

**SOCIETY AND ECONOMY OF  
SIKKIM UNDER NAMGYAL RULERS  
(1640- 1890)**

**A THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO GAUHATI UNIVERSITY FOR THE DEGREE  
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY  
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## **CERTIFICATE**

Certified that Mr. Keshav Gautam has worked under my supervision for the thesis entitled "*Society and Economy of Sikkim Under Namgyal Rulers (1640-1890)*". He fulfills all the requirements prescribed under the Ph.D. rules of the Gauhati University. The thesis is the product of the scholar's own investigation in the subject and the scholar has incorporated the suggestions made at the time of pre-submission seminar. I further declare that this thesis or any part thereof has not been submitted to any other university or institution for any degree.

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I hereby declare that the thesis entitled "*Society and Economy of Sikkim Under Namgyal Rulers (1640-1890)*" is prepared by me and I follow all the rules and regulations of Gauhati University. The thesis was not submitted by me for any research degree to the Gauhati University or any other University or institution.

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Date:

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## PREFACE

Sikkim, a beautiful mountainous state lies on the lap of eastern Himalayas. In remote past it was encompassed with dense forests with little inhabitants. People could easily occupy lands and settle down. Livelihood depended on hunting, gathering and old methods of cultivation. In the seventeenth century Phuntsog Namgyal was consecrated as the ruler of Sikkim with the title of *Chogyal* by the three *lamas* (Buddhist monks) of Tibet with the objectives of promoting Buddhism. Sikkim became a protectorate of British in 1861 and in 1889 J. C. White was appointed as the first Political Officer. With the coming of Namgyal to power, Sikkim became a theocratic kingdom guided by the principles of *Nyingmapa* form of Buddhism. With the patronage of three *lamas* the *Chogyal* built a number of monasteries called the *gonpas* and set towards the conversion of his subjects towards Buddhism which directly and indirectly led to the socio-cultural upliftment of the state. Efforts were made by them to bring their subjects under this new faith. *Lamas* were appointed in these monasteries to look after its maintenance and administration. The third Namgyal ruler promulgated to send second of every Bhutia family to be ordained as a *lama* of Pemayangtse *gonpa*. He also invented alphabets for his Lepcha subjects in order to translate Tibetan religious texts.

The earliest society of Sikkim consisted of three communities *viz.* the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Tsongs, who were later known as the Limboos. Lepchas are believed to be the original inhabitants of Sikkim. The Bhutias and the Tsongs migrated to Sikkim from Tibet. The Tsongs started to have close interaction with the Nepalese and they were called Limboos by the latter. Later Nepalese migrated to Sikkim from Nepal by way of conquest, cross-border movements and due to the commercial and administrative necessity of the British.

The society of Sikkim consisted of the *Chogyal*, *kuchap*, *lamas*, *kalons* and *dzongpons* (later *kazis*), village headmen, cultivators and herdsmen, and zimchungpas. The *Chogyal* was the ruler, *kuchap* his agent and a close associate, *lamas* were the religious teachers, preachers and clergies. The *kalons* and the *dzongpons* were ministers and governors respectively. In the nineteenth century they came to be known as *kazis*. The village headmen were the head of the villages, collectors of revenues and taxes and

solved petty cases of crimes with the guidance of village lama. The next strata consisted of common cultivators and herdsmen and finally the *zimchungpas* were the slaves working in palace and the officials.

The Bhutias and the Lepchas developed almost similar culture. Earlier the Lepchas worshipped nature however, with the advent of Bhutias and the establishment of Namgyal dynasty brought a change in their customs and faith. The Tsongs were also converted to Buddhism by opening *gonpas* for them. Later with the contacts with the Nepalese they started embracing Hinduism. The Nepalese were mostly Hindus and brought almost all of their communities to this fold. The coming of the Nepalese brought many changes in society, economy and culture of Sikkim. In the latter half of the nineteenth century Christianity entered Sikkim through the activities of the missionaries.

The economy of Sikkim depended on agriculture, forest and cattle rearing. The people practiced shifting cultivation and agriculture was practiced for self consumption and barter. With the establishment of the kingdom the economy showed a change. The ruler became the lord of the land. The cultivators paid revenue to the state on their own assessment. Trade relations were established with Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal and Indian plains in the form of barter. Among all trade on salt and tea was profitable. Later with the British occupation of Darjeeling these commodities were available there and the focus of trade was shifted to this place. With the British direct administration Gangtok became the administrative headquarter and developed into a modern town.

Sikkim possessed many natural and mineral resources which remained unexplored before the advent of the Nepalese. With their settlement few changes were noticed. New methods of cultivation were introduced such as terracing of the fields and the use of plough. The Newars belonging to Nepalese community got the permission from the Namgyal rulers to extract copper in Sikkim and mint coins. Copper was exported to Nepal and for a time being it became a source of revenue to the state. However it did not last long due to the objection of the ruler of Nepal. The Newars established themselves as merchants, revenue collectors of the areas where they had settled a large number of Nepalese. With the British administration Sikkim started experiencing various changes in administration, society and economy.

The society and economy of Sikkim under the Namgyal rulers is important from different aspects. Various scholars have taken up the study of various aspects of modern history of Sikkim, however, they have slightly overlooked the society and economy of Sikkim under the Namgyal rulers. This work is a modest attempt to find out the socio-economic condition of Sikkim during the Namgyal period. The study aims to reveal the society and economy of Sikkim during the Namgyal period which was not studied before.

The period includes the study of the changes in society that took place in Sikkim up to 1890. The work is to examine the change in economy of Sikkim from pastoralism to agriculture, trade and commerce through change in technology.

The consecration of Phuntsog Namgyal as the first ruler of Sikkim belonging to Namgyal dynasty made Sikkim a Buddhist state. The Bhutias, being the ruling class became superior and influential to the inhabitants of Sikkim. They introduced Buddhism as a state religion and brought changes in society and economy of Sikkim. The work **“Society and Economy of Sikkim Under Namgyal Rulers (1640-1890)”**, has revealed those facts which were unknown before and has brought to light the polity, society, economy and cultural conditions of Sikkim. This work is further focused on possession of land holdings, taxation, income, wages, trade and commerce, agricultural system, educational system, religious structure, society, social stratification and social changes.

The work is exploratory cum descriptive and analytical in nature. It is exploratory in the sense that unexplored events of history have been put to scrutiny to develop a comprehensive study. In the absence of sufficient primary source materials historical method of investigation, predominantly on the basis of hitherto unexplored primary source materials (oral source) is followed, in the form of interviews in addition to the new scientific methodology to complete the work. Due to the dearth of primary sources, the study also depends on secondary sources both published and unpublished

through field studies. Thus, it is an endeavour to review the available materials, literatures of Sikkim and fill the gap of inadequacy by exploring new areas. The field work carried out has been supplemented by consulting library and archival works, census and case study. Interviews are being taken from the old house members of Sikkim. Apart from this other supportive documents like deeds and family papers are collected from such families. These documents are reviewed and used in the conventional and time tested historical methodology. Secondary sources include both official and non-official documents, published and unpublished materials. After collecting the source materials, cross examination of these sources were initiated to get a complete picture of the various historical aspects.

The whole thesis has been divided into five chapters including the introduction and the conclusion. The **first chapter** begins with the introduction of the area, discussion on land and people, and its geographical settings, settlement patterns in the state with a brief insight into its political background.

In the **second chapter**, circumstances leading to the formation of state are discussed. The role of religion, the Buddhist *lamas* (monks) and their influence on rulers have been discussed. Administration of the Namgyal rulers and their efforts to make Buddhism a state religion are highlighted. Their effort to make the *lamas* and the Bhutias as the superior section in Sikkimese society has been discussed. It also deals with the coming of the Nepalese and their settlement and changes that started coming into society and economy of Sikkim. It also discusses the British trade missions to Tibet through Sikkim and reasons leading to direct British administration in Sikkim.

The **third chapter** looks into the composition of people in Sikkim. The society and social stratification has been discussed. The impact of Buddhist religion on the people has been highlighted. The entry of Hinduism and Christianity in the later period has also been discussed. The system of marriage has been highlighted and also reveals the system adapted by the people of Sikkim regarding marriage. Birth and death rituals, treatment of various diseases through shamans also forms an important portion of discussion in the chapter. The religious festivals and dances of the people are also looked into in details. It also provides a detail account of the traditional religious

education, the recruitment of *lamas* in the monasteries and the introduction of English education.

The **fourth chapter** discusses the economy of Sikkim under the Namgyals. The economic practices, rights related to land and their uses, the agricultural practices of the people, the different techniques involved in the cultivation of the various crops, the economic practises of the people related to animal husbandry are discussed in great details. An account of the yak herders, cow herders and shepherds are also dealt with which includes their seasonal movement to higher altitudes and back to areas having warmer climate, preparation of *ghew*, *churpi* and other dairy products for consumption, payment of revenue and barter are also dwelt upon. The use of forest resources for making various items and crafts are also looked into. Other economic practices of the people like trade in the in salt, tea and other local products are discussed. The chapter also focuses on the trade and economic impact on Sikkim after the entry of the Nepalese and British administration has been examined.

The **fifth chapter** is the concluding chapter which provides an overview of the entire discussion and summaries the preceding chapters. It provides an insight into the various social and economic changes in the society till the coming of the British administration. It also shows the influence of religion on the social structure of the society. Besides, it also shows the impact of British administration on society and economy of Sikkim.

The work is also embodied of glossary, bibliography, appendices and photos.

The study on this topic has revealed much new information on the society and economy of Sikkim. It is sincerely hoped that this study will be of great help for further research.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Sikkim, a small hilly state of North-East India and the 22<sup>nd</sup> state of the Indian Republic, is situated between 27°5' and 28°10' North Latitude, and between 88°4' and 88°58' East Longitude.<sup>1</sup> It covers an area of 7096 square kilometres. Sikkim is surrounded by China on the north and east, Nepal on the west and Bhutan on the east sharing 220 km., 100 km. and 30 km. long borders with these countries respectively. The only border she shares with an Indian state is with that of West Bengal on south. However, when Sikkim was founded in the middle of the seventeenth century the boundary of the state was different. It was Dibdala on the north bordering Tibet, on the east it touched Bhutan at Tangla, on the west at Tamar Chorten bordering with Nepal and on the south the borders was at Titalia. At the end of the nineteenth century, when the British took over, after the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, the boundary of Sikkim, as described in of the Convention, was:

“The boundary of Sikkim and Tibet shall be the crest of the mountain range separating the waters flowing into the Sikkim Teesta and its affluents from the waters flowing into the Tibetan Mochu and northwards into other rivers of Tibet. The line commences at Mount Gipmochi on the Bhutan frontier and follows the above mentioned water-parting to the point where it meets Nepal Territory.”<sup>2</sup>

Sikkim is a land of varied elevations ranging from 800 feet above sea level at the southern foothills to over 20,000 feet along its northern and north-west boundaries. The state is girdled by high ridges on the north-east and the west and thus looks like an

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1. H. H. Risley, *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Calcutta, 1894, p. 1
  2. C. U. Aitchison, Article 1 of “Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890”, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries, Vol. II*, Calcutta, 1909, p. 331



amphitheatre.<sup>3</sup> It is covered by snow-clad mountains on the north-east and the west. World's third highest mountain peak, Mt. Kanchandzonga (28,156 ft.) lies in Sikkim. The other mountain peaks of Sikkim are Mt. Kabru (24,215 ft.), Mt. Talung (24,200 ft.), Mt. Siniolchu (22,600 ft.), Mt. Simvo (22,476 ft.) and Mt. Pandim (22,100 ft.).<sup>4</sup> Besides these mountains a number of easy passes run through Sikkim into the Chumbi valley of Tibet. They are Nathula, Jelepla, Batangla, Chola and Yakla. A number of mountain ranges separates Sikkim from three countries namely, Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet. The Singalila Range separates Sikkim from Nepal in the west, Chola Range separates Sikkim from Tibet and Bhutan in the east and the Pangolia Range separates Sikkim from Bhutan in the east.<sup>5</sup> The Himalayas also act as a barrier from penetrating cold winds blowing from Central Asia, resulting in heavy snowfall on the mountain tops and higher elevations. This also results in dry winter season at lower elevations of Sikkim located at the leeward side.<sup>6</sup> The Monsoon winds dominate the climate of Sikkim and there are seasonal reversals of winds almost throughout the state.

The snow-clad mountain peaks are the sources of rivers in Sikkim in the form of glaciers. Among them Rathong and Cholamu Glaciers are the sources of two important rivers of Sikkim namely, Teesta and Rangit. River Teesta originates from the Cholamu Glacier and Rangit originates from the Rathong Glacier. The other glaciers of Sikkim are Zemu Glacier, Lonak Glacier and Talung Glacier. Besides these glaciers Sikkim has a number of lakes which are regarded sacred and holy and they are places of interest and important tourist destinations. They are Tsango Lake, Cholamu, Khecheopalri, Gurudongmar and Memenchu Lake. These water bodies are natural and mostly a product of glaciations. The only exception is Khecheopalri Lake, which is located in low altitude valley in west Sikkim. Sikkim has a few hot springs where warm water

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3. *Sikkim Study Series, Vol. I*, Gangtok, Department of Information and Public Relations, Government of Sikkim, 2004, p. 14

4. *Sikkim – A Statistical Profile*, Gangtok, DESME, Government of Sikkim, 2002, p. 27

5. *Ibid.* p. 28

6. J. R Subba, *Agriculture in the Hills of Sikkim*, 1989, p. 27

oozes out from beneath the earth with a strong sulphurous odour and popular due to their medicinal value.

The State is endowed with rich natural resources and its flora and fauna are unique in nature. The two major rivers of Sikkim are Teesta and Rangit which flow in north-south direction. The Teesta and the Rangit Rivers meet at the borders of Sikkim and West Bengal. The Sanskrit name for the Teesta is *Trishna* which means 'thirst'. The other Sanskrit name of Teesta is *Trisrota*, which means 'three springs'.<sup>7</sup> An account of the origin of the River Teesta has been given in the *Kalika Purana* that goddess Parvati, wife of Lord Shiva, a Hindu pantheon, was fighting with a demon, whose crime was that the demon would worship her husband and not herself. While fighting the demon felt thirsty and prayed to his patron deity Lord Shiva for water. In consequence Lord Shiva caused the Teesta River to flow from the breast of the goddess Parvati in three streams, and thus it has ever since continued to flow.<sup>8</sup> About 48 species of fishes like *katla*, trout and common carps are found in these rivers.

The climate of Sikkim is varied due to its geographical location, relief and altitudinal variation. Due to great variation of sharp edged mountains there is also a large variation of rainfall and temperature. The proximity to the Bay of Bengal and direct exposure to the effects of the moisture laden south-west monsoon made the State most humid place in the whole of the Himalayan Range.<sup>9</sup> The maximum temperature rises up to 28 degree centigrade during summer and during winter it goes up to minus 15 degree centigrade. Depending on the topography of the State it can be divided into five climatic ranges:<sup>10</sup>

I.	Tropical	-	Below 610 m.
II.	Sub-Tropical	-	610 - 1524 m.

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7. B. C. Allen, *Gazetteer of Bengal and North – East India*, New Delhi, reprint 1979, p. 172

8. *Ibid.*

9. J. R. Subba, *op. cit.* p. 27

10. *Ibid.*

III.	Temperate	-	1524-2743 m.
IV.	Sub-Alpine	-	2743-3962 m.
V.	Alpine	-	3962-5182 m.

Most of its territory is covered with forests. The forest covers 44.10% of the total area of Sikkim.<sup>11</sup> The different varieties of trees found in there include oak, silver fir, magnolia, *sal*, pine, cane, rhododendron, bamboo, etc. and plants of great medicinal value. About 150 species of mammals, 550 species of birds, 650 species of butterflies, moths and amphibians, , 4500 species of flowering plants, 36 species of rhododendrons, 8 species of conifers, 450 species of trees, 480 species of orchids, 362 species of ferns and 175 species of edible wild plants are found in the forest of Sikkim.<sup>12</sup>

Sikkim is divided into four vegetation zones namely, Tropical, Sub-Tropical, Temperate and Alpine, and in these divisions large varieties of vegetation are found. The principal crops of Sikkim are rice, maize, wheat, barley, pulses, millet, buckwheat, and oilseeds such as mustard and soya bean.<sup>13</sup> The climate of Sikkim is suitable for growing a large number of high value crops such as cardamom, ginger and other horticultural crops. Tea plantation has also been taken up in small scale and the product is rated highly in the international tea market.<sup>14</sup> Sikkim is also suitable for the cultivation of fruits like apples, oranges, banana, papaya, peach, plum, pears and a number of wild fruits. Presently mandarin orange has become an important commercial fruit.

The total population of Sikkim as per 2011 census is 6, 07, 688 persons and the density of population is 86 persons per square kilometre.<sup>15</sup> According to the population

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11. *Ibid.*  
12. *Sikkim Study Series, op. cit.* p. 5  
13. J. R. Subba, *op. cit.* p. 65  
14. *Sikkim Study Series, op. cit.* p. 82  
15. *Census of India, Series 12, Provisional Population Totals, Sikkim, Paper 1 of 2011, Gangtok, 2011, p. 4*

census of 2001, the total population of Sikkim was 5, 40, 493 and the density of population was 76 persons per square kilometre. The decadal growth rate of population of Sikkim during 2001 – 2011 is 12.36%. The decadal growth of population during 1991- 2001 was 33.07% and the 2001 – 2011 censuses have shown a decrease in the percentage of decadal variation of population in the state.<sup>16</sup> In February 1891 a census was taken in Sikkim for the first time and the total population was 30,458 persons. The majority of the population consisted of the Nepalese and their number was 18,955, Lepcha population was 5,762 and the Bhutias were 4,894 in number. The census also gives a miscellaneous population which consisted of 521 persons.<sup>17</sup> The miscellaneous populations were, most probably, the Marwaris and the Biharis, who came down, following the British, in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and settled in Sikkim. They mostly engaged in trade and commerce and a section of them helped in the administration. The population of Sikkim, today, comprises mainly of the Nepalese, the Lepchas and the Bhutias, the plainsmen - the Marwaris and the Biharis. The Marwaris and the Biharis, settled mostly in the town areas, formed the business community and have dominated the trade and business activities in Sikkim. Some of these worked as teachers and government officials along with their traditional business activities. These people formed a link between the local people and the plains. They procure articles of daily use from Siliguri, a major town in plains of West Bengal and sell into the towns and *bazaars* of Sikkim. The local people of Sikkim, mostly the farmers, sell their products like cash crops such as - cardamom, ginger, oranges and other fruits, to these businessmen and these businessmen in turn sell these items at Siliguri.

### **The Nepalese:**

The Nepalese occupies about 70% of the total population of the State. The Nepalese are the people of Nepal origin but settled down in Sikkim before 1946 and

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16. *Ibid.* p. 28

17. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. 27

speak Nepali language. In 1961 *Maharaja* Tashi Namgyal passed the Sikkim Subject Regulation Act by which all the people living in Sikkim were granted the status of the subjects of the Sikkim *Maharaja*.<sup>18</sup> According to one of the terms of the Act people living in Sikkim for more than fifteen years before the commencement of the said Regulation were regarded as the Sikkim Subjects. The Nepalese of today's Sikkim are the descendants of those subjects who were living in Sikkim during the reign of the Namgyal rulers even before the Sikkim Subject Regulation was passed.

The Limboos and the Mangars of the Nepali communities were living in west Sikkim even before the consecration of Phuntsog Namgyal, the first ruler of Sikkim. During that period the Limboos were known as the Tsongs as they came from the province of Tsang of Tibet, and they maintained their profession as yak herders. In the early part of the Namgyal rule, too, a large number of people from Nepal on different occasions came to Sikkim and settled there. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries when the Gurkha rulers of Nepal conquered the western part of Sikkim a large numbers of the Nepali people occupied the area and settled down. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries another wave of the Nepalese settled down in Sikkim due to the encouragement of the British administrators.<sup>19</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the second Namgyal ruler, Tensung Namgyal, granted the title of *Subba* to the Limboo chiefs, as the head of a *subah* in Sikkim. From now onward the Limboos of Sikkim used the title of *Subba* after their names. The Mangars, however, later moved back to Nepal as they were defeated by Phuntsog Namgyal and again came to Sikkim to work as miners under the Newars. The Newars are the business class among the Nepalese who were granted the permission to dig mines in Sikkim by the ministers of Namgyal rulers in the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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18. *Notification No. 156/S-61*, dated 3rd July, 1961

19. Before 1889 most of the tracts of Sikkim were barren and covered with forests. After 1889 the British administrators encouraged a large number of people from Darjeeling, Nepal and Bhutan to settle down in Sikkim. The people who preferred to come and settle down in Sikkim were mostly the Nepalese.

The Nepalese are mostly agriculturists. In Sikkim they introduced the terraced system of cultivation and brought large tracts of hilly terrain to yield productive crops. The introduction of terraced cultivation had a great impact on the cultivation of rice, maize and other cash crop like cardamom and ginger in Sikkim. This brought a great change in life of the people of Sikkim by raising their income and brought good revenue to the state. Following them the Bhutias and the Lepchas also started to grow crops on the terraced fields.

### **The Bhutias:**

The second largest inhabitants of Sikkim are the Bhutias. Originally the Bhutias came from the province of Kham of Tibet to Sikkim, and practice Buddhist religion. During the reign of the Namgyal rulers more people from Tibet came to live under them. Though they prefer to call themselves as Bhutias, the name 'Bhutia' has been given to them by the Mangars. Tibet was known as *Bhot* in the language of the Mangar and the people of *Bhot* were the *Bhoteys* variantly '*Bhutia*'. After the exile the *Dalai Lama* in the middle of the twentieth century from Tibet, a large number of Tibetan from the different parts of Tibet came down and settled in Sikkim as refugees; they also claimed as the 'Bhutia' as they are from Tibet. The Bhutias of Sikkim do not consider them as Bhutia and argued that there are a number of differences between them. First and foremost of all is the allegiance showed by both of them. The Tibetans owe their allegiance to the *Dalai Lama* as their religious and temporal head whereas the Bhutias of Sikkim do not. The other difference between a Bhutia and a Tibetan is that Bhutias of Sikkim celebrate their festival of New Year as *Losoong* which falls in the month of December – January, and the Tibetans celebrate their festival of New Year as *Losar* in the month of March. The Bhutias are evenly distributed throughout the state of Sikkim however, in northern Sikkim they are the major inhabitants. They speak Bhutia, a dialect of Tibetan language, and use Tibetan script in writing.

**The Lepchas:**

The Lepchas are of Mongoloid descent and are predominantly Buddhists by religion, at present, many of them have converted into Christianity. The Lepchas, call themselves as '*Rong*', are said to be the oldest inhabitants of Sikkim. According to the tradition prevail among them that the ancestors of the Lepchas worshiper of spirits, both good as well bad, of mountains, rivers, big stones, big trees and so on. The places, where the spirits of these components were worshipped were called by them as '*Lapcho*'. From *Lapcho* the people came to be known as Lepchas or the people who worshipped at '*Lapcho*'. Another version says that in the ancient period the people from Sikkim used to go to Tibet to bring salt. As the route to Tibet was covered with dense forests and full of wild beasts, the people used to gather in a place, and, then went to Tibet in a large group. The place where they used to gather is known as '*Lapcho*', the act of waiting for others to gather, is known as '*Rong-Lyang*', and the people, who wait for others, are termed as the *Rongs* in Lepcha language.

The Lepcha population prefers to live in the hilly terrains and concentrated in the hilly terrain of Dzongu in north Sikkim. They live on agriculture of paddy; the production of cardamom and oranges are mostly under their control and are fond of hunting and fishing. Due to development of education in the state some of the Lepchas are moving out of their traditional practice and have started taking up different professions in both private and public sectors.

**Other Communities:**

Among other population of Sikkim a small section consists of the plainsmen. The Marwaris, constitute 50% of the plainsmen living in Sikkim, settled down in Sikkim from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the Biharis, 40% of the plainsmen, and have settled down in the second half of the last century as merchants and traders. Rest others are the people from other states of India who have settled down as

government employees, both under central and state, in the private sectors and as manual labourers. Many of the Marwaris established their business as bankers. Nowadays a number of people from the plains have migrated to Sikkim as migrant labourers due to growing hydro – power projects in Sikkim. Many of them are working as contractors in large constructions and in private firms.

The *lingua franca* of the state is Nepali. Due to the growth and development of education in Sikkim people have almost abandoned their traditional dresses except during festivals and occasions. The impact of Western culture could be seen in culture of Sikkim. The main religions are Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity and Islam is popular among the town dwellers.<sup>20</sup> The Nepalese celebrate *Durga Puja* as *Dasai* and *Laxmi Puja* as *Tihar*, *Maghe Sakranti*, *Ram Nawami* as *Chaita Dasai* and *Tij*. The Lepchas celebrate *Namsoong* as their New Year and the Bhutias celebrate *Loosong* as the New Year. One noticeable thing is that the people of Sikkim belonging to different communities celebrate all these festivals together.

By the Thirty Eight Amendment Act of the Indian Constitution 1975 Sikkim merged in India as the 22<sup>nd</sup> state of Indian union and received the Associate State status.<sup>21</sup> Prior to that Sikkim was under the Namgyals till 1861 when Sikkim became a protectorate of British India; then in 1947 it became protectorate of India. Gangtok is the capital of Sikkim and the district headquarter of the East District. There are four districts in Sikkim namely, East, West, North and South, with its headquarters at Gangtok, Gyalsing, Mangan and Namchi respectively. There are nine sub-divisions in Sikkim namely, Gangtok, Pakyong and Rongli in the East district, Gyalsing and Soreong in the West, Mangan and Chungthang in the North and Namchi and Ravongla in the South. By far the East District is the largest among the four districts in terms of population containing 46.29 per cent of the total population in the state. Sikkim is connected by National Highway No. 31 A with the Darjeeling District of West Bengal.

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20. *Census of India*, op. cit. p. 6

21. *The Gazette of India*, Extraordinary, Part II-Section I, dated May 16, 1975



The nearest railway station of Indian Railways is New Jalpaiguri and the nearest airport is Bagdogra both in West Bengal. The literacy rate as per 2011 census is 82.20 per cent and the sex ratio is 889 females per 1000 males.<sup>22</sup>

There are several versions regarding the toponym of Sikkim. According to one version prevailing among the Nepalese of Sikkim that Sikkim was connected with the Mahabharata, the Hindu epic. In the tussle over the throne of Hastinapura between the *Pandavas* and the *Kauravas* the *Pandavas* were overpowered by the *Kauravas* and the *Pandavas* were sent to exile for long fourteen years. After the completion of exile the *Kauravas* did not accept the claim of the *Pandavas* on the throne of Hastinapura. To win over them the *Pandavas* performed a number of *yajnas* and in this course Yudhisthira, the eldest *Pandava*, sent his brothers to all four directions, for performing *Rajasuya* sacrifice so that they could get back their rights over Hastinapura by defeating the *Kauravas* in war. Bhima, the second *Pandava* went to the east, third brother, Arjun went to the north, fourth Nakul to the west and the fifth brother, Sahadeva went to the south.<sup>23</sup> Ved Vyasa, the great teacher of the *Pandavas* suggested Arjun, to go to the Northern Himalayas called Indrapuri to learn the art of warfare from Lord Indra. At Indrapuri, Arjun met Lord Indra in the dress of a sage who suggested him to worship Shiva, another Hindu pantheon. While worshipping Shiva a wild boar appeared before Arjun. Arjun shot an arrow at the boar and at the same time another arrow from some unknown direction was shot at the boar killing it at the spot. Arjun was surprised at the moment and a man appeared on the scene. He was wearing a dress made up of skins of wild animals and had a bow in his hand. Arjun and the unknown man had a discussion over the killing of the wild boar. Both argued that they had shot the arrow killing the wild boar. Finally, Arjun realized that he met Lord Shiva in the form of *Kirateshwar* or

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22. *Ibid.*

23. Homnath Subba and Kedarnath Pandit Upadhaya, *Mahabharata, Sava Parvam, Sloka 5-6*, Varanasi, 1969, p. 102

the Lord of the *Kiratas* and was blessed by *Kirateshwar*.<sup>24</sup> The place where the above incident had taken place is believed to be situated, at present, at West Sikkim, where the present temple of *Kirateshwar* Shiva is situated. Due to these reasons the Nepalese believe that Sikkim was once a garden fort of Lord Indra or Indrakila which was described as Indrapuri in Mahabharata.

Guru Padmasambhava, a Buddhist teacher and a monk, well versed in Tibetan language, described Sikkim as *Bras-ma Jong*. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century A. D. on his way to Tibet to preach Buddhism he reached Sikkim. He found Sikkim a beautiful and peaceful place, covered by snow clad mountains on the north and forest on all sides. He considered the place was best for meditation and thus named it *Bras-ma Jong* which means a paradise.<sup>25</sup> The Lepchas who are the old inhabitants of Sikkim called it *Nye-Mael* or heaven. Sikkim is known as *Denzong* and variantly *Demozong* or *Demoshong* by the Bhutias which means “Valley of Rice”. The word Sikkim is said to be derived from two Limboo words – ‘*Su*’ which means new and ‘*Heem*’ which means a house. The second Namgyal ruler, Tensung Namgyal, is said to have built a new house for his Limboo queen and asked her to name it. She called it “*Suheem*” which in Limboo language meant “new house”. At first the Limboos called the country *Suheem* after their queen’s new house. Later the whole area where the queen’s new house was situated was known as *Suheem*. Later on, in course of time *Suheem* became *Sukhim* meaning a happy country (*sukh* means happy).<sup>26</sup> During the reign of the Namgyal rulers the people of Sikkim used to visit Nepal. The people of Sikkim who visited said that they were from Sukhim, the happy country as the Namgyal rulers made them happy by giving good

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24. *Ibid. Vana Parvam, Sloka 87-94*, p. 167. As per the *Mahabharata* the *Kiratas* were the people living in the Northern Himalayas and were mostly the tribes belonging to the Nepalese. They worshipped Lord Shiva, the Hindu Pantheon, in the form of *Kirateshwar*, the Lord of the *Kiratas*. In Sikkim the Nepalese mostly the Khambu Rais and the Limboos worship *Kirateshwar* and a few temples and statues at Legship and Namchi are dedicated to *Kirateshwar* Shiva.

25. Thutob Namgyal and Yeshey Dolma, *History of Sikkim*, Gangtok, (unpublished typescript), 1908, p. 5

26. George Kotturan, *The Himalayan Gateway: History and Culture of Sikkim*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 4

government and other facilities. Till today some old people of Nepal refer Sikkim as *Sukhim*. British called the country Sikhim and finally it became Sikkim.

