken from the second book of the rgyud bzhi):

"There are stated to be 404 kinds of common diseases. There are 101 diseases due to unbalanced humours, of which 42 are due to Air, 26 to Bile and 33 to Phlegm." (Rechung Rinpoche 1973:54 from chapter 12 of the bshad rgyud)

(4) See, for example, Rechung rinpoche 1973, A Kuhn 1986.

(5) Local doctors (amchi) would be expected to diagnose nodpa and refer as necessary but Western trained doctors cannot be relied upon to recognise the problem.

(6) Nebesky-Wojkowitz writes of a list of 18 that attack children (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975:310-11) but I never heard of this number in Ladakh. Gdon are described as demons by Helffer, who writes of the "gdon rendus réponsables des maladies" (Helffer 1977:534) and by Ribbach, who describes the diagnosis of a "fortuneteller" in Ladakh: "don and dre demons are not favourable" (Ribbach 1986:50).

There are also references to the more general usage, where gdon is seen as supernatural damage. Epstein follows this latter usage in an extract quoted in an article by Lichter and Epstein (1983:239). In its most general sense, gdon refers to the powers that bring about illness, not just demons and spirits, but also sin and other faults (Tucci 1980:175).

(7) See also Kaplanian unpub. ms (a). His second footnote lists many of these distinctions and the article, as a whole, presents an extended attempt to describe different types of nodpa.

(8) Gyak (bgegs or geg) also refers to a particular class of spirits, like gdon and gdong: to a class of obstacle-creating demons, usually numbering 80,000 in classical accounts (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975:285, Beyer 1978:300). In my experience, the word generally described "trouble" as in the gyakstor (bgegs gtor) thrown to get rid of trouble in general when a spouse enters her or his new home or the diagnosis labelling "troubles" caused by a clash of elements between an individual's birth year and the present year (lomgyak, lo bgegs).

(9) Further synonyms might be provided for the phrases cited above: klu'i gnod pa yin nog (a lu's damage) and klu'i skyon yin nog (a lu's fault). Klu'i rkyen yin nog might be translated as "it is due to a lu" and klu'i 'phogs as "a lu struck".

(10) Bala, the evil eye, may verge towards intentional cursing. Unintentional damage can be caused by those of low status (rigs ngan). A Mon, Beda or Gara might pollute a higher status individual by sharing his cup, for example. Such damage may also be caused by those who are looking, speaking or feeling in a way that unintentionally harms others.

(11) With respect to my earlier comments on ritual (Chapter 3), it could be argued equally that gossip must be objectified for ritual purposes. In Ladakh, the mikha text is read while a human figure with a beak is constructed (usually at the centre of a group of three figures). This need not be seen simply as a character, "gossip", but as a form constructed to hold that gossip so that it can be expelled. This argument is clarified with my discussion of ritual in the next chapter. See Kaplanian unpub.ms (b) on mikha in Ladakh.

(12) Parka also refers to the Chinese set of divinatory signs and has a similarly specialised sense in Ladakhi astrology in addition to the general sense described.

(13) Lungsta, rlung rta, wind horse is commonly understood to refer to 1) the print on the flag, 2) the flag itself and 3) the rite to raise spiritual power. One type of flag (dar lcog) is described as the most important variety of rlung rta that is beneficial for the next life while another (dar rgod) is used just to solve immediate problems (Tucci 1966:192). See also Norbu's discussion in the same volume (Norbu 1966).

(14) In the literature on this topic, dbang thang, rlung rta and a term for merit, usually bsod nams, are linked and compared. See, for example, Helffer 1977:544-5 and, on dbang thang in particular, footnote 19 to p.545.

(15) Lichter and Epstein argue that the close analogy between belief in karma and supernatural causation makes it easier to move from one system to the other. They say that they

"are analagous to the point of frequent interchangeability" (1983:246)

and easily reconciled (ibid). While Lichter and Epstein divide Tibetan and Tsumba beliefs into two systems, their sensitive approach implies that the use of metaphor virtually turns causation into a single overarching system. See comments on Furer-Haimendorf below.

(16) Allen also comments on Furer-Haimendorf's shrindi:

"The word appears to be the same as Sherpa shen-dre, Tibetan shi-'dre (Snellgrove 1957:290) and Funke's chendi (see his index - probably also the same as his chende and sende). Chendi is summarised as 'Schattenseele' and is said to accompany a man through life as well as causing harm after his death. Cf. also Hofer's ginde "ghosts of the recent dead". The Thulung recognize Sindi as a dangerous Sherpa god and either officiant may perform rites to him." (Allen 1976(b):538 (fn 13))

(17) See Ortner for a distinction between 'dre and bdud which seems to be broadly similar to the Ladakhi:

"The du (bdud) seem to be a more general type of demon, who vie with de ('dre) in the Sherpa system to be the generic demons of the system. Some people actually said that de were a special kind of du (bdud), but the de seem to have more of a role in the popular imagination, while the du seem to represent a Buddhist attempt to supersede the de with a higher and more general type, whose main attribute is that they can be dealt with (read: are created by) Buddhist myth and ritual. While both de and du are greedy, vicious, cannibalistic, and antireligious (as any proper demon must be), du show up mainly in tales and rituals as being defeated by lamas, while de perform more specific and immediate antisocial and antipersonal acts (especially attacking hospitality events) and can be combated by lay people and local lamas without the help of higher representatives of the religion." (Ortner 1978a:180 (fn 8)).

Ortner mentions four types of demons: simbu, du, de and dirnby. Simbu may correspond to the Tibetan srin po while du and de correspond to the Tibetan bdud and 'dre. I am unsure of the derivation of dirnby (1978b:279).

(18) Efforts have been made to distinguish these senses. Allen, for example, implies that scapegoats should be distinguished from prestations (Allen 1976b:545,550; 1974). Paul distinguishes a scapegoat strategy when evil forces are coaxed into a vehicle and destroyed, a sacrifice-offering strategy when evil forces are appeased by offerings and a ransom strategy when evil forces are offered a copy of whatever they desire (Paul1979:284). However, my earlier

discussion of ritual in Chapter 2 makes it clear that presents to spirits can be turned into traps for them. Moreover, representations of the spirits themselves can be seen as "gifts" of bodies which are then offered other gifts of food, precious things or the substitute bodies of potential victims. Ortner has anticipated these points in her valuable discussion of seats, bodies and food for spirits (Ortner 1975, 1978a) (see also Chapter 6 below). Accordingly, the different senses of lud and related terms are not distinguished in this account.

(19) This was the classification offered by the officiant. In other accounts, mdos are distinguished from glud. Tucci describes glud as a type of mdos (Tucci 1980:176). See also Beyer 1978:325-330 on the different senses captured by mdos; as demon traps, substitutes and a representation of the universe. Similarly, the term glud is seen to refer to the ritual as a whole while ngar mi or ngar glud are said to refer to the image of the one who is to be ransomed (ibid:177). At this performance of gyazhi, ngar glud were described more generally as offerings to get rid of badness and trouble and it was the boy and girl lud that were described specifically as substitutes or ransoms for the people in the house. The mdos or demon traps used in the rite had different thread crosses attached (nam mkha') which identify classes of demons (Lessing 1951:282). These four outer offerings were described as bodies for the devils (see above note).

(20) On another occasion, a lay astrologer gave the following interpretation which was also thought to be based on doctrine. He said that gyazhi was "an invitation of the four dud to a feast, so that you can get rid of them." He said that the dud come in four shapes; gyapo, tsan, shinje and mamo. He explained that shinje were shinde or ghosts (see below) while mamo were manmo (also discussed below). tsan have been mentioned in Chapter 2 while the nature of gyapo is explored further below. The thebrang named by the monk are a kind of demonic spirit. Lhamayin and yidags are creatures in the Wheel of Life.

(21) The cover term "people demon" is not often used in the Leh area. The classification normally offered includes "demons of the dead" (ghosts), "living demons" (witches) and "god demons". The term lhande, "god demons", is spelt in the same way as lhadre (lha 'dre), previously translated as "gods and demons". See fn 41 in Chapter 4.

(22) Sbas yul. See, for example, Reinhard 1978 on sbas yul in Nepal.

(23) Rinpoche, it should be noted, can reveal these hidden places but only at the risk of poverty and unhappiness to hidden people who live, like Adam and Eve, in these Gardens of Eden.

(24) In Ladakh, the Hemis Pegar seems to be a form of Pehar (see Chapter 4). He is said to have been tamed either by Kesar or by Guru Rinpoche:

"Guru Rinpoche asked Pagar, "what can you do?" (after defeating him). He replied "I can become the owner of something." Guru Rinpoche asked, "in what shape?" He replied, "in the shape of giving disease and madness." (monk)

One version of his arrival at Hemis explains:

"Gyapo Pagar once guarded Kesar's property. Kesar's cymbals were acquired by Hemis. Subsequently, there were many problems in the monastery and the monks consulted oracles who said that Gyapo Pagar was angry; they should give back the cymbals. The monks did not want to return them for they were very valuable so they made the gyapo into their monastery protector (dgon lha) instead." (laywoman)

He is obsessively interested in his property and territory today also:

He follows objects (monastery property) and he gives slow damage to people, not necessarily to the ones who stole things but to those who have them now. (the same woman, paraphrased)

(25) Thus, the village gods in Gongma are called King Nezer (Nezer gyapo) and Queen Traltse (Traltse gyamo). Phaslha are also often called kings and queens.

(26) For further examples, see Jest 1975:300, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975:417.

(27) The derivation is 'dre mo but timo are not seen as female dre; indeed, there is a masculine form, tipo ('dre po). While 'dre are demons in a generic sense, 'dre mo/'dre po describe a particular type of demon that sits on the boundary between spirit demons and living demons in the classification given above. They are more like spirits when they are classed with btsan and rgyal po and more like living demons when they are classed with the witches described below. The differences between the demon type tipo/timo and the generic class dre are not captured in dictionary definitions.

An example of a problem attributed to gyapo, timo and tsan together has been given in the previous chapter. A girl consulting Ayu oracle was told that these spirits were responsible for her unsettled mind.

(28) Manmo were assimilated to the category ma mo by the lay astrologer quoted above (fn 20). Ma mo are a class of fierce oath-bound goddesses who serve religion under Paldan Lhamo (dPal-ldan lha-mo). Nebesky-Wojkowitz and Gorer write that ma-mo, fierce female demons in Tibet where they sometimes accompany gShin-rje as messengers, are mamoo in Lepcha, fierce female deities/demons (1950:72).

However, the Ladakhi manmo is more likely to be derived from sman mo in Tibetan; some Ladakhis pronounce the word smanmo:

"sMan ... is often used as the appellation of the consorts of the lha, the meaning of this word being both "woman" and "medicine". (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975:199). See also Tucci 1949 (vol.2):720 who describes sman mo as consorts of any class of god or demon.

(29) Men deprive manmo of their livelihood when they hunt game. Wild women steal sex from men in return. This is not purely a negative reciprocity but also a dangerous pact which might bring further wealth and fortune to the hunter for, in many accounts, men become fabulously wealthy if they do not speak of their encounters with manmo.

(30) Shed and shinde are also used interchangeably to refer to ghosts.

(31) Allen suggests that a general process may be involved in the naming of evil spirits:

"This suggests that the life cycle of a named evil spirit is as follows: he is recognized as a cause of affliction usually after his death, when a diviner first implicates him. If he catches on, he may enjoy a certain local vogue before his individuality is merged with that of other named spirits or lost in the swarms of potentially harmful anonymous spirits." (Allen 1976b:533)

(32) I was a close friend and so I could be told these things.

(33) Material on the courts and witchcraft in Nepal describe similar situations: see, for example, Macdonald 1976b.

(34) Nying nganpa/tsogpo (snying ngan pa/rtsoq po) - bad heart; sems nganpa/tsogpo - bad mind; samba nganpa/tsogpo (bsam pa) - bad thoughts.

(35) The terms bamo, gongmo, timo can be used interchangeably to describe trouble. A very common response to problems of all kinds is found in the phrase:

gongmo/bamo/timo zhugsterag - "a witch is possessing you"

At the other extreme, all three are sketched in fantastical shapes, often to frighten children. An example is evocative of witch stories the world over:

"Bamdu are meetings of gongmo and timo. Shetral (sha'i gral, flesh turn) are organised, that is, a rota for bringing meat. The boss calls a meeting. In P. village, there is a boss of all the gongmo but I don't know whether the same is true of other places. The boss sends them out turn by turn to find a victim. There is a place in T. village where 6 or 7 bamo always used to be called to meetings. Everyone can see their fire and hear their voices but when you get really close there is no-one there and only ashes to be seen." (Gongma villager)

However, distinctions are often made between these demons. In Gongma, the word bamo is most often used spontaneously to describe the unexpected deaths of babies and young children:

bamo zoste in - "a witch has eaten it"

Bamo is also used in a rather different context, to describe particular appearances at monastery festivals, as described in the next chapter. Both usages contrast with a rather elaborate folklore concerning the same bamo witches, that can be elicited with direct questions. They are then described as women who are conscious of their powers which they use intentionally. They are foreigners or strangers:

"with two protruding canine teeth, hanging breasts and very long braided hair",
often northerners who speak a different language. In Gongma, these were fairy tale figures.

Around Gongma, the term gongmo is reserved for real people who are not evil for they know not what they do. They emanate bad feelings, primarily jealousy, which they cannot control. These feelings travel and cause the victim problems or, in extreme circumstances, loss of consciousness. Any minor problem might be attributed to gongmo, as noted above, but the person responsible can only be identified during cases of possession, when the witch talks through her victim (see below). The term gongmo is often used to describe all living demons in Gongma, that is bamo, gongmo and timo. Sometimes, bamo is used in the same way.

Timo are less clearly human. In Gongma, they are sometimes classified with these other witches, when they are seen as jealous, thwarted women. At other times, they are classified with tsan and gyapo, when they seem to be closer to (other) spirits than to people.

(36) In Ladakhi eyes, madness generally points to gyapo, gods (lha), rabid dogs or, rarely, a "natural" senility.

(37) I saw very few cases of full-blown witchcraft possession and so my discussion is necessarily limited. The reasons I saw so little are two-fold:

1. Ladakhis are embarrassed about this illness and, during attacks, they virtually bar the doors to the house so that no-one should know what is happening. I could have attended curing sessions but I felt that this would be an unwarranted intrusion. Though I cannot describe many cases of full-blown possession, it is worth noting that Ladakhis too see possession only in their close friends and family.

2. For reasons outlined below, I feel that the occurrence of full possession is exaggerated. Therefore, the fact that I saw so little probably reflects the empirical reality more accurately than it would at first seem.

(38) See also, for example, Reinhard on the Raji of Southwest Nepal in the same volume, especially 1976b:279-82.

(39) Men suffered symptoms which looked very like mirdechēs to me but these symptoms were rarely systematised. In treatment, they were often played down. Thus:

A Muslim man turned up at the house where Kirzi oracle was in trance. He described symptoms of anxiety (tserchēs, see fn 40 below). He said that he had troubles at home. The god did not classify these symptoms, HE did not dwell on the man's emotional state or his personal problems. Rather, HE spoke of troubles in the house which he attributed to its construction at a place where three roads meet.

In other cases, men may be told that they are troubled by tiṃo but this diagnosis does not imply possession and a concurrent weakness in the same way that it does in women.

(40) nying zūmo yongerak, snying zur mo yong-. Snying means both heart and mind.

nyingka, snying kha, "heart" and also an illness, often taken to experts, which seems to be best translated as "heart pain".

tshererak, tshe re rag. Tshe re and tsher ka mean sorrow, grief, pain, affliction. Mtsher ba means to sorrow or to be afraid.

lablip; lab, "talk", lib, "all" or "all at once". Ladakhis also translated the word to me in English as "palpitations".

When I questioned her, Diskit explained that bamo were the same as gongmo.

(41) Ladakhis who spoke English gave the translation cited. The term was used to describe a state of confusion. It may be related to sab sob which, in Das, is translated as incomplete or defective.

(42) Like many of the terms cited, including zhugshēs itself, this word can also be used for more specific and dramatic symptoms. Kaplanian translates the term thus:

"Les Ladakhi attribuent souvent aux lha un phénomène appelé deptet ('dre-ded). Une personne, frappé par la colère d'un lha (le plus souvent un yulha), disparaît pendant plusieurs jours, errant dans la montagne, incapable de se situer, de s'orienter, de retrouver son chemin. Au bout de quelques jours, elle reprend conscience, retrouve son chemin et réapparaît. On dit qu'elle avait perdu sa conscience: khoe tanba stortok: "il est inconscient"..." (Kaplanian unpub. ms (a):11).

(43) I shall draw upon the wider context below but it might be noted that Chorol eloped during this period. I left Ladakh in January and so I do not know whether the December episode completed her illness.

(44) By true or full blown possession, I refer simply to the displacement of consciousness. As mentioned above, Ladakhis often use the word possession (zhugshes) more loosely to include episodes of anxiety.

(45) The account may already evoke earlier descriptions of novice oracles. Novices, likewise, are most fully possessed during treatment.

(46) I was told that dugzes referred to incense but was used to specify (white) mustard seed (yungs dkar) incense. However, Kaplanian suggests that the term refers to an object thrown in the fire to expel demons (as in the case mentioned below where a piece of material is burnt in the fire) or to the pouring of water (derived from the the Tibetan ldug-, to pour out or to cast, rather than bdug-, to burn incense). He also cites the Tibetan dug, a medical term denoting heat or external application (from Meyer 1981) (Kaplanian 1985:145).

(47) Capitalised letters for personal pronouns indicate possession, as with oracles, though the individual is taken over by a witch rather than a god. It is not always clear when a woman is possessed so I use capitals only in unequivocal cases.

(48) Witch victims are often possessed by more than one witch just as oracles are possessed by more than one god.