The history of Sikkim before the seventeenth century is obscure as there is no written document of their own. According to the oral history prevailing among the people of Sikkim that during the thirteenth century a Tibetan chieftain named Guru Tashi along with his five sons headed towards south direction from Tibet to try his luck in there. During their wandering they came across the Sakya province of Tibet where a monastery was being built at that time. They saw the workers trying to erect pillars for the building. When the workers collectively failed to erect the pillars of the monastery in their proper position the eldest son of Guru Tashi raised the pillar single handedly and were placed in proper positions, after that he came to be known as *Khye Bumsa*.<sup>27</sup> The Sakya chief offered his daughter named Guruma in marriage to *Khye Bumsa* which he readily agreed. The family of Guru Tashi lived at Sakya for some time after marriage. Again, they moved further southwards. On their way they built a monastery at a place called Pashi and left one brother in charge of it and the rest went to Phari and built another monastery. Guru Tashi died at Phari and the three brothers of *Khye Bumsa* moved towards Bhutan while *Khye Bumsa* went to a place called Chumbi, a province in southern Tibet, to rule.

*Khye Bumsa* did not have any issue for a long time. The religious teachers and astrologers advised him to seek the blessings of the head of the Lepcha people of Sikkim. The Lepcha head, Thekong Tek, at that time, was living at a place near present Gangtok. *Khye Bumsa* met Thekong Tek with offerings and finally the latter blessed *Khye Bumsa* that he should become father of three sons. Finally, three sons were born and the eldest was named Kya bo Rab, the second Mipon Rab and the third Langmo Rab.<sup>28</sup> Out of the gratitude *Khye Bumsa* visited Thekong Tek a number of times

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27. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. 8

*Khye Bumsa* is a Tibetan word which means as powerful as ten thousand men.

28. *Ibid.* p. 9

thereafter which ultimately culminated in a treaty of brotherhood between the two chieftains at a place called Kabi Lungchok. This treaty brought about new ties of brotherhood between the Lepchas and the Bhutias.<sup>29</sup> After the death of *Khye Bumsa* his three sons went further south and settled around Gangtok. The second son Mipon Rab, married a lady from Sakya province of Tibet, had four sons, the youngest of them was named Guru Tashi after the name of his grandfather. Guru Tashi's eldest son was Gyelpa Apha. Gyalpa Apha had a son named Guru Tenzing, who was the father of Phuntsog Namgyal, the first consecrated ruler of Sikkim.<sup>30</sup>

With the consecration of Phuntsog Namgyal, Sikkim, for the first time, got a hereditary ruler. His successors continued to rule Sikkim till it became the protectorate of British in 1861 and Mr. J. C. White became the first British Political Officer in 1889 and Sikkim was brought under direct British Administration. The Namgyal rulers, tracing their origin in Tibet, has brought changes in the polity, society, economy and cultural conditions of Sikkim from 1640 till 1890. Being the ruling class, the Bhutias became superior and influential to the inhabitants of Sikkim. The Namgyal rulers introduced Buddhism as a state religion and made Sikkim a Buddhist state.

### **Review of Literature:**

Number of books have been written on Sikkim by various writers and scholars. They have taken up the study of various aspects of modern history of Sikkim, however, they have slightly overlooked the society and economy of Sikkim under the Namgyal rulers. Among some of them mention may be made of *History of Sikkim* by Thutob Namgyal and Yeshey Dolma, *Sikkim and Bhutan: Twenty One Years on the North-East Frontier (1887-1908)* by J. C. White, *Politics of Sikkim* by A. C. Sinha, *The Himalayan Gateway: History and Culture of Sikkim* by George Kotturan, *Aspect of Cultural*

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29. *Sikkim Coronation*, Gangtok, Sikkim Coronation Book Committee, 1965, p. 1

The two chiefs cut down their veins and the blood was poured into a pot thereby promising that the Bhutias and the Lepchas have become blood brothers from that day.

30. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. 10

*History of Sikkim: Studies in Coinage* by Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya. In these books attempts have been made by the writers to provide comprehensive history of Sikkim. However we do not find any comprehensive study on society and economy of Sikkim during the Namgyal period though many of them have written about socio-economic trends that took place in Sikkim in the later period. We do not find any single book that has been written with special reference to the society and economy of Sikkim before the beginning of the twentieth century. This work is a modest attempt to find out the socio-economic condition of Sikkim during the Namgyal period. The study aims to reveal the society and economy of Sikkim during the Namgyal period which was not studied before.

**Objectives:**

The work has been done with the following objectives:

- (i) To study the changes in society as a result of migration and state policy.
- (ii) To examine the changes in economy from pastoralism to agriculture, trade and commerce through change in technology.

**Methodology:**

The work is exploratory cum descriptive and analytical in nature. It is exploratory in the sense that unexplored events of history have been put to scrutiny to develop a comprehensive study. In the absence of sufficient primary source materials historical method of investigation, predominantly on the basis of hitherto unexplored primary source materials has been followed in the form of interviews in addition to the new scientific methodology to complete the work. Due to the dearth of primary sources, the study also depends on secondary sources both published and unpublished through field studies. Thus, it is an endeavour to review the available materials, literatures of Sikkim and fill the gap of inadequacy by exploring new areas. The field work carried out has been supplemented by consulting library and archival works, census and case

study. For further information studies have been carried out at National Library Kolkata, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Kolkata, National Archives New Delhi, Sikkim State Archives, Tribhuvan University Library, North Bengal University Library, K. K. Handique Library Gauhati University, ICHR Gauhati, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology Library, Gangtok and private archives and libraries. Interviews are being taken from the old house members of Sikkim. Apart from this other supportive documents like deeds and family papers are collected from such families. These documents are reviewed and used in the conventional and time tested historical methodology. Secondary sources include both official and non-official documents, published and unpublished materials. After collecting the source materials, cross examination of these sources were initiated to get a complete picture of the various historical aspects.

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## CHAPTER II

### SIKKIM UNDER THE NAMGYALS

The history of Sikkim starts from the installation of Phuntsog Namgyal, in the *Chu-ta* year, corresponding to year 1642 A.D., on the throne of Sikkim with the title of *Chogyal*<sup>1</sup> and *Dharmaraja*<sup>2</sup> or the king who rules with righteousness.<sup>3</sup> Being a Bhutia, by birth, Phuntsog Namgyal was consecrated as the ruler, by the three monks or the *lamas* of *Nyingmapa* sect of Buddhism namely, Lhatsun Chenpo, Kathog Kunto Zangpo and Ngadak Sempa at Yuksom, in west Sikkim.<sup>4</sup> Phuntsog Namgyal as the *Chogyal* had two-fold duties - spiritual and temporal. As a spiritual leader he was regarded a saint as well as propagator of Buddhist doctrine and faith, and at the same time, he was installed as head of the administration of Sikkim. By doing so, a connection was established between the *Dalai Lama*<sup>5</sup> of Tibet and Phuntsog Namgyal through Lhatsun Chenpo.<sup>6</sup> Thus the first ruler of Sikkim was installed on the throne on the Tibetan model.

The circumstances that led to the consecration of Phuntsog Namgyal can be traced back in the differences occurred among the religious leaders of Buddhist religion of Tibet. According to the tradition prevailed among the people of Sikkim as well as those of Tibet and as per the informations given by J. Ware Edgar, the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, during his visit to Tibet in 1873,<sup>7</sup> that Buddhism was introduced in Tibet in the middle of the seventh century A. D. The religion at that stage

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1. *Chogyal* is a Tibetan word meaning a king who rules with righteousness.
  2. *Dharmaraja* is a Sanskrit word meaning a king who is the protector of religion.
  3. Thutob Namgyal and Yeshey Dolma, *History of Sikkim*, (Unpublished typescript), Gangtok, 1908, p.19
  4. *Ibid.*
  5. The *Dalai Lama* is the priest-king of Tibet having both temporal and spiritual powers. As a spiritual head he is the head of the religion and as a temporal head he is the head of the administration.
  6. *Ibid.*
  7. Letter from J. Ware Edgar, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling to the Commissioner of Cooch Behar, dated 20th January 1874

was probably based on the teachings of the Buddha himself. In the middle of the eighth century one Guru Padmasambhava of Ujjain (India), better known as Guru Rimpoche by the Tibetan Buddhists, visited Tibet and introduced many Brahmanical elements, such as idol worship and ritualistic observances which were absent in the earlier form of Buddhism. The modifications also consisted of worshipping the Buddha in different forms. The Buddhist people of Tibet accepted these modifications introduced by Guru Rimpoche as their own and practised these modifications for more than two centuries even after his departure. However, in the eleventh century Attisa, a native of Bengal and his disciple Bromston (pronounced as Domton), protested against these modifications and advocated the earlier form of Buddhism prevailed in Tibet.<sup>8</sup> Attisa and his followers rejected the modifications of Guru Rimpoche except the teachings of the Buddha. This protest led to a great schism among the Tibetan Buddhism and contest between these two lasted for many years. Ultimately the people were divided into two groups, namely- the *Gelugpas* (the Reformers) and the *Nyingmapas* or *Brukpas*, (pronounced as *Dookpas*), and *Shammar*.<sup>9</sup> The followers of Attisa, came to be known as the *Gelugpas*, followed the teachings, spiritual importance of celibacy and purity of Buddha. The *Gelugpas* i.e. the reformists separated from the old sect and wore yellow head dress as their distinctive badge.<sup>10</sup> Eventually the *Gelugpa* doctrine spread throughout all the Tartar tribes of Central Asia and in Tibet itself during the first half of the fifteenth century. The teachers of the *Gelugpas* one named *Gyow Rimpochi* founded the succession of priest-kings known as the *Dalai Lama*.<sup>11</sup> The successors of the *Dalai Lama* used their influence over other tribes of Central Asia and Tibet. In 1640, the fifth *Dalai Lama* made himself master of Tibet and *Gelugpa* sect got the patronage as a principal sect of Buddhism in Tibet.<sup>12</sup> The followers of Guru Rimpoche, came to be

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8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, p. 36

10. *Ibid.*, p. 37 J. W. Edgar has described the head dress of these two sects as the Yellow Hat Sect and the Red Hat Sect for describing the *Gelugpas* and the *Nyingmapas* respectively.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*



known as the *Nyingmapas*, variantly *Brukpas* and *Shammar* or the non-reformists, wanted to continue with the modifications that were introduced in Tibet. They adopted as against the yellow hat of the *Gelugpas*, red hat cap as their badge. By the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century the *Nyingmapas* were degraded of their popularity and reduced to a submissive position among the people so much so that the sect was on the verge of extinct. Under the circumstances and the ascendancy of opposition of the *Gelugpas* some of the leaders of the *Nyingmapas* started moving towards southern regions viz. Bhutan, Sikkim and East Nepal. They brought with them the idea of the installation of the *Dalai Lama* by the *Gelugpas* as the priest-kings of Tibet, and, some of these *lamas* wanted to start a new system of kingship in Sikkim on the Tibetan model. In the early seventeenth centuries three Buddhist monks or the *lamas* viz. Lhatsun Chenpo<sup>13</sup>, Kathog Kunto Zangpo and Ngadak Sempa of *Nyingmapa* sect who emigrated to Sikkim<sup>14</sup> with the intention of installing a new priest-king there. They ultimately installed Phuntsog Namgyal as the first *Chogyal* or *Dharmaraja* of Sikkim in 1642. They were able to fulfill their mission of saving their sect from extinction and became the king-makers of Sikkim; they also manipulated and motivated Phuntsog Namgyal to protect and patronize the *Nyingmapa* sect. Phuntsog Namgyal as *Chogyal* took them under his protection and aided them to convert the Lepchas to the *Nyingmapa* form of Buddhist faith,<sup>15</sup> and also promised to respect the followers of Lhatsun Chenpo and his creed in Sikkim.<sup>16</sup> The whole process was a new concept in Sikkim and these *lamas* found an agent in Phuntsog Namgyal through whom a phase of propagation of new faith started in history of Sikkim by the way of conversion and proclamations.

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13. He was the founder of *Nyingmapa* order in Sikkim.

14. Sir Richard Temple, *Journals Kept in Hyderabad, Kashmir, Sikkim and Nepal, Vol. II*, New Delhi, 1977 (reprint), p. 167

15. *Ibid.*

16. Thutob Namgyal, *op.cit.*, p. 19

### **Phuntsog Namgyal (1642-1670):**

According to the Gazetteer of Sikkim by H. H. Risley Phuntsog Namgyal was related to a Tibetan chieftain named Guru Tashi of Minyang dynasty of Kham Minyak province of Tibet. In the thirteenth century A.D., Guru Tashi, along with his five sons headed towards south direction from Tibet to try his luck in there. During their wandering they came across the Sakya province of Tibet where a monastery was being built at that time. They saw the workers trying to erect pillars for the building. When the workers unitedly failed to erect the pillars of the monastery in their proper position the eldest son of Guru Tashi raised the pillar single handedly and were placed in proper positions, after that he came to be known as Khye Bumsa.<sup>17</sup> The Sakya chief offered his daughter named Guruma in marriage to Khye Bumsa which he readily agreed. The family of Guru Tashi lived at Sakya for some time after marriage. Again, they moved further southwards towards Chumbi and settled there for few years. On their way they built a monastery at a place called Pashi and left one brother in charge of it and the rest went to Phari and built another monastery. Guru Tashi died at Phari and the three brothers of Khye Bumsa moved towards Bhutan while Khye Bumsa went to a place called Chumbi, a province in southern Tibet.

Khye Bumsa did not have any issue for a long time. The religious teachers and astrologers advised him to seek the blessings of the head of the Lepcha people of Sikkim. The Lepcha head, Thekong Tek, at that time was living near Gangtok. Khye Bumsa met Thekong Tek with offerings and finally the latter blessed Khye Bumsa that he should become father of three sons. Finally, three sons were born and the eldest was named Kyabo Rab, the second Mipon Rab and the third Langmo Rab.<sup>18</sup> Out of the gratitude Khye Bumsa visited Thekong Tek a number of times thereafter which ultimately culminated in a treaty of brotherhood between the two chieftains at a place

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17. H. H. Risley, *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Calcutta, 1894, p. 8

*Khye Bumsa* is a Tibetan word which means as powerful as ten thousand men.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 9

called Kabi Lungchok. This treaty brought about new ties of brotherhood between the Lepchas and the Bhutias.<sup>19</sup> After the death of Khye Bumsa his three sons went further south and settled around modern Gangtok and at the same time some of their relatives also arrived in Sikkim from Hah in Tibet via Chumbi. The second son Mipon Rab married a lady of Sakya province of Tibet and had four sons, the youngest and the fourth was named Guru Tashi after the name of his grandfather. This Guru Tashi's son, Gyalpa Apha, had a son named Guru Tenzing, who was the father of Phuntsog Namgyal, the first consecrated ruler of Sikkim.<sup>20</sup>

In the middle of the seventeenth century, the three *lamas*, Lhatsun Chenpo, Kathog Kunto Zangpo and Ngadak Sempa came from different directions of Tibet and met at Norbugang in west Sikkim, which was called by the Lepchas as 'Yuksom' meaning the three superior ones or the three *lamas*. From this place they sent a group of men to find a person who had a name as Phuntsog. After several days the search party found Phuntsog at modern Gangtok. They presented him an invitation from the *lamas* who were at Yuksom and the invitation was accepted by Phuntsog. On that very evening, Phuntsog left Gangtok along with his followers and household establishments. After reaching Yuksom the three *lamas* performed the rites and ceremonies of the installation of a king and made him *Chogyal* of a new kingdom.

Phuntsog Namgyal was made *Chogyal* of the area bounded by Dibdala beyond Chumbi valley on north touching southwest frontier of Tibet, Tamar Chorten on the banks of Arun river on the west bordering Nepal, Titalia and the Mahanuddee river on the south bordering Bengal (India) and Tangla on the east touching Bhutan.<sup>21</sup> The head quarter this area was at Yuksom. Soon after he was consecrated as the *Chogyal* of Sikkim he divided his kingdom into twelve *dzongs* or districts and placed them under

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19. *Sikkim Coronation*, Gangtok, Sikkim Coronation Book Committee, 1965, p. 1

The two chiefs cut down their veins and the blood was poured into a pot thereby promising that the Bhutias and the Lepchas have become blood brothers from that day.

20. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 10

21. *Ibid.*

twelve *dzongpons* or governors from twelve chief clans of the Lepchas. He, in order to strengthen the central administration, set up a council of ministers consisted of twelve members called *kalons*.<sup>22</sup> The *kalons* were also selected from among the chief twelve clans of Bhutias of Sikkim and their duty was to assist him in central administration.<sup>23</sup> The appointment, promotion and punishment of the officers, was the *Dharmaraja's* prerogative. He, with the help of his mentors formulated certain rules and regulations of the administration. One of such rules was that the officers who did not serve the king and the state loyally would be degraded and place them at par with the common people, and, they (degraded officers) were required to render service to the state without any payment.<sup>24</sup>

However, Phuntsog Namgyal's *Chogyalship* was not accepted by the people of all the communities of Sikkim, the Limboos and the Magars of the western frontier did not like to be ruled by the Bhutias and challenged. The Lepchas being already disciples of Guru Tashi, the great grand father of Phuntsog, contributed summer *nazar* in shape of newly gathered crops, grains and fruits.<sup>25</sup> Soon after consecration as the *Chogyal* a Tsong (Limboo) chief named Nahang was defeated and accepted the suzerainty of Phuntsog Namgyal.<sup>26</sup> Another chief of Magar community named Shintu Sati Syan was also subdued with the help of Lama Lhatsun Chenpo.<sup>27</sup>

One of the important events of the reign of Phuntsog Namgyal was the tripartite agreement in 1663, generally known as the "*Lho-Men-Tsong Sum*"<sup>28</sup> by invoking local deities and various Buddhist deities (*Lho* referred to the Bhutias, *Men* to the Lepchas and *Tsong* to the Limboos, and *Sum* was the treaty or the agreement

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22. *Sikkim-A Concise Chronicle*, Gangtok, Royal Wedding Committee, Sikkim Darbar, 1963, p. 4

23. *Ibid.*

24. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.*, p. 20

25. *Ibid.*, p. 15

26. Iman Singh Chemjong, *Kirat Itihas*, Darjeeling, 1948, p. 10

27. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 10

28. Document preserved at Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok and translated into English from Tibetan by Dr. Ringu Tulku, Department of Tibetan, Sikkim Government College, Gangtok, on 31 August 1984. Appendix no. B (Part-I)

between three people). By this agreement the Lepchas and the Limboos accepted the Bhutia ruler as the head of the government. They promised to abide by the king, his *guru* and his sons and agreed to remain loyal to the ruler and would not revolt against him, if not the guardian deities would punish them. If they did not abide by this agreement they would be punished and if remained loyal they would be benefited physically and economically. Thus by bringing the three communities closer by showing fear and favour Phuntsog Namgyal laid the foundation of the state.

After these troubles were over Phuntsog Namgyal set his mind towards the construction of *gonpas* or the monasteries. He built *gonpa* at Dubde and Sangachelling under the direction of Lhatsun Chenpo. Another *gonpa* was built at Pemayangtse only for monks under the direction of Lhatsun Chenpo. This *gonpa* was completed during his reign his son Tensung Namgyal.<sup>29</sup> Later on this Pemayangtse monastery was considered as the royal monastery. Various other sites of worship were selected for construction of new monastery there. Under the guidance of Lhatsun Chenpo *stupas* were built and several *lamas* were employed there for performing religious rites of Buddhism; he also got a number of disciples and preached the doctrine of *Nyingmapa* Buddhism,<sup>30</sup> The *lama* spent rest of his life in Sikkim opening holy places and meditating in caves and secluded places.<sup>31</sup> Thus proselytization of Lepchas and Limboos began and Buddhism became the state religion under the patronage of the rulers of Namgyal dynasty. Soon after the installation of Phuntsog Namgyal was over the other two *lamas* namely, Kathog Kunto Zangpo and Ngadak Sampa might have left Sikkim as no information about them were found thereafter.

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29. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p.11

30. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.*, p.23

31. Saul Mullard, "The 'Tibetan' Formation of Sikkim: Religion, Politics and the Construction of a Coronation Myth", *Bulletin of Tibetology*, vol. 41, No. 2, Gangtok, 2005, p. 33

### **Tensung Namgyal (1670-1700):**

The next ruler of the Namgyal house, Tensung Namgyal ascended the throne in *Chag-khyi* corresponding to 1670 A. D., while his father, Phuntsog Namgyal and Lhatsun Chenpo were still alive.<sup>32</sup> The reason for installation of Tensung Namgyal on the throne of Sikkim when his father was still alive is unknown from any of the available sources. It is probable that Lhatsun Chenpo might have advised Phuntsog Namgyal to abdicate the throne in favour of his son. The other reason to abdicate the throne might be due to Phuntsog Namgyal's old age and wanted to witness the consecration ceremony of his son by the respected *lama*, Lhatsun Chenpo. It is also probable that Phuntsog Namgyal might have devoted his time in administration rather than his duty towards religion. So the *lama* asked Phuntsog Namgyal to abdicate the throne in favour of his son and perform the duty of a Buddhist saint.

After becoming the *Chogyal*, on the advice of Lhatsun Chenpo, Tensung Namgyal shifted his capital from Yuksam to Rabdentse a few miles eastward from the earlier capital and was situated on a hill top. The *lama* had advised him to erect his palace at Rabdentse to the east of which is situated the Tashiding hill, which was regarded as the most sacred pilgrimage of Buddhist faith. It is believed that the hill of Rabdentse was protected by the holy serpent spirit, *Gao-jogpo*, hence the hill was also considered esteemed. It is further believed that residing at the hill of Rabdentse the new ruler could witness the sunrise at Tashiding and that remind him of his duty of protector and propagator of Buddhist faith. The *lama* had advised him that Rabdentse was most suitable place for him for the erection of palace and monasteries leading further to the protection of faith.<sup>33</sup>

Tensung Namgyal brought out a change in administration. He created a new post of prime minister, *changzod*, who led the council of ministers; the first *changzod* was one Karwang, a Bhutia. He reduced the number of Lepcha *dzongpons* (governors)

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32. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.*, p.23

33. *Ibid.*

and Bhutia *kalons* (ministers) to eight clans from twelve. Later on the descendants of these Lepchas and Bhutias officials came to be known popularly as *kazis*, and, they maintained law and order in their respective jurisdictions.<sup>34</sup> An office was built just below the Rabdentse Palace for ministers to hold office for general discussions.<sup>35</sup>

The monastery of Sangachelling was completed and was open to all the subjects irrespective of their descent. With the direction of Lhatsun Chenpo a third monastic building was erected near Pemayangtse for Bhutias only.<sup>36</sup> The establishment of two types of monastries for Bhutias and the common subjects showed favouritism towards Bhutia subjects by the ruler.

Tensung Namgyal tried to consolidate the kingdom by forming matrimonial alliances with Bhutan, Tibet and the Limboos of Nepal. He married three queens firstly from Bhutan named Nambi Ongmo, who gave birth to a daughter named Pende Ongmo. He next married Lhacham Pedma Putik, the daughter of a Tibetan noble. She gave birth to a son, Chagdor Namgyal and the third was Yo Yo Hang, the daughter of a Limboo chief of Arun Valley on the west bordering Nepal.<sup>37</sup> With this queen seven Limboo maidens came who were married into the leading Sikkimese families.<sup>38</sup>

Tensung Namgyal also followed a policy to bring the Limboo chiefs under his control by way of granting titles and land grants. He granted the title of *subba* to one Limboo chief Suma Hang Thi with a plot of land, *subah*, for cultivating rice and grazing grounds for cattle.<sup>39</sup> The grant of titles and lands brought the Limboos closer to Tensung Namgyal. In the later part of his reign he appointed a Lepcha named Yuthing

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34. *Sikkim – A Consice Chronicle, op. cit.* p. 4

35. Thutob Namgyal, *op.cit.*, p. 24

36. H. H. Risley , *op. cit.*, p. 24

37. Thutob Namgyal , *op. cit.*, p. 24

38. *Ibid.*

39. A copy of the deed in Tibetan possessed by late Dharnidhar Dahal of Namthang, South Sikkim and translated into English by Dr. Ringu Tulku, Department of Tibetan, Sikkim Govt. College. It was a term that was in vogue in the Mughal period in India was also in vogue in Nepal. In Nepal a *Subba* was the head of a *Subah* and they were mostly Limboos. Limboos of Sikkim and Nepal use the title *Subba* after their names because of this connotation.

Arup as the head of the Lepchas and later on appointed him to the post of *changzod* after the death of Karwang.<sup>40</sup>

Tensung Namgyal nominated Chagdor Namgyal, the son born from the Tibetan queen, as his next successor. Pende Ongmo, daughter of Tensung Namgyal born out of Bhutanese queen, did not like the decision. She claimed the throne on the basis of being the eldest among all the children and of being born from the first queen of Tensung Namgyal. During the reign of Tensung Namgyal though she could not established her nomination but she continued her claim after the death of her father, this led to the misunderstanding among his children.

#### **Chagdor Namgyal (1700-1717):**

Chagdor Namgyal ascended the throne after the death of his father in the *Chag-Drug* corresponding to the year 1700 A. D. Pende Ongmo, the daughter of Tensung Namgyal through Bhutanese queen, dissatisfied with the decision, and she tried to usurp the throne by inviting the Bhutanese forces to attack Sikkim<sup>41</sup>. In support of Pende Ongmo, the *Deb Raja* of Bhutan sent a Bhutanese force under Tabar Nga-wang and Don Phenley to capture and assassinate young Chagdor Namgyal. The Bhutanese force reached up to the Rabdentse palace. At this a Lepcha named Yuthing Tishey took Chagdor Namgyal to Tibet and saved the life of the young *Chogyal* of Sikkim.<sup>42</sup>

In Tibet, Chagdor Namgyal took refuge under the 6<sup>th</sup> *Dalai Lama*, who happily gave refuge to him, and was treated generously by the Tibetan government. Chagdor Namgyal during that time showed his interest in secular studies and attended secular

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40. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.*, p. 24 Yuthing Arup was the son of Tensung Namgyal born out of his relation with the wife of Lepcha headman, Tassa-Aphong. According to the prevailing custom in Sikkim if an offspring was born due to such illicit relationship the child carried the title of the real husband of his or her mother. Such relation had legal status in Sikkim during Namgyal rule. In reality, Yuthing Arup was the son of Tensung Namgyal and was a Bhutia. As per the prevailing custom, Arup was a Lepcha and not a Bhutia.

41. *Sikkim-A Concise Chronicle, op. cit.*, p. 4

42. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.*, p. 25



schools at Lhasa and distinguished himself by his attainments in literature and astrology. Impressed by his scholarship, the *Dalai Lama* eventually appointed him as the chief astrologer of the *Dalai Lama's* court, and granted the estates like Padi Jong, Nagartse Jong, Tinke Jong and Gyalkharnangpa in southern Tibet, as tax free, to Chagdor Namgyal.<sup>43</sup> These estates were given to Chagdor Namgyal in full perpetuity to be enjoyed by him for his distinguished service to the *Dalai Lama*.<sup>44</sup> In addition to this the *Chogyals* of Sikkim got the right to stay freely at Chumbi valley in Tibet with tax free pasture land their maintenance. From this time onwards all the *Chogyals* along with their men and cattle stay at Chumbi during summer season.

During the absence of Chagdor Namgyal at the capital, Yuthing Arup took the charge of the Rabdentse palace, and he acted as the head both of Bhutia and Lepchas of Sikkim. During this period the ruler of Bhutan, *Deb Raja*, took the advantage of the situation and sent an army under Tabar Nga-wang and Don Phenley. The army occupied the palace, captured Arup, and sent to Bhutan to kill by the Bhutanese king.<sup>45</sup> However, when Arup was interviewed by the ruler, the *Raja* was so impressed with him that he granted life and was asked to stay in Bhutan as friend.<sup>46</sup> The Rabdentse palace was on occupation of the Bhutanese for almost eight years. During this period the Bhutanese forces moved further west and occupied Gangtok.<sup>47</sup>

In the meantime, when Chagdor Namgyal attained certain age the *Dalai Lama*, in order to send back Chagdor Namgyal to Sikkim, wrote a letter, apparently for friendship, to the *Deb Raja* of Bhutan asking him to protect Sikkim and abstain from any ulterior design. Eventually the Bhutanese forces retreated from Rabdentse to the east of Teesta bordering Bhutan. However, the eastern part of Sikkim including Damsang, Daling, Jongsa and Kalimpong and places around the Tagong La hill were

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43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*, The lands granted to Chagdor Namgyal in Tibet has been described as *jagir* by Thutob Namgyal and Yeshey Dolma in their work *History of Sikkim*.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 26

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*

under Bhutanese possession. There after Chagdor Namgyal was sent back to Sikkim with *Lama Jigmed Pao* as his advisor in administration. Before leaving Tibet the Namgyal promised to the *Dalai Lama* that he (Chagdor) would make a courtesy visit to any Tibetan official visited Sikkim. Reaching Sikkim, Chagdor appointed *Lama Jigmed Pao* as the head *lama*. The return of Chagdor Namgyal was not liked by few ministers, and, one of such minister, named Shal-ngo Achhok, sent an invitation to the Bhutan government to attack Sikkim. Bhutan utilized this opportunity and sent two forces under their leaders Magpon Agyal and Rupa to attack Sikkim. The Bhutanese army ultimately occupied the land between Teesta and Tagong La, they also killed Achhok was treacherously.<sup>48</sup>

Chagdor Namgyal brought a few reforms in administration by appointing new officers with different powers. He appointed Jigmed Pao as the Head *lama* of the palace as well as the Pemayangtse monastery. He appointed new officers called *kuchap* or king's agents who were responsible for demarcating pasture lands which were granted to ministers. He appointed a commander of the army from among the ministers called *chikyap*. He also made a rule by which a *kalon* or a *dzongpon* could become a *lama* and serve the ruler in spiritual business. The ruler took necessary advice from them and expected loyalty.<sup>49</sup> He observed the Buddhist rites and rituals more vigorously than his predecessors. He made religious offerings and formalities as mandatory before starting any new venture. He made a private room called *Nyi-Wod-Khil-Wa* at Rabdentse palace where secret meetings with the chief *lamas* were held. He made it the rule that in absence of king only the chief *lamas* could issue instructions and could hear petitions from the ministers thereby giving the *lamas* an upper hand in the administration of the state.

Chagdor Namgyal's long stay amongst the learned priests and *lamas* in Tibet had a great influence in him, which he used for the development of Buddhism and

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48. *Ibid.*, p. 27

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28

monastic discipline in Sikkim. He wrote a book entitled *Chayik* on monastic discipline for the smooth regulation of Buddhist monasteries and which became a constitution regarding the affairs of the monasteries and granted greater autonomy to the monastic body to look after the affairs of the monasteries.<sup>50</sup> According to the constitution the monasteries were to have a governing body called *dutchi* which was responsible for the care of properties of the monasteries. The constitution provided by the *Chayik* later on covered other monasteries also and later on made uniform to all monasteries in Sikkim.<sup>51</sup> He composed a religious dance, called *rong cham*, in honour of *Takpoo* or warlike demons and invented the alphabets for Lepcha language.<sup>52</sup> With the aim of increasing the number of Bhutia monks in Sikkim, he issued a proclamation that every second son of a Bhutia family be ordained a monk of Pemayangtse monastery.<sup>53</sup> He also made efforts to bring Limboo subjects under Buddhistic faith by building monastery for them at Pemayangtse under the guidance of *Lama Jigmed Pao*. He also reorganized the administration of the monastery and appointed 108 *lamas* and 108 officials known as *garnapas* to serve and assist him in secular business.

In 1712-13 a border dispute took place between Tibet and Bhutan, and Tibetan army thus dispatched under a general, camped at the boarder of Sikkim. Chagdor Namgyal, however, could not meet, as he promised earlier, the general as he was ill, and sent one of his *kuchap* to receive the Tibetan force. The *kuchap*, too, failed to meet the Tibetan Regent and this action of Chagdor Namgyal displeased the Tibetan ruler and withdrew the estates granted to him earlier and ultimately a Tibetan force was dispatched to attack Sikkim. This situation of danger was avoided by the tactful

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50. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 13

51. As informed by *Lama Dup Tshering*, Age- 72, *Dorje Lopen* (Head *Lama*) of Old Rumtek Monastery on 16 February, 2011

52. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 13

53. *Sikkim-A Concise Chronicle, op. cit.*, p. 5

negotiations by Samduk Lingpa, the *dzongpon* of Tsang on the promise to pay regular tribute to Tibet in kind, thus the danger of Tibetan attack was averted.<sup>54</sup>

Chagdor Namgyal's feud with his half-sister, Pende Ongmo continued throughout his reign. Pende Ongmo had taken shelter in Bhutan after Chagdor Namgyal's flight to Tibet. She had been negotiating with Bhutan to usurp the throne. By 1714, she had won friendship of some of the *lamas* of Sikkim and bribed the personal physician of the king. In 1715 Chagdor Namgyal went to take bath in the hot water spring at Ralang along with his personal physician.<sup>55</sup> The physician suggested that some blood should be let out from king's body and so he pierced the main artery of the king with his lancet and let the blood come out from his body. The physician left the spot immediately leaving the *Chogyal* bleeding and soon after this incident the king died on the spot.<sup>56</sup> Jigmed Pao, the head *lama* of Rabdentse palace was informed about the incident and he went to Ralang to see the king however, it was too late. Jigmed Pao acted immediately by sending attendants to avenge the death of Chagdor Namgyal. Pende Ongmo and her assistant were captured at Namchi and were strangled to death by stuffing silk scarf down her throat.<sup>57</sup>

### **Gyurmed Namgyal (1717-1733):**

Gyurmed Namgyal, son of Chagdor Namgyal, ascended the throne of Sikkim in *Me-Ja* corresponding to 1717 A.D., as the fourth ruler of Namgyal dynasty. Being a minor he was assisted by Jigmed Pao, who acted as his Regent. Taking advantage of the minor age of the *Chogyal* a Lepcha chief named Tashi Bidur rose in rebellion against

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54. Thutob Namgyal, *op.cit.*, p. 30

55. *Ibid.*, Sikkim has four main hot springs or lakes, three in south and one in the north district. The Namgyals and the common people of Sikkim used to take bath in these lakes with the belief that it cures diseases related to nerves and bones. Chagdor Namgyal was infected with disease related to nerves and weak bones during his flight to Tibet in his childhood while on his way through snow laden paths to Tibet. It was his usual routine to visit Ralang for hot water every year during winter. Taking hot water bath by the people of Sikkim during winter is practiced till date.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 32

57. *Ibid.*

the king with the help of a Magar chief. The rebellion was put down by Jigmed Pao and Tashi Bidur was killed at Badamtam.<sup>58</sup>

In 1718 Mongols invaded Tibet from the north at Mindoling and a large number of *Nyingmapa* sect among others were persecuted by the invading Mongols. A group of this sect left Tibet and took asylum in Sikkim. Gyurmed Namgyal married one daughter of a *lama* who had taken asylum in Sikkim. The king's marriage with the daughter of a refugee was however, regarded as un auspicious by the leading *lamas* of Sikkim.<sup>59</sup> This caused Gyurmed Namgyal to abandon his wife at this he went to Tibet lived there as a mendicant. During his absence in 1721 the Bhutanese forces attacked Sikkim and made major destruction at Rabdentse palace. They were, however, repulsed by Sikkimese forces under Shal-Ngo and Nyerchen and the boundary was fixed at Dhalla-Gang.<sup>60</sup> Taking advantage of the situation the Limboos also rose in rebellion. In 1722 Gyurmed Namgyal came back from Tibet and the Lepchas received him with great respect and now onwards he became more inclined towards them. He with the help of the Lepchas oppressed the rebellions and asked them to build fort walls at Rabdentse at their own cost. The Limboos rebels withdrew their allegiance to Gyurmed Namgyal, fled away towards west and finally organized a province there and they took alligiance to the Nepal ruler.<sup>61</sup> The province the Limboo were created came to be known as Limbuana.

At this development Gyurmed Namgyal realized the loss of Limboos to Sikkim and creation of Limbuana might invite major disaster to Sikkim in future. To rectify it, he hurriedly called some Limboo and Magar chief of Sikkim and issued a *sanad* granting them the *subahs* with the title of *subba*, or the head of the *subahs*.<sup>62</sup> He also

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58. *Sikkim-A Concise Chronicle, op. cit.*, p. 6

59. According to the sources it seems that Gyurmed Namgyal's marriage was arranged by some other person as he was only ten years old at that time.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 6

61. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 15

62. A copy of the deed possessed by late Dharnidhar Dahal and translated from Tibetan into English by Dr. Ringu Tulku, Department of Tibetan, Sikkim Govt. College. The Deed of Grant or the Charter has been described many times as *sanad* in the unpublished work *History of Sikkim*, by Thutob Namgyal and Yeshey Dolma.

gave the permission to all Limboos to beat their traditional drum, *chyabrun*, during their festivals. The Limboos were happy with this declaration and once again Gyurmed Namgyal was able to win the friendship and loyalty of Limboo chiefs of Sikkim.

The troubles with Bhutan had not come to an end even after his return from Tibet and frequent quarrel and skirmishes continued. Gyurmed Namgyal unable to settle by himself asked for Tibetan intervention and the Tibetan government deputed Tsang Depon Chang-lo-Chen to settle the issue. Tsang Depon Chang-lo-Chen called a meeting and invited the representatives of both the parties at the province of Tsang. The meeting could not bring any success, hence, in 1723, Depon Chang-lo summoned again a meeting with the representatives of Sikkim and Bhutan at Phari in Tibet. At this meeting they came to a conclusion and boundary between Sikkim and Bhutan was fixed at Rongchu.<sup>63</sup>

Gyurmed Namgyal had no interest in administration and so, again went to Tibet on pilgrimage in disguise as a mendicant. While he was in Tibet, Gyurmed Namgyal met Wangchuk Dorje, the 9<sup>th</sup> *Karmapa Lama* and revealed the truth of his mendicancy. Wangchuk Dorje asked him to return to his kingdom and advised him to rule; accordingly Gyurmed Namgyal returned to Sikkim after pilgrimage to holy places in Tibet.<sup>64</sup> After his return from Tibet in early 1733, he built a monastery at Ralang for the *Karma Kagyupa* sect of Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>65</sup>

The long absence of Gyurmed Namgyal from Sikkim had increased troubles among his ministers. By the end of 1733 he fell seriously ill and told his ministers about his connection with a young nun of Sangacholling monastery. She was the daughter of Nyer Gahden, a monk and was living at Sangacholling looking after the herds of the monastery. Soon after, Gyurmed Namgyal died, and the ministers went out in search of

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63. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.*, p. 37

64. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 15

65. The *Karma Kagyupa* sect of Buddhism was founded by Dusum Khyenpa in Tibet in the 12th century A. D. the *Karma Kagyupa* form of Tibetan Buddhism believes in the incarnation of Buddhist saints known as the *Karmapas*. The *Karmapa* wears black head dress or hat as a mark of distinction.

the nun. They found the nun with her son. The ministers had named the child as Namgyal Phuntsog and brought him to the palace.<sup>66</sup>

### **Namgyal Phuntsog (1733-1780):**

Namgyal Phuntsog was declared as the next Namgyal ruler after Gyurmed Namgyal. Soon, however, confusion arose among ministers over the legitimacy of the heir to Sikkimese throne. *Kalons* divided into two groups – one group supported Namgyal Phuntsog under *changzod* Karwang and the other opposed him under *changzod* Tamding, the Royal Treasurer.<sup>67</sup> The differences gradually increased so much that ultimately they fought each other and continued for few years. Taking advantage of this situation Tamding established himself as the king of Sikkim by assuming a new title of *Gyalpo* Tamding from 1738-1741.<sup>68</sup> In such a period of internal strife *changzod* Karwang took the young king to Sinchel near Darjeeling and fought wars from there with *Gyalpo* Tamding with the help of Lepchas, Limboos and Magars.

In 1741, Tamding lost the war against the combined forces of *changzod* Karwang and fled to Tibet. He made representations to Tibetan government requesting the *Dalai Lama* to look into the affairs of Sikkim and to interfere regarding the legitimacy of the king of Sikkim.<sup>69</sup> At this the Tibetan government got an opportunity to look into the matters of Sikkim and deputed one Rapden Sharpa to act as a Regent of the minor Namgyal Phuntsog. He was also ordered to make detailed enquiry and submit its report as soon as possible. Rapden Sharpa reigned in the name of Namgyal Phuntsog for five years from 1741 to 1746.<sup>70</sup>

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66. H. H. Risley , *op. cit.*, p. 15

67. *Sikkim – A Concise Chronicle*, *op. cit.* p. 6  
*Gyalpo* is a Tibetan word which means a king.

68. Thutob Namgyal , *op. cit.* p. 39

69. *Ibid.*

70. H. H. Risley , *op. cit.*, p. 16

Rapden Sharpa built forts at Karmi and Mangsher and converted these places into new *dzongs*, and he made Mangsher as his headquarter.<sup>71</sup> However, he was neither in mood to solve the affairs of Sikkim nor bothered to bring the young *Chogyal* back to the palace from Sinchel. Instead he brought out a series of administrative reforms on Tibetan model by convening the Assembly of Sikkimese officers at Mangsher in the presence of the *lamas*, village headmen and the common people.<sup>72</sup> In this Assembly, headmen were given the title of *tumyangs* or the superintendents of cultivation. The Assembly led to the fixation of new system of revenue in Sikkim namely – *bah pa* – a tax on land, *zo lung* - a tax on forest produce, and *tshong- khyed* - a custom or income tax which were to be paid in kind.<sup>73</sup> In this connection another system of taxation was introduced called *kang* which was a rent on land that to be paid by the tenant to the landlord or by a landlord to the government which was to be paid in butter.<sup>74</sup> Rapden Sharpa thus introduced a new system of taxation in Sikkim in the 1740s and made a way for collection of taxes from the peasants of Sikkim and tried to bring in a stable income to the ruler in future.

In 1746, an incident took place which led to the unpopularity of Rapden Sharpa. A Magar chief of western border of Sikkim died. According to the norms prevailed the *Chogyal* or his regent had to recognise the new chief and to send representatives for coronation. Rapden Sharpa refused to accept the chieftainship of the new chief. This attitude of Rapden Sharpa enraged the new Magar chief, who, then sought the patronage of *Deb Raja* of Bhutan. The *Deb Raja* deputed his representatives to attend the consecration ceremony, thus the friendship between the Magar chief and the *Deb Raja* was established.<sup>75</sup> In 1747 they jointly attacked Sikkim and they were defeated by Rapden Sharpa with Tibetan armies. After this battle the relations between Magars and

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71. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.*, p. 40

72. *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal and *Maharani* Yeshey Dolma have described the village headmen as *mondals* and peasants as *rai-yats* in their work History of Sikkim.

73. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 16

74. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet*, Delhi, 1992 (reprint), p. 304

75. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.*, p. 41



Sikkim went off for ever. The Mangars from now onwards became subordinate to the Bhutan ruler.

In 1747 *changzod* Karwang tried to persuade Rapden Sharpa to install Namgyal Phuntsog on the throne. For the purpose he along with *Lama* Khangchen Ralpe Dorje, a Tibetan from Sher, went to Karmi fort where at that time Rapden Sharpa was residing. *Lama* Ralpe was able to influence Rapden Sharpa to agree to bring the young *Chogyal* from Sinchel and install him at the capital. An agreement was drawn up and promulgated at Mangsher known as Mangsher Duma, and by the terms of the agreement Rapden Sharpa formally placed Namgyal Phuntsog on the throne at Rabdentse.<sup>76</sup> After settling this issue Rapden Sharpa returned to Tibet.

In 1752 another threat came from the Limboos who again rose in rebellion against the ruler. However, it was also put down by *changzod* Karwang and their loyalty was won back by the grants of presents to the Limboo chiefs according to their ranks and position.<sup>77</sup> After this trouble was over Namgyal Phuntsog was more inclined towards the Lepchas. He created a new post of *nagzen* or advisor and appointed one Lepcha, named Patuk on this post whose duty was to help the ruler in administration and to advise him in special cases.<sup>78</sup> He was assisted by the Lepcha minister *changzod* Karwang in administration and continued with the administrative reforms brought out by Rapden Sharpa. Namgyal Phuntsog died in 1780 and was succeeded by his son Tenzing Namgyal in the same year.

### **Tenzing Namgyal (1780-1793):**

Tenzing Namgyal ascended the throne in the *Chag-Ji* corresponding to 1780 A.D. At the time of his accession he was surrounded by two ambitious rulers in the east

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76. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 16

77. *Ibid*

78. Document translated from Tibetan by Dr. Ringu Tulku, Department of Tibetan, Sikkim Govt. College, Gangtok

and the west namely, Deb Zhidar, the *Deb Raja* of Bhutan and the other was Prithvinarayan Shah in Nepal respectively.<sup>79</sup> In 1780 Bhutan attacked Sikkim and took possession of Sikkim up to the eastern bank of Teesta River and Samdong, the Bhutanese forces were repelled the enemy from Sikkim and peace was brought about by ceding Rhenock to Sikkim, which earlier belonged to Bhutan.<sup>80</sup>

Gurkhas of Nepal raided Sikkim in 1785-86 and the attack was again repelled by *changzod* Chogthup, popularly known as Satrajeet, and the Gurkha forces were chased up to the banks of Arun River.<sup>81</sup> But soon as the Sikkimese forces retreated due to summer heat in the plains, the Gurkha forces took the advantage and advanced up to Tob-Jong. *Raja* Pratap Singh Rai, the successor of Prithvinarayan Shah, sent four Brahmins in 1786 to settle boundary question with Sikkim at Bijapur, but the representatives were killed by the forces of Satrajeet.<sup>82</sup> The Gurkha ruler insisted on the indemnities for the slaughter. The matter could not be settled by Tenzing Namgyal, he requested the interference of the Tibetan government. Sikkim's treasury was empty due to war with Nepal and the Tibetan government saved Sikkim by paying four thousand rupees to the Gurkhas as indemnity for the slaughter of four Brahmins. The Gurkhas promised to refrain from any kind of future raids and the boundary between Sikkim and Nepal was fixed to the east of Shangdi-Jong. It was also agreed that any breach to this agreement was to be fined with hundred *dharnis* of gold.<sup>83</sup> Once again Sikkim was saved from the ambitious projects of Prithvinarayan Shah and his successors.

The war with Nepal led Tenzing Namgyal to modify his armed forces. He made it mandatory that during emergency the *lamas* and common people were to form an

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79. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Prithvinarayan Shah of Nepal had united all the chiefs under the banner of one religion (Hindu), one ruler and one nation - Nepal.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 45

81. *Satrajeet* was a Lepcha and he was named so by the Gurkhas as he defeated the Gurkhas on seventeen occasions.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 46

83. *Ibid.*, p. 46

A *dharni* is equivalent to two and a half kilograms. In usual practice a *ser* is more or less equal to one kilogram. Therefore the breach fee to be paid was two hundred and fifty *ser*s of gold.

armed force and in 1788, Tenzing Namgyal formed a regular force which consisted of Bhutias, Lepchas, Limboos, Jimdars (Rai) and Magars. Two Limboos namely, Sho-na Hang and Yong-Yong Hang, were appointed as Commanders for the first time.<sup>84</sup> Tenzing Namgyal also appointed a chief cook in his palace with the title of *sopon* and was made a close associate of the king along with *changzod* and the head *lama*. While considering their services the king could appoint the *sopon* to the post of chief administrator or *dewan*.<sup>85</sup> From this time onwards the title of *changzod* and *dewan* was used jointly for prime minister of Sikkim *Chogyals*.

In 1788 the Gurkhas again attacked Sikkim and occupied Illam and Tob-Jong and advanced as far as Chakung in west Sikkim. In 1789 Sikkim dispatched a force under joint command of Bhutia Commander Tagkarpa Deba Tsang Rinzing and Satrajeet. Tagkarpa Deba Tsang Rinzing repelled the Gurkha forces at Namchi and Satrajeet was able to repel Gurkhas from Rangeet River and drove them up to Morung. In the meantime, the Bhutia Commander, Tagkarpa Deba Tsang Rinzing died and Bhutia force under him retreated.<sup>86</sup> The death of the Bhutia commander was a great loss to Sikkim. Taking the advantage of the retreat of Sikkimese force, Purna Alley and Jahar Sen the commanders of Gurkha army made a sudden attack in the western borders of Sikkim and advanced to Rabdentse palace. Another force under Damodar Pandey occupied lower Teesta.<sup>87</sup> The Gurkha raid of 1790 compelled Tenzing Namgyal to flee to Tibet along his queen and his son, Tsugphud Namgyal.<sup>88</sup> Damodar Pandey continued his attack and occupied most of the places in west Sikkim. He also dispatched forces to take possessions of monasteries and took possessions of the properties of monasteries and administration in their hands.<sup>89</sup> At this *Chogyal* Tenzing Namgyal and his attendants reached to Am-Mochu in Tibet and took refuge under Tibetan government. During the

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84. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48

85. *Ibid.*, p. 51

86. *Ibid.*, p.48

87. *Sikkim – A Concise Chronicle, op. cit.*, p. 8

88. *Ibid.*

89. Thutob Namgyal , *op. cit.*, p. 48

refuge to Tibet the *Deb Raja* of Bhutan, Deba Seshing sent twenty four thousand *pathis* of rice, tea and twelve hundred silver coins to Tibetan government for helping the Sikkimese king.<sup>90</sup> The *Deb Raja* of Bhutan showed his generosity to help Tenzing Namgyal in this period of distress. At this stage of Gurkha occupation of Sikkim the Tibetan government deputed the *dzongpon* of Phari, Phadang Gawa, to Sikkim and the *Deb Raja* of Bhutan sent Tinlay Dugyal and Phurpa to help Sikkim. They convened a meeting with *lamas* and laymen at Song Bolgyong in 1791 and summoned Jahar Sen from Rabdentse palace. The Gurkha leader did not succumb to their demands and further planned to attack Tibet.

In 1791-92 the Gurkha force renewed the attack on Tibetan force and advanced as far as Tashi Lhunpo in Tibet, however, they were driven back to Morung by Tibetans.<sup>91</sup> A negotiation was held between the Chinese, Tibetan and the Gurkhas in Tibet. The Chinese representative asked the Gurkhas to return the earlier portions back to Sikkim which they had occupied. At this time Sikkim failed to send any representatives as the king himself was in exile, so the Gurkha representatives told that Sikkim boundary was up to the river Teesta and the areas to the west of Teesta were of Nepal.<sup>92</sup> The ruler of Sikkim being a helpless refugee in Tibet the Gurkhas took possession of major portion of Sikkim in the western borders.

The war between the Gurkhas and the Tibet in 1791-92 had some repercussions in Sikkim. While Gurkhas were engaged in Tibet the Sikkimese forces under Satrajeet and Zomgyal expelled the Gurkhas from Rabdentse. When the war between Tibet and Nepal concluded Tenzing Namgyal went to Lhasa to seek help of Tibet for driving out the Gurkhas from Sikkim. In the meantime, a letter was sent to Lhasa by Satrajeet that the Sikkimese forces had recovered some portion of Sikkim from Gurkhas. The

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90. *Ibid. Pathi*, a unit of measurement have been described in Chapter IV.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 51

92. *Ibid.*

Tibetans, in consequence, were incensed and ceased preparations.<sup>93</sup> Tenzing Namgyal died in Lhasa in 1793 and his son Tsugphud Namgyal was in Tibet. The Tibetan government sent Tsugphud Namgyal to Sikkim with some presents to succeed as a new ruler of Namgyal dynasty.

### **Tsugphud Namgyal (1793-1863):**

Tsugphud Namgyal ascended the throne of Sikkim as the seventh *Chogyal* of Sikkim in *Chu-Lang* corresponding to 1793 A. D. During this time the Gurkhas further pushed in Sikkim from the west and occupied remaining tracts of land lying to the west of Teesta. At this Tsugphud asked for Tibetan help which was however refused. Tibetans too pushed their boundary up to the Chola Jelep range thereby reducing the boundary of Sikkim from the north.<sup>94</sup> The Gurkhas started moving further eastwards, occupied Nagri and a large number of their population settled there who paid rent to Nepal for some years. Tsugphud Namgyal was helpless at the loss of his tracts in the west and the north but could not do anything. The fear of Gurkha raids and to bring himself closer to Tibet he shifted his capital to Tumlong from Rabdentse in 1814.

At this stage the British, who were involved in a war with Nepal over the issue of Gurkha encroachment in the Terai region of Gorakhpur, were watching the developments on their northern frontiers, and were keen to keep peace with the northern neighbours.<sup>95</sup> The British were apprehensive of Chinese and Bhutanese involvement in the war and found that Sikkim was the real ally. In 1815 they deputed Captain Barre Latter to contact the king of Sikkim who eagerly agreed to help British against the Gurkhas.<sup>96</sup> Tsugphud Namgyal in turn was assured by British Government regarding

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93. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 18

94. *Ibid.*, p. 19

95. *Ibid.*, p. iii

96. *Papers Relating to Nepal War*, London, 1824, p. 268

possible assistance to expel the Gurkhas.<sup>97</sup> He extended all possible support to the British which resulted in the defeat of Nepal.

The Anglo-Nepalese war came to end by signing the Treaty of Saguali in 1815. Nepal lost the war with British and the hilly tracts situated to the east of Mechi River and to the west of the Teesta River formerly occupied by Nepal were ceded to the British. To reward Sikkim for the help they rendered to British during the war they concluded a separate treaty with Sikkim in 1817 at Titalia. By the Treaty of Titlia the tracts lying to the east of Mechi River and to the west of Teesta were ceded with full sovereignty to the Sikkim ruler or *Sikkimputtee Maharaja* by the British.<sup>98</sup> Sikkim was to abstain from any kind of hostility with Gurkhas or any other state and was to help British in their expedition to the hills. British arbitration was made mandatory in relation to disputes between Sikkim and neighbouring states. Dacoits and offenders were to be handed over to British and no protection was to be given to the defaulters. Merchants and traders were to be protected and Sikkim was not allowed to levy duties on the transit of merchandise.<sup>99</sup>

The treaty was beneficial to the interest of Sikkim however, Sikkim lost her independent status. Sikkim was made “dependant” to British and the duty of Sikkim was to look after the welfare of British and their subjects. Sikkim was not allowed to levy any new tax and custom duties and she was dependent to British. British on the other hand got the right of trade up to Tibetan borders, to get fugitives and dacoits arrested and handed over to the British authorities.

The Treaty was of great advantage to the British. The British objective to prevent Nepal from getting assistance from any quarter was fulfilled by isolating both the states. British feared that if Nepal got aid from China then they would not be in a position to safeguard their northern frontiers. A situation was needed to open relations

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97. C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries Vol. II*. Calcutta, 1909, p. 311

98. *Ibid.*, p. 322

99. Appendix no. B (Part-III)

with Sikkim and fulfill the British objectives of safeguarding their northern frontiers and this opportunity was provided by the Treaty of 1817.<sup>100</sup> Two months later after the signing of Treaty of Titalia the East India Company granted a *sunnud* by which an additional territory of Morung, *i.e.*, the lands lying between Mechi and Mahanadi Rivers were granted to Sikkim.<sup>101</sup> However, a condition was made that the *Sikkimputtee Maharaja* should obey the orders of the Governor General in Council. The *sunnud* also mentioned Sikkim as a feudatory of the British.<sup>102</sup>

The growth of British interests over Sikkim and the developments of friendship between them were looked upon by Tibet with suspicion. Immediately after the conclusion of the Treaty of Titalia Tibetan army was stationed at Phari and Gyantse to watch the movements of British and subsequently the information was given to Tsugphud Namgyal.<sup>103</sup> In 1822 After the Tibetan troops moved upto Sikkim borders. In 1844 when Tsugphud Namgyal went to Chumbi for a retreat the Tibetan Government at Lhasa asked him to pay for pasturage and hire for transport. The Namgyal rulers were exempted from any payment for pasturage during their stay at Chumbi. The sudden change or demand was due to growing friendship between Sikkim and British. These developments were also responsible for the growth of relations between Sikkim and the British. After his return from Tibet Tsugphud Namgyal repeatedly requested Captain Llyod, who was then Governor General's Agent for North Eastern Frontiers and British Resident in Nepal, to settle the western boundaries of Sikkim up to Arun River. However, at this moment Captain Lloyd took no interest in settling the boundary question.

In 1826, a Lepcha *changzod* named Bolod was murdered by the orders of Tsugphud Namgyal. Bolod's cousin Eklathup *alias* Dathup, fearing similar fate, fled

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100. *Papers Relating to Nepal War*, London, 1824, p. 268

101. Melville Memo, no. 4

102. *Sunnud granted to Sikkimputtee Maharaja*, Appendix no. B (Part-III)

103. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.*, p.54

and took refuge in Nepal with some of his Lepcha followers.<sup>104</sup> Dathup met the son of Bolod named Kungha who was the *dzongpon* of Kotah near Illam.<sup>105</sup> The Kotapas asked the help of Nepal Government to raid Sikkim and Nepal readily helped them as an opportunity to take revenge on Sikkim and helped them to rebel against Tsugphud Namgyal with men and arms. They penetrated Sikkim by crossing Rangit River reached the capital of Sikkim at Tumlong. Though they were driven out however, they kept on raiding Sikkim and troubled for a long time.<sup>106</sup> Tsugphud asked the Tibetan and Chinese Resident in Tibet to negotiate with Nepal to remove the Kotapa brothers from Illam and prevent them from frequent raids. After repeated requests the Tibetan and Chinese Resident agreed to call Dathup to the court of Tsugphud for reconciliation. Dathup demanded the post of *changzod* and the Tsugphud was reluctant to grant him that post due to the opposition from his ministers. Dathup was sent back to Illam without any punishment. As no agreements were made, Dathup resumed his raids in Sikkim.<sup>107</sup> The failure to bring about reconciliation between Tsugphud Namgyal and the Kotapa leader brought further troubles to Sikkim and British did not take any interest as they thought it to be an internal matter of no importance.

Further in 1827 a dispute occurred between Sikkim and Nepal regarding a hill called Ontoo, on the eastern side of the Mechi River. Tsugphud Namgyal asked the Governor General, Lord William Bentinck, to arbitrate into the dispute as per the provisions of the Treaty of Titalia. In response the Governor General deputed Captain G.W. Lloyd and G.W. Grant to investigate into the matter. During the course of their investigation they came across Dorje Liang later Darjeeling, a small hill village in Sikkim and they were attracted by the position of this place and found it to be suitable for a sanatorium and a military station. The climate of Darjeeling resembled with that of England and they brought to the notice of the Governor General, who, then deputed

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104. C. U. Aitchison , *op. cit.* p., 312

105. The family and brothers of Bolod were known as *kotapas*.

106. Thutob Namgyal , *op. cit.*, p. 59

107. *Ibid.*, p. 60



Captain Herbert, a surveyor, to examine the place with Lloyd and Grant. They suggested that the place to be suitable both for a sanatorium and a considerable military station.<sup>108</sup>

The Ontoo question was decided in favour of Nepal and the hill was granted to Nepal. British were now more interested towards the transfer of Darjeeling to them for a sanatorium. The matters were discussed in the Council and Lord William Bentinck proposed to open negotiations with Tsugphud Namgyal for the transfer of Darjeeling to the East India Company. Charles Metcalfe, a member of the Council, opposed the proposal on the ground that it would rouse suspicion of the king of Sikkim and jealousy of Nepal. Charles Metcalfe feared that Nepal might consider it to be step to invade her and the matter was again dropped for a time being. An opportunity came to British in 1834-35, when again the Kotapas under their leader Dathup raided Sikkim. Colonel Lloyd, the Governor General's Agent for the North-Eastern Frontier and the British Resident in Nepal was deputed to enquire into the causes of disturbance. Bentinck wanted to exploit this situation to acquire Darjeeling and he again proposed to his Council that Lloyd should negotiate with Tsugphud Namgyal for the grant of Darjeeling in exchange for an equivalent, either in land or money.<sup>109</sup>

On 18 February 1835, Lloyd reached Sikkim and paid a courtesy visit to Tsugphud at Tumlong. Lloyd mentioned to Tsugphud about the desires of the Governor General to have Darjeeling in exchange for lands in the plains or for a sum of money.<sup>110</sup> He agreed to cede Darjeeling in exchange of Debgong, a site in plains. However, it was beyond his authority and not possible for Lloyd to grant any lands in exchange, he pressed him for rent or compensation. Finally, he agreed to cede Darjeeling to the British without a condition,<sup>111</sup> and promised to send the Deed of Grant to Lloyd through

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108. A. J. Dash , *Bengal District Gazetteers*, Darjeeling (Alipore), 1947, p. 37

109. Bentinck's Minute of 8 January 1835, F. P. P., p. 1

110. Lloyd's Letter to Government of India, 9 March, 1835, F. P. P., p. 100

111. C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.*, p. 312

his *vakeel* or Sikkim *Maharaja's* Agent at Darjeeling.<sup>112</sup> Subsequently the Deed was handed over to Lloyd at Darjeeling by Cheeba *Lama*, the *vakeel*. The Deed of Darjeeling Grant said that Darjeeling was given to the British out of *Maharaja's* friendship with them.<sup>113</sup> In 1841 the British Government granted an allowance of three thousand rupees a year to Tsugphud as compensation for the grant of Darjeeling, and in 1846 the sum was increased to six thousand rupees a year.<sup>114</sup>

The settlement of population at Darjeeling advanced rapidly due to tea plantation taken up by the British. The British encouraged the Nepalese and the people from Sikkim and the plains to settle down in Darjeeling. Schools were opened up and Darjeeling began to flourish as a modern market place. The increased importance of Darjeeling was a source of early and constant jealousy and annoyance to the *dewan* of Sikkim.<sup>115</sup> Namgyal, the *dewan* of Sikkim was the monopolist of all trade in Sikkim. This jealousy was shared in by the *lamas* and other principal officers of Sikkim, who lost their rights over slaves settling as British subjects in Darjeeling.<sup>116</sup> Slaves escaped to Darjeeling in search of better avenues and to save themselves from the atrocities of the officials and *lamas* of Sikkim. The *dewan* occasionally threatened those subjects who had settled in Darjeeling by declaring them as escaped slaves and discouraged their settlement. Some of them were kidnapped and again sold into slavery by his men. When the British authorities asked them to capture and surrender the criminals, the *dewan* and the *lamas* denied. Earlier, there was an arrangement between Sikkim and Bhutan regarding mutual exchange of slaves. Tsugphud Namgyal and his *Dewan* constantly importuned Dr. Campbell, the Superintendent of Darjeeling, to follow a similar course

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112. Tsugphud Namgyal had appointed Agents of the *Maharaja* of Sikkim as per Article 7 of the Treaty of Titalia. These Agents were known as *vakeel* who were to act as mediators and interpreters between the British officers and the *Maharaja* of Sikkim.