(49) According to this report, the oracle was not going to beat Chorol's shadow but the girl herself. I do not know how often this occurs. The logic is similar to the treatment of witches in other areas. Macdonald cites an example from Laos where, according to Condominas:

"every action that he (mo mon (the healer)) undertakes on his victim is reproduced on the body of the phi pop; if he whips the patient with his stick, the latter does not suffer from it, but the phi pop is wounded; if he shaves his head with a half of a coconut, the sorcerer reappears shaven. Thereby denounced, the phi pop is chased by the inhabitants" (Macdonald 1976b:382 (fn 7)).

I asked how the oracle knew who the witches were and I was told:

"It's in the nature of gods, they know immediately."

(50) One of the most interesting facets of Ladakhi witchcraft concerns the creation of a ritual context out of the everyday. How is an elaborate ritual built upon the odd headache, some sour milk, an anxiety attack? Who creates it? And what are the effects? Lambek has suggested that illness be seen as an aesthetic idiom for trance rather than its result (1981:53) and, in Ladakh, illness in women of the right age provides a forum in which a range of rituals can be elaborated, involving laymen and ritual specialists. Particularly interesting are the divergent views about what is and is not ritual. In December, Chorol resisted her diagnosis; she simply did not feel like working. Yet, her

household managed to construct a ritual out of her situation in which she had to participate. The rites described do not occur automatically; at times, they are resisted or redefined and, at times, some participants will see a ritual where others see only the mundane. Ladakhi witch attacks are described below as rites of passage (see also Stirrat 1977) but it should be emphasised that these rites are not clearly demarcated from everyday life and they involve an element of coercion.

(51) The audience are sent out in order to bring the witches in: if there is someone in the room with high spiritual power, the witches will be too frightened to come in. Note that it is again the woman rather than her shadow that is beaten (see fn 49).

(52) It was suggested that Shangkongka might be derived from wolf (shangku; Tib: spyang kyi) and witch ('gong). Thikse oracle also seems to be possessed by this god (Brauen 1980a:152).

(53) Lit: shetral, sha'i gral, rota for bringing meat. In folklore at least, witches are sent to kill a person, bring back their flesh and share it out (see fn 35 above).

(54) See, for example, Mary Douglas 1970b and references cited in the article.

(55) These comments apply specifically to gongmo. Bamo and tim sometimes present a contrast on this point.

(56) The following discussion suggests that older women occupy a less ambiguous household position than younger women. Many women move at marriage but some marry at home and some never marry. I have no figures on the incidence of "non-marriage" in Ladakh but, in other Tibetan speaking areas, it is relatively high. In Limi, 20% of the women aged 35 years and over had never been married (Goldstein 1976:223-233) as compared with 22-23% of women in Chumik in the same age bracket (Schuler 1987:47). Although gongmo attacks are interpreted as a rite of passage into motherhood, this clearly only applies to some women. Others, with time, come to belong in just one place without marrying. All, with old age, come to acquire a more respected religious position. A series of changes are therefore associated with the absence of gongmo attacks among older women and the process of marriage provide just one particularly elaborated focus.

(57) Gender is discussed very selectively, from the perspective of possession. In particular, it is the significance of the comparison made with novice oracles that orients the discussion. When oracles are likened to witchcraft victims, they are also, by implication, associated with women and ranked low. It should be emphasised that the categories, "women" or "younger women", are only relevant in certain contexts such as possession.

(58) An association between women and nature and men and culture has been explored in anthropological work on gender.

Ortner, for example, discussed the transformation women carry out on "raw" nature in a 1974 article. Her approach has been extended in a more recent discussion of demonic possession in Sri Lanka (Kapferer 1983). Kapferer argues that women are equated with the house where they perform the groundwork of creating culture from nature. They suffer more in the process of creating this female culture (which is opposed to a male culture) and they are seen, in many ways, to be more vulnerable and therefore appropriate vehicles of disorder and the demonic. This kind of analysis could be applied to Ladakh; it could be said that women create a female culture out of nature while men reproduce a higher order culture in the realm of monastic religion and the organisation of formal inter-household ties. However, it would be misleading to single out one particular image of gender in relation to "nature" and "culture" without discussing other images and the relevant Ladakhi ethnography. Restrictions of space prohibit a more general discussion but it should be noted that Ladakhis also stress the partnership of male and female in many contexts. The main house, for example, is often contrasted to other houses because it contains the proper balance of male and female, including a properly constituted reproductive couple.

(59) Although I have been told of Ladakhi male witches and male witch victims, I do not have information on their social circumstances and so I cannot describe their household position. However, it should be emphasised that problems associated with the household ideal are not projected purely on to younger women. Younger brothers are often in a highly ambiguous position especially with respect to marriage; see Phylactou 1989.

(60) Interestingly, women in Sri Lanka are susceptible when they are alone; Ladakhi women are susceptible when they are too much together. Kapferer's perspective has some similarities to my analysis of different forms of Tibetan possession and the associated gods and demons. However, I argue that demons represent more than disorder, they also represent the raw material for civilised life.

(61) Kirzi oracle is also integrating Chorol's physical symptoms with the diagnosis. It will be recalled that she had flu, colds and sore throats as well as various skin complaints which might have been due to other causes. Kirzi lha is claiming that possession and flu are caused equally by witchcraft, he is claiming that the different symptoms have a unitary shape and a single cause.

(62) This is the woman who was described at length in the last chapter, Dolma from Choglomsar.

(63) Men are also linked with living demons on occasion, as shown in the following account:

A man from Gongma was diagnosed by Bakula rinpoche as an oracle. After several attempts, the god was successfully banned. This case seems to have been forgotten until Kirzi oracle spoke some years later for now the god's words in

trance are often cited. One version reads:

"A couple of years ago Kakshal (Kirzi) oracle came to Gongma. One of his gods, a Tibetan, told the story of Nezer gyapo. HE greeted the god as a brother (ggun) and introduced him, saying, "now I may call you a god." It seems that Nezer had gone away because the people of Gongma treated him so badly and polluted him. L. father was drunk at a village (ritual) about ten years ago. Suddenly, he shouted "the lha has come". Everyone thought it was a chang gong (chang 'gong, beer demon). So, we threw a carpet on him and we put shoes on his head. The same thing happened again and again. It happened so many times that they took him to Bakula rinpoche. The rinpoche said it was a lha. L. father did not want to be an oracle and, after some time, the god accepted a ban.

"Nezer came to Kirzi oracle in trance. HE explained that HE had gone up the mountains to stay with another god, a gyamo (queen). But, Nezer said HE would not return. HE said, "my village people, I am going to my own place." "

Possession is blamed on a type of gongpo, a particularly male witch, a beer-demon.

It would be repetitive to give further illustrations. But, it might be reiterated that the process of diagnosis also works in the opposite direction: a god is assumed to be the agent of possession but turns out to be one of these demons.

"When I was a child, a schoolboy from Chu. fainted in the fields when we began ploughing. He was treated for epilepsy. But, back at home, he danced on the roof of the house and ran up and down, just like a lha. Later, a lhaba came and cured him and we found out that he had not been possessed by a god but by a girl from Leh (that is, a gongmo)." (Leh doctor)

(64) Ladakhis use competing models of religious time. In the next chapter, I describe an optimistic view of civilisation. Yet, a pessimistic model of a degenerating cosmos is part of orthodox Buddhism and also seems to inform the old woman speaking.

(65) People from Sham often make such comments. They have relatively few practising oracles in their villages but Sham clients outnumber all others at many of the trances around Leh, particularly those with Ayu and Skarra oracles.

(66) It might be noted that these fierce gods also cause illness in their vessels. Ayu oracle, for example, described how she had one of her gods banned because of the physical symptoms he caused:

"Early in my life as a vessel (luya), Thanglha used to come. I suffered greatly from the upheaval because the god jumped up and down all the time and my knees became painful and swollen. I didn't like this so Nashrung rinpoche made a ban."

In this way, similarities are re-established between healer and patient through affliction.

(67) I have drawn attention to the marked variations between village oracles. The Skarra nun was described in the last chapter as a religious educator, who does not extract poison or pollution from clients and who bases her own history on a journey to death and back (daslog).

Further details of this trance will be found in Chapter 7 and a full transcript is appended (appendix 4).

(68) See also March 1979 on the contrasts between Tamang and Sherpa lamas and shamans.

(69) This is true even of the nun who claims much closer relations with the monastery than other village oracles. She too possesses fierce gods who cut up living demons in dough effigies:

"I used to build a great dung fire. I took a (large, shallow pan for roasting barley) with river sand in it, and put this on the fire. Then I took the linga and burned them one by one. Before possession, I would have drawn the picture and I burned them in trance after I had called the living demons (sondre) to the person. She (the client) would become possessed by the gongmo and I would burn the papers. At first, the gongmo would say, "you can't do anything to me." Later, my god, Jetsun Dolma, would come and SHE is very strong and angry. Then, sounds would come from each side of the pan. I would add the footprint of the gongmo. I would add her shadow. These were collected by my patient before the trance (in earth where the gongmo had walked and stood). Then, sounds would come forth. The gongmo would say, "I am dying of burns. I can't run away. Father, mother, help me." "Leave me alone, I won't hurt anyone." Then, I would add some hair of the gongmo to the pan. She would cry, "I'm dying." And then, the patient would fall unconscious and the sounds would cease. Later, the patient would recover.

"If I use a paba (dough) figure, it does not pollute me as much as burning (shrakches). Sometimes, the dough is very difficult to cut and sometimes blood comes out when I do cut it. First of all, I collect the "intelligence" (sems) in the figure. Then, I cut it with my sword. Still the gongmo cries when she is cut open, just like she does when the paper is burned. I gave up doing shrakches (burning) through compassion, now I sometimes do this ritual with the dough figures." (Skarra oracle)

Footnotes to Chapter 6

(1) This man attended one of Ayu lhamo's trances. It was Dolma's initiation. The senior god at one point told both the Hemis luya and the attendant monk:

"I may say things wrong because I'm a new lha. If you want to check up properly, you should ask my guru."

Later, after the successful initiation, the senior god said to the man from Hemis:

"There are problems at Hemis. Some of the monks in Hemis don't want the lha to possess in the monastery but you are the monastery lha. Why is this? It is because some of the monks stole thangka (religious paintings) and other things. They are afraid of what the lha might reveal. ... You should go into meditation and then everything will be alright."

The oracle gave the man and the monk a scarf.

After talking later to the man from Hemis and Ayu oracle, I learned that the "Hemis oracle" had come to ask the lhamo what he should do. He had already been to the Hemis rinpoche who had arranged a forum with all the monks to discuss the situation.

(2) The oracle is possessed by Dorje Chenmo. Sometimes, Dorje Chenmo is described as the tutelary god of the scholar, Rinchen Zangpo (Rin-chen bzang-po), sometimes as a form of the goddess Tseringma (Tshe-ring-ma) and, sometimes, just as one who has achieved enlightenment. No-one is very sure. The oracle rides a horse to different parts of the village, the castle and the upper monastery. SHE (the vessel is a man but the spirit is usually described as a goddess) is offered beer by villagers before questions are asked. On the second day, the 10th of the 7th month, the god also visits the local "governor's" (longpo, blon po) house and the small monastery where SHE changes her own shrine. SHE answers questions from spirits as well as people, from lu and the invisible men from invisible lands known as bilungpa. SHE dances on a field of grass (dresma) and throws a storma on the second day. Her past tells of forceful conquest but by the royal family rather than the monastery. Local history suggests that Dorje Chenmo originally lived at a shrine some miles away, east of Thikse. The king or, some say, the queen wanted to bring the god to the castle in Shey. A delegation was sent but the god refused to move. Enticements were offered in the form of a horse, a lion and people dressed in fine clothes. Dorje Chenmo came part of the way but stopped in a field where she grabbed some of that dresma grass mentioned above. She refused to go any further. To this day, the grass in that field grows in special shapes and no-one is allowed to touch it. The royal helpers quickly cut some more grass that grew nearby and lay it along the road to Shey. In this way, they persuaded the god to accompany them. She was built a small shrine which can be found now on the roof of the small

monastery below the castle and, every year, the harvest festival commemorates this history with a lion figure, a horse figure, men holding branches and a scapegoat to please Dorje Chenmo. Part of the festival is held in a field covered with dragma, which is also strewn on the floors of all Shey houses, again to please the god (see also Brauen 1980a:143). This history shows Dorje Chenmo to have been tamed and housed by the royal family in a way that is similar to the gods that possess oracles at 'cham. However, the festival will not be discussed further in the present context.

(3) However, a monk who appears at Tak Tok festival will be mentioned in this context, for the light he throws on the area in-between monkly meditation and oracular possession. He is not, however, a monastery oracle.

About 30 years ago, another oracle was banned from the festival of the 11th month at Spituk. Allegedly, the god nearly strangled his vessel in trance and was banned because of the danger.

Other oracles appear outside the Leh region. For example, "brothers" to the Stok and Matho gods are said to appear at Gya, to the east. A seventh brother (or, sometimes, a pair of brothers) is said to appear in an oracle at Skyurbachen, in Lower Ladakh.

Monastery oracles are also associated with cham in other Tibetan speaking areas. The highest ranking state oracle of Tibet, for example, appears at the 'cham celebrated occasionally at Nechung at the beginning of the first month. The oracle is visited by the god Pebar and HE delivers a secret prophecy to the regent of Tibet. HE then makes a public prophecy concerning the coming year. Further ceremonies and processions follow as the state oracle is taken to Lhasa where HE meets the Dalai Lama or Regent and helps drive the famous scapegoats and the evil accumulated over the previous year out of Lhasa. There are a number of accounts of this period: see, for example, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975:422-4.

(4) References to 'cham include descriptions of Tibetan festivals and especially those associated with the New Year in Lhasa. See, for example, Bell 1928, Chapman 1938, Harrer 1953, Karsten 1983, Landon 1905, MacDonald 1929, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975 and 1976, Rockhill 1891, Snellgrove and Richardson 1968, Stein 1972, Taring 1970 and Waddell 1905. There are also references to performances outside Tibet. See for example Fischer 1946 and Fedotev 1986 on cham in China and Mongolia; Downs 1980, Furer-Haimdendorf 1964, Jerstad 1969 and Paul 1979 for accounts of Sherpa cham; Aris 1976 on Bhutan and Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976 on Sikkim. There are also many references to cham in Ladakh. Older accounts concentrate on the Hemis festival: see Godwin Austen 1865, Gompertz 1928, Heber and Heber 1926, Jaschke 1865, Knight 1971 (1893), Waddell 1972 (1895) and the summary given in Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976 (pp. 38-41) which includes further references. More recent references to Hemis can be found in the tourist

literature. See also Helffer 1980 and Kaplanian 1981:295-7. A more general account of monastery oracles can be found in Brauen 1980a and an account of the Matho Rong-btsan can be found in Dargyay 1985.

(5) Cham are staged throughout the year in other Tibetan speaking areas also (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976) and, in some places, the dates may be changed from year to year (Jerstad 1969:97).

(6) Since I left Ladakh, the Thikse festival has been moved to the summer. In the past, Phyang festival was staged in the winter (Heber and Heber 1926:239, Brauen 1980a) but in 1982, it was held on 22-23 July.

(7) This episode is described in several of the accounts about Hemis tshes bcu. See, for example, Knight 1971:221-2, Heber and Heber 1926:265-6, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:23-4, 40, Helffer 1980:119. See also Jerstad 1969:110 on the consecration of yak in the Sherpa mani rimdu.

(8) Nebesky-Wojkowitz presents the iconography of many of the gods and describes the dance sequences of 'chams performed by the different sects (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:9-64). A number of other accounts describe the particular dance sequences. See, for example, Jerstad 1969 for the thirteen dance episodes that occupy the second day of the Sherpa mani rimdu or Coombe on the episodes that make up a Nyingmapa 'cham at Tachienlu (Coombe 1926:179-197) and Helffer 1980 on the two days of Hemis tshes bcu. Helffer's account implies that the dance sequences on the second day were confused by comparison with the first (1980:118). Many accounts emphasise the importance of comic figures such as Hashang gyapo who is said to represent the teacher of a Chinese school of Buddhism defeated in Tibet in the 8th century by a rival Indian teacher. (Alternative interpretations are also suggested. For example, the abbot of Darjeeling told Helffer that this episode celebrates the merit made from charity (Helffer 1980:120).) Hashang is an object of fun, who is ridiculed by accompanying boys. The dramatic and dance sequence of cham are not immediately relevant to my focus on oracles.

(9) It should be noted that the rinpoche does not always orchestrate 'chams from the edge of the stage. Sometimes, he appears as master of the black hats.

(10) Only the Shey oracle wears the five-lobed crown, ringa, seen on all village oracles. The individualised characters appearing in monastery oracles are often marked in other ways too. The great state oracle of Tibet is associated with the following signs:

"Various other signs, indicating that the candidate is a true medium of Pe har and which may be observed at the time of a trance are: if the saliva flowing out of the mouth of the medium at the beginning of a fit contains blood, if the medium keeps the tongue, when not speaking, rolled backward and pressed with its tip against the upper palate, and if

the outline of the thunderbolt with which Padmasambhava has subdued Pe har becomes visible on the scalp of his cleanly-shaven head." (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975:420-1)

and

"a strong medium of Pe har, when possessed, should have a brilliant white complexion, its saliva should smell of saffron, and blood should shoot out of its nostrils in a strong ray." (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:28)

(11) Traditionally, the Shey oracle appears in Lhaba house, said to have been appointed to the role by the king, like other dancers involved in the festival. Shaw remarked on this hereditary position a century ago:

"An annual incarnation of one of these demons (Lha) (a female) takes place at She, a village of Ladakh, in the month of August; but though Lamas are so plentiful in the country, it is to one of the lay members of a certain family that the honour of giving a temporary body to the deity belongs, ..." (Shaw 1878:79)

Gyudpa normally refers to incarnations within this household. However, after a period of 3-4 years recently when the god did not come to anyone, SHE reappeared in the old oracle's daughter's son, who lives in another house. This man is also described as a hereditary oracle (gyudpa), though the link passes through the female line and across houses.