113. Appendix no. B (Part-IV)

114. C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.*, p. 312

115. Now onwards the prime minister of Sikkim came to be known as the *dewan*. It is probable that *dewan* was the corrupt form of *diwan* widely used in India at that time.

116. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 20

The slaves of Sikkim had escaped to Darjeeling to save themselves from the harsh treatment of their masters. They settled down there freely due to the British encouragement and became freemen.

which the latter refused.<sup>117</sup> This was the beginning of strained relations between British and Sikkim.

In 1849, Dr. Campbell and Dr. Hooker were seized and made prisoners by *dewan* Namgay. They had visited Sikkim for a botanical survey with the permission of British Government and the ruler of Sikkim. *Dewan* Namgay detained them in order to force the demands of giving up of escaped slaves back to Sikkim from Darjeeling.<sup>118</sup> Tsugphud Namgyal ordered the release of the detained officers when intimation reached him from the Governor General. However, the British Government was very unhappy on the detention of their officers. In February, 1850 a British force was dispatched to Sikkim and the annual grant of six thousand rupees on account of the Darjeeling rent was also stopped. As a punishment, Morung and the hill tract of Darjeeling to the west of River Teesta were confiscated. Tsugphud Namgyal was impoverished due to the stoppage of the rent as it was the only permanent source of income of Sikkim. Not only this British also annexed the plains of Sikkim and it was another major loss for Sikkim as major revenues came from the plains.<sup>119</sup> The new territory was put under the management of the Superintendent of Darjeeling and the *dewan* was ostensibly dismissed from service by Tsugphud due to British pressure. Sikkim lost her possession of her territories and a permanent income from Darjeeling. British Government did not take this matter lightly and the tiny state of Sikkim was now under the mercy of the British.

The matter did not end here and *dewan* Namgay made his way into power again through his wife, an illegitimate daughter of Tsugphud Namgyal. The kidnapping of British subjects of Darjeeling was resumed without the possibility of obtaining redress. In April and May 1860 two aggravated cases of kidnapping were reported to the British Government. The effort to procure reparation failed and the Governor General in

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117. C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.*, p. 313

118. *Ibid.*

119. Sir Richard Temple, *op. cit.*, p. 169

Council ordered to occupy the territories of Sikkim lying to the north of the Ramman River and to the west of Great Rangit. A force was dispatched under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Gawler, accompanied by Hon'ble Ashley Eden, as Envoy and Special Commissioner. The force advanced to the Teesta when the Sikkimese acceded to the terms dictated by the Governor General. On 28 March 1861, the Treaty of Tumlong was concluded by Ashley Eden with Sidkeong Namgyal, son of Tsugphud Namgyal. At this stage Tsugphud Namgyal was in Chumbi with his son and family. Ashley Eden sent the message to him through Cheeba *Lama* to come to Tumlong to sign the Treaty. Cheeba *Lama* on the other hand deputed Phodang *lama* to Chumbi with the message that the treaty would be favourable if Sidkeong Namgyal came down to Sikkim to sign the treaty and Sidkeong Namgyal signed the Treaty on behalf of his father.<sup>120</sup>

The Treaty of Tumlong consisted of twenty three articles.<sup>121</sup> All former treaties between the British Government and Sikkim were cancelled. The Government of India restored the territory under its occupation to Sikkim. Sikkim agreed to pay the war indemnity of seven thousand rupees by way of instalments. Other articles included the surrender of criminals, abolition of trade restrictions and abolition of slave trade. The Government of India got the right to construct road through Sikkim. Sikkim agreed to assist British army in the hills and not to allow armed forces of any other country to pass through Sikkim without prior permission of British. The Sikkim Government agreed not to allow *dewan* Namgay or his blood relations to enter into Sikkim or hold any office under the ruler of Sikkim or his family either in Sikkim or at Chumbi. It was also agreed that Namgyals were not to stay in Chumbi for more than three months. Finally, a *vakeel* or an Agent of Sikkim was to be appointed by Sikkim Government at Darjeeling who would reside permanently at Darjeeling.<sup>122</sup>

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120. C. U. Aitchison , *op. cit.*, p. 314

121. Appendix no. B (Part-V)

122. C. U. Aitchison , *op. cit.*, p. 314

The Treaty of 1861 brought Sikkim under the control of British. Sikkim lost all freedom of action and became a protectorate of the British Government of India. The British interests were secured by banishing *dewan* Namgay from the state. The Namgyal ruler having agreed not to stay at Chumbi in Tibet for more than three months in a year was less likely to be influenced by Tibetans. British gained many trade privileges as free trade between British India and Sikkim was assured. They got all the concessions without having the need to annex Sikkim. Sikkim was a great loser in terms of the Treaty of 1861. Most of the fertile and revenue yielding tracts in the lowland were occupied by the British. Sikkim was financially crippled and she was not in a position to pay war indemnity when she herself was dependent on Darjeeling rents. The appointment of *vakeel* at Darjeeling was additional financial burden to Sikkim and he was to be paid by the Sikkim Government.

#### **Sidkeong Namgyal (1863-1874):**

Sidkeong Namgyal was nominated by Tsugphud Namgyal as the next ruler of Sikkim while both of them were at Chumbi.<sup>123</sup> He ascended the throne in the *Cha-Phag* corresponding to 1863 A. D., after the death of his father Tsugphud Namgyal as the eighth consecrated ruler of Sikkim.<sup>124</sup> As soon as he ascended the throne a dispute between the people of Lachen and Lachung and the Khamba-Jong regarding grazing tax was settled. In 1866 an agreement was made between Sidkeong Namgyal and Bhutan and both countries agreed that they should not give any support to the criminals.<sup>125</sup>

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123. Thutob Namgyal, , *op. cit.* p. 68

124. *Sikkim – A Concise Chronicle, op. cit.*, p. 10

125. *Ibid.*, p. 69

*Dewan* Namgay, after his expulsion from Sikkim in 1861 received a grant of land from *Dalai Lama* and was appointed an officer at Phari (Tibet). His duty was to give advice to the *dzongpon* of Phari on Sikkim affairs, whenever required.

The significant development during the reign of Sidkeong Namgyal was the increase in the annual rent on account of Darjeeling in 1868 to nine thousand rupees, and in 1873 to rupees twelve thousand rupees.<sup>126</sup> Sir George Campbell had recommended to the Government of India to increase the allowance on condition that Sidkeong Namgyal should assist British officer Edgar, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, during his visit to Sikkim. Sidkeong Namgyal was to help the Government of India in the opening of trade with Tibet and should inform the Government of India on the activities at the Tibetan borders.<sup>127</sup> In 1868 Sidkeong Namgyal asked the permission of Government of India for the return of *ex dewan* Namgay to his service. The request was refused as being contrary to the 7<sup>th</sup> Article of the Treaty of 1861 and it would lead to intrigues for succession.<sup>128</sup>

Sidkeong Namgyal was under pressure from both sides *i.e.* Tibet and British Government. There was a pressure from Tibet to restore *dewan* Namgay to his old position. On the other hand the British Government had some other intentions over Sikkim and was keen to develop trade relations with Tibet. In 1873 J. Ware Edgar was sent on a mission to Tibet via Sikkim for opening of trade relations.<sup>129</sup> The mission of Edgar was also interrupted due to the suspicion of *dewan* Namgay at Tibetan borders. However, he came back with valuable information on future trade prospects with Tibet via Sikkim and proposed the British Government to open up roads to Tibet through Sikkim.<sup>130</sup> The other result of mission of Edgar exposed the system of land and revenue administration in Sikkim under the Namgyals. He also noticed the system of administration of Sikkim under Namgyals. Sidkeong Namgyal died in 1874 and was succeeded by his half-brother Thutob Namgyal.

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126. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. 22

127. Letter of the Government of Bengal to the Government of India, 17 June 1873, F. P. P., October 1873, no. 492

128. C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.*, p. 314

129. J. W. Edgar, *Report on a Visit to Sikkim and the Thibetan Frontier, in October, November and December, 1873*, Kathmandu, Bibliotheca Himalayica, 1969 (reprint), p. 11

130. Letter of J. Ware Edgar to the Commissioner of Cooch Behar dated 20 January 1874

### **Thutob Namgyal (1874-1914):**

Thutob Namgyal, son of Tsugphud Namgyal through his fifth wife Menchi, ascended the throne after the death of his half-brother Sidkeong Namgyal, in the *Shing-Khyi* corresponding to 1874 A.D. His accession was not an easy affair as intrigues were attempted to set aside his accession in favour of his half-brother, Tinle Namgyal at Chumbi. To claim the throne of Sikkim for Tinle Namgyal, Namgay and his mother-in-law, Menchi, arranged a joint marriage of Thutob Namgyal and Tinle Namgyal, with Yeshey Dolma, the daughter of Leden Se, at Chumbi, as polyandry was accepted under prevailing law. Thutob accepted Yeshey Dolma as joint wife along with Tinle Namgyal, as per the prevailing law. All this helped the intrigues in favour of Tinle, as his joint marriage with Yeshey Dolma was pointed out proving Thutob and Tinle as legitimate brothers from the royal family.<sup>131</sup> However, the designs of Namgay and Menchi failed due to the action of Mr. J. Ware Edgar, the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling.<sup>132</sup> J. Ware Edgar was in favour of setting Thutob Namgyal on the throne of Sikkim and he knew that Thutob Namgyal would better serve British interests in Sikkim than Tinle Namgyal. Tinle Namgyal was under the influence of Namgay and the Tibetans who were sure to jeopardize the British designs of establishing new trade relations with Tibet.

In 1875 Sir Richard Temple, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, visited Sikkim and had a friendly interview with the Thutob Namgyal and Karpo at Chomnaga near the Cho-la pass. The British were more interested in the establishment of free trade relations with Tibet and not the internal affairs of Sikkim. Sir Richard Temple's visit is important because he studied the system of administration under the Namgyal rulers of Sikkim and made some notes of it. He studied the conditions prevailing in Sikkim during his visit and found that the absence of the Namgyals from Sikkim was the reason of backwardness of Sikkim. He noted that the ruler of Sikkim resided half the year in the

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131. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26

132. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25

Chumbi Valley, in Tibet, along with his officials.<sup>133</sup> According to him this might have led to the negligence of administration in Sikkim on the part of the Namgyals. Richard Temple has also given the description of the administration of Sikkim under *kazis* and the condition of Sikkim. He noted that, the civil officer of Sikkim were the *kazis*, and scanty population of Sikkim which was less than 5,000 persons in an area of 2,544 square miles. To him Sikkim was rich in natural resources and "...soil, timber, fuel, running streams, metals, and stone – but very poorly cultivated; not actually misgoverned, perhaps, but more backward than any Hill State I have ever seen..."<sup>134</sup> The visit of Sir Richard Temple resulted in the construction of road from Darjeeling to the Tibetan frontier at Jeylep in 1877.

The reign of Thutob Namgyal was witnessed by the settlement of a large number of Nepalese in west Sikkim. He was against the settlement of the Nepalese and the Bhutanese due to his fear of the frequent raids by the Nepalese and the Bhutanese in the earlier periods. The other reason was the fear that these settlers could reduce the Bhutias and the Lepchas to minority in Sikkim. Nepalese were granted settlement by his ministers without the knowledge of the ruler. These ministers had allowed them to settle at Chakung, Reshi, Rammam, Kitam Namchi and Sadam.<sup>135</sup> In 1877, the Nepalese trader of Newar tribe was given the tracts of lands for settlement of Nepalese at Kitam by Phodong *Lama* and Khangsa *dewan*. It was resented by Tatsang *Lama* and his men and they planned to expel these Newars from Namchi and Kitam. The matters worsened further and a quarrel took place between the *lamas* and the Nepalese at Kitam. Further, this led to a misunderstanding between the pro-settlement ministers. Thutob Namgyal convened a Council of Ministers and *lamas* called the *Lhadi Medi* in 1877.<sup>136</sup> The *Lhadi Medi* approached Ashley Eden, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal at Kalimpong in

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133. Richard Temple, *Travels in Nepal and Sikkim, Two Diaries of Travel in Sikkim in 1875*, Bibliotheca Himalayica, 1977 (reprint), p. 14

134. *Ibid.*, p. 64

135. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 73

136. *Ibid.* p. 74



1878 to discuss and settle the matters, the question of Nepalese settlement was discussed and they were admitted in south Sikkim on uninhabited lands<sup>137</sup>. At this Namgay instigated the pro-Tibetan party of Sikkim to intrigue and agreement did not work well. A riot broke out at Rhenock between the local people and the Nepalese settlers. The Bengal Government deputed Mr. A. J. Paul to pacify the two groups and on April 14, 1880 he was able to bring out an understanding between the two groups of locals and the Nepalese.<sup>138</sup> The pro-Tibetan party of Namgay was unhappy with the agreement of allowing the Nepalese to settle in Sikkim and Namgay went to Tibet and created anti-British feeling there.

In 1881, Government of India deputed Sarat Chandra Das, Head Master of the Bhutia School at Darjeeling, to visit Tibet and establish contacts with the *Panchen Lama* or the Grand *Lama* of Tashi Lunpo. He met the minister of Panchen *Lama*, Singchen and was able to develop friendly contacts with him and persuaded for free trade relations with British.<sup>139</sup> Soon after Sarat Chandra's return to Darjeeling in 1883, trade on Sikkim-Tibet border was stopped. The British Government keen to develop trade with Tibet, was intrigued at this stoppage. With the suggestion of the Bengal Government, the Government of India deputed Finance Secretary of Bengal Colman Macaulay to visit Sikkim in 1884 and was sent with an instruction to enquire the reasons of the stoppage of trade, to find out direct route to Tsang in Tibet via Lachen Valley of Sikkim, and to communicate a friendly message of the Government of India to the Minister of the *Panchen Lama* at Tashi Lunpo.<sup>140</sup>

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137. Thutob Namgyal and Yeshey Dolma have described the *Lhadi Medi* as Sikkim Assembly in their work *History of Sikkim*.

138. C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Vol. 12, Calcutta, 1929, p. 54

139. *Maculay's Memorandum to the Government of India on British Relations with Tibet*, F. S. E., May, 1885, no. 752

The *Panchen Lama* was the administrator of Tashi Lunpo and had died. Till the incarnation of *Panchen Lama* was identified the minister of late *Panchen Lama*, Shing-chen dealt with the administrative affairs of Tashi Lunpo.

140. *Ibid.*

In October 1884, Colman Macaulay came to Sikkim and met Thutob Namgyal and asked him to enquire regarding the stoppage of trade activities by the Tibetans. Macaulay could not get any information regarding the matter. At this time Thutob Namgyal had come under Tibetan influence due to his second marriage with a Tibetan lady, Yeshey Dolma. Earlier, the influence was minimized when Thutob Namgyal was installed on the throne of Sikkim due to the interference of Mr. J. Ware Edgar. Thutob Namgyal was again inclined towards Tibet and showed a little concern over the disruption of trade. Macaulay assisted by Sarat Chandra Das, *Lama Ugen Gyatso* and Nimsering the interpreter, went to Tibetan border and met the Tibetan official, the *dzongpon* of Khamba at Sikkim-Tibet border. He came to know with the communication with the *dzongpon* that the Tibetan monks of Sera, Drepung, Gaden and Mulu were afraid of losing their influence and profits if free trade was opened to the British. These monks feared that free trade between Tibet and the British would lead to competition and they would lose their monopoly over it.<sup>141</sup> After much discussion with the *dzongpon*, Macaulay was able to open up friendship of Government of India with Tibet. He was able to find out the future prospects of British free trade to Tibet. The mission of Macaulay was successful was able to persuade the Tibetan Government for opening a free trade between the British and Tibet.

After his return from Tibet Mission, Macaulay proposed to the Government of India to obtain the permission of the Chinese Government to allow Indian traders to Tibet and the removal of obstructions on trade through the Sikkim-Darjeeling route. He proposed that the Government of India should request the Chinese to allow British to proceed to Tashi Lunpo. Finally, he proposed to improve the condition of road and bridges in order to open up a permanent communication with Tibet through Sikkim.<sup>142</sup>

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141. *Ibid.*

142. Colman Macaulay, *Report on a Mission to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier, 1884, With a Memorandum on our Relations with Tibet*, Bibliotheca Himalayica, Kathmandu, 1977 (reprint) , p. 105

In 1885 Thutob Namgyal received a letter from the British Commissioner of Darjeeling to go to Phari and influence the Tibetan officials for opening up free trade between British India and Tibet. In 1866 he was again asked to remain at Phari till the advent of Macaulay's second mission to Tibet. Thutob Namgyal was pressed between the ambitious projects of British Government and the Tibetans. Tibetans, owing to the Chinese pressure, did not allow British to enter Tibet and the Phari *dzongpon* started building forts at Sikkim-Tibet borders at Lingtu.<sup>143</sup>

The period of Macaulay's second mission was troublesome for Thutob Namgyal. Thutob Namgyal himself was in trouble due to Tibetan movements and construction of forts at Lingtu and they also started claiming Rhenock. He feared if he was unable to defend his frontiers he would lose his throne so he preferred to remain neutral.<sup>144</sup> Thutob Namgyal was at Chumbi when Macaulay's Mission was in progress in 1886 and concluded a secret treaty with Tibet at Galling in 1886 showing his inclination to Tibet.<sup>145</sup> The treaty was like a petition in which Thutob Namgyal had promised to Tibet and the Chinese to remain loyal to them and abide by their orders. Due to these developments between Sikkim and Tibet the mission of Macaulay was stopped at Lingtu and the Tibetans refused to evacuate the forts. In 1888 the Sikkim expeditionary force was sent against Lingtu under British and the Tibetans were compelled to evacuate Jelep.<sup>146</sup> In December 1888 the Chinese Resident Sheng Tai arrived at Gnatong and negotiations were opened with a view to a settlement of the misunderstandings that had arose between British and Tibet however the negotiations broke down in January 1889.<sup>147</sup>

The secret treaty of Galling was the violation of the Treaty of 1861 with the British, and Thutob Namgyal was asked to return Sikkim. British Government was now

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143. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 86

144. *Ibid.* p. 88

145. H. H. Risley, *op.cit.* p. viii

146. C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.* p 317

147. *Ibid*

convinced that the problems relating to free trade with Tibet could be solved only if Sikkim was brought under direct British rule. Mr. James Hart, of the Chinese Imperial Customs Service, reached Darjeeling in 1889 and negotiations were made towards the solution of difficulties.<sup>148</sup> Due to all these reasons, Mr. J.C. White was appointed Political Officer of Sikkim at Gangtok in June 1889, to advise and assist the *Maharaja* in his administration of Sikkim. A representative council selected from the three communities of Sikkim namely, the Lepchas, the Bhutias and the Nepalese was established. The salary of the Political Officer was met by withholding the annual subsidy of twelve thousand rupees to the Sikkim state on account of Darjeeling.<sup>149</sup> The appointment of the British Political Officer brought the affairs Sikkim under direct control of British Government. This control was brought out without any objection and difficulties. However, British did not annex Sikkim to avoid troubles from Tibet.

As a Political Officer, J. C. White organized a Council consisting of *Khangsa dewan*, *Phodong Lama*, *Shoe dewan*, *Gangtok kazi*, *Tassiding kazi*, *Entchey kazi* and *Rhenock kazi*. He set out to streamline the administration of Sikkim by surveying the lands for revenue assessments. He encouraged immigration in order to bring more lands under cultivation, roads and bridges were laid and thus established the basis of taxation and revenue and Gangtok became new administrative capital.<sup>150</sup> New allotments of land were made to Newars and the plainsmen were granted the *thikadari* or the rights of collecting revenues, without the consent of the Namgyal ruler. Thutob Namgyal was paid five hundred rupees per month for his maintenance which further led to complications.<sup>151</sup>

Thutob Namgyal felt frustrated by the usurpation of power and authority and impoverishment caused due to the stoppage of his permanent income from Darjeeling

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148. *Ibid*

149. *Ibid*.

150. J. C. White, *Sikkim and Bhutan – Twenty One Years on the North-East Frontier 1887-1908*, London, 1909, pp. 26-27

151. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* pp. 104-106

rent. He went on pilgrimage leaving the administration in the hands of the Political Officer and the Council. Later, Thutob Namgyal realized that Sikkim needed development in administration. He felt gratitude for the British benevolence in Sikkim. Mr. White's administration was judged by Thutob Namgyal and his queen Yeshey Dolma and later they prayed to Lady Minto for the extension of service of Mr. White during their visit at Calcutta.<sup>152</sup>

In March 1890 Anglo-Chinese Convention was signed between China and British Government at Calcutta to settle the matters connected with the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet.<sup>153</sup> By this Convention China recognized the British as protectorate over Sikkim, the British got the right to control administration and control over foreign relations of Sikkim and trade. Free trade between British India and Tibet was opened to all British subjects and were allowed to travel freely between British India and Tibet at Yatung. The Political Officer of Sikkim had full power to enquire matters on the disputes arising between British and Chinese or Tibetan subjects in Tibet along with the Chinese Frontier Officer.<sup>154</sup> Thus the Convention of 1890 settled the status of Sikkim, for all practical purposes Sikkim became a part and parcel of British India and lost the Namgyals' separate existence and identity.



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152. *Ibid.*, Kazi Dausamdub was the interpreter between *Maharani* Yeshey Dolma and Lady Minto at Calcutta.

153. C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.* p. 333. It should be noted here that both Tibet and Sikkim were considered as the subordinate to the Chinese Government.

154. Appendix no. B (Part-VI)

## CHAPTER III

### SOCIETY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The Sikkimese society was formed by the assimilation of different stocks and races in different period of history. This process resulted in a number of social and economic systems either by adaptation or copying the system that prevailed in Sikkim, Tibet and Nepal. The Lepchas and the Limboos who were the original inhabitants of Sikkim had their own social system before the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty. The Bhutias came later, initially in small numbers, with the establishment of the Namgyal rule, in large number; with them came some of their social custom and norms. Some of these social customs the Bhutias abandoned in subsequent period, such as the social divisions which were prevalent in Tibetan society, the lowest strata of Tibetan society- *ragyapbas* and blacksmiths -were not found in Sikkim among the Bhutias.<sup>1</sup> The Lepchas on the other hand, adopted some cultre like -the Bhutias' religion, Buddhism, and some of their social customs. In the subsequent period with the coming of different communities from Nepal the composition of the society further changed and the Nepalese population increased during the rule, and ultimately the Nepalese outnumbered the earlier populations. This was evident from the first Census of 1891 where Nepalese population of Sikkim showed 18,955 out of the total 30,458 where as the Lepchas were only 5,762, and 4,894 were Bhutias.<sup>2</sup> With their entry their customs, terms and traditions entered Sikkim and gave rise to new systems in social and economic sphere. The system of adaptation and imitation continued and Sikkimese society developed a unique society where one gets the elements of the Lepchas, Limboos, Bhutias and the Nepalese. Thus it can be said that formation of Sikkimese

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1. Sarat Chandra Das, *Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet*, Bibliotheca Himalayica, New Delhi, 1970 (reprint) p. 63

2. H. H. Risley, *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Calcutta, 1894, p. 27

society and social system was the result of the assimilation and adaptation to suit the need of the people.

### **Composition of the society:**

The Lepchas were the aboriginal inhabitants of Sikkim.<sup>3</sup> According to H. H. Risley they were probably Indo-Chinese cognate with the tribes of the Naga Hills, and entered the Sub-Himalayas through the Assam valley.<sup>4</sup> Risley had tried to show the similarity of the Lepchas with the tribes of North-East India by comparing their physical features with them. However, according to the tradition of the Lepchas, they originated from the foothills of Kanchanjanga by their creator *Etbu-dubu-rum*.<sup>5</sup> During the creation of the universe *Etbu-dubu-rum* created the first Lepcha male named *Phodong-thing* and a Lepcha female *Najyong-nu* to look after the animals and forests, and were to live as brother and sister. However after living for several years together they were physically attracted to each other and bore children. In order to save themselves from the wrath of the creator they took the child every time to a cave and threw into the cave, so did up to the seventh child. When the eighth child was born *Najyong-nu* did not throw the child, instead kept him and fed him, and so also did for next nine children. In this way ten children born became ten families, and on the other hand the children thrown in the cave did not die and became demons. The eldest of the demon brothers was *Laso-mung* or the demon king who appeared in the foothills.<sup>6</sup> The Lepchas prayed to their creator to save themselves from the demon and asked for forgiveness what their ancestors had done. The creator listened to their prayers and sent *Tamsang-thing* as their saviour and he fought war with the demon. Finally the demon king was killed after fighting for twelve years. During the course the war ten families of the Lepchas helped *Tamsang-thing* to defeat the demon in ten different ways, thus got their appellations accordingly. The

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3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. Uday Chandra Basista, *Sikkimka Chadparva*, Gangtok, 1997, p. 49

6. K. P. Tamsang, *Rong Lung Ten Sung, (Lepcha Myths)*, (translated by Mr. P. R. Lepcha) Kalimpong, 1996, p. 31

eldest named *monlom mu* became priests, who prayed for their well being, *luksom mu* became doctors who treated the soldiers during their war, *sumick mu* fought war with the demon and became a warrior class, *sumut mu* and *sundyang mu* disposed its body by cutting and crushing the body parts. Three Lepchas *phiyung tali mu*, *bhri mu* and *aden mu* became carpenters and made bow and arrow and seats of bamboo and wood. *Jorivo mu* became the cook for armies and *karvo mu* made the implements of iron.<sup>7</sup> After this the Lepcha community spread to the east and north Sikkim.

The other community to settle down before the establishment of the Namgyal rule was the Limboos who were concentrated in west Sikkim. They traced their origin in the Tsang province of Tibet and preferably called themselves as the Tsongs and were Buddhists by religion. By profession the Limboos were the *yakthumbas* or the yak herders and were butchers and sellers of yak skins. Due to this the Lepchas and the Bhutias called them as the Tsongs which means a merchant. With the establishment of the Namgyal rule in Sikkim including the Limboo inhabited area, they became a part of Sikkimese society.<sup>8</sup> In the subsequent period misunderstanding arose between the Namgyals and the Tsongs and a large group of the latter moved towards eastern Nepal and carved out an independent country named Limbuwan and thus intermingled with the people of Nepal.<sup>9</sup> Since then, they came to be known as the Limboos or the people of Limbuwan country for the Nepalese. Here they came into contact with the Hindu religion and influenced by the religion most of them adopted it as their own. Later on some of the chiefs were called back to Sikkim by the fourth Namgyal ruler, Gyurmed Namgyal and pacified them by granting lands in west Sikkim with the title of *subba*.<sup>10</sup> With the grant of the title of *subba* to the Limboo chief of the units, later on, the common Limboos also started using the title of their leaders after their names. Here the section having adopted Hinduism as their religion called themselves as *Kasi gotra*

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7. *Ibid.*, p. 32

8. *The Treaty of Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum*, Appendix No. B (Part-I & III)

9. H. H. Risley, *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Calcutta, 1894, p.15

10. Appendix no. B (Part-III)



Limboos after Kasi (Benaras of India), which was the main centre of Hindu pilgrimage at that time; the section of Limbuwan who retained Buddhism as their religion claimed as *Lhasa gotra* Limboos tracing their origin in Tibet. Later on the Tsongs merged with the *Lhasa gotra* Limboos and all of them came to be known accordingly.

Bhutias settled down in Sikkim came from the Tibetan province of Kham and Ha.<sup>11</sup> With the culmination of treaty of brotherhood between Khye Bumsa and Thekong Tek, the Lepcha chief of Kabi Lunchok, in fifteenth century, a trend of migration of the Bhutias towards Sikkim from Tibet started. After the death of Khye Bumsa his three sons moved further south from Tibet along with their followers and settled around Gangtok. They almost scattered in east, west and north Sikkim and practiced the profession as yak herders and continued their movement between Tibet and Sikkim along with their herds during summer and winter. Along with their movements they acted as the suppliers of rock salt to Sikkim and grains to Tibet. With the consecration of Phuntsog Namgyal, the son of great grandson of Khye Bumsa, a number of relatives and a large number of Tibetans migrated to Sikkim and settled down in different parts. The descendents of these Tibetans came to be known as Bhutias in Sikkim. These people occupied a number of berths in administration as ministers, became *lamas* or religious leaders and teachers, traders and most commonly as herdsmen.

The eighteenth century Sikkim saw the settlement of a large number of Nepalese people by way of conquest and migration. During the reign of king Prithvinarayan Shah of Nepal a number of raids were conducted in west Sikkim and subsequently a part of it was occupied where a large number of Nepalese settled down. By the Treaty of Titalia concluded in 1817 between the British Government of India and Sikkim the former granted the lands that were occupied by Nepal in the earlier period.<sup>12</sup> This brought the already settled Nepalese under Sikkim. Later the Namgyal rulers granted certain rights

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11. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 27

12. C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries Vol. II*. Calcutta, 1909, p. 311

to the Newar community of the Nepalese to work out minting and copper extraction in Sikkim. This community brought a number of workers and service castes such as Brahmins, Khsatriyas, barbers and artisan castes such as Kamis (smiths), Damais (tailors), and Sarkis (cobblers).<sup>13</sup> The British occupation of Darjeeling in 1835 was an important factor leading to the migration of the Nepalese to Darjeeling and then to Sikkim. By far the greatest role in settling the Nepalese in Sikkim were played by the British Political Officer, Mr. J. C. White who encouraged their settlement in the name of bringing a large area under cultivation thereby raising the revenue of the state. Thus the Nepalese community outnumbered the already existing population and started influencing the society on religious and social fields.

Thus the society of Sikkim was formed which composed of the communities of the Lepchas, Limboos, Bhutias and the Nepalese. The Lepchas were nature worshippers who were converted to Buddhism by the Namgyal rulers with the help of *lamas*. The Limboos were originally followers of Buddhist faith and later a section of them adopted Hinduism after they came into contact with the Nepalese. Buddhism was the state religion as the Namgyals being the propagator and upholder of this faith. Thus the entry of Hinduism could not be prevented in Sikkim. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century Christianity too entered Sikkim through the activities of the Christian missionaries leading to the conversion of many Lepchas to it. A section of Nepalese too adopted this new faith owing to the activities carried by the missions in the field of education and health care.

### **Social Stratification:**

#### ***Chogyal:***

The *Chogyal*, with the establishment of temporal and spiritual head, was supreme in all matters and head of the society of Sikkim. Later, he was termed as *Raja*,

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13. *Ibid.*

*Sikkimputtee Raja* and *Maharaja*, by the British. In theory, he was the master of all lands and enjoyed the most respectable position in the society. All the affairs in the state were carried in his name.<sup>14</sup> He, as the religious head, was supposed to propagate the religion (Buddhism) among the people and to maintain a pious life. He was surrounded by his family and servants who looked after his properties and lived in palace built out of wattle and daub.<sup>15</sup> His personal belongings consisted of cattle and yaks. He took from the people minimum; hence at the time of famine and other natural calamities he did not have enough stock of food grains as in the case of Tenzing Namgyal. In 1788 he suffered a great hardship owing to lack of provisions during the Gurkha raids in Sikkim.<sup>16</sup> In this matter, Thutob Namgyal, ninth Namgyal ruler, and his queen, Yeshey Dolma, noted down the hardship suffered by Tenzing Namgyal. Due to the hardship Tenzing Namgyal had to depend on the provisions sent by the *Deb Raja*, ruler of Bhutan, who gave "... 160,000 or 24,000 Bhutea pathis of rice, bales of dye and tea, with about Rs. 1200/-, of Bhutea silver coins, which proved a very welcome gift, in the strained circumstances."<sup>17</sup> About the economic condition of the *Chogyal* J. C. White, the British Political Officer of Sikkim interpreted that the rulers of Sikkim were poor and at the time of the British took over the status of treasury was - "The coffers were empty and the first thing to be done was to devise some means by which we could raise a revenue".<sup>18</sup>

***Kuchap:***

*Kuchap* was a close associate of the *Chogyal*. The *kuchap* was appointed by the *Chogyal* from among the trusted *lamas*.<sup>19</sup> He was an agent of the ruler and advised him in administrative matters. All the records of monasteries, its lands, revenue and

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14. J. W. Edgar, *Report on a Visit to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier in October, November and December, 1873*, Biobliotheca Himalayica, Kathmandu, 1969 (reprint), p. 60
  15. *Ibid.* p. 61
  16. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 48
  17. *Ibid.* p. 49
  18. *Ibid.*
  19. *Ibid.* p. 27

expenditure were kept by the *kuchap*. He could grant lands to the monasteries with the order of *chogyal*. He was also responsible for the demarcation and grant of lands to the officials. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century *kuchap* also acted as an envoy or ambassador of the Sikkim ruler to the British at Darjeeling and came to be known as *vakeel*.<sup>20</sup> His duty was same as earlier *i.e.* the grant of lands and keeping of records however, with the grant of Darjeeling they acted as the mediators and interpreters.

### ***Lamas:***

Next to the King in terms of social hierarchy were the *lamas*, the religious master. Since Sikkim was a theocratic state established under Buddhist doctrine the ruler was to assist by the *lamas* in administrative affairs.<sup>21</sup> Almost all of them were bareheaded and those belonging to high ranks wore caps, kept short hair and wore red robes according to their distinction. The higher order of the *lamas* wore high leather boots, carried mendicant's food bowl and prayer wheel in their hands and resided in the *gonpas*.<sup>22</sup> However, the chief *lamas* belonging to the *gonpas* of Tashding, Ralang, Rumtek, Tumlong and Phodong resided at the palace of the Namgyals. These *lamas* had much influence in the state and enjoyed a respectable position in Sikkimese society.<sup>23</sup> The *lamas*, enjoyed the position of administrators, clergies, religious preachers and teachers, even as traders, formed a considerable section of the general population and occupied nearly all posts.<sup>24</sup> However the title of *lama* strictly belonged to priests only who were selected from among the monks. The position and influence of the *lamas* is evidenced by the installation of Phuntsog Namgyal as the first king of Sikkim by the three *lamas* in 1642.<sup>25</sup> Besides their function as religious teachers they assisted state and common people during religious ceremonies, festivals and other ceremonies. Later

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20. C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.* p. 312

21. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 19

22. Clements R. Markham, *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa*, London, 1876, p. 1

23. Sir Richard Temple, *Journals Kept in Hyderabad, Kashmir, Sikkim and Nepal, Vol. II*, Delhi, 1977 (reprint), p. 215

24. *Ibid.*

25. Namgyal, Thutob, *op. cit.* p. 19

according to the rule of the state the *lamas* could trade and possess property. They held lands under their possession either by purchase or donated by proprietors and were not entitled to pay taxes of any kind. They were free to marry, held ranks and wealth,<sup>26</sup> their marriages, however, were looked upon with disfavour. Influential *lamas* had large tracts of lands under their possession. One Cheeba *Lama* had lands under his possession measuring 49 sq. miles bordering Nepal in west Sikkim before the grant of Darjeeling to British.<sup>27</sup> Those who lived with the court or with the officers were fed by the state while who lived in the *gonpas* supported themselves from rent free lands. The charity given by the ruler or the devotees were shared by them.<sup>28</sup>

The hierarchy system existed among the *lamas*; the Head *lama* of the state, referred as *Kubgen Lama*, was selected from the Pemayangtse monastery and lived in the palace with the king. He was believed to be an incarnation of the earlier *Kubgen Lama*. The next order of the *lama* was that of the Head *lamas* of all the monasteries of Sikkim who were referred as *dorje lopen*, then the *um-dse*, who was the Chief Celebrant and *chor-tim-ba*, was in-charge of monastic library. Next to these was the *chi-nyer* who communicated the messages from the higher *lamas* to the ordinary *lamas* in the monastery. *U-cho* was head of all the teacher *lamas* of the monasteries. *U-cho* from the Pemayangtse monastery acted as the family priest of the Namgyals. The three categories of the *lamas* namely *ku-nyer* or the image care taker, *chhab-dren* or pourer of holy water and *tapa* or the blower of conch shell were regarded as the learners residing in the monasteries. Their positions were recognized by their seats inside a monastery and during religious ceremonies.

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26. J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals, Vol. I*, London, 1854, p. 227

27. L. S. S. O'Malley, *Darjeeling District Gazetteers*, Calcutta, 1907, p. 148

28. Baboo Kishan Kant Bose, *Account of Bhutan*, translated by D.Scott, Bibliotheca Himalayica, New Delhi, 1972 (reprint), p. 349

### ***Kalons and Dzungpons:***

The next in the order were the *kalons*, the ministers, selected from the Bhutia community, and the *dzongpons*, the governors, selected from the Lepchas, respectively.<sup>29</sup> Among the *kalons*, the *changzod* was the prime minister who had a higher status, and later, it was seen that sometimes *dzongpons* were also appointed to this post. In the nineteenth century the post of *chanzod* was also termed as *dewan* as in the case of Namgay. In 1826 when the post of *changzod* remained vacant for a long time a Bhutia named Namgay was appointed as *dewan* or the chief administrator of Sikkim. After his banishment from Sikkim Karpo, a Lepcha was appointed as the *dewan* in 1861 and promoted as *changzod* in 1863. From that year onwards the title *dewan* was more frequently used to describe *changzod*.<sup>30</sup> These, *kalons*, *dzongpons* and *changzod*, were Tibetan terms and later with the coming of the Nepalese and the British these titles were abolished and they were commonly categorized as *kazis*. However in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the title *kazi* was used by the Nepalese to address the descendents of the *kalons* and *dzongpons* and the common people of Sikkim also frequently used this term which later became a general official title.<sup>31</sup> The *kalons* lived in the capital and helped the ruler in administration, and the *dzongpons* lived in their respective districts and acted as regional lords. They came under the class of nobility and aristocracy in Sikkim. They were the bureaucrats and were the link between the common people and the ruler.<sup>32</sup> The *kazis* had hereditary title to their office as in the case of earlier *kalons* and *dzongpons* and were also the dispensers of justice to the common mass as they exercised both civil and criminal jurisdiction.<sup>33</sup>

The position of *kazis* in Sikkim was noted by J. W. Edgar, the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, during his visit to Sikkim in 1873.

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29. *Sikkim – A Concise Chronicle*, Gangtok, Royal Wedding Committee, 1963, p. 4

30. C. U Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries Vol. II*. Calcutta, 1909, p. 314

31. Sir Richard Temple, *op. cit.*, p. 164

32. *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the year 1930-31*, p. 12

33. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.*, p. 62

“There are twelve kazis in Sikkim, and several other officers of various names exercise jurisdiction over specific tracts of lands. Each of these officers assesses the revenue payable by all the people settled on the lands within his jurisdiction....”

However, the *kazis* settled a number of cultivators in Sikkim they did not have rights over the lands except their hereditary titles and the exercise of their limited civil and criminal powers. Edgar further noted that, “... At the same time, he has no proprietary right in the lands, though the kazis have at least a kind of hereditary title to their office. The kazis and other officers exercise limited civil and criminal jurisdiction within the lands the revenue of which they collect.”<sup>34</sup> They, in return of their service to the state as well as the ruler, got a large tract of lands and later became landlords, and settled a large number of cultivators in their jurisdiction. Afterwards they also became the managers of king’s private estates and could freely intermarry with the ruling family of Sikkim.<sup>35</sup> The *kazis* derived their incomes from the fines imposed in cases of crimes as these cases and amount rarely reached ruler.<sup>36</sup> They appeared in villages and their presence was informed by beating kettle drums and hand bells. Later on taking advantage of their position some of them resorted to snatch good tracts of lands of cultivators.<sup>37</sup> Some of them harassed common people very frequently, misappropriated funds and made false documents so that they can snatch away the belongings of poor cultivators. They even did not spare cattle and children were made to work as slaves under them.<sup>38</sup> These cultivators had to work for them for free and demanded gifts from these people and expected salutations from them.<sup>39</sup> This gave birth to a system of *theki-bethi* and *salami* in Sikkim during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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34. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63

35. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 23

36. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet*, New Delhi, 1992 (reprint), p. 106

37. J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals, Vol. II, op. cit.*, p. 402

38. *Report of the Committee of Land Reforms*, Government of Sikkim, Department of Land Revenue, January 1975, p. 13

39. *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the year 1912-1913*, p. 3

### ***Thikadars:***

With the occupation of Darjeeling in the first half of the nineteenth century and settlement of Nepalese in Sikkim during the late nineteenth century, a new class of officers called the *thikadars* became evident in the society of Sikkim. In the initial stage the *thikadari* right was granted to the Newars for settling cultivators in south Sikkim. Later they got the rights to carry out the works in mining and the minting of Sikkimese copper coins. This grant was again extended to the Bhutia and Lepcha officers, from the *kazis* and the new revenue contractors who later became British trade agents.<sup>40</sup> Further, with the British administration and their trade to Tibet this section became the focal point of Sikkimese society. A distinction was made that all *kazis* were *thikadars* and got the rights of contract however the new *thikadars* could not raise to the position of *kazis*. They settled a large number of cultivators under their jurisdictions and collected revenues from them in both cash and kind. They utilized their position by asking the cultivators to work for them and as porters for free which later developed into *jharlangi* or system of unpaid carriers in Sikkim. It became a common feature when the British trade to Tibet was opened in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Tumyang or Tassa:***

In the villages the village headman was the supreme head. They were called *tumyang* or *tassa* and in the villages having mixed population they were selected mostly from among the Lepchas.<sup>41</sup> The *tumyangs* and the *tassas* were the headmen of the villages of hills and of the plains respectively.<sup>42</sup> Later with the coming of the British administration they came to be known as the *mondals*. In the early period of Namgyal rule a village in east and north Sikkim generally consisted of ten to twenty houses and in the west and south ranging from forty to fifty houses. The village headmen were in charge of villages, collected taxes from the crown lands and acted as middlemen

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40. *Report of the Committee on Land Reforms, op. cit.*, p.13

41. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.*, p. 24

42. *Ibid.*



between the *kalons* and *dzongpons* and later *kazis* and *thikadars*. They were responsible for allotting new lands to the cultivators in the name of the landlords and the ruler. It was their duty to provide workers and labourers for the state as well as the officials if needed. If an official desired to build a house in village for stay during his visit then the headman had to provide skilled labourers for its construction. Porters were to be provided for carrying loads and asked the villagers to serve them by turns, provide fodder to their mules in the form of grains. He was to inform the villagers that what sort of salutations should be offered during their visit. Sometimes the officials themselves come to villages to collect taxes and in such a case the headman had to keep the details of the revenue collected and to arrange porters for carrying loads to the district or to the capital. The village headman also dispensed justice and tried cases of both civil and criminal. He was assisted by a village *lama* in solving criminal cases and was generally referred to higher *kalons* and *dzongpons* to try them. The civil cases were solved by imposing fines and the amount collected was to be sent to the higher officials. The headmen lived in villages and depended on agricultural labour. Hence they also came under the category of cultivators however they had a good social position being the headmen of villages.

***Singpo:***

The majority of Sikkimese population consisted of the ordinary villagers of the cultivators who cultivated lands under their possession. They cultivated the lands of the *chogyal*, *kalons* and *dzongpons* being granted to them by the village headmen in the name of the state. The Bhutias and the Lepchas called them *singpo* or the people who work in fields and live in villages. Later with the settlement of the Nepalese they called them as *bustiwallas* and *raitis*. The Lepcha and the Limboo cultivators, since remote past, used to practice shifting cultivation and moved from a place to another in search of new soil for cultivation on regular basis. With the formation of the state and monasteries in different places of Sikkim, the Namgyal started settling some cultivators on particular

areas to cultivate there as the monasteries were maintained by the villagers themselves. The rulers and *lamas* of the monasteries depended on them for food and their agricultural and dairy products for performing religious rituals. The dependency of the state as well as the monasteries was responsible for coming up of some settled agricultural areas.

A number of crops were cultivated by the cultivators depending on the fertility and high and low lands. In the east and north Sikkim the areas covered with dense forests and snow during winter they sow buckwheat or *bra-hu*, barley and wheat. Rice of some varieties such as *bras-chung*, *lad mar* and *sangkha* were grown which needed irrigated and dry fields of the north and eastern Sikkim. Maize of *rato*, *paheli*, *seti* and *kalo* varieties, and millet were grown both for its flour and brewing *murwa* or *chang*. In the lowlands they cultivated maize, mustard and rice. Oranges were grown and it was the Lepchas who cultivated extensively.

A number of villages sprang up in Sikkim after the establishment of the Namgyal rule. Lands were granted to the *singpos* by the *kalons* and *dzongpons* and new lands were created after clearing the forests. These officials granted the crown lands to them on certain conditions. These officials granted these lands on the condition of dividing the produce equally between the cultivator and the owner which was known as *che-se*. Sometimes the condition was that the cultivator had to pay a certain amount fixed by the owner per one agricultural year. The amount to be paid them was increased if the harvest was good however if it was not good the amount was not reduced. The officials sometimes kept the employees or the workers to work in their fields giving a certain land for them for their maintenance.

With the settlement of the Nepalese and later with the coming of the British *singpos* came to commonly referred as *bustiwallas* and later as *raitis*. However, a *raiti* was a cultivator possessing a landed property under his possession. The other categories

of cultivators, found during this time, were *adhiadars*, *kutdars* and *pakhurays*.<sup>43</sup> *Adhiadar* was a cultivator settled in the lands of the landlords who was required to pay half of the produce to them on whose lands they had settled.<sup>44</sup> A *raiti* could also grant lands to an *adhiadar* if he had a large extent of lands. However, a *raiti* could also become an *adhiadar* if he desired to cultivate the lands of the other landlords on the condition of dividing equal produce between them. The other group of cultivators was the *kutdar* who were settled on the crown and the lands of the officials on the condition of paying certain amount of produce per year.<sup>45</sup> The cultivators also kept a number of workers to help them in cultivating activities imitating those of the landlords called *pakhurays*. They were fed by the cultivators, and sometimes, were granted a small portion of land ranging from two to three terraced plots and the produce of which was *pakhuray*'s personal property. These *pakhurays* worked for the *raitis* and the landlords as and when required. Sometimes the *raitis* were required to work for the village headman, or the officials and these *pakhurays* substituted the *raitis*.<sup>46</sup>

Tradition says, most of the cultivators were asked to work, whenever required, in the fields of crown lands, *kalons* and *dzongpons* later *kazis*, *thikadars* and the landlords.<sup>47</sup> Apart from the taxes, they had to pay as salutation to these officials during festivals and their visit to villages in form of gifts called *theki-bethi*. The *theki-bethi* consisted of dairy products, fruits, vegetables, wines, eggs and meat.<sup>48</sup> They had to be present at the call of the landlords and work for them. The free service or labour was common system in Tibet where the tenants of each district had to contribute ten days' labour per head per agricultural season and was referred as *las-tal* or labour tax.<sup>49</sup> This

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43. *Report of the Committee of Land Reforms, op. cit.* pp. 13-14

44. *Ibid.* These lands were leased out to the *thikadars* by the *Durbar* after British administration and the then *Durbar* consisted of the *Chogyal* and the Advisory Council with the British Political Officer.

45. *Report of the Committee of Land Reforms*, Government of Sikkim, Department of Land Revenue, January 1975, pp. 13-14

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the year 1912-1913*, p. 1

48. *Report of the Committee of Land Reforms, op. cit.* p. 13

49. Sarat Chandra Das, *op. cit.*, p. 184

Tibetan system, it seems, was transplanted by the Namgyal rulers in Sikkim and was made mandatory for the *raitis*. Later on, it was given a new term of *jharlangi* by the Nepalese. It became a common practice in Sikkim and later *kazis* and the *thikadars* frequently used the service of *jharlangi* by taking advantage of their position.<sup>50</sup> The failure to attend *jharlangi* was punished with flogging. The reform in the social status of the common people was a great challenge to the British administrators in Sikkim.

***Drokpas:***

A section of Sikkimese population consisted of herdsmen known as the *drokpas* by the Bhutias and the Lepchas. A distinction was however found in respect of the herdsmen, yak herding was the monopoly of the Bhutias and the Limboos whereas the Nepalese herded cows and sheep. There were at least three categories of *drokpas* depending on the animals they kept. A yak herder was called *gyag drokpa*, cow herder as *beek drokpa* sheep herders as *lug drokpa*. Later the Nepalese called the herdsmen as a whole *gothals*. The yak herders were referred as *chauri gothala*, cow herders as *gai gothala* and sheep herders as *bhera gothala*. The British too continued with the Nepalese terms and later granted passes to them for moving to uplands for grazing. The *drokpas* depending on the season moved from one place to another along with their cattle. They moved to higher hills of northern Sikkim during summer and descended to lower altitude during winter. On the other hand the Nepalese did not move to higher altitudes as they did not find enough pastures on the north to feed their cows. However, those Nepalese belonging to Gurung community and sheep herders moved to colder regions for grazing their sheep during summer.

Among the yak herders there were two categories of herdsmen, one who herded the yaks of *chogyal* and the officials along with their herds and the other herding their own and among the cow herders same category were found. They had to supply meat,

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50. *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the year 1918-1919*, p. 3  
*Jharlangi* became a burdensome practice in the twentieth century that the people of Sikkim agitated against it. Finally this system was abolished by Tashi Namgyal. Appendix-B (Part-IX)

*ghew* and *churpi*, as revenue, to the ruler of Sikkim and to the government of Tibet in case of their movement in the latter country, through their respective *dzongpons*. In occasional cases they were liable to supply these items however it was not very heavy.

The number of yaks in a herd was ranging from three hundred or more under a *gyag drokpa*.<sup>51</sup> However these numbers exceeded in case of the herd belonging to the *chogyal* and the *kalons* and *dzongpons*. The *gyag drokpas* herded these animals on condition of producing one young for every three yaks per year. If it exceeded it went to the herder and in case of deficit he had to pay from his herd. Besides he was also required to produce a certain amount of *ghew*, *churpi* and yak hair in a year.<sup>52</sup> The *gyag drokpas* made ropes of yak hair and bags for storing barley and wheat flour and also for storing salt. Skins of young yaks were used for churning *ghew* and storing it. They took these items to the villages for exchange and to pay these to their lords.

On the basis of the quality of milk and its products yaks were categorized in three varieties namely *lo gyag*, *bod gyag* and *a-yu*. *Lo gyag* was supposed to be the best breed which milk produced best *ghew*. The medium quality was *bod gyag* and the lowest breed was that of *a-yu*. Three varieties of cow namely *ba-glang* or the Bhutia cow, *nam-thong* or Nepalese cow and *thang* or the cow of the plains were reared in Sikkim. Among these cows *ba-glang* was considered the best breed. However, cow was cheaper than the yaks that most of the Sikkimese afforded to keep them. The *beek drokpa* had to pay a certain amount of *ghew* and *churpi* per year as their revenue and also exchanged them with the grains.

The herdsmen mostly lived in the sheds along the hills with their families and belongings. As it was a custom among them that a shed built by a herdsman was his property and did not resort to encroachments or forceful possessions by others during their movements towards higher hills and down. During their way down to the lower

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51. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5

52. Appendix no C, p. xxxiii

altitudes the herdsmen kept their cattle in their fields or nearby to the village and practiced cultivation, sold dairy and animal products or exchanged them for meeting their daily needs. The yak herders however could not move to the lower regions as yaks prefer cold climate and survives in snow. They moved down to villages along with yak skins, ropes made from yak's hair, yak tails, *churpi* and Tibetan rock salt to exchange with grains and wooden *tolung*<sup>53</sup> for churning *ghew* and tea and other commodities for their use during their movement to higher regions during summer.

### ***Zimchungpas:***

A small section of Sikkimese consisted of the *zimchungpas* belonging to Bhutia community whose condition was more or less like that of the slaves. They worked in the palace and lived near behind it, in huts built for them. They served in the palace by turns and were required to pay a maund of *murwa* beer per year to the *chogyal*.<sup>54</sup> They were required to prepare it from millet that was collected by the ruler as tax. The *kalons* and the *dzongpons* also kept a number of servants who worked in their households like that of *zingchungpas*. Later the *thikadars* and even the *raitis* kept unpaid servants in the same way as that of *zimchungpas* and were known as the *chakerays*.<sup>55</sup> The *chakerays'* position was more as slaves and worked in the fields and households of the *raitis* and *thikadars*. They were the labourers and porters and belonged to the Nepalese community. In comparison the *zimchungpas* had a better status than that of the *chakereys*. This system was abolished in Sikkim by the Treaty of 1861 however it was not ruled out totally.<sup>56</sup>

### **Birth and Death rituals:**

It was a custom among the Lepchas and the Limboos to employ the service of their shamans before and after child birth. They were employed to ward off evil spirits

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53. Appendix-C, P. xxxiii

54. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.*, p. 104

55. *Ibid.*

56. *Ibid.*

and the birth of healthy child. In most of the cases child birth was assisted by a mid-wife called *sudeni*. After birth the umbilical cord and placenta called *sathi* was removed and the child was thoroughly washed. The *sathi* was put inside a bamboo pot and either hanged on a tree or buried. The mother and the child were kept in the kitchen to provide warmth till a month. The child was named on the third day in case of a girl and the boy child was named on the seventh day after birth. A drop of *murwa* was put into the mouth of the child by the elderly lady of the house or of the village and it was believed that the child was accepted in their society.<sup>57</sup> The child's name was chosen by their parents or by the elders of the society. Later with the entry of Buddhism they employed the *lamas* to ward off evil spirits and naming of the child with consultation of Buddhist horoscope.<sup>58</sup> Among the Nepalese the shamans and their local faith healers performed the service. However the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and the Newars employed Hindu priests to name the child. The girl child was named on the seventh day after birth and eleven days in case of boy. The name was given after consulting a handbook having details of dates and the position of stars called *patro*.

In Sikkim the Lepchas and the Limboos buried their dead. Among the Lepchas the dead was buried either in sleeping position, sitting and half seated or the body kept straight with legs spread. The body was faced towards Kanchandzonga and the hands were folded in prayers. The concept of heaven or hell was not there among the Lepchas, however, it was believed that after their death they go to the abode of their creator and mix with him. It was believed that the dead should look towards Kanchandzonga when their shaman *i.e.*, *bijua* prayed for the dead person.<sup>59</sup> The Limboos too buried their dead and erected headstones over the corpse and Lepcha *bijuas* were employed for performing death rites.<sup>60</sup>

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57. As informed by Phur Tshering Lepcha, Age- 78, ex-*mondal* of Marchak, East Sikkim, on 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2011

58. Charles Bell, , *The People of Tibet*, *op. cit.*, p. 197

59. As informed by Phur Tshering Lepcha, *op. cit.*

60. J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, p. 96

The Buddhists of Sikkim burnt their dead; they do not observe the Tibetan custom of chopping and throwing of the corpse in the hills for vultures.<sup>61</sup> The abundance of fuel wood for fire and the absence of vultures in Sikkim it presumed was the reason behind the cremation of the Buddhists. However the relics of the *lamas* were deposited in a mound called *chorten* and the ashes were thrown into a mountain stream.<sup>62</sup> The death rites were very elaborate among the Buddhists. Among the royal family the death rites were performed by the eldest son. Lamps were lighted and *mantras* were chanted. The Head *lama* chanted the *mantras* and he directed most of the ceremonies to be performed and the body was cremated by the *lamas* after they prescribed the dates for cremation. According to the tradition the dates prescribed for the royal families and the wealthy were probably longer than the ordinary people. In case of common Buddhists the death rites was also performed by the eldest son and ordinary *Lamas* directed the ceremony.<sup>63</sup> Among the wealthy Buddhists the dead was kept in big vessels and in case of common people inside baskets made up of bamboo by covering with plain silk scarfs called *khada* and the dead was offered food and drinks through the *lamas* till it was cremated by them. Different musical instruments were blown, such as thigh-bone trumpets, Tibetan flutes, conch shells, cymbals and drums to ward off the evil spirits and to make way for the dead to the other world.<sup>64</sup> On the 21<sup>st</sup> day of death a ritual was observed by chanting prayers and lighting lamps by the *lamas* and the completion of the death ritual was believed to be on 49 days, on this day 108 Buddhist prayer flags called *lungta* were hung nearby their house. The death rites of Sikkimese, mostly among the Buddhists, were very expensive. The amount expended on these occasions was enormous, beyond the means of ordinary people. They had to offer donations to the *lamas* and the monasteries. However, the burden was shared by all the relatives of the dead. J. Ware Edgar observed that "...The amount expended on these

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61. *Ibid.*, p. 185

62. Sarat Chandra Das, *op. cit.*, p. 256

63. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.* p. 57

64. *Ibid.* p. 58



occasions is sometimes enormous, in proportion to the means of the people; but there is a universal custom which somewhat lessens the burden. When a member of a family dies, all the relations, friends, and dependents, send presents to the survivors, as a help to the deceased on the journey to the other world; and of course all these offerings go to the Lamas.”<sup>65</sup>

During the death of the king and queen it was a customary to observe general mourning by all the Buddhist subjects for two months.<sup>66</sup> The ruling family mourned for one full year and no functions of importance were performed during the whole year. After the full period of mourning was observed another consecration ceremony was observed which used to be more elaborate and imposing.<sup>67</sup> Funds and donations were given to the monasteries in the name of the deceased ruler by the next successor.<sup>68</sup> Among the Nepalese except the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas, the dead was buried along with some clothes and utensils and observed 5 to 9 days mourning.<sup>69</sup> The elders of the family declared the mourning to be over by sprinkling *murwa* beer and by sacrificing chicken on the altar. Among the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas they observed mourning for 13 days and the sons and the daughters of the deceased were to donate cows to the priests. After this the mourning was said to be over however, they were not allowed to perform any auspicious functions for one year.

### **Marriage:**

It is evident that different forms of marriage prevailed in Sikkim during the Namgyal period. Polyandry was the common form of marriage among the common Bhutias and in exceptional cases among officials and rulers. Among the Lepchas and the Nepalese monogamy was the norm however polygamy also existed.

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65. *Ibid.* p. 59

66. *Administration Report, 1910-1911*, p. 1

67. *Administration Report, 1914-1915*, p. 1

68. *Ibid.* p. 2

69. Khemraj Sharma, *The Himalayan Tea Plantation Workers*, Dibrugarh, 2000 p. 14

Among the Bhutias marriages were arranged by the parents by consulting the horoscopes of both boy and girl by the *lamas*. If it matched, the parents of both boy and the girl exchanged silk scarves called *khada* and fixed the date on which the bride would leave her home. On the day of marriage the groom was required to give presents to the family and the relatives in the form of ornaments and animals. After reaching the bride's house the groom was to serve *murwa*, meal and rice which lasted for a month.<sup>70</sup> With the passage of time a few changes took place in marriage customs among the Bhutias. After the horoscopes of bride and bridegroom were matched the latter had to give presents to the maternal uncle of the bride which included *murwa*, clothes, yak meat and *khada*. The serving of *murwa* was known as *kha-chyong*. After it was over the bridegroom had to work in the house of the bride for three years. Only after the period of probation finished the consent for final marriage was given. On the day of marriage he was to reach the bride's house with the marriage procession called *gyampu kyundae* along with his parents, elders and the *lamas*. The bridegroom's parents were required to provide rice, *murwa* and live bull for feast. The headmen of the village as well as the *lamas* were to be invited who witnessed the occasion and blessed the couple. The bride price was again to be paid in the form of rice, a milch cow with a calf and other presents.<sup>71</sup> The Namgyals and the *kalons* used to give a number of presents and a plot of land to their daughters as marriage gifts. However, the lands of the princess were confiscated by the state after her death.<sup>72</sup>

The system of polyandry form of marriage entered Sikkim in the early period of Namgyal rule and became common among the Bhutias.<sup>73</sup> This form of marriage among this community was of a peculiar type. The wife of the eldest brother was common to all his brothers. The wife of the second brother was common to all the brothers younger than himself and the eldest brother was not allowed to cohabit with the wives of the

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70. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet, op. cit.*, p. 181

71. *Ibid.*, p. 185

72. *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for year 1917-1918*, p.1

73. *Administration Report, 1912-1913*, p. 3

younger brothers.<sup>74</sup> The disputes regarding the children of the marriage were settled either by a comparison of the features of the child with those of its several fathers or left to the determination of the mother.<sup>75</sup> It was generally practiced by the herdsmen and the cultivators of the two communities and later it was made permissible in Sikkim. The Namgyals too practiced such system once in an exceptional case on dispute over the throne.<sup>76</sup> Thutob Namgyal and his half-brother Tinle Namgyal married one common wife in 1881 to claim the latter's right of succession as it was a rule that only brothers from same parents could marry a common wife.<sup>77</sup>

The reason to adopt this form of marriage was that with the formation of the state a system of government was established. Bhutia and Lepcha herdsmen and cultivators had to contribute more to the revenue demand of the state. With this they needed more cultivable lands and pasture grounds for their animals. Likewise the marriage also incurred heavy expenses either in form of presents, animals or feasts. The system of letting a son to serve the bride's parents for three years till the confirmation of marriage was burdensome practice for these communities. Moreover a small cultivable land, animals and pastures were to be divided among the brothers. To avoid the division of movable and immovable properties and to keep their sons united they adopted this form of marriage. To keep their ancestral property undivided and to preserve the family property the system became an established custom. The other reason was that these communities had to go higher and lower regions to bring salt and grains. During wandering they believed that children and family were at a disadvantage.