(12) Heber and Heber, writing in the 1920's, report that the oracles came instead from two Matho families for a few years in succession (1926:206).

(13) Brauen has also written of these oracles and his information differs from mine in several respects. As our data on monastery oracles are based on only a few festivals and interviews, I cite some of his comments and also Dargyay's on Matho in the hope that a later visitor will be able to corroborate the details. Brauen suggests that each of the Stok families provides oracles in turn (1980a:134).

(14) See, for example, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975 on Tibetan monastery oracles. He describes an annual feast of Tibetan oracles on the 10th of the 5th month where lower ranking oracles pay their respects to the state oracle in trance (1976:28-9). This feast is accompanied by 'cham in which most of the lamas represent the retinue of Pe har (ibid).

Govinda's account of the election of a monastery oracle through an initiatory illness also illustrates the extensive training for oracles in Tibet:

"To make sure that my case was genuine and neither imagination nor fraud, I was sent to Lhasa and confronted with the Great Oracle of Nechung. We were made to sit side by side during the invocation, and only after various trials and a careful observation of all symptoms was I admitted as a candidate for the priesthood of the Oracle. I

had to take the vows of celibacy and observe all the rules of the Vinaya (monastic discipline). From then on I wore monastic robes and was given special tutors, who taught me to read and write and instructed me in the Scriptures. I had to observe special rules of cleanliness and diet. My life was completely changed and more strictly regulated than that of an ordinary monk, because the smallest transgression or mistake in my conduct might make me vulnerable and lead to my destruction by the very powers to whom I had devoted myself, to whom I had surrendered my body and my life. It was only after a long and severe training that I was finally declared fit and was sent to Dungkar Gompa, where the throne of the Oracle had become vacant... " (Govinda 1966:190-1)

See also Rock 1959 on the selection of monastery oracles.

(15) Brauen has 15 days (1980a:134).

(16) Heber and Heber report different patterns for the 1920's. A new oracle had to meditate in a mountain retreat for up to 4 months before the festival while an established practitioner had to retire for just one month (1926:206). Compare my summary of Matho with the more detailed description in Brauen (1980a:136-142). Brauen suggests, for example, that both monks go into seclusion for a year together. This was not the practice in 1982-83, at least.

(17) John Crook, personal communication.

(18) It will be recalled that village oracles often come into trance on auspicious days as well, to honour religion and the gods.

(19) Dargyay suggests that

"the oracle monks change their attire from that suitable for a rgyal po (spirits who have the appearance of a king) to that suitable for a tantric one" (Dargyay 1985:58).

She also suggests that it is on the fifteenth rather than the fourteenth that the oracles receive the upper garment of the founder of the monastery, with which they used to fly in ancient times.

(20) Unfortunately, the one time I saw these questions, the oracles refused to tell the future; instead, THEY beat the representatives from the radio station and asked why THEY had not completed the directives given the previous year.

(21) Brauen has a slightly different version: if an oracle appears with red hair in certain months, there will be a bad accident the following year; villagers have not done as they were advised (1980a:138).

(22) Brauen adds that, afterwards, when the gods have left the oracles back in the monastery, villagers mix with the masters of the ceremony in this field and they try to put flour on each others' faces. If successful, the person who is

covered with flour has to pay a fine (Brauen 1980a:136). Similar episodes are reported at some rituals of first ploughing (saka) (Dollfus in press, Phylactou 1989) where this smearing with flour seems to be related to a more general emphasis on renewal in the village world.

(23) The association between monastery oracles and the secular state is also underlined in the prophecies given at Matho. Traditionally, these were given to the king and informed statecraft for the new year. Brauen also notes a dualism between church and state in the oracular practices at Matho, between the "queen's house" and the "monastery of Hemis" (1980a). Unfortunately, I can provide no further details on the role of oracles in the secular state.

(24) According to one of the current oracles at Stok, the shrine in the high pastures is renewed at the time of shrublha by an astrologer and lhadaq (see fn 34, Chapter 4).

(25) In fact, it is generally claimed that the rituals are supported rather by Hemis monastery and Stok castle (Dargyay 1985, Crook, pers. comm.). Brauen reports another version according to which one horse comes from Shey palace, which is associated particularly with the queens of Ladakh (1980a:140).

(26) Brauen suggests that the oracles stop half-way on their journey to rest and eat a little of the food that is to be given to the gods. It is from this point that they fall into trance (ibid:140) (see also Dargyay 1985:59).

(27) According to Brauen, the two oracles hold their heads in or over the juniper and the gods then vanish until the first month of the following year (ibid:140). Crook suggests that the oracles jump into the lhatho and the gods then leave their hosts (pers. comm.).

(28) Brauen suggests that the Matho Rong-btsan appears in a peaceful form in one oracle and a fierce form in the other (1980a:137).

(29) The converted enemy is not always a spirit. Nebesky-Wojkowitz describes the appearance of an oracle at the Gangtok 'cham on the 15th of the 7th month. The oracle speaks in the voice of a Lepcha who was conquered in the 17th century. The defeated king speaks today through his mun or bongthing vessel (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:22).

(30) Stein also comments upon an inversion that takes place at birth. At death, the soul (sems) travels from the heart to the head at which point it leaves the body. According to a Bonpo text that Stein cites, the soul enters an embryo at the same point on the head and descends to the heart before birth (Stein 1957:232). See also Stablein 1980.

(31) There are a number of accounts of texts used at death rites. See, for example, Skorupski 1982, Snellgrove 1957 and the translations of the Book of the Dead (fn 25, Chapter 3).

(32) For other accounts, see for example MacDonald 1929:217, Coombe 1926:186, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:36,55. The 'cham text published by Nebesky-Wojkowitz includes a passage describing how the corpse is turned into food for peaceful gods and holy people or wrathful deities who are invited to the feast (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:183-7, and summary on the root dance, pp.104-5).

(33) Although my discussion goes beyond most village interpretations, it still simplifies the sequence of events from the perspective of meditation practice, as shown by Cantwell's discussion of a zlog pa ritual (Cantwell 1985). Her account of the "Liberating Killing" reveals a number of transformations during three expulsions (1985:20-27). The murders themselves are seen to destroy only the "forms" or bodies of hostile forces for their consciousness is liberated. Thus, the first expelling section culminates as the master of the ritual, in the form of the yi dam, brings down the dagger above the linga and purifies the consciousness of the hostile forces who pass out in the state of Great Bliss (ibid:22). Their merits are dissolved into the yi dam. Only the body of the poisons is destroyed when the linga is cut up (ibid). Afterwards, the remains are transformed in meditation and offered to the yi dam and his retinue. Later, in the second expelling section, worldly troubles are expelled and diverted against the hostile forces:

"Rather than destroying the causes of disturbances in the natural and social world ... gro-lod (the yi dam) expels them, gathering them into his retinue to join the ritual attack which is symbolically displayed on the twenty-ninth day." (ibid:23)

My simplified presentation is intended only to show that there is a "double sacrifice". The "bad sacred" is transferred to a victim whose consciousness ("good sacred") is saved through transference back to the ritual officiant. After the "bad sacred" (either the body alone or the body and the bad part of the soul) has been destroyed, it is subject to further transformations providing (good) sacred food for a congregation. Whether or not the consciousness is then incorporated on the side of religion to continue the fight against enemies seems to depend on the nature of the particular expulsion.

(34) This emphasis is common to many accounts of 'cham. Thus Jerstad reports the Abbot's explanation of the ritual executors who:

"kill the enemies of Buddhism in such a manner that their souls are led to higher spheres ..."

"When these demons are overcome by the wizards, their bad karma is purged, and they consent to being converted and to using their strength to protect Buddhism. They are, therefore, reborn in a higher realm." (Jerstad 1969:138-9)

(35) Coombe cites doctrinal interpretations of the murder at a Nyingmapa 'cham. He says that the more docile evil spirits are incorporated with the guardians of the faith but the more obstinate and rebellious are cut up with the ling ga or burned with the gtor ma (Coombe 1926:196). See also fn 33 above on the gathering of worldly troubles into the yi dam's retinue in order to continue the fight against hostile forces.

(36) Ladakhi villagers tended to restrict their use of the term dulba to the vinaya or rules of monastic discipline. My usage of the term extends beyond the Ladakhi.

(37) My earlier discussion of the triple jewel in Chapter 3 described the Community purely in terms of people that belonged to it. In the present context, the Community should be seen in a wider sense. Buddhas teach Doctrine to all sentient beings, including spirits, as shown by the narratives attached to oath-bound gods.

(38) It should be appreciated that this principle is not necessarily reflected in actual changes in the composition of the pantheon marshalled at 'cham. I do not know whether new gods have been added to the dramas historically. However, the importance of movement in the pantheon is confirmed in other sources. Nebesky-Wojkowitz, for example, writes:

"The existence in the class of the 'jig rten pa'i srung ma (that is, worldly protectors), though it may extend over periods beyond human comprehension, is believed to be limited and subject to the karmic law, all the deities of this group passing eventually, by the power of the merits which they acquired by protecting Tibetan Buddhism, into the rank of the 'jig rten las 'das pa'i srung ma (that is, other-worldly protectors). While the ascent into this higher class is said to be a progress of infinite slowness, if judged by human standards of time, the number of the 'jig rten pa'i srung ma by comparison increases rapidly due to the circumstance that many harmful spirits of the class called nag phyogs gi bdud are still being conquered and changed into protectors of the Buddhist creed by appropriate ceremonies of the Tibetan Buddhist priesthood." (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1975:5)

It should also be noted that this image of the pantheon ignores a number of the higher layers which are of little interest to villagers, namely gods important in monastic and tantric ritual such as yi dam, mkha' 'gro ma and sgrub thob; tutelary deities, dakini and sages.

(39) Holmberg has made a related and interesting analysis of oaths (dam) among the Tamang. See particularly Holmberg 1980 and 1984; also Hofer 1981:18-19. It might be noted further that the conquest of spirits sometimes also involves the conquest of specialists who deal with them. In Chapter 4, reference was made to the defeat of Tamang bombo. The oracle figure was defeated by his elder lama brother in one version

(Holmberg 1984:714). In another version, it is Guru Rinpoche who defeats the bombo through oaths (dam) and the process of 'dul ba:

"By the techniques of damla taba (the casting of oaths) he (that is Padmasambhava, Guru Rinpoche) compelled all evil beings, nočcen, to content themselves with a scape-goat (glud) of the sick, instead of taking the soul of the latter. Today, whenever the shaman presents such a scape-goat for his patient, he has to remind the nočcen of this obligation. Padmasambhava also "tamed" (dulba) the First Shaman, Tusur Bon, and the present division of ritual tasks between the lāma and the bombo is a result of Padmasambhava's victory over Tusur Bon. Tusur Bon's descendants or disciples (?) are the spiritual ancestors and tutelaries of the Tamang shamans. They are called phamo or gyūpa meme, and the spiritual descent line connecting them with the present shamans is denoted by the term kāwa (pillar)." (Hofer 1974a:173)

(40) See, for example, Ortner 1978a. Her model of coercive hospitality, on which secular and ritual life are said to be modelled, has been summarised previously. Ortner suggests that high ranking gods are kept in the world to defeat enemies but she does not apply her thesis to the relations between different parts of the supernatural hierarchy, as discussed in Chapter 2.

(41) Clearly, this optimistic view of history is just one of several. At the end of the last chapter, Ladakhi views of a perceived increase in the numbers of oracles were quoted. One old woman suggested that, together with more gods, there are more demons today. Another woman said that there were more demons because people had lots of money and were jealous of each other. A model of a degenerating cosmos is not peculiar to Ladakhi villagers. Aspects of the doctrine set out in Chapter 3, concerning salvation and the karmic cycle, are frequently accompanied by theories about progressive degeneration in the cosmos. Man is becoming smaller in stature and in mind as his life-span shortens and as evil accumulates in the world. The quest for a better rebirth and for salvation becomes that much more urgent against this backcloth. Tucci outlines such a view with respect to the Gelugpa New Year and 'cham:

"The dGe lugs pa have given it (the smon lam celebration that accompany New Year and consists of liturgical ceremonies) an additional, more secret meaning. The community is situated in a period of general decline, in which evil grows and the doctrine preached by Sakyamuni is becoming obscured. It thus becomes necessary to overcome or at least to lessen the evident marks of this period of time, plagues, war and famine, and above all to help the saving activity of the next Buddha, Byams pa (Skt. Maitreya) by preparing for his coming." (Tucci 1980:152)

The view of history that I have outlined is not an esoteric one; it is part of the renewal of the year, preparations for a new life and a commemoration of religious and secular

victories of the present order. In this context, it is not perhaps surprising that an optimistic view of history is presented.

(42) Lambek's account of the aesthetics of trance culture in Madagascar provide a good illustration of the compromise effected between person and spirit. Lambek shows how spirits are brought into an uneasy and always uncertain accomodation with human society (Lambek 1981:46-48, 79-83, 168-171).

(43) Kapferer's account deals primarily with demonic possession. The demonic is seen as nature disordered and outside the order of culture. Exorcistic ritual transforms the demonic and creates culture out of this natural disorder. The cosmic order is rebuilt as demons lose their terrifying aspect and are reduced to a fitting absurdity. As noted in Chapter 5 (fn 58), there is no general equation in Ladakh between women and "nature". Witchcraft possession might be described as anti-cultural insofar as it is seen as the "worse side of life", the "anti-religious" or the "anti-social".

(44) Cham in other Tibetan speaking areas are also incorporated into the agricultural cycle. Among the Sherpa, "Dumje" is held just before the first planting and the first rains. Funke quotes his informants:

"The Dumje is carried out so as to ask God for rain. We need rain for a good harvest. God is supposed to make us happy by preserving us from sorrow and by sending rain for the harvest." (Funke 1969:118, translated by Paul IN Paul 1979:279).

Paul's analysis builds upon the nature of the ritual as a spring fertility rite by arguing for an equation between agricultural and human fertility (ibid:278). He points to the opportunities for sexual license among villagers and to an episode in the dances, concluding that

"Dumje is also a festival that is patently both for and about children. The boys in the tek-tek masks at once represent sexuality and also the multitude of children who are the desired result of sexuality." (ibid:286)

My analysis of the life-bringing character of cham is very different from the one presented by Paul (Paul 1979, 1982) but the emphasis on renewal of life in this world through an uneasy alliance with religion is similar.

(45) Some of the burlesque episodes in Ladakhi cham can be interpreted in these terms. Elsewhere, the old man, rgan dkar, introduced to the New Year 'cham in Lhasa this century "kills" a tiger skin and regains his youthful powers (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:44).

A particular figure at the Pan-nam dga'-gdong monastery in Tibet is likewise linked with the renewal of life:

"Whenever the 'chams is held women who are pregnant travel to Pa nam dga' gdong to have a view of the mask which is supposed to ensure an easy delivery. The principal dancer, shortly after donning the mask, is supposed to fall into a state similar to strong intoxication." (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976:51)

(46) Dorje Chenmo's shrine, which is renewed at the Shey harvest festival, is the only one to be intimately associated with the monastery. It is found, however, on the roof and not inside.

(47) In fact, my analysis of one form of possession has been informed by other types. Thus, material on village oracles helped to make sense of monastery oracles whose role is opaque insofar as they are often described as a mere irrelevancy to the general drama of cham.

(48) It seems that similar episodes occur at other 'cham. Apparently, monks dress up to represent troublesome female demons which were conquered long ago at Sa-skya monastery in Tibet. Some of the women watching are said to display signs of possession, indicating their propensity for witchcraft (C. Cech, personal communication).

Footnotes to Chapter 7

(1) These accounts are based upon the people or "vessels" in trance. Ladakhis sometimes make further discriminations according to the appearance of particular gods. As the style of a trance episode is derived partly from the character of the god embodied at that point, the following presentation blurs some important distinctions.

The perspective on treatment that is obtained by looking at trance sessions is incomplete. Appendix 2 documents the occasions on which Gongma households called oracles to their own homes in 1982. It might be noted that villagers generally call "cheaper" and more accomodating oracles who live close by as they have to pay transport costs as well as the normal fee. They might choose different oracles for other purposes. One house, for example, preferred Thikse, the senior Martselang or Kakshal lhaba for cases of zhugshes and the Skarra nun for general misfortunes in the household. Case histories in Chapters 4 and 5 illustrate how individuals take their problems from one ritual specialist to the next.

(2) A comment from the highest ranking household in a village close to Leh provides an apt illustration:

"We perform rites to lu twice a year but we never used to do this... When my brother was ill, we were told to sponsor the rites. Now, everyone does the same. We also sponsor gyazhi (see Chapter 5) once a year. This started when grandmother was ill and my mother was told to perform the rite. We do it every year now and almost all the houses on this side of the village do the same."

(3) It may be recalled that bad magic is described as jadu (Urdu), ngan chos (Ladakhi) or simply "paper".

(4) Both rites mentioned are exorcistic rites "to finish bad things" but the latter is cheaper to sponsor and the woman is poor. A performance of changbu gyaltse is described below, at a trance of Skarra nun's.

(5) "To mix with your hands" (lagpa kolches) is a more formal expression for "to give poison".

(6) This is a favourite refrain, used in the face of scepticism and disbelief, and also to assert authority, to emphasise that the god knows all.

(7) Paul aptly cites such treatment among the Sherpa in an argument against the psychotherapeutic explanation of cures (Paul 1976:146).

(8) The former are flags that Shiites hang on mosque roofs. The latter are prayer flags that Buddhists hang on house roofs, bridges, mountain tops or trees, as described previously.