In Sikkim monogamy was the rule of marriage before the establishment of the Namgyal rule. The Lepchas were monogamous and rarely polygamous in nature. The Lepcha marriage was contracted in childhood by the parents of both boy and girl. The

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74. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. 55

75. Clements R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 123

76. C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.* p. 316

77. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 82

wife was purchased by service rendered to the future father-in-law. According to the prevailing custom the father of the boy along with his maternal uncle asked for the hand of the girl and the decision of the maternal uncle of the girl was regarded final. After it was finalized the parents of the boy were required to pay two pots of *chang* or *murwa* called *bong-chi*.<sup>78</sup> The groom was required to pay a live bull, pig and fowl as bride price and if he was unable to pay these he had to serve the bride's parents for some years. When the service expired the marriage was confirmed. After this was over they could marry any time by eloping and the groom's parents were required to report to the bride's family and a date of formal marriage was fixed. On the prescribed day of marriage the groom was required to bring marriage procession along with the bride and his relatives to the bride's house and was called and *bhri-da*. They had to pay bride price in the form of meat and were asked to pay a single yak or a bull to the bride's family and ate together during the marriage ceremony.<sup>79</sup>

Among the Limboos and the Nepalese monogamy was the rule, polyandry was not practiced by them however, polygamy was common. Among them marriage ritual were always same as in the case of Bhutias and the Lepchas. The parents of boy along with some village elders asked the hand of the girl and one among the elders acted as *kalia* or the middleman. If the parents of the girl accepted the proposal it was followed by the presents of *marwa* and was called *sunauli*. After it was over they could marry any time by eloping. When the couple reached the boy's house the parents called the relatives and the elders from the village to witness the arrival of the couple. Again they had to request an elder or a relative to act as a *kalia* by offering him a pot of *marwa*. The *kalia* was required to go to the bride's house with two pots of *marwa* to convey the message that their daughter has married to the boy and this ceremony was called *chor-ko-shor*. The parents of the bride confirmed the date of formal marriage and on that day the bride and the groom led the marriage procession called *janti*. The parents of the

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78. As informed by Phur Tshering Lepcha, *op. cit.*

79. *Ibid.*

groom were required to pay bride price in the form of *murwa*, meat and ornaments. In case of the Limboos the couple were blessed by the parents, elders and shamans or *dhami* by pouring *murwa* on the altar and letting the couple to drink it from the same pot. The *dhami* blessed the couple by touching their heads with a live fowl and later sacrificing it and pouring its blood on the altar. This was believed that their ancestors accepted the couple. Among the other Nepalese except the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas same process was followed. On the next day the *janti* returned to groom's house along with the couple. After reaching the groom's house their shaman again sacrificed a fowl and poured the blood on the altar along with *murwa* and thus both were accepted as husband and wife.

Except the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas of the Nepalese community a brother could marry his elder sister-in-law in the event of death of his elder brother and if he married her when he was still alive it was accepted after paying some amount asked by the former husband or by the village elders as *jaari* to be paid to him. When this was over the village elders accepted them as husband and wife by allowing the wife to cook meal and distribute to the elders called *daal-bhaat*.<sup>80</sup> The new husband and wife were separated from the family and given a plot of land for constructing a house and earn their living. If the former husband desired to live away from his family he was allowed to live separately letting his brother and his ex-wife to live in the old house. However if a boy from the Nepalese community married his cousin's wife she was accepted as a member of his family by the same process of *jaari* and *daal-bhaat* and need not be separated from the family and if he desired to do so he was allowed.<sup>81</sup> Inter community marriage was also accepted by the Lepchas, Limboos and other Nepalese except by those of Brahmins and Kshatriyas by the same process of *daal-bhaat*. However, the Bhutias and Nepalese Brahmins and Kshatriyas looked upon this with disfavour.

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80. As informed by Uday Chandra Basistha, Age- 73, retired officer of Education Department, Government of Sikkim, on 9<sup>th</sup>, October, 2012

81. *Ibid.*

Bhutias believed themselves to be a superior community among the Sikkimese and the other two as the superior castes of the Nepalese.

Among the Nepalese Brahmins and the Kshatriyas the parents asked the hand of the girl for the son generally known as *mangni*. The confirmation was given after the consultation of horoscopes of both boy and the girl. If it matched the parents of the boy was asked to come along with *janti* to bride's house and the bride was brought to his house after the ceremonial rituals were over. Child marriage was in vogue among the upper caste Nepalese namely Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. A girl was married before the attainment of puberty and the boy probably before his teenage. However, a custom prevailed among them called *duran*, that a child bride had to return to her parents within a week after marriage and if she did not return back to her husband within a year the marriage was said to be dissolved and she was not allowed to remarry. Among them the child widow could remarry if her husband died before menarche.<sup>82</sup> Among them widows were considered inauspicious. However, among the Bhutias, Lepchas and the Nepalese except the two upper castes if a widow did not remarry, she deserved respect and was regarded as the head member of the family and obedience was paid to her.<sup>83</sup>

### **Marriage by eloping:**

Marriage by eloping was another form of marriage in Sikkim. A young boy and a girl could marry without the consent of parents. The boy usually took the girl to his house and the parents of the boy confirmed by consulting the village elders whether the girl was fit for marriage. They also confirmed that the girl was from their community and the formal ritual followed. After confirming the parentage of the girl the parents usually requested an elder or a relative to go to girl's house to inform that their daughter being taken by the boy as his wife. The process was also called *chor-ko-shor* or asking of forgiveness for the theft. The representative had to offer two pots of *murwa* to girl's

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82. *Ibid.*

83. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.* p 4

parents and if they agree the day for marriage was fixed by them after consulting the elders and relatives. Sometimes the girl's parents disapproved such marriage however it depended on the representative to convince them by requesting to accept it. If it was inter-community marriage the girl's parent imposed fines to the boy's parents in the form of additional *murwa*, meat, live bull or a pig and ornaments more than what they usually asked in the case of marriage between their own communities. This was *jat-danda* or punishment for taking a girl by a different community. If the boy or a girl happened to be the relatives then the parents and elders tried to separate them and if they did not agree then they were banished from the society. They were socially boycotted and no one was allowed to meet and sit together with them. Even the children born out of them were looked upon with disfavour. Among the Nepalese Brahmins and Kshatriyas marriage by eloping was not approved and if the boy of these communities married a girl of other communities then the parents of the boy did not eat food prepared by the daughter-in-law belonging to another community.<sup>84</sup> In case of a girl marrying to the boy of another community they were happily accepted by the parents of the boy as they have found a daughter-in-law hailing from a higher caste than that of theirs. However, the parents of the girl had to perform *chandrayan* or declaring their daughter to have died by shaving their heads and offering donations to other Brahmins.<sup>85</sup> However, if the boy of these communities married a girl belonging to Kamis, Damais and Sarkis belonging to lowest strata of Nepalese community then the parents of the boy had to perform *chandrayan*. The other communities were also asked by them not to drink water offered by such couple.

### **Divorce:**

Dissolution of marriage was permissible in Sikkim. The separation was obtained by simply paying some amount and ornaments to the wife if a husband wished to be

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84. As informed by Uday Chandra Basistha, *op. cit.*

85. *Ibid.*

separated from her. In the same way if a wife wished to leave her husband then it was permissible to her after paying some amount and one suit of clothes to him.<sup>86</sup> Adultery and taking other's wife was also common in Sikkim, however taking the king's or *lama's* wife was considered a grave crime and almost unnoticed in the history of Sikkim. Among the common people it was settled by paying *jaari* both in cash and kind.<sup>87</sup>

### **Position of women:**

The women in Sikkim generally used to take active part in agriculture and trade.<sup>88</sup> Women of ruling family and the nobility enjoyed a good social status and inherited property. Widows of the *kalons*, *dzongpons* and landlords inherited their husband's personal properties if they died without an heir, in the event of their death, however, it was reverted to the state.<sup>89</sup> The properties of Sikkimese women consisted of ornaments and personal belongings among the common women and also landed properties in case of landlords and officials. The status of women in Sikkim was determined with the ornaments they wore, heavier ornaments higher the status. In common household, they prepared their own clothes in looms along with their other works. They even used to take out threads of nettle plants and Tibetan wool as well as of the sheep for their looms.<sup>90</sup> The preparation of *murwa* was women's prerogative and they used to collect the ingredients for preparing *murwa* such as leaves and roots of various plants for the purpose. They could become the owner of yak herds and cows, and as the owner they took care of their animals, milk them and churn *ghew* along with cooking. As the Sikkimese society was to some extent immune from social evils they enjoyed an atmosphere of equality. Though the system of polyandry among the Bhutias and the Lepchas of Sikkim prevailed the easy system of divorce gave them a sort of

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86. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. 53

87. *Ibid.* p. 54

88. *Administration Report, 1932-1934*, p. 2

89. *Administration Report, 1918-1919*, p. 5

90. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. 38



relief. Some of the Sikkimese women became Buddhist nuns and lived in monasteries. However, they had no say in the administration and adopted such lifestyle for the attainment of salvation. Those who preferred to become nuns were also given a share of landed properties and in the event of their death it was granted to the *gonpas* to which she belonged. The *lamas* of that particular *gonpa* performed the death rituals of the nuns belonging to the royal family and those of officials. Among the common people too women were the owner of lands and other movable and immovable assets. They were the head of the family after the death of their husbands and were much respected.

### **Food habit:**

The food habit of the people of Sikkim consisted of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian diet. They cultivated and ate rice, wheat, millet and fruits and the non-vegetarian diet consisted of meat of sheep and yak and they also hunted wild animals.<sup>91</sup> The people living in the highlands of north Sikkim where the soil was not so fertile and the lands were unsuitable for cultivation lived on wild products such as *githa*, *bhagur*, *gai khure* and *tarul*.<sup>92</sup> The Bhutias, mostly the herdsmen consumed dried mutton and yak meat called *sya-chu* and ate them raw as in higher altitudes the firewood was always scanty and had to depend on yak's dung for fire. It was possible for them to preserve meat for a long time due to the coldness of the climate and dry winds. The other reason was partly due to the absence of flies and maggot-breeding insects.<sup>93</sup> They killed yaks and sheep, dried them in open space and could be preserved for a year. They also lived on barley and wheat flour which was made into dough called *tsampa*. The flour was also baked into a bread called *pha-ley* with *ghew* and ate with *sya-chu*.<sup>94</sup> The Lepchas diet consisted of rice which was grown without irrigation before the coming of

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91. Sarat Chandra Das, *Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet*, Bibliotheca Himalayica, New Delhi, reprint (1970), p. 1

92. *Administration Report, 1918-1919*, p. 10  
These wild products were found abundantly in Sikkim forests.

93. Clements R Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 86

94. *Ibid.* p. 119

the Nepalese. It was a large, flat and coarse grain, and often pink when cooked.<sup>95</sup> It was eaten with boiled leaves of wild nettle. However, eating of rice in Sikkim was the privilege of the wealthy as the cost of its production was high and formed an important item of revenue and trade. The Nepalese lived in the lowlands and had better meal as compared with the people living in the highlands as they practiced both agriculture and cattle rearing. Their diet consisted of agricultural products mostly maize and rice. They also consumed *tsampa* however the common name for it was *saatu* and was made of wheat and maize flour. The Nepalese belonging to Brahmins and Kshatriyas were vegetarians.<sup>96</sup> Almost all the people of Sikkim were fond of dairy and its products in the form of *ghew* and *churpi*.

#### **Tea and beverage:**

Tea was drunk in large quantities by the Bhutias and the Lepchas. Tibetan tea in the form of brick tea and was consumed by churning it with butter and salt.<sup>97</sup> The way of preparing brick tea was by putting it into hot water and then churned with salt, butter and milk. It was boiled and then transferred into a tea pot. Almost all the *drokpas* carried a tea bowl or cup made of wood in their gown. They drank tea by pouring into them and the remaining tea was consumed by mixing *tsampa* by rolling it with their fingers. The consumption of liquor made up of millet was common and was an item of exchange with salt in Tibet. To the Bhutias it was *chang* or *murwa*, the Lepchas called it *chi* and to the Nepalese it was *janr* which was manufactured almost in every household except those of Brahmins and Kshatriyas. It was an essential part of all people during religious ceremonies, festivals and death rituals except the two communities of Nepalese. The habit of drinking liquor was very widely spread in the state and was highly in demand.<sup>98</sup> It is seen that the habit of eating opium, smoking of tobacco and

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95. J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals*, *op. cit.*, p. 92

96. *Administration Report, 1918-1919*, p. 10

97. *Ibid.*

98. *Administration Report, 1930-1931*, p. 15

*ganja* also became popular in Sikkim after the British occupation of Darjeeling. These items were available in Darjeeling through stores. However, opium consumption was confined mostly among the *kazis* and the nobility.<sup>99</sup> Altogether the foods consumed by the Sikimese were simple in nature.

### **Dress:**

The traditional male dress among the Bhutias was *bakhu*, a cloak like garment, an inner shirt called *entas* and the trouser called *gyado* and a cap made up of animal furs called *shambu*. However, the Namgyals and the *kazis* wore dresses made up of silk which had the inner lining of lamb's wool and a long boot with animal furs. The *lamas* wore red robes of cotton and silk and the Head *lama* was distinguished with his red hat and a higher seat during religious functions and second higher seat than the king if he attended it. The common Bhutia dress was made up of sheep wool and cotton procured from Tibet and kept themselves warm during winter by wearing two three *bakhus* together and did not wear trousers. The Bhutia women wore *bakhu* made up of silk, a blouse called *honju* and *shambu* was commonly worn, and a married women was distinguished by a piece of cloth called *pangden* tied on the abdomen. The Lepchas wore inner shirt made up of silk called *dumpra*, a loose pant *gyado*, a striped upper coat *pagi* and a cap called *rong thak- tuk*. Among the common Lepchas the dresses were made up of nettle thread. They also wore dresses made up of animal skins to keep them warm. The Lepcha women dress was upper blouse *tago* and the lower garment *domdyan* covering the shoulders made up silk and nettle thread. Among the Nepalese the common male dress was a long shirt called *daura* a loose pant *suruwal*, a cap called *topi* and wealthy Nepalese wore a coat up to waist called *ista* coat. It was made up of cotton and wool, and a coat called *lukuni*, made up of sheep's wool was also common among the Nepalese. The Nepalese women wore a blouse *chaubandi choli* with four strings made up of cotton and wool, a *sari* like garment called *faria* and it was tied on the abdomen

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99. *Ibid.*

with a long cloth called *patuki*. Sikkimese women were fond of ornaments which were made up conch shells, precious and semi-precious stones and animal bones. The women belonging to royal family and the *kazis* wore ornaments made of turquoises and rude gold.<sup>100</sup> The common women preferably adorned themselves with the ornaments of animal bones, conch shells and bamboos.

### **Health care:**

In Sikkim diseases were believed to be associated with evil spirits. Commonly the people of Sikkim depended on local faith healers or the shamans to ward off these spirits by performing certain ceremonies.<sup>101</sup> These Bhutia male and female shamans were called respectively as *pow* and *nezum*. The Lepchas called them *bongthing* and *mun bongthing* or *bijua* and *bijuani*. The Nepalese male and female shamans were respectively *dhami* and *dhamini* or sometimes as *jhankris* and *jhankrinis*. Commonly these evil spirits were offered fruits, rice cakes, liquor made of millet, eggs and chicken were sacrificed to satisfy them. The common evil spirits believed by the Bhutias were *dae*, *simbu*, *dud* and *sendem*. The first three were believed to cause severe headache, abdominal pain and digginess and were treated by offering a chicken by the *pow* and *nezum*. *Sendem* was believed to be an unsatisfied spirit living near a gorge or streams and caused repeated yawning and vomiting tendency. It was also believed to hurt their cattle such as the loss in quantity in milk. It was treated by throwing some rice outside their house and offering some eggs and still if the patient did not recover chicken had to be sacrificed. The Lepcha *manyam* spirit was the spirit of the river causing severe headache. *Sower* was the spirit of the forest which caused abdominal pain. These two spirits were satisfied by sacrificing a chicken and throwing rice. *Mung* was a female spirit which cause hurt to new born and the mother and was offered eggs to satisfy them. Among the Limboos and the Nepalese the common spirits causing diseases were

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100. Sir Richard Temple, *op. cit.* p. 197

101. Appendix-C, p. xxxi

*shikari*, *masan* and *shi-hae*. *Shikari* was the spirit forest which even caused death by vomiting blood. *Masan* was both spirits of rivers and forests causing headache and stomach pain. In both cases fowl and eggs were sacrificed and offered to the spirit. *Shi-hae* was said to be the cause of some minor diseases such as mild headache or pain in the body and eggs were offered to satisfy it. It was also believed to be the spirit of those who died of unnatural death. In such a case a black fowl had to be sacrificed and *dhami* called the spirit and let speak through him. The *dhami* later conveyed the message to the members of the family that what desires the spirit had before his death. After satisfying the spirit the *dhami* used to kill the *shi-hae* by chanting some hymns and offerings so that such death was not repeated in the family. Among the Nepalese such treatment of diseases was very elaborate. The *dhami* had a very different dress and beads of animal and human bones which he wore during performing oblations and sacrifices. It was called *chinta* and he danced around the altar and if needed in the courtyard and round the house, beating a drum made of animal skins and plates of bell metal. Such event was attended by the villagers to witness the prowess of the *dhami* and if the patient recovered then he was renowned as a powerful faith healer. Sometimes the faith healers were also said to be the carriers of evil spirits and sent to those houses causing harm to the members of that family. In such a case the patient hardly recovered if the same faith healer did not treat the patient.

The Buddhists performed certain *pujas* or ceremonies in their houses and in the monasteries with the help of the *lamas* to ward off the evil spirits. They also believed in ghosts and called them *dae*, *mon salang* and *ajyo-ana* and *lamas* were employed to ward them off. The *lamas* worshipped the images of these ghosts on a paper and after the ceremonies were over it was either burnt or buried. The other way was to make a figure with wheat or barley flour and kept on the pathway. Besides treating diseases with the help of shamans and the *lamas*, Tibetan medicine were also used in Sikkim

under the guidance of Tibetan doctors or the *amji*. The Nepalese took the help of *baidang* who were experts in treating fractures of bones.

Among the diseases reported during the Namgyal period skin diseases and goitre was common and cases of smallpox were reported. Goitre was commonly due to the calcareous nature of water drunk by the people.<sup>102</sup> Leprosy was common skin disease and it was usually believed to be caused by the *nagas* or serpent spirits. It was also believed to be caused by digging of the soil where these *nagas* lived, throwing stones on them, throwing of tea, water and boiling tea which was said to excite the wrath of the serpent spirits.<sup>103</sup> However, the common cause of this disease was believed to be the consequence of the sins of former lives. Some cases of smallpox were reported during the Namgyal rule. It was due to the contact with the plains where it was common. People also believed that British were also carriers of this disease that was why the Sikkimese officials did not allow British missions to enter Tibetan borders in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Rheumatism and swelling of bones were common in the higher altitudes due to excessive cold.<sup>104</sup> The people had no idea of treating leprosy and smallpox and the only solution was to keep them isolated in their houses. Regarding other diseases they depended on local faith healers and natural remedies for treating most of the diseases.<sup>105</sup> Barring few instances Sikkim was free from serious epidemics. The women at palace were taken care of by the maid servants and in case of sickness they were attended by the *lamas* for performing *pujas* and treated by the shamans and faith healers.<sup>106</sup> The pregnant women were looked after by female attendants called *sudeni* and took care of them during child birth. However, due to the absence of hospitals and dispensaries before 1890 many women lost their lives during childbirth and the queens and noble women too lost their lives during such period.

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102. Sarat Chandra Das, *op. cit.*, p. 258

103. *Ibid.*, p. 260

104. J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals, Vol. I, op. cit.*, p. 94

105. *Administration Report, 1910-1911*, p.5

106. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 71

### **Crimes and punishments:**

Crimes were very rare in Sikkim except few cases and the grave offences under Sikkimese law were mostly considered as sins. The five sins were: (1) murder of mother, (2) murder of holy men, (3) murder of father, (4) making mischief amongst *lamas*, and (5) causing hurt to good men.<sup>107</sup> For these offences punishments were inflicted by putting out the eyes, cutting the throat, tongue and hands, being thrown from cliffs and being thrown into deep water.<sup>108</sup> The theft was punished by throwing into the prison or by cutting both hands. If a monk was accused of theft he was expelled from the monastery, flogged and banished by the monastic authority.<sup>109</sup> Certain crimes were punished by fines in cash and kind which varied accordance with the gravity of the offence. In the villages the village headman was assisted by the *lamas* in determining the crimes. The civil cases were solved by imposing fines and the criminal cases were referred to *dzongpons* and *kalons*. Some civil cases were also referred to the higher officials if the headman was unable to solve at his level. The *dzongpons* and *kalons* and later *kazis* exercised their civil and criminal powers to dispense justice.<sup>110</sup> They were too assisted by the *lamas* to determine the criminal cases and if was again undecided it was referred to the *chogyal*. The *chogyal* consulted the *dorje lopen* and in such cases the offenders were punished by putting them into prison or the body parts were cut or thrown into water by the palace guards.

### **Religious beliefs and festivals:**

The Lepchas and the Limboos worshipped both good and evil spirits, spirits of mountains, forests and rivers, and the *Nyingmapa* form of Tibetan Buddhism by the Bhutias. They were invoked and worshipped by sacrificing animals and oblations of eggs, rice cakes, fruits, grains and *murwa*. The shamans invoked them to make them

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107. *Ibid.* p. 49

108. *Ibid.*

109. Clements R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 327

110. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.* p. 62

happy and satisfied.<sup>111</sup> Among the Lepchas the worship of mountains, lakes and forests were called *bon* and *mun* and were performed by the *bongthings* and the shamans called the *bijuas* and *bijuanis*. However they did not pay heed to the good spirits as they believed that it did no harm to them. To the bad spirits, they believed that they dwell in every rock, cave and mountains and to them they prayed because it would hurt them. The *bijuas* and *bijuanis* and *bongthings* were employed for prayers and invocations. The *zingchungpas* and the *chakereys* were supposed to be the carrier of evil spirits and were asked to work of fetching water, fuels and sweep the yards.<sup>112</sup>

Among all forms of worship the Lepchas worshipped two mountains namely Kanchadzonga and Tendong hill. The former was regarded as the abode of their deity *Lyang-it-nyu-rum*. They worshipped Kanchadzonga after they had finished sowing rice and other grains for good harvest and the safeguard of their community and their country from natural calamities. Following their tradition, at Kabi Lunchok, keeping Kanchadzonga as a witness the Lepcha chief Thekong Tek and Tibetan chief Khye Bumsa of Kham province, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, concluded the treaty of blood brotherhood by sacrificing animals and soaking their feet with its blood. It was believed that the Lepcha chief erected nine stones facing Kanchadzonga and sprinkled the blood on it promising that the Lepchas and the descendents of Khye Bumsa would live in Sikkim as brothers. The mountain was kept as the witness of this event and the local spirits living under it were invoked and worshipped. The event was believed to have taken place on the full moon day of the seventh month of Tibetan calendar and was given the name of *Pang Labsol*.<sup>113</sup> Later with the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty the practice was modified by the *lamas* and declared to be the festival of the Buddhists throughout Sikkim.<sup>114</sup> Lepchas believed that the Tendong hill was the central part of their country. According to the tradition that during the creation of the universe a violent earthquake

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111. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* pp. 12-13

112. *Ibid.* p. 31

113. Uday Chandra Basista, *Sikkimka Chadparva, op. cit.*, p. 7

114. J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals, Vol. I*, p. 225



shook the world and several rivers were created which resulted in flooding of these rivers. In Sikkim too the Teesta and the Rangit rivers devastated their country and it was covered with water. In order to save themselves they climbed the Tendong hill which was untouched by the waters. After several days of prayers to their creator the flood subsided and their people remained safe. To show their respect and gratitude for being safe the Lepchas started to worship the Tendong hill by called it *Tendong-lo-rum faat*.<sup>115</sup> It is noticed that the Buddhist form of worship was modified in Sikkim and the invocation of the spirits of woods, mountains and water did not form the part of their earlier worship. The *lamas* modified their practices to suit their requirements thereby formally recognizing the spiritual supremacy of Buddhist faith in Sikkim. The *lamas* acknowledged the worship of Kanchandzonga mountain by the Lepchas by recognizing it as a festival of the Buddhists thereby accelerating the process of the conversion of the Lepchas to a new faith. However they did not altogether leave their old practice and continued the worship of mountains, lakes and rivers in the modified form.<sup>116</sup>

The Limboos too were nature worshippers. They had five categories of priests namely *phedangba*, *bijua*, *dhami*, *baidang* and *srijanga* who performed the service of religion and secular ceremonies.<sup>117</sup> The *phedangba* conducted religious ceremonies and fortune tellers, *bijua* were trained to shamanic worship, *dhami* practiced witchcraft and expelled evil spirits, *baidang* were physicians and *srijanga* had exclusive privilege of interpreting religious observances and rites.<sup>118</sup> However their practice was same and invoked the good and bad spirits of nature and worshipped them by sacrificing fowls and offering fruits and grains for their good harvest and prayed for safeguard against calamities of all kinds.

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115. Uday Chandra Basista, *Sikkimka Chadparva*, *op. cit.*, p. 50

116. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.* p. 70

117. Sarat Chandra Das, *op. cit.*, p. 6

118. *Ibid.*

With the consecration of the Namgyals a number of *gonpas* were built for the propagation and conversion of the people towards Buddhism.<sup>119</sup> The Bhutias and the ancestors of Namgyals had already adopted Buddhism under the patronage of Guru Padmasambhava in Tibet. Later with the patronage of the three *lamas* who installed Phuntsog Namgyal on the throne of Sikkim worked extensively for propagation of this faith. The Lepchas and a few Limboos adopted this faith and became Buddhists.<sup>120</sup> The *lamas* performed the religious ceremonies and chanted hymns and prayers in the monasteries and were engaged in chasing evil spirits.<sup>121</sup> The other religious festivals celebrated by the Bhutias and the Buddhists in Sikkim were *Saga Dawa*, *Drukpa Tseshi*, *Lhabab Duchen* and *Kagyat*. *Saga Dawa* was celebrated on the full moon day of the fifth month of Bhutia calendar in memory of Buddha's birthday, his enlightenment and his *parinirvana*. The first sermon given by the Buddha to his disciples at Sarnath was celebrated in Sikkim by the Buddhists as *Drukpa Tseshi*. It falls on the fourth day of the sixth month according to the Bhutia calendar. During this day the Buddhists lighted butter lamps in their houses. On the twenty second day of ninth month of the Bhutia calendar *Lhabab Duchen* was celebrated in memory of return of Buddha from heaven after meeting his mother. During this day the *lamas* read holy books in the *gonpas* and worshipped Buddha. A religious dance was organized in the *gonpas* to impress eight *kagyats* or tantric deities and pray them to ward off evil spirits responsible for human sufferings.

The Nepalese were mostly Hindus and believed in the four fold caste system. However they also worshipped local spirits by sacrificing chicken and by offering fruits and rice balls. The Namgyals and the people of Sikkim in general were tolerant to Hindus and had great respect for *Brahmins*.<sup>122</sup> The entry of Hinduism in Sikkim could

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119. *Ibid.* p. 19

120. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.* p. 70

121. *Ibid.*

122. *Family papers of late Nandalal Upadhaya Brahman*, possessed by his grandson Mr. Dharnidhar Khatiwada Brahman. Appendix B (Part-VII)

be traced in the early 1770s during the reign of Prithvi Narayan Shah of Nepal who had united his country under the banner of one ruler and one religion *i.e.*, Hinduism. During this period the borders of Sikkim touched Morung in the plains of Nepal and the unguarded frontiers of Sikkim in the west was the entry point of this religion in Sikkim. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the frequent wars with Sikkim and Nepal led to the occupation of certain portion of Sikkim in the west. The Nepalese settled down as common people and were able to influence other people in these areas, religiously. These people were Hindus and influenced the Limboos and Magars of Sikkim who started worshipping the nature in the form of female Hindu pantheons namely, Durga, Devi and Chandi. These female deities were worshipped in the form of nature by erecting stones under a big tree, on a hill top, cave or a gorge. Long bamboo poles were erected tied with red, white and yellow clothes as flags. These poles and flags were changed every year during *Baisakhi purnima* or the full moon day of *Baisakha* month of Nepalese calendar. On this day the people of the village gathered on the particular place of worship and prayed together by offering milk, *ghew* and some of them sacrificed goats and chicken to the deity; and prayed for good harvest, to save them and their animals from natural calamities and for good progress. Among the Hindu male pantheons were Shiva was worshipped in the form of *lingas* or conical stones and as Mahadev, Mahakal and Kirateshwar. Stones were erected depicting this deity and were worshipped on *Shivaratri*. In the middle of the nineteenth century Laxmidas Pradhan, the Newar trader, built a Shiva temple at Rongli in East Sikkim, by bringing workers and bell metals from Nepal. Rama, the incarnation of Hindu pantheon Vishnu was worshipped and on the ninth day of Nepalese calendar of *Chaita* his birthday was celebrated as Ramnawami and *chaita dasai*. In the month of *Aswin* the Nepalese celebrated *bada dasai* as the killing of Ravana, the king of the devils or *rakshasas* of Hindu mythology by Rama. It was also celebrated as the victory of Hindu goddess Durga over Mahisasur, a devil. It was celebrated to enjoy victory of good over evil. When this month approached they cleaned their houses and painted with red and white mud. During this festival the elders bless

the young members of their families and younger relatives by putting *tika* or the rice moisten with curd on their forehead. Some of them even sacrificed goats and buffaloes to goddess Durga and asked for power. The return of Rama, the Hindu pantheon from fourteen years' of exile was celebrated for three days as *tihar* during the month of *Kartika* of Nepalese calendar. The first day was of *tihar* the Nepalese women roamed in the villages in the night singing *vailini* and men enjoyed *deusi i. e.*, songs in praise of lord Rama.

Christianity entered Sikkim in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the activities of the Scottish Missionaries. In 1885 William Macfarlane visited Sikkim to carry on his activity however Thutob Namgyal did not allow him and his team to enter Sikkim. However during Thutob's retreat to Chumbi in 1887 he could not prevent Macfarlane's missionary works from Kalimpong.<sup>123</sup> Young converts were trained at Kalimpong from 1887 onwards witnessing the beginning of Christianity and mission schools in Sikkim. These new converts helped the missionaries as interpreters, health workers and educators, and encouraged the Sikkimese to adopt this faith. Mass prayers were organized and lighted candles in their houses on Christmas to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and prayers were organized on Good Friday as His crucification.