(9) Oracles frequently focus on their backs as they come in and out of trance, as noted in Chapter 4. See also the description of Kirzi oracle in Chapter 5. A further example can be found below in the description of Shey oracle.

(10) These are Droghpa, the so-called Aryan Dards mentioned previously (for example, fn 1, Chapter 1), who are seen to have a distinct culture as shown below in the comments made by Ayu oracle.

(11) Gyasol is the honorific for solka. These are offerings made to gods on a regular basis in monasteries and many households. At Mig, the rite was performed just once a year but it was offered daily in the local monastery.

Animals and birds occasionally appear in trance. I do not know whether these are seen as forms of gods. Ladakhi oracles are not, however, possessed by a series of animals, as in other Tibetan speaking areas (Berglie 1976:98, 1978:45).

(12) This phrase seems to describe rinpoche, see fn 44, Chapter 4.

(13) Lama panpon seems to refer to "bad monks" in this context. Panpon is probably a form of ponpo, that is bon po which is generally used simply to refer to "monks who do things the wrong way round". See fn 38, Chapter 4.

(14) These were shangi dulzok (sp?) and dolma mandel (sGrol-ma man-dal).

(15) These were manle dochok (sMan-bla'i mdo-cog) and sago namgo "for the animals" (see Chapter 1).

(16) This was the rite to avert the misfortunes from years ending in the number nine (gumig, dgu mig). I was told that a storma comprising several groups of nine items is thrown, just before an astrologically inauspicious year or in the event of illness.

(17) This is what the nun told me; I could not understand the recital. But the nun's summary was similar to another summary given to me by a literate villager. There are several different mi kha texts (see, for example, Kaplanian unpub.ms (b)).

(18) Patkan has been translated as "gastric problems" in Chapter 4. The term is often used to refer to such problems or "indigestion" but it also means phlegm or mucous.

(19) Oracles are sensitive to the different cultural systems brought before them. My Ladakhi companion could not make sense of the diagnosis given, involving "your own god".

(20) Barley had been used at several points previously, in divination. Unlike Ayu oracle and most others, the chomo held the grains of barley in her hand rather than on a drum when SHE read the signs.

(21) As noted in Chapter 1, monks will not necessarily perform all the rites that a household sponsors. In particular, Gelugpa monks are reluctant to perform a number of exorcistic rites, such as the fierce fire offering.

(22) This refers to treatment that might be offered by an amchi.

(23) By chos, the oracle seems to be referring specifically to the necessary consecration for the object. Apparently, he had previously suggested that this device be made for the new house.

(24) Choglomsar oracle, from Gerge, said that he is told that he treats people mostly for jip (or tip). He himself does not remember what happens in trance. He also apparently sends people "in different directions" to doctors, amchi and monks. He uses the khapko blessing to cure visitors.

Agling oracle (1), from a pastoral area near Chang Thang (which sounded like Nak-zan shed-za song) said that he treated local visitors for poison, cold, patkan. He divined the truth with barley and drum and, most of all, he brought out tip. He said that he never burned gongmo.

A second Agling oracle, from Chang Thang (Agling oracle (2)), said that he primarily extracted tip through the bell, drum or mirror. He also made referrals, revealed knowledge hidden to people and performed curative rites. He spoke of the exorcism of gongmo:

"I call the gongmo to the person, then I free the person and send the gongmo in a particular direction, telling it how bad this (possession) is. If the gongmo is very strong, I sometimes burn it; I burn a drawing (linga) of the gongmo in a big fire of dung."

A third oracle from Central Tibet (Agling oracle (3)), explained his work:

"Most people are cured by the extraction of tip. Some need rituals too, for example, raising prayer flags, reciting prayers, setting free the lives of animals and fish. In Tibet, we had the same illnesses. I bring out tip, khap, nails and bones. ... I perform burning for gongmo. I make a dough figure and collect the gongmo inside it. They are thrown away together. ... I bring out khap with a scarf, the small drum (damaru), the pipe or with a prayer flag. Jip is extracted in the same way. Sometimes, I send people to an amchi or a doctor, depending on the problem. ..."

It should be noted that I saw none of the Tibetans in trance and these comments are based upon what the vessels told me. Berglie's account of Tibetan "heroes" reveals a more elaborate interpenetration between gods and person than reported by Tibetans in Ladakh. Ribbons tied to the hands during an initiation control the visibility and entry of spirits through the "channels" in the right or left hands (Berglie 1976). Berglie's material suggests an important

distinction between seeing and embodying the gods which was not emphasised by any of the Tibetans in Ladakh (Berglie 1976 and 1978). One of the refugees described simply how the god entered him through the "channels". A number of other distinctions are apparent; in the oracle's equipment, in ritual performances (for example, there were no reports of rites in Ladakh to collect the soul (bla)), and in the use of a translator - "hero" oracles used a formal intermediary unlike the Tibetans in Ladakh.

(25) Choglomsar oracle explains that he meditates upon his tutelary deity and enters trance. Then, the god looks in a mirror on the altar to discover what is wrong with the people.

Agling oracle (1) gave a more extensive account of the mirror:

"The lha comes as a guest with the help of a mirror. The god is collected in the mirror and that is what makes possession possible. First, I do a wash (lhatrus) with the mirror (the god is ritually washed in the mirror). Then, I throw black tea to make the god come and go, like writing a message to someone, telling them where to come and when. Then, I stand the mirror in a plate of barley. At the end of a trance, when I want the god to go, I take the mirror off the plate and put it away."

Agling oracle (2) said that he thought the god stopped in the mirror and came to him (the vessel) from the mirror. Agling oracle (3) explained that the mirror was mostly used in divination, echoing the first man's account.

The Tibetans in Ladakh described only one mirror. Berglie's account of Tibetan dpa' bo mentions three mirrors for three classes of spirits; lha, klu and btsan (1976:194). Some Ladakhi oracles also mentioned the mirror as an important item of equipment. For example, it was said that the oracle from Phyang, who is now dead, used to place a mirror in front of him. He became possessed as the gods travelled to him from the mirror. Another Ladakhi claimed that the mirror was the lha's eyes.

(26) Choglomsar oracle incarnates a god that he describes as a place god (yu lha) by the name of Kangri Lhabtsan. Agling oracle (1) also mentioned a single god, with the same name. The Tibetan from Chang Thang, also based at Agling, described his spirit as a dergyad (sde brgyad) and a follower of Paldan Lhamo (Agling (2)). Agling oracle (3) (from Central Tibet) likewise named just one god, this time a follower of the ubiquitous Khangri Lhabtsan.

(27) Only one of the four Tibetans, the Agling oracle (3) from Central Tibet said that he had extracted khag before he came to Ladakh. However, he noted:

"It is true that there were less khag in Tibet but that is because the fodder here is very rough."

The other three learned to extract needles in Ladakh.

(28) Indeed, many Ladakhis said that oracles were the best people to find jadu. There was no oracle at Spituk and the villagers said that they always sent for an oracle to deal with jadu, the astrologer and monks could deal with everything else.

(29) J Parry outlines a similar image in his discussion of North Indian mortuary rites. Digestion is seen as a way of conceptualising ideas about proper circulation and transformation within the wider social and cosmic orders while improper circulation is expressed in the language of digestive malfunction. After death:

"By "digesting" the deceased his pure essence is distilled, and translated by the digestive fire of the stomach to the other world, while his impure sins are eliminated. This distilled ancestral essence then becomes the source of progeny - as is the sexual fluid distilled out of the good part of food." (Parry 1985a:614).

See also Bloch 1986.

(30) Kaplanian builds a three-tiered cosmos into imagery of the person, suggesting that lu are located in the bottom, tsan in the middle and gods above (unpub.ms (a):13). Isan, it seems to me, are more closely related to discriminations made between back/front and inside/outside. Kaplanian also draws firm distinctions between the damage caused by these three classes of spirits and by demons (ibid:19). These distinctions seem to be too rigid, given the difficulties in labelling spirits (see Chapter 5).

(31) In other Tibetan speaking areas, lu are also twinned very closely with these autochthons. Among the Sherpa, for example, klu are described as consorts of sa bdag (Ortner 1978b:279, Paul 1979:294).