The festivals celebrated during the Namgyal period were influenced by the religion as well as the traditional worship and beliefs. The non-religious festival celebrated by the Lepchas called *Namsoong* as their new year from the twenty ninth day of final twelfth month. It was celebrated in memory of the victory over *Laso Mung* who was killed by their leader Tamsang Thing on the twenty ninth day of the twelfth month of the Lepchas.<sup>124</sup> It was celebrated as the victory of good over evil and lasted for seven days. The Bhutias celebrated *Loosong* as the beginning of a new year. *Lo* meant year and *soong* meant celebration in Bhutia language. After the collection of annual harvest

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123. Albert Craig, *A Scot in Sikkim*, date and publication not mentioned, p. 6

124. Uday Chandra Basista, *Sikkimka Chadparva*, *op. cit.*, p. 28

they stored grains and visited *gonpas* to witness religious dances performed by the lamas to ward off evil spirits and pray for good year ahead.<sup>125</sup> The common Nepalese non religious festivals were *magh sakranti*, *asar pandhra*, *sawney sakranti*. The Nepalese celebrated *magh sakranti* on the first day of the tenth month of their calendar. On this day fairs called *mela* were organized and people rejoiced by visiting these places. Yams of various kinds called *tarul* were eaten by the people. During *asar pandhra* the Nepalese celebrated the end of sowing rice during rainy season. They celebrated this day on the fifteenth day of the third Nepalese month of *Asar* by eating beaten rice with curd to relieve them from the restless work. The first day of the fourth month of *Sawan* was celebrated as *sawney sakranti*. On this day firewood were thrown in their agricultural lands believing that it would keep them free from skin diseases.<sup>126</sup>

### **Recreation:**

Hunting was the common means of entertainment among the people of Sikkim and animals were killed commonly for food. Bows and arrows were the main weapon and more easily they were killed by laying traps, poisoning, nets, hooks and shooting.<sup>127</sup> The Lepchas were good hunters and fishermen.<sup>128</sup> Sikkim being a Buddhist state hunting and killing of animals was not allowed during the fourth month of Bhutia calendar and animal sacrifice was prohibited.<sup>129</sup> It was generally prohibited in the fifth month of Bhutia calendar *Dawa Jhepa* in which *Saga Dawa* is celebrated commemorating the birthday of Gautama Buddha, his enlightenment and the attainment of *Nirvana*. It was regarded as the holiest Buddhist festivals falling on the full moon day of the fifth month of Bhutia calendar. Dice and gambling was common among all

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125. *Ibid.*

126. *Ibid.* p. 58

127. The Sikkim Code, *op. cit.* p. 20

128. Sarat Chandra Das, *op. cit.* p. 1

129. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. 48

Sikimese. *Khopi*, the common game of mere skills, was common among the Nepalese. The playing of dice and gambling was socially permitted during festivals.<sup>130</sup>

### **Dances:**

Among the Buddhists some of the dances had religious significance. The young *lamas* were taught about these dances from the very beginning of their entry into monasteries. Religious mask dances were organized in monasteries during *Kagyat*.<sup>131</sup> The *lamas* used to dance in a group wearing eight different masks in order to appease eight *Kagyats* or Buddhist *tantric* deities. Through this form of dance the *lamas* prayed to the deities to ward off evil spirits who brought human sufferings in the form of illness and unnatural deaths. A year of prosperity, good harvest and safeguard from natural calamities were longed for.<sup>132</sup> Some of the monasteries like Pemayangtse, Tashiding and Ralang organized mask dances as a part of their annual religious rituals organized mask dances. Among the Bhutias the common form of dance was *cham-se*. They danced in a group holding *khadas* in their hands and at the end they offered it to each other. *Cham-se* was a form of entertainment for them during festivals, marriages, during coronation ceremony of the ruler and their birthdays. Their common musical instruments were *gyalong* or trumpet and drum called *dhangro*. The Lepcha traditional form of dance was *alok* and it signified the beginning of harvest season and festivals. Two types of flute used by them were *puntong pulit* which was of short length and a longer one called *ikbu pulit* made of bamboo formed their musical instrument. A guitar like instrument with strings made up of mule's hairs called *dap-ne* was used by the Lepchas.<sup>133</sup> Among the Nepalese different form of dances existed such as *maruni*, *dhan nach*, *sangini* and *selo*. *Maruni* dance could be performed in a group of both male and female wearing a long skirt called *jama* and males wore an additional head dress called

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130. The Sikkim Code, *op. cit.* pp. 5-13

131. Appendix-C, p. xxxi

132. Uday Chandra Basistha, *Sikkimka Chadparva*, *op. cit.*, p. 28

133. As informed by Phur Tshering Lepcha, *op. cit.*

*feta*. *Dhan naach* also known as *ya-lak* was mostly performed by the Limboos. *Sangini* was the common form of dance performed by the Nepalese Brahmin and Kshatriya women preferably when the young bride was about to leave her parents after the marriage ceremony at her house was over. *Selo* was performed by the Nepalese beating a small drum like instrument called *damphu*. The other common musical instruments used by the Sikkimese during festivals and dances were drums made of goat skins called *chabrung* and *madal*, a stringed instrument made up of bamboo called *tungna*, a violin like instrument with the strings made up of mule's hair called *sarangi*, *binayo* and *murchunga* made up of bamboo sticks.

### **Educational System under the Namgyals:**

Sikkim had its own traditional monastic system of education based on the study of religious scriptures under the Namgyals. The intention of this type of education was to benefit a learner with religious knowledge and to prepare them for the religious order. During the Namgyal period a number of *gonpas* (monasteries), were built and some of which acted as educational institutions as in the cases of Pemayangtse and Tashiding monasteries.<sup>134</sup> From the very inception of the Namgyal rule in Sikkim the propagation of Buddhist faith was kept in minds and the Namgyals worked towards the conversion of the Lepchas and the Limboos to Buddhism. The third Namgyal ruler, Chagdor Namgyal was very much particular towards the spread of Buddhist faith.<sup>135</sup> He, being an ordained monk and distinguished Buddhist and Tibetan literature,<sup>136</sup> commanded by a proclamation that the second of every three sons of a Bhutia family must be a monk of the Pemayangtse Monastery.<sup>137</sup> For the promotion of Buddhism among the Limboos he also made open this monastery to them. To make the Lepcha language a written

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134. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 19

135. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. 11

136. *Sikkim – A Concise Chronicle*, *op. cit.* p. 4

137. *Ibid.* p. 5

language he invented alphabets for the Lepcha.<sup>138</sup> Chagdor Namgyal became a progenitor of Buddhist learning in Sikkim.

The *gonpas*, where monastic education were imparted, were - Sangachelling (estd.1697), Pemayangtse (estd.1705), Tashiding (estd. 1716), Phensang (estd.1840), Karthok (estd. 1840), and Enchey (1840). In these *gonpas* *Nyingmapa* form of Buddhist studies were undertaken. The *gonpas* of Ralong (estd. 1730) and Phodong (estd. 1740) later became well known for *Gelugpa* school of Buddhism.<sup>139</sup>

In all these *gonpas*, to be a *lama*, there was a system of apprenticeship prevailed for new entrants. A young boy of seven to eight years was brought to the monastery by his parents, after severe tests in religious education in the Buddhist scripture; the young boy was admitted into the Buddhist religious order.<sup>140</sup> Young monks were put under the care of the elders and seniors, who were responsible to teach them the preliminaries of the religion. In the initial stages these young monks were taught traditional ritualistic prayers, religion, uses of religious musical instruments during rites, practices and dances.<sup>141</sup> This Tibetan system of monastic educational system, as Dr. Chowang Acharya opines that, very much resembled with the *gurukul* system that prevailed in India in ancient period and developed in Tibet in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>142</sup>

Before the monastic system of education began in Pemayangtse and Tashiding *gonpas* of Sikkim, young boys were sent to Mindrol–Ling and Dorji–Dak monasteries of Tibet for getting instructions in discipline and religious rites. After their education was over they came back to their respective *gonpas* and used to teach whatever they had

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138. *Ibid.*

139. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. 257

140. *Administration Report, 1933-1934*, p. 45

141. Dr. Chowang Acharya, "Aspects of Monastic Education in Sikkim", Gangtok, *Bulletin of Tibetology*, 1998, p.1

142. *Ibid.*



learnt to the interested devotees. Under this circumstance, only a few people received the education of ritualistic practices.<sup>143</sup> This was the beginning of education in Sikkim.

Sikkimese monastic education was based on the model of Samye monastery of Tibet.<sup>144</sup> After the introduction of importance of religion and the rituals the young monk students were to undergo studies. They were taught initially Tibetan alphabets, and then to read and recite by heart some special prayer books. After some years of reading, writing and reciting of religious scriptures by heart he was for the first time brought under monastic rules. His hair was to be shaved and had to take certain vows and to dress as a monk. He was given a religious name and was subjected to the monastic rules and discipline. Before being admitted as a junior monk the boy had to work as an apprentice running errands for and help out the elder monks besides getting trained in making cakes made of wheat flour to be offered to the deities called *torma* and playing various religious instruments.<sup>145</sup> When he acquired knowledge in various rituals and practices he was free to learn science of languages, astrology and painting. He was given certain responsibilities to serve the *gonpas*. On completion of all these services he became an important functionary of the *gonpa*.<sup>146</sup>

In the monasteries of Sikkim the boy candidate for admission was usually brought aged between eight and ten years. The parentage of the boy was enquired and the Pemayangtse monastery admitted only candidates belonging to Bhutias only.<sup>147</sup> The boy monk was physically examined to ascertain that he was free from any deformity or defect. After the physical examination he was made over to any senior relative he might have amongst the monks. If he did not have any relative then his horoscope was consulted and one of the monks was fixed upon as being his most suitable tutor. The boy's father was required to give presents to the tutor included tea, eatables and *murwa*.

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143. *Ibid.*, p. 3

144. *Ibid.*, p. 1

145. *Ibid.*, p. 4

146. *Ibid.*

147. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 294

The boy was to be escorted by the tutor inside the hall where the monks were assembled. The tutor was required to state the parentage of the boy and other details and he had to ask the permission of elder monks to take the boy as a pupil. When it was approved by the Head *lama* the boy was taken a probationer.<sup>148</sup>

As a probationer the new boy monk was to remain under the care of the tutor. His hair was cropped without any ceremony and wore his ordinary dress. The tutor taught him Tibetan alphabets and afterwards to read and recite by heart small booklets of prayer books, charms, *sutras* and offerings and to make *tormas* and incense. He was instructed to speak according to their norms. H.H. Risley observed the manner of their speech and remarked that, “He was to speak as bold as lion, gentle and soft as hare, impressive as serpent, pointed as an arrow and evenly balanced.”<sup>149</sup> Using coarse language, impoliteness, talking with pride, want of foresight, harsh names, staring, immoral conduct and stealing were regarded as the acts of low born and not of a monk. He was to have a belief in books, respect teachers, to abstain from using abusive language, respect old men and women and not to borrow and he was not to speak of a subject of which he was ignorant.<sup>150</sup>

The young monk had to go under rigorous training for two to three years. In this period corporal chastisement was inflicted in him. He was dismissed if he was found stupid and if he proved to be intelligent, he was admitted to regular novitiate. The object of this probationary stage was to weed out unpromising individuals.<sup>151</sup> After passing this stage he was designated as a learner and was brought under monastic rules. His head was ceremoniously shaved, vows were taken, assumed the dress of a monk, and was given a religious name. An interview was conducted by the elder *lamas* and if found satisfactory then he was brought under general rules of the *gonpa*. The parent of the

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148. *Ibid.*, p. 295

149. *Ibid.*

150. *Ibid.*, p 297

151. *Ibid.*

young monk had to prepare feast for the monks and gifts in the form of flesh of pig and bulls were to be given to all *lamas*. The wealthy parents had to give presents to one hundred and eight *lamas* in cash. The poor parents were also required to give cash to these *lamas* however, the amount was subsequently lower. The young monk's admission could not be confirmed if the presents in form of money and flesh were not made to the institution.<sup>152</sup>

The professional examination was conducted within a year of his admission and he was expected to get through. Until he passed the first and second examination he was to perform the service of serving tea and *murwa* to the elder monks in the Great Assembly Hall of the *gonpa*.<sup>153</sup> The examination was conducted in the presence of the assembled monks and the candidate was to stand up in the assembly and recite by heart the prescribed book. The first examination lasted for three days. Severe punishments were inflicted if he failed to pass and repeated failure for three consecutive years resulted in monk's rejection of membership from the order of the monks. Readmission was possible on payments of presents and money by parents.

When the boy monk recited by heart all the prescribed books satisfactorily he was promoted to the order of junior monks and was not subjected to any further ordeal of examination.<sup>154</sup> He was then presented with a scarf of honour and considered a member of the Order. From that date he was given a higher seat in the Assembly Hall. He was now entitled to receive his share of money and gifts and got privilege to drink *murwa* along with his teacher. However, he was not to discuss any great subject with his masters. He was taught to pay deepest respect to teachers and to place implicit on all his sayings.<sup>155</sup>

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152. *Ibid.*, p. 298

153. *Ibid.*, p. 299

154. *Ibid.*

155. *Ibid.*

Monks were prescribed certain duties to perform. *Tormas* had to be prepared for offerings to gods and demons. He had to blow conch shells, copper trumpets and had liberty to opt himself as a teacher. He was then allowed to sit and recite the verses with his teachers making a row according to their position.<sup>156</sup> The monks were required to take subjects like Tibetan astrology, medicine and painting but the majority of the new monks were content with the position of ordinary monk. To become a successful chaplain or family priest he had to recite by heart all the litanies and other sacerdotal ritual without consulting their books. After the completion of the course the monks were permitted to reside in their villages as village-priest for the convenience of people. They were to return to their parent monastery at definite intervals and monastery kept rolls of all its members and were punished if they remained absent for long periods.<sup>157</sup>

When a monk left his parent institution and settled in his village he was free to lead a married life and to perform the service of village-priest. He performed the rites of naming a new born by consulting Tibetan horoscope, rituals and performed death ceremony. The wealthy people invited the *lamas* from the nearest monasteries. It was the right of the particular monastery situated in each village to perform death rites and it was regarded unlawful for the monks of any other monastery to interfere in this matter.<sup>158</sup> When the monks returned to their village they got themselves engaged in secular pursuits. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries monastic orders started falling into disorder. The monks often broke vows of their celibacy, led a lazy and listless life. The celibacy among monks fell into disuse.<sup>159</sup> Due to these reasons the title of *lama* which was earlier extended by courtesy to all the monks now strictly belonged to the priests who were selected from among the monks.<sup>160</sup> Many of the monks abandoned their

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156. Appendix-C, p. xxxii

157. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 302

158. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.*, p. 59

159. Richard Temple, *Travels in Nepal and Sikkim Two Diaries of Travel in Sikkim in 1875*, Kathmandu, Bibliotheca Himalayica, 1977 (reprint), p. 65

160. *Ibid.*, p. 66

religious career when they grew older. The reason was they did not want to become priests as they were unable to follow or practice the strict discipline of the order.<sup>161</sup>

### **Composition of monastic institutions:**

In every monastery the officials consisted of the steward, the rod bearer, the deputy master and the master. The master was the *dorje lopen* and deputy master was the *Um-dse*. Their position was recognized by their dress of yellow silk tunic and scarlet scarf and wore a scarlet head-dress.<sup>162</sup> The head of the principal monasteries in Sikkim lived at king's court. The monks constituted the educated class in Sikkim during the Namgyal rule. Whatever education existed for other people was in their hands. These monks and priests married frequently however, celibacy was the original rule of the order and this rule too fell into disuse in the subsequent periods.<sup>163</sup>

The monastery had a governing body too called the *dutchi*. It consisted of *dorje lopen*, *khenpo* and *chultrim*. They were responsible for the administration of monastery, its lands, food, clothing and shelter of the monks. The monks could be promoted to these posts according to their seniority and their qualifications. The *dutchi* was made uniform to all the monastic institutions of Sikkim by the proclamation of the third Namgyal ruler, Chagdor Namgyal.<sup>164</sup>

### **Monastic administration:**

The monastic education also prepared a class of officials in Sikkim who were responsible for the administration of monasteries under them. The chief *lama* of Sikkim was selected from the Pemayangtse Monastery and was called the *kubgen lama* and was

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161. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet*, Delhi, First Indian Edition 1992, p. 201

162. Sir Richard Temple, *Journals Kept in Hyderabad, Kashmir, Sikkim and Nepal*, New Delhi, 1977 (reprint), p. 210

163. *Ibid.*, pp. 215-216

164. As informed by *Lama Dup Tshering*, Age-72, *Dorje Lopen* (Head *Lama*) of Old Rumtek Monastery, on 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2011

an incarnation or *avatara* of earlier *kubgen lama*.<sup>165</sup> He had the honour of anointing with holy water to the reigning ruler of Sikkim.<sup>166</sup> The *dorje-lopen* upheld the dignity of religion by meditating and did not take part in secular matters.<sup>167</sup> Next in the order was *um-dse* who was the Principal and Chief Celebrant and supervised the whole establishment of the monastery and controlled the discussions. He could rise to the position of the *dorje-lopen* and if the *dorje-lopen* did not retire or the post did not remain vacant then the office was held for life.<sup>168</sup> However, *um-dse* was always more learned of the two and enjoyed almost equal rank with that of *dorje-lopen*. *Chor-tim-ba* was the next post which was tenable for one year and was the Provost Marshal and was appointed by the vote of the *tapa* or the group of learner *lamas* of the monastery. The office of *chor-tim-ba* required the qualities of pre-eminent learning, popularity, tact and the ability to enforce discipline and respect. He was the in-charge of library and to read out the *Cha-yig* constitution to the assembled monks. He was the recognized head of the monks and their spokesman and was appointed for one year and could be reappointed for more than one term. The next office was that of the *chi-nyer* who had the power to hear complaints from the *tapas* and communicated to the higher officers and was to communicate the order to the *tapas* after consultations. *Chi-nyer* was the Commissariat Manager for three years. After completing the stage of learner an *u-chho* was selected from *ku-nyer* and was the Head of Religion and for the laity he was *ya-pa* or the Reverend Father. The *u-chho* from Pemayangtse Monastery used to act as the family priest to the Sikkim *chogyal* for few years. The next post was that of *ku-nyer* and he was in-charge of image care-taker and additional charge of dusting and arranging the objects on the altar and making the offerings of water, lamps, sacred food and the removal of the same. He was promoted to that post after working as *chhab-dren* or pourer of holy water for one year. *Chab-dren* was the pourer of holy water who was promoted from

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165. Sir Richard Temple, *op. cit.* p. 176

166. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 258

167. *Ibid.*, p. 304

168. *Ibid.*, pp. 303-304

ordinary learner *lamas* after two to three years of learning. The lowest grade was that of the conch shell blower or the *tapa* and a *tapa* was an ordinary monk or the learner. However, the three posts namely the *ku-nyer*, *chab-dren* and *tapa* were regarded jointly as the learner stage. Almost all the *lamas* of Sikkim had to pass through the stage of a learner to attain higher post.

### **Education under the British Administration:**

With the appointment of J. C. White as the first British Political Officer of Sikkim witnessed the dawn of modern English education in Sikkim. The British had their interest to transform the social structure of the state and J. C. White took special interest in educational reforms in Sikkim. He sent the young prince Sidkyong Tulku to Darjeeling and later to Oxford for higher education. Along with Sidkeong Tulku, J. C. White also sent the wards of the *kazis* and *lamas* of Sikkim to Darjeeling for English education.<sup>169</sup> With the establishment of British Political Office at Gangtok in 1889 the Government decided to impart education by establishing schools according to the curriculum followed in the neighbouring province of Bengal.<sup>170</sup> The British Political Officer tried to train the successor of the Sikkimese throne in modern English education. His idea was that if these influential sections of society were given modern English education they would be fully influenced by the western ideas.

Prior to the British administration in Sikkim the development of Darjeeling played a vital role in education. Influential *lamas* and the *kazis* sent their wards to Darjeeling to get modern education. During his visit in 1873, J. W. Edgar, had also explained the establishment of schools in Darjeeling and obtained the consent of *kazis* and the *lamas* to send their wards there.<sup>171</sup>

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169. J. C. White, *op. cit.*, p. 95

170. *Administration Report*, 1908-1909

171. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.*, p. 23

Christian Missionaries also played an important role in the development of modern English education in Sikkim. Vok mission school was the first Mission school in Sikkim which was established in 1881.<sup>172</sup> Later the Scottish Universities Mission opened up schools in Sikkim along with their missionary activities. The schools were opened at Daramdin, Sadam, Temi, Pakyong, Chakung, Soreng, Dentam, Namthang, Rhenock, and a lace school at Vok. Scandinavian Missions opened up two schools at Mangan and Song.<sup>173</sup> With the missionary activities modern education started in Sikkim which got support from the first British Political Officer. Weaving schools came up in north Sikkim and later a school for girls was opened by Mary Scott at Gangtok. It was possible for the Scottish Missionary, Mary Scott due to her cordial relation with the queen Yeshey Dolma.<sup>174</sup>

The modern schools established in Sikkim both managed by the Government and the Missions paid particular attention towards the physical training of the students along with the subjects like English, Tibetan, mathematics, vernacular, history, geography, drawing and painting. The Sikkimese students excelled in drawing and painting, design and engraving on metal and wood. Later on two students from Sikkim were sent to Patna and Kalimpong for elementary medical course.<sup>175</sup> In the beginning reading was difficult when all other boys in the little room read aloud at the same time. The concept of development of education in Sikkim was in its infancy, physical punishments were frequently used as an aid to instruction. According to the locals it was useless to try to teach them without beating them.<sup>176</sup> In the beginning the upper sections of Sikkimese society became conscious and started sending their wards to schools both in Sikkim and outside. Thus it was due to the effort of the British administration that

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172. *A Brief Educational History of Sikkim*, Gangtok, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok, 2001, p. 5

173. *Administration Report*, 1922-1923, p. 17

174. J. C. White, *op. cit.*, p. 32

175. Charles Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 204

176. *Ibid.*, p. 205



Sikkim came to know the value of modern education which had a tremendous effect in the democratic movement that took place in Sikkim in the later years.



## CHAPTER IV

### PASTORALISM, AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND COMMERCE

The economy of Sikkim under the Namgyals depended on agriculture, forests and its produce for their daily needs. They practiced traditional method of farming and shifting cultivation. Sikkim was covered mostly by forests and its produce was utilized for firewood, timber, fodder, pastures and hunting. With the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty a few changes were noticed in the economy till the advent of the British. A system of land revenue was introduced and revenue was collected in kind. People could settle down on any uninhabited land and they were not measured. Trade and commerce existed and the barter system was in vogue. Due to limited economic resources Sikkim was referred as a poor kingdom by the first British Political Officer.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Land Revenue System:**

Sikkim, prior to the establishment of Namgyal dynasty was theoretically under the Tibetan authority however, in practice, there were hardly any control over the land except enjoying certain tributes in kinds from the people living there. The country was covered mostly by forests and the daily needs of the people were fulfilled by collection of forest products and hunting. The scanty population and the existence of large forests was enough for them to survive. Under such circumstances the system of land ownership among them was almost absent. Guru Tashi, after establishment of his authority in the area, as stated in chapter II, received newly gathered crops, grains, fruits and forest products from the Lepchas as tributes.<sup>2</sup> After the consecration Phuntsog

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1. J. C. White, *Sikkim and Bhutan: Twenty One Years on the North – East Frontier (1887-1908)*, London, 1909, p. 29
  2. Thutob Namgyal, and Yeshey Dolma, , *History of Sikkim*, Gangtok, (Unpublished Typescript), 1908, p. 15

Namgyal, the great grandson of Guru Tashi, as *Chogyal* of Sikkim, the *Chogyal* enjoyed the tribute, the amount, however, not known.

With the formation of the state, the *Chogyal* became the head of the state, sole proprietor of land and the absolute owner of all subjects. The whole state was divided into twelve districts and distributed among the *kalons* and *dzongpons* who again divided their share among some cultivators, *singpos*. These *singpos* were granted lands on certain conditions that cultivable lands would be created by clearing the forests and dividing the produce equally between a cultivator and the landlords (*kalons* and *dzongpons*) as *che-se*, or asking the cultivator to pay certain amount (later termed it as *kut*) in kind. However, a *singpo* could settle down on any unoccupied land and cultivate and no formality was needed for this purpose. The first observant in this respect J. Ware Edgar, Superintendent of Darjeeling during his visit to Sikkim in 1873, observed that, "...A man may settle down on and cultivate any land he may find unoccupied without going through any formality." The cultivator did not have any right on the land he occupied, neither he had the right to sell the land he cultivated, however, he was allowed to sub-let the land to other cultivators. He further observed that, "...The cultivators have no title to the soil... and a man who has terraced a piece of hill-side could not sell the land, but is allowed to sell the right of using the terraces."<sup>3</sup> The amount of land revenue paid by a cultivator was unknown and the amount of the tax to be paid by the cultivator was also not fixed as the lands were not measured and assessed. The revenue payer personally assessed the amount to be paid to the state. The system of paying land revenue was on the basis of the property, both movable and unmovable, of the cultivator. In addition, the cultivator had to give his service to the state in the form of labour, and if he did not give the service the amount of his whole property was roughly assessed. In this case the value of his wives and children, slaves, cattle and furniture were also taken into account and his contribution to the state was

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3. J. W. Edgar, *Report on a Visit to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier, in October, November and December, 1873*, Kathmandu, Bibliotheca Himalayica, 1969 (reprint), p. 62

fixed accordingly.<sup>4</sup> In other words if a cultivator had a big family and had a less extant of fields then he had to pay more revenue if he did not give service to the state in the form of labour.

Another feature of land revenue taxation in Sikkim in the Namgyal period was that the amount to be paid to the state by a cultivator depended on the distance of the cultivated lands with the capital of the kingdom. The people living near to capital had to contribute the larger share and those at the remote had to contribute lesser share through local officials.<sup>5</sup> The local officers, *i.e.* *kalons* and *dzongpons*, collected the dues, a share of it kept for their expenditure and the surplus was sent to the *Chogyal* as his share.

The Tibetan Government made large grants of rent free lands to the Namgyals at Phari and Chumbi in Tibet; in return, they required to pay homage to the Tibetan officials during their visit to the adjoining areas. These lands were cultivated by their own men and some parts were cultivated by the Tibetans in the name of the Sikkim *Chogyal*. The *singpos* of these regions paid their dues directly to the *Chogyals*. During the reign of Chagdor Namgyal the right over these lands was lost for a time being however, later it was renewed.<sup>6</sup>

The migrant Tibetan herdsmen too paid land revenue to the ruler of Sikkim. They were not only herdsmen but also cultivators who cultivated lands both in Sikkim and Tibet. They used to come to Sikkim along with their herds and cultivated the lands of the Namgyals. These cultivators paid their revenue to the Tibetan king, but also were bound to do certain services to the *Chogyal* of Sikkim and supplied foods to the royal household in Sikkim as well as in Chumbi in Tibet.<sup>7</sup> They supplied food in form of *ghew* and *churpi*, which it was calculated in 1873 by J. Ware Edgar, at the value of Rs.

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4. *Ibid.*

5. J. C. White, *op. cit.* p. 26

6. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 32

7. Charles Bell, *Tibet: Past and Present*, Delhi, 1992 (reprint), p. 254

6 per year. According to him, "... They were also liable to some other demands, both in kind and service, however, the latter was occasional and not very heavy".<sup>8</sup>

It was in 1748, during the period of the fifth Namgyal ruler of Sikkim, Namgyal Phuntsog, a Tibetan Regent Rabden Sharpa, introduced a new system of land revenue on Tibetan lines called the *kang*. The rent on land whether paid by the tenant to the landlord or by a landlord to the government was based on *kang*. *Kang* was determined by the seeds required for a particular plot of land; again the requirement of seeds depended on the quality of land. In a particular area where the soil was good and fertile the seed were sown more closely than the poor quality soil which produced less.<sup>9</sup> Hence more seeds were needed to sow in fertile land than that of less fertile land and in such a case the *kang* was higher in the former and lesser in the latter.<sup>10</sup> Thus the revenue paid by the cultivator and the landlord on the basis of *kang* were different from district to district. One of the special feature of this kind of revenue was that *kang* could be paid in *ghew*.<sup>11</sup> However it is difficult to ascertain at present how much was the state share and how they converted the *kang* into *ghew*. As the system of *kang* was not accustomed with J. Ware Edgar which made him, most probably, to remark, thus, "...The land is not assessed, and pays no revenue. The assessment is on the revenue-payer personally."<sup>12</sup>

With the interaction of Sikkimese with the Nepalese in the nineteenth century, the system related to land revenue and taxation among the Nepalese found way into Sikkim. The Newars brought in the system of collection of revenue called *bisa panja* literally meaning five out of twenty i.e., one fourth of the produce (*bisa* means twenty and *panja* means five).<sup>13</sup> The Nepalese introduced the farming in Sikkim by terracing

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8. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.*, p. 4

9. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet, op. cit.* p. 301

10. *Ibid*

11. *Ibid*.

12. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.*, pp 62-63.

13. As informed by Dr. M. P. Kharel, Age-56, Principal, Sikkim Government College, Gangtok, on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 2012

the hills and by the use of plough.<sup>14</sup> The lands began to be classified according to the fertility and produce per seeds sown and they were classified as first, second and third class land.<sup>15</sup> The first class land was the land on which in average years four *manas*<sup>16</sup> or less of seed produced one *murhi* of paddy. Second class land was the land on which in average years between four and six *manas* of seed produced a *murhi* of paddy and the third class land on which more than six *manas* of seed were required to produce a *murhi* of paddy. However, the taxation was still based on the quantity of seeds sown and not the produce of the land.<sup>17</sup> It seems that the land revenue was fixed at the time of sowing seed and not during the harvest of the crop.

**Table: 4.1**

12 <i>Manas</i>	1 <i>Pathi</i>
20 <i>Pathis</i>	1 <i>Murhi</i>

Later in the nineteenth century, the *kazis* became the landlords and owner of the crown lands by virtue of deeds of grants. These *kazis* appointed subordinate officers from among the Limboos and Nepalese. Later on several Bhutias and Lepchas also held small plots of land in perpetuity under deeds of grant from the *Chogyal*. Under such lands these *kazis*, landlords, officers and even the Bhutia and Lepcha cultivators granted lands to minor cultivators.<sup>18</sup> These minor cultivators were the Bhutias, Lepchas and the Nepalese and were later commonly referred to as *raitis*.<sup>19</sup> They cultivated the fields of

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14. Sir Richard Temple, *Journals Kept in Hyderabad, Kashmir, Sikkim and Nepal, Volume II*, New Delhi, 1977 (reprint), p. 196

15. *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the Year 1914-1915*, p.3

16. Appendix-C, p. xxxii, *Mana* is the smallest unit of measurement of seed having a conical shape of approximately six inches in height and the upper circumference of fifteen inches and circumference of almost half at the base.

17. *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the Year 1914-1915*, p.3

18. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 103

19. The *raiti* is equivalent to the *ryot* a term commonly used to refer to a cultivator in India at that time. It came to Sikkim through Nepal and most commonly referred to as *raiti*. *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal and *Maharani* Yeshey Dolma have described these cultivators as *raiya*s in their work *History of Sikkim*.

the landlords under conditions of *adhia* and *kut*. *Adhia* meant cultivating land on the condition that the produce would be distributed equally between the landlord and the cultivator. *Kut* meant an amount of produce to be paid to the landlord which was pre-fixed before the settlement. Both *adhia* and *kut* were to be paid annually in kind. One difference between it was that the amount of *kut* to be paid annually was fixed and no relaxation was made during crop failure due to natural calamities and *kut* was renewed in every agricultural year. However, in case of *adhia* the produce was distributed equally between the cultivator and the landlord and relaxation was granted during crop failure. The *kutdars* or the cultivators who paid *kut* to the landlord had to work in the fields of landlords and during festivals they were required to present gifts to landlords and to the *Chogyal*. The system of presenting gifts was known as *theki-bethi* or presents in the form of milk and its products, meats, eggs, fruits and grains.<sup>20</sup> The *adhia* system was same as *che-she*, the term used by the Bhutias and Lepchas in Sikkim before the entry of the Nepalese. However, the condition was same as *adhia* and was paid in kind.<sup>21</sup>

In the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the *Chogyals* granted their private estates and large tracts of cultivable lands on contracts to *kazis* and *thikadars*.<sup>22</sup> These *kazis* and *thikadars* settled cultivators on these lands and paid a fixed amount to the *Chogyal*. The amount fixed between these contractors and the ruler is unknown from any of the available sources. However, the amount to be paid by the cultivators to the contractors was half the produce if it was on *adhiya*. The settlement of lands on *kut* varied from one third to one fourth of the produce.<sup>23</sup> The tax paid in kind by the cultivator called *bisa panja* was collected by the agents of *kazis* and the *thikadars* and it was the share of the

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20. *Report of the Committee on Land Reforms*, Government of Sikkim, Department of Land Revenue, January 1975, p. 13

21. Bell, Charles, *op. cit.* p. 58

22. The *thikadars* were the revenue contractors and this *thikadari* system entered Sikkim with the coming of the Newars, a community of Nepalese in the 1860s. The Bhutias and the Lepchas also acquired these rights afterwards.

23. *Report of the Committee on Land Reforms*, *op. cit.* p. 22

state. However, the *adhia* and *kut* was the internal agreement between the cultivator and the contractor which went directly into the pocket of the latter, and the agreement was always verbal.

With the coming of the British few changes were brought out in the collection of land revenue. The lands were not surveyed however it was classified into wet lands and dry lands. The wet lands were the terraced lands where paddy was grown and in the dry lands maize and other crops other than paddy were grown. The assessment of land was fixed on an acreage basis however no survey of scientific measurement of land was done. An acre was determined by the seed sowing capacity of the land as earlier, the seed sowing capacity was the amount of seed needed to sow in a particular land. The tax which was collected in kind commonly called *bisa panja* was abolished and the taxes were collected in cash.<sup>24</sup> The country was parceled into various *elakas* and these *elakas* were leased out to the influential people of Sikkim for a fixed term. The lessees were called *elakadars* who acted as middlemen between state and the *raiya*s. The rate fixed between the state and the *elakadars* varied according to the conditions of the *elaka* leased and the post of the *elakadar* was hereditary. The *elaka* was divided into convenient blocks under the charge of a village headman called *mondal*. A system called *chardam* came into vogue by which crown lands were granted to the Nepalese settlers. The settlement was to be made out by clearing forest and bringing the land under cultivation.<sup>25</sup> A nominal sum of 4 *paisa*, four *pathis* of paddy, four *pathis* of millet, one *pathi* of rice and a *ser*<sup>26</sup> of *ghew* was to be paid to the respective *kazi* of the area in which a new settler intended to settle down. The *kazi*, if desired, would grant the land to him through the village *mondal* and sometimes the *kazi* himself demarcated the area. A deed of grant was also given to the settler by the *kazi*. The land was taxable and if the settler failed to pay the tax than it was deemed to be abandoned and lapsed to the

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24. *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the year 1932-1933 to 1933-1934*, pp. 28-29

25. *Ibid.*

26. Appendix-C, p. xxxii, A *ser* is approximately equal to 900.50 grams.



state. It was re allotted to any other fresh settlers on the usual payment of *chardam*.<sup>27</sup> In an interview with Parshuram Neopaney,<sup>28</sup> he said that his grandfather, Chandrakhar Neopaney got a land at Rumtek, East Sikkim, from Entchey *kazi* after the payment of *chardam*.

### **Other Taxes:**

The people of Sikkim had to pay taxes for using the forest produce. In north Sikkim people collected ripe fungus during the summer and half of the collection was to be sent to the ruler as his share, through the local officers.<sup>29</sup> The people collected wax and honey from the hives of wild bees and major share went to the *Chogyal* as tax.<sup>30</sup> In 1748, Rabden Sharpa, introduced a new system of taxation in Sikkim called *bah pa, zo lung* and *tsong-khyed*.<sup>31</sup> *Bah pa* meant income and it was a kind of income tax to be paid to the state by the trader on account of salt trade and could be paid in the form of salt. It formed a regular source of income to the ruler. *Zo lung* was a tax on the use of forest produce such as timber, bamboos and other produce from forests. *Zo lung* could be paid in kind which consisted of grains, wine, milk and *ghew*. A tax on import and export of items was introduced called *tshong-khyed*. It was also a tax on carrying business or trade.<sup>32</sup>

The *drokpas* living in the northern borders of Sikkim paid their tax on animals to the Namgyals in the form and *ghew*, wool and yak tails as their revenue and pasturage tax.<sup>33</sup> The *kalons* and the *dzongpons* collected the hides and skins of their domestic animals as well as their respective areas and sent them to the *Chogyal* as gifts and tributes.<sup>34</sup> The *Chogyals* had landed and other properties under their direct ownership.

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27. *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the Year 1930-1931*, p. 13

28. He is the father-in-law of the researcher.

29. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet*, Delhi, 1992 (reprint), p. 304

30. *Old Laws of Sikkim, Sikkim Code, Vol. V*, Law Department, Government of Sikkim, p. 4

31. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 32

32. *Ibid.*

33. J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals, Vol. II*, London, 1854, p. 281

34. *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the Year 1914-1915*, p. 7

These consisted of herds of yaks which were looked after by their own *drokpas*. These *drokpas* moved up to Chumbi in Tibet during summer and came down to Sikkim in winter.<sup>35</sup> The people of Sikkim and Tibet living on the borders paid grazing tax to Sikkim in the form of sheep skins and barley in case of cultivable lands. The *kalons* and the *dzongpons* settled these taxes and the amount to be paid by the people living on the borders. Charles Bell who succeeded J. C. White as the British Political Officer of Sikkim remarks that most of the time the terms of negotiations was sent to the ruler and only a small amount to the Namgyals as annual revenue derived from the people of the borders on account of grazing tax.<sup>36</sup> Apart from paying pasturage tax the *drokpas* were required to work in the private estates of Sikkim *Chogyal* at Chumbi for four days in a year.<sup>37</sup> However the migrant Tibetans were asked to pay it in the form of *ghew*. The herdsmen from Sikkim moving to Chumbi paid their taxes in *ghew* and *churpi* to the ruler during the latter's stay at Chumbi itself.

With the coming of the Newars and the grant of *thikadari* rights another system of paying *dhuri khazana* or the house tax found its way in Sikkim. A *dhur* was an imaginary measurement of ten long steps of an average man each on all four sides and the area was thought to be sufficient to build a house. Later a house was referred as *dhuri* by the Nepalese and became a common term for a house in Sikkim. In the late nineteenth century the *dhuri khazana* was to be paid both in cash and kind at the rate of 1 rupee or one *murhi* of rice.<sup>38</sup>

#### **Income from Darjeeling rent:**

In 1841 the British Government granted an allowance of Rs. 3000 a year to *Maharaja* Tsugphud Namgyal as compensation for the grant of Darjeeling to British. In

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35. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet*, op. cit., pp. 59-60

36. *Ibid.* p. 68

37. *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the year 1912-1913*, p. 1

38. As informed by D. K. Rai, Age—56, OSD, Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok, on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2012

1846 the sum was increased to Rs. 6000 per year.<sup>39</sup> The grant was stopped in 1850 as a punishment to Sikkim due to the imprisonment of two British officers by the officials of Sikkim at Sikkim-Tibet borders. In 1862 the payment of Darjeeling rent was renewed and was increased to Rs. 9000 per year, and in 1873 it was further increased to Rs. 12000 per year.<sup>40</sup> The rent from Darjeeling was a great income to the Namgyals since 1841. Thutob Namgyal was so depressed when the British stopped the payment in 1886 due to his failure to reconcile the Tibetans for a trade mission to Tibet and was so much impoverished that he was unable to manage his house hold affairs.<sup>41</sup> The administration of Sikkim was brought under direct control of British and the annual rent of Rs. 12000 was withheld and was paid to the Political Officer on account of his salary.<sup>42</sup> The *Maharaja* was paid Rs. 500 per month for his maintenance.<sup>43</sup>

With the grant of Darjeeling Indian money called the Company *paisa* and the coins of Nepal or the Nepali *paisa* was freely used in the plains and the borders between Sikkim and Nepal. From this period onwards the Namgyals derived revenues from the plains both in cash and kind. As per the calculation of *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal and *Maharani* Yeshey Dolma the annual revenue derived from the plains from 1841 to 1845 was about Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 55,000 per annum.<sup>44</sup> (Prior to this revenue from the plains was not calculated and not available). The village headmen of the plains called the *tassa* collected the revenue from the *raitis*. In 1847 the tax derived from the plains in form of land revenue, cattle tax, timber royalty, tax on pigs, ferry duties on goods and income from law suits amounted to Rs. 19590.12. According to them, in 1849 the revenue fell to Rs. 15876.14.6, due to the frequent raids from Nepal and hurried flight of people from the plains. In 1850 the annual income of Sikkim from the plains was estimated at

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39. C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries, Volume II*, Calcutta, 1909, p. 312  
40. H. H. Risley, *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Calcutta, 1894, p. 22  
41. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 96  
42. C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.* p. 317  
43. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 104  
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-66

Rs. 46000 annually in cash and kind.<sup>45</sup> The revenues from the plains were lost when British Government of India confiscated Morung and plains in 1850 due to the ill treatment meted out to Dr. Campbell and Dr. Hooker by the *dewan* of Sikkim during their visit to Sikkim.<sup>46</sup>

### **Land Revenue system under Monastic Lands:**

During the period of the third *Chogyal*, Chagdor Namgyal a large plots of lands and forests were granted to the monasteries by the *Chogyal* himself or sometimes through his *kutchap*. These lands were granted to Pemayangtse and Tashiding *gonpas*. The ministers and governors, *kalons*, *dzongpons*, with the consent of the *Chogyal* also made grants to the monasteries. Such lands were granted to Rumtek and Ralang *gonpas*. These lands were not measured, however, the area or the plots had a natural boundary such as a stream, a big rock, river or a pathway.<sup>47</sup> These monastic lands could be spread over from 15 to 20 acres and even more depending on the importance of the monasteries.<sup>48</sup> The land granted to a monastery normally was situated near it but sometimes distant areas were also granted. The lands of Rumtek monastery is situated is almost twenty kilometers away at Radang, in East Sikkim. Besides, the monasteries were granted funds in the name of the deceased ruler by the Namgyal rulers for its maintenance.<sup>49</sup>

The *dutchi* was the governing body of the monasteries which consisted of the head *lama* or *dorje-lopen*, *um-dse* and *chortimba*. The *Chogyal* and his officers granted these lands to them in the name of the monasteries. It was the duty of the *dutchi* to take over these lands under their proprietorship. They could settle the cultivators on these lands. The *dutchi* had the every right to grant these lands to cultivators on their own

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45. *Ibid.*

46. Sir Richard Temple, *op. cit.* p. 169

47. As informed by D. K. Rai, *op. cit.*

48. *Report of the Committee on Land Reforms, op. cit.*, p. 22

49. *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the Year 1914-1915*, p. 2

conditions. The *dutchi* was to collect dues from them and kept the records of the revenue thus collected.

The *dutchi* granted it to the *singpos* to cultivate and if required clear the forests to make the land cultivable. The *dutchi* had the right to lay conditions on the *singpos* and the lands. The *singpos* had pay *che-se* i.e., dividing the produce equally between them and the *dutchi* or paying a certain amount of produce as fixed. The revenue thus derived from the monastic lands was utilized for performing religious rituals and food for the *lamas*. Later in the nineteenth century the *dutchi* was to pay the house tax (later *dhuri kahzana*) to the state, which was realized from the settled tenants on the monastic lands.<sup>50</sup> However, the revenue or the rent realized from them was lower than that of the state.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century the *dutchi* settled a large number of Nepalese *adhiadars* and *kutdars* on the monastic lands. The units of measurement of revenue collected by these monasteries were usually in *pathi* and *murhi*.<sup>51</sup> Later on, the contract system entered on these lands; the *dutchi* gave lands on contract to *thikadars* on condition of paying a certain amount of cash and produce. The *thikadars* granted the rights to settle these lands to the cultivators on their own conditions. However, there emerged a class of middlemen called *thui* and the *thikadars* granted lands to these *thuis* again granted their share to the *raitis* on *kut* and enjoyed the fruits of their labour.<sup>52</sup> The settlement of cultivators on these lands by the *thikadars* through *thuis* encouraged landlordism in Sikkim.<sup>53</sup> Due to this reason there was no direct relation between the landlord and the actual cultivators and the middlemen collected the revenue from them on their own condition. The settlement of lands was verbal and hence the *kutdars* had no claim over the lands they cultivated. The uncertainty of land possession discouraged the

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50. *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the Year 1925-1926*, p. 4

51. *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the Year 1914-1915*, pp. 2-3

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.* p. 27

53. *Ibid.*

cultivators to increase the productivity of the land they cultivated. The contractors and the middlemen preferred to grant lands on *kut* rather than *adhia*. If any of the *raiti* assured to pay more *kut* than the previous *kutdar*, then the *kut* was settled with the new *kutdar*. Thus this uncertainty over land haunted the minds of the *raitis* of Sikkim.<sup>54</sup>

### **Agriculture:**

The state economy of Sikkim depended on agriculture. Being the main source of economy, cultivation of land was made for consumption and payment of revenues in kind to the state. Sikkim being a mountainous kingdom having diverse climate, it was difficult to cultivate crops equally in all parts. The northern part being covered with snow clad mountains and forests it was not fertile enough and was unfit for cultivation. The people living in lowlands of south and western Sikkim practiced agriculture on fertile tracts however, most of the fertile tracts were lost to Nepal and British India during subsequent periods by way of wars and deed of grants.

The methods of cultivation consisted of clearance of forests by cutting down of trees and were set on fire when dried. Before the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty the Lepchas and the Limboos moved from highlands to lowlands commonly known as *lek* upper land and *awal* lower land respectively.<sup>55</sup> They never inhabited one place for more than three successive years. Their farming practice was old and nomadic. They selected a site, cut down the jungle, cleared away the trees and cultivated between the stumps. After the cultivation for three years they moved to some other place. With the establishment of the Namgyal, the practice of moving from highlands to lowlands gradually reduced and ultimately came to an end. The forests were cut down with the help of *bambhok*, a kind of cutting equipment, and weeds with bamboo sticks. They used implements to till the land hoes and clubs made up of oak. Later the Bhutias who preferred to cultivate lands too used these implements. They broke clods with small

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54. *Ibid.* p. 23

55. L. S. S. O'Malley, *Darjeeling District Gazetteers*, Calcutta, 1907, p. 65

spade called *jama* brought from Tibet and large clods were broken with hoes made up of oaks. The crops like buckwheat, barley and wheat were grown in the *lek* lands and mustard, rice and maize were grown in the *awal* lands. Rice were sown however it was not irrigated owing to the dampness of the climate.<sup>56</sup>

Later with the entry of the Nepalese a change in the mode of cultivation took place and a large variety of crops were grown in Sikkim. The industrious and enterprising Nepalese cultivators taught the Bhutias and the Lepchas to terrace hills, and the use of plough and tilling land with the use of furrows. Their implements were better as compared to the Lepchas and the Bhutias. They taught them the art of terracing the fields and the use of plough drawn by bullocks. The introduction of *kodali*, spade, used by them gave way to the old system of farming in Sikkim.<sup>57</sup> The Nepalese cultivated every available portion of land and kept their plough engaged as much as they could. Due to this the increase of yields became evident in Sikkim.

In Sikkim twelve kinds of rice namely, *bras-chung*, *lad-mar*, *sankha*, *rang-dan*, *so-bras*, *bang-bras*, *khah-bras*, *dam-bras*, *phang-bras*, *kho-mad*, *khazis* and *tsong-bras* were grown thrice in a year.<sup>58</sup> The first one was sown in December and harvested in March, the second was sown in August and harvested in December and the third one was sown in March and harvested in August. The two crops namely *bras-chung* and *lad-mar* were transplanted into irrigated grounds from the nurseries and the others were grown on dry land which was not irrigated. It was grown on lands that was left fallow for some years, and on which there was a heavy undergrowth of jungle. The jungle was then cut down, burnt and carefully dressed, and excellent crops were obtained. From one measure of seed in good ground the yield varied from twenty to fiftyfold. Paddy

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56. J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, p. 101

57. L. S. S. O'Malley, *op. cit.*, p. 44

58. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p.76

husking was done by each house as required and was carried out in primitive manner.<sup>59</sup> The Nepalese taught the art of threshing by erecting a pole and let the cattle go round it.

Four kinds of maize crop were grown in Sikkim which was grown up to elevation of 6, 200 feet. It was distinguished by its colour namely *seti* or white, *rato* or red, *paheli* or yellow and *kalo* or black. It was sown in March, and according to elevation in the high grounds as late as May and June. Thirteen kinds of millet namely *bam-shing*, *shag-chag*, *ga-sher*, *mang-kar-ma*, *ze-bog*, *tsig-nag-ma*, *phag-gyug*, *dung-kar-ma*, *gong-tses-ma*, *ker-jom-la*, *la-sum-ma*, *ser-gyug-ma* and *la-kar-mo* were sown in March and harvested in July and August. Five kinds of buckwheat called *bra-hu* by the Bhutias and the Lepchas and *fapar* by the Nepalese were grown namely, *kar-gor-ma*, *bra-nag*, *gyas-ra*, *kha-jug-ma* and *bra-chung*. Later mustard were grown in Sikkim in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the Nepalese and were of three kinds namely, *yung-kar*, *yung-nag* and *pad-gang*. After 1840s cardamom were grown in Sikkim. Due to its value as a profitable cash crop the cultivation increased rapidly. In the late nineteenth century the cardamom crop was sold from Rs. 30 to Rs. 45 a maund.<sup>60</sup>

In Sikkim *marwa* or *chang* were prepared from rice, maize, millet and buckwheat along with other wild creepers and yams. *Marwa* was a kind of beer brewed by almost everyone in Sikkim and was the staple food and drink. The seed was soaked in water for two days and was husked gently, washed and then boiled. The water was then drained off and the seeds were kept for half an hour in the vessel. The boiled seeds were later spread on a bamboo mat and the fermenting agent called *marcha*, made up of roots and leaves of wild plants were spread over it. After mixing the *marcha* with the seeds it was stored in bamboo baskets covered with banana leaves and within 48 hours the *murwa* became ready for drink. It was put in a *dhungro* or bamboo and wooden

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59. *Ibid.*, p. 74

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75



vessel along with hot water and was sipped with the help of bamboo straw or *pipsing*.<sup>61</sup> It was also crushed with hot water in a vessel and then strained with the help of a bamboo strainer called *chapani* and then the liquid was drunk. Due to its refreshing quality it was preferred mostly by the Sikkimese and also formed an important item of barter in Tibet. The crops were also grounded occasionally for making *chapattis* and consumed with tea. Barley and wheat were grown in small quantities and mustard was grown in the lowlands. The Sikkimese collected the barks and stem of plants and was boiled along with Tibetan brick tea and consumed after churning with butter. Tea was grown in small quantities on the slopes and its tender leaves were collected and dried in the sun. However, no systematic cultivation was resorted before the British occupation of Darjeeling.

One of the important fruit crop grown in Sikkim was orange. It was grown by all Sikkimese, and still more largely by the Lepchas. The fruit was small in nature and of excellent flavor which ripened during November and February. Yams were cultivated mostly by the Lepchas. A popular belief among the people was that the yams derived from the wild were more digestible than those obtained from the cultivated varieties.<sup>62</sup> So the Lepchas preferred to collect wild yams during winter. Apple cultivation was encouraged by Mr. J.C. White after 1889 and the production excelled under his supervision.<sup>63</sup>

### **Cattle Rearing:**

The other important occupation of Sikkim during the Namgyal period was cattle rearing. This was done by both Bhutia and Limboo *drokpas* and the Nepalese *gothals* along with farming. The Bhutia and the Limboo *drokpas* tended yaks and moved to higher altitudes during summer. However there were a few *drokpas* who reared cows

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61. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 76

62. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet, op. cit.*, pp. 32-33

63. J. C. White, *op. cit.* p. 296

did not move to highlands. The Nepalese *gothalas* also did not move to high lands as they did not find enough pasturage for their cows.

Three kinds of yaks were found in Sikkim and were used as pack animals. According to H. H. Risley's calculations in the late nineteenth century, *lho-gyag* was the best breed among yaks and fetched from Rs. 25 to Rs. 30 each, *bod-gyag* was a smaller breed and the price varied from Rs. 20 to Rs. 25 and the third variety was *a-yu* found in higher valleys of Sikkim.<sup>64</sup> The yaks were determined on the basis of their size, colour of tails and long hairs. *Lho-gyag* was bigger in size as compared to other breeds with long hairs and most probably white in colour. It was also used for milk which was of excellent quality containing a very large proportion of butter fat. Its skins were used for storing salt and butter, mats, and young yak skins were used for storing milk and churning butter. Its horns were used as drinking cups by the *drokpas* and during marriages it was used for drinking *murwa*. Rich merchants, *lamas* and officials rode on them while their way to Tibet and down to Sikkim. Yak tails were exported to Bengal and plains which were used as fly whiskers and fetched good price. Its hairs were used extensively for making bags, tents and ropes.<sup>65</sup> The *drokpas* however did not have many yaks with them and their economic condition was worse as compared to the cultivators. Most of them tended yaks of the Namgyals and officials. They specified a fixed amount of yak hair, *ghew* and *churpi* to be produced each year. They were asked to produce one young yearly for every three yaks and if it exceeded it went to the *drokpas*, any deficiency were to be paid to the owner.<sup>66</sup>

Three kinds of cows viz. *ba-glang* or Bhutia cow, *nam-thong* or the Nepalese cow and *thang* or plains cow were reared in Sikkim.<sup>67</sup> The *ba-glang* owned chiefly by the Bhutias and the Lepchas were considered to be the best breed in those days on

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64. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 76

65. *Ibid.*

66. Charles Bell, *People of Tibet*, *op. cit.*, p. 25

67. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. 78

account of the quality of milk fat and could be driven up to 14,000 feet for grazing. This was reared by the *beek drokpas* and later by Nepalese *gothals*. As per the calculations of Risley, that in the late nineteenth century a cow of this breed could cost Rs. 30 to Rs. 45. *Nam-thong* was a smaller breed owned mostly by Nepalese and fetched Rs. 15 to Rs. 25. *Thang* was the cattle of the plains and was considered of a low quality fetched only Rs. 12 to Rs. 15 each.<sup>68</sup>

Five kinds of sheep namely, *ha-lug*, *bod-lug*, *bhyang-lug*, *sog-lug* and *phe-dar* were reared mostly by the *bhera gothals* belonging to Gurungs of the Nepalese community. It was reared for its meat, skin and wool. The price of sheep varied from Rs. 3 to Rs. 9 according to size and the quantity of wool. Its wool were trimmed with the help of knives called *karda* and used for making clothes, caps and mats. Goats were of two kinds namely, *ra* and *bod-ra* and was reared for its skin and meat.<sup>69</sup> Besides these cattle, ponies and mules were kept mostly by traders and rich herders. Pigs and fowls were also found in Sikkim and the price of the pigs and fowls were unknown however, they were domesticated for its meat and eggs respectively.

### **Trade and Commerce:**

Trade and commercial activities on a small scale was carried on between Sikkim and Tibet through the passes lying at the northern and eastern borders of Sikkim along with their herds and many of Sikkimese mainly the herdsmen became occasional traders and it was carried out in the form of barter. This interaction between Sikkim and Tibet was possible due to the movement of herders and the movement of Namgyals to Tibet for retreat. In the earliest society of Sikkim no system of trade and commerce existed. Before the rule of the Namgyals, the Lepchas and the Limboos used to go to Tibet and bought salt, tea and woolen blankets for their use in exchange with rice, dyes, wooden planks and cups and fruits. Oranges were abundantly grown in Sikkim by the Lepchas

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68. *Ibid.*

69. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 78

which formed a good item of barter.<sup>70</sup> They used to go in a group during summer when the snow melted and bought salt for a year and came back before the onset of rains. With the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty the people of Sikkim started having close interaction with Tibet. The Namgyal rulers went to Chumbi in summer in order to avoid summer heat in Sikkim; along with them moved the herdsmen called the *drokpas*, the *lamas* and other officials, the traders. These *lamas* and the officials used to take articles like rice, butter, grains and fruits with them to pay tributes to the Namgyal ruler and also to exchange these with their necessary articles.<sup>71</sup> They exchanged their articles for yak tails, gold dust, salt, wool and blankets and took them up to the plains in winter. J. D Hooker says, "From Tibet these items were brought on yaks and from Sikkim to the plains it was carried on men's back."<sup>72</sup> Other items of import by these traders consisted of gold and silver in lesser quantity. Yak tails and ponies were brought and sold in the borders of Nepal and Bhutan.<sup>73</sup> The *lamas* and the officials had a number of *drokpas* under them and they virtually started monopolizing trade activities between Sikkim and Tibet. They stored items such as rice, dyes called *manjeet*, oranges and cotton from the plains and moved to Tibet. The ordinary *drokpas* went to Tibet along with their herds of yaks and sheep during summer and came down to Sikkim before winter started.<sup>74</sup> They had their own sheds in the hills who took rest there on their way up and down. They moved along with their families. The ordinary *drokpas* used to carry their articles, salt, tea and woolen blankets, on their pack animals and they exchanged with the Sikkimese for food grains for their use while in Tibet during summer. The favourable month for summer trade was from March to May and came down to Sikkim in September.<sup>75</sup> With these growing contacts of Sikkimese herdsmen with the Tibetan merchants a sort of trade and commercial activities started in Sikkim during the early years of Namgyal rule

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70. Clements R. Markham, *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa*, London, 1876, p.168

71. J. D Hooker, *Himalayan Journals, Vol. II*, London, 1854, p. 392

72. *Ibid.*, p. 402

73. Clements R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. *cxix*

74. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 24

75. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet, op. cit.* p. 123

and these merchants went up to Lhasa. They took with them items like wooden planks, beans, rattans, *ghew*, *churpi*, *munjeet*, rice and some dyestuff. These items were exchanged with Tibetan rock salt, tea, woolen blankets, yak skins and tails and wool.<sup>76</sup>

The *drokpas* collected various creepers called *manjeet* and were dried in the sun which was used as a natural dye and was an item of exchange in Tibet. It was obtained from jungle and appeared to be the favourite colour for dyeing blankets and woolen carpets for the Tibetans. The supply obtained was plentiful and no means were resorted to cultivate it. It formed an important article of export to Tibet at Shigatse and Gyantse woolen carpet factories.<sup>77</sup> On the other hand the villagers living in the uplands of Sikkim collected a considerable quantity of *manjeet* and dried in the sun, and exchanged with the *drokpas* with salt and woolen items. It was also exchanged with cotton goods, cutlery, glassware and hardware which had come to Tibet through Nepal and Bhutan.<sup>78</sup> Sometimes these villagers also went to Tibet to buy salt, tea and Tibetan earthenware with these creepers at Yampung.<sup>79</sup> Wooden planks consisted of another important item of export to Tibet for the construction of houses, fuel wood, spoon, cups and saddle for yaks and ponies. Due to absence of wood and charcoal in Tibet it was regarded valuable as they had to depend on yak dung, horses and sheep droppings for fire.<sup>80</sup> They were packed on yaks and it carried up to six planks at a time. The hides of bullocks were exported to Tibet for making soles of snow boots.<sup>81</sup> However it was the property of the Sikkimese officials and the hides were not allowed to sell or exchange by the common people.

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76. A .Campbell, *Diary of a Journey Through Sikkim to the Frontier of Tibet*, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1840, p. 18
77. William Griffiths, *Journal of the Mission to Bhutan in 1837-38*, Bibliotheca Himalayica, New Delhi, 1972 (reprint), p. 327
78. Clements R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. liv
79. Sarat Chandra Das, *Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet*, Bibliotheca Himalayica, New Delhi, 1970 (reprint), p. 3
80. Clements R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 316
81. Pemberton, R. B., *Report on Bhutan*, Bibliotheca Himalayica, New Delhi, 1972 (reprint), p. 224

From the north western borders of Sikkim the traders exported broadcloth, indigo, pearls, conch shells, spices, tobacco and cotton clothes which were procured from Bengal. A considerable amount of *argeli* plant for making paper was exported through this route. However the traders from Nepal exported readymade papers made from the barks of *argeli*, popularly known as *paharia kagaz*, the importance of this plant as an item of trade was gradually lost. It was conveyed into Tibet through Morung along the banks of Tambur River where Nepal government had established a trading mart called *golla* at Mai, where the Sikkimese exchanged rice and *tsampa* and other items brought from Bengal with salt, yak tails, wool, gold dust and blankets.<sup>82</sup> The use of coins of Nepal was noticed in this area. Due to the absence of mint in Sikkim and Tibet the returns were made in small bulses of gold dust or the coins of the rulers of Nepal.<sup>83</sup>

*Chang* or *murwa* beer formed another item of barter among the traders of Sikkim. It was greatly in demand in Tibet and the latter readily exchanged this item with salt. Salt was very rare in Sikkim and the exchange of these items between the traders of these Himalayan countries was favourable. The Limboos and the Lepchas of west Sikkim went up to Yampung in Tibet to buy salt, wool, tea and Tibetan