GLOSSARY

Ladakhi terms which appear frequently or which are important to the sense of the text are given their spellings and rough English gloss. Entries are made under the Ladakhi transliteration and they are organised according to the English alphabet.

| <u>Ladakhi</u> | <u>Tibetan spelling</u> | <u>English gloss</u> |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| <u>ani</u> | a ne | father's sister, nun |
| <u>amchi</u> | am chi | "local" (traditional) doctor: also <u>smarpa</u> (sman pa) and <u>lharje</u> (lha rje) |
| <u>bamo/po</u> | sbag mo/po | "witch", living demon |
| <u>bardo</u> | bar do | intermediate space, trouble |
| <u>Beda</u> | bhe da | wandering musician |
| <u>cham</u> | 'cham(s) | monastic dance drama |
| <u>chindag</u> | sbyin bdag | patron, donor |
| <u>chinlab</u> | byin rlabs | blessing |
| <u>chishu</u> | tshes bcu | "10th day", village ritual associated with Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) |
| <u>chodpa</u> | mchod pa | ritual offering |
| <u>chodkhang</u> | mchod khang | offering room |
| <u>chomo</u> | jo mo | nun |
| <u>chorten</u> | mchod rten | stupa, Buddhist shrine |
| <u>chos</u> | chos | religion, Buddhist doctrine, dharma |
| <u>choskyong</u> | chos skyong | religious protector, divinity |
| <u>chospun</u> | chos spun | religious siblings |
| <u>dadar</u> | mda' dar | "wedding arrow" |
| <u>drao</u> <u>dra</u> | dgra bo dgra | enemy |
| <u>digpa</u> | sdig pa | sin, demerit |

| <u>Ladakhi</u> | <u>Tibetan spelling</u> | <u>English gloss</u> |
|------------------|-------------------------|--|
| <u>drangyes</u> | 'brang rgyas | dough welcome cake |
| <u>dre</u> | 'dre | demon |
| <u>Drigungpa</u> | 'Bri-gung-pa | religious sect, under Kagyupa |
| <u>Drugga</u> | 'Brug-pa | religious sect, under Kagyupa |
| <u>dos</u> | mdos | thread cross and rituals involving thread crosses |
| <u>dron</u> | mgron | feast |
| <u>dronpo</u> | mgron po | guest |
| <u>dulba</u> | 'dul ba | Vinaya, to tame, convert, cultivate, educate, conquer |
| <u>dud</u> | bdud | devil |
| <u>Gara</u> | mgar ba | blacksmith |
| <u>gewa</u> | dge ba | merit, virtue |
| <u>Gelugpa</u> | dGe-lugs-pa | religious order, "reformed" |
| <u>gongpa</u> | dgon pa | monastery, solitary place |
| <u>gongmo/po</u> | 'gong mo/po | "witch", living demon |
| <u>gyapo</u> | rgyal po | king, spirit |
| <u>gyazhi</u> | brgya bzhi | exorcistic ritual |
| <u>gyud</u> | brgyud rgyud | "lineage", heredity tantra |
| <u>idam</u> | yi dam | tutelary deity |
| <u>jadu</u> | Urdu | bad magic |
| <u>jip</u> | 'jib | to suck, "pollution" |
| <u>Kagyupa</u> | bKa'-brgyud-pa | religious order, comprising <u>Drugga</u> and <u>Drigungpa</u> |
| <u>khandoma</u> | mkha' 'gro ma | high ranking goddesses, amulet |
| <u>kalchor</u> | dkar 'byor | pure offerings |

| <u>Ladakhi</u> | <u>Tibetan spelling</u> | <u>English gloss</u> |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| <u>katag</u> | kha btags | white ceremonial scarf |
| <u>khangpa</u> | khang pa | house, "unnamed house", household |
| <u>khangchen</u> | khang chen | main house |
| <u>khangun</u> | khang chung | offshoot house |
| <u>khapko</u> | bka' bsgo | blessing, exorcism ("the thunderbolt rite") |
| <u>khyimlha</u> | khyim lha | house(hold) god |
| <u>lama</u> | bla ma | monk, religious teacher, sprul sku (see <u>tulku</u>) |
| <u>lanchaks</u> | lan chags | accumulated (bad) karma |
| <u>las</u> | las | "work", karma |
| <u>linga</u> | ling ga | effigy, type of <u>storma</u> that is burnt in a <u>zhinshrek</u> offering |
| <u>lha</u> | lha | god |
| <u>lhaba</u> (m) <u>lhamo</u> (f) | lha pa lha mo | oracle, spirit medium |
| <u>lhande</u> | lha 'dre | wandering spirit |
| <u>lhadre</u> | " " | gods and demons |
| <u>lhaphok</u> | lha 'bogs | oracle's initiation |
| <u>lhatho</u> | lha tho | shrine to god |
| <u>losar</u> | lo gsar | (secular) New Year |
| <u>lu</u> | klu | spirits of the underworld and of water |
| <u>lubang</u> | lu bang | shrine to <u>lu</u> |
| <u>lud</u> | glud | scapegoat or substitute offering |
| <u>lung</u> | lung | permission, instruction |
| <u>lungsta</u> | rlung rta | wind-horses, prayer flags, ceremony to raise spiritual power |

| <u>Ladakhi</u> | <u>Tibetan spelling</u> | <u>English gloss</u> |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| <u>luya</u> | lus gyar | "vessel", oracle out of trance |
| <u>mirdechēs</u> | mi bde- | to be unsettled |
| <u>mikha</u> | mi kha | gossip |
| <u>migphogchēs</u> | mig 'phog- | "to cast the evil eye" |
| <u>Mon</u> | mon | musician |
| <u>namstok</u> | rnam rtog | "superstition", "scruple" |
| <u>ngags</u> | sngags | mantra |
| <u>nodpa</u> | gnod pa | "supernatural damage" |
| <u>Nyingmapa</u> | rNying-ma-pa | religious order, "unreformed" |
| <u>onpo</u> | dbon po | astrologer |
| <u>parka</u> | spar kha | spiritual power, also signs associated with divination |
| <u>parsam</u> | bar btsan (?) ba-mtshams (?) | the middle world |
| <u>phaslha</u> | pha lha | god of the <u>phaspun</u> |
| <u>phaspun</u> | pha spun | ritual group of houses |
| <u>pumpa</u> | bum pa | ritual pot |
| <u>rigs</u> | rigs | kind, social strata |
| <u>ringa</u> | rigs lnga | five lobed crown worn by ritual officiants |
| <u>rinpoche</u> | rin po che | "precious (jewel)", reincarnate lama |
| <u>sadag</u> | sa bdag | spirit of the earth |
| <u>sadag dōndol</u> | sa bdag gdon 'grol | rite for <u>lu</u> and <u>sadag</u> |
| <u>saka</u> | sa kha, sa ka | ritual opening the agrarian year, the first ploughing |
| <u>Sakyapa</u> | Sa-skyapa | religious order, as at Matho monastery |

| <u>Ladakhi</u> | <u>Tibetan spelling</u> | <u>English gloss</u> |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| <u>sangs</u> | bsangs | offering of incense for gods |
| <u>sangda</u> | bsangs mda' | "ritual arrow" |
| <u>sems</u> | sems | intelligence, soul, mind, consciousness |
| <u>serkyem</u> | gser skyems | golden drinks, offerings to the gods |
| <u>shinde</u> | shi 'dre | ghost |
| <u>shrok</u> <u>shrokshing</u> | srog srog shing | soul soul wood |
| <u>shrublha</u> | srub lha | offering of the first fruits |
| <u>shrunga</u> | srung ba | amulet |
| <u>shrungma</u> | srung ma | religious protector, divinity |
| <u>skangsol</u> | bskang gsol | ritual and feast celebrated after the harvest, an excuse |
| <u>skorra</u> | skor ba | circumambulation |
| <u>skurim</u> | sku rim | (religious) ritual |
| <u>skushok</u> <u>kushok</u> | sku gshogs | term of address for rinpoche |
| <u>sondre</u> | gson 'dre | living demon |
| <u>stanglha</u> | steng lha | the world above |
| <u>storma</u> | gtor ma | ritual offering that is thrown away |
| <u>tam</u> | dam | oath, binding promise |
| <u>thabzan</u> | thab zan | "stove food", New Year offerings |
| <u>timo/po</u> | 'dre mo/po | living demon |
| <u>tip</u> | grib | pollution, dirt |
| <u>tragpo</u> | drag po | fierce, wrathful |
| <u>tronpa</u> | grong pa | household |

| <u>Ladakhi</u> | <u>Tibetan spelling</u> | <u>English gloss</u> |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---|
| <u>tsan</u> | btsan | spirits without backs in the middle world |
| <u>tshetar</u> | tshe (m)thar | to set free the life of (animals) |
| <u>tshogs</u> | tshogs | assembly, ritual dough offerings which are distributed among a congregation |
| <u>trus</u> | khrus | wash, ritual wash |
| <u>tuk</u> | dug | poison |
| <u>tulku</u> | sprul sku | emanation body, rinpoche |
| <u>wang</u> | dbang | power, initiation, consecration |
| <u>yanguk</u> | gyang 'gug | ritual to collect fortune |
| <u>yoklu</u> | 'og klu | the world below |
| <u>yul lha</u> | yul lha | village god, god of the place |
| <u>zemches</u> | 'dzem- | avoidances after birth and death |
| <u>zhanag</u> | zhwa nag | "the black hats" |
| <u>zhidag</u> | gzhi bdag | spirit, master of the place |
| <u>zhinshrek,</u> | sbyin sreg | burnt offering |
| <u>zhiwa</u> | zhi ba | peaceful, mild |
| <u>zhugshes</u> | 'jug- | to be possessed |
| <u>zumo</u> | zur mo | illness, pain |

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(*) I have been unable to consult works in Japanese or German, with the exception of Brauen 1980a, which was kindly translated for me by a number of German speakers. A separate entry is given for collections only if more than one contribution is cited from that book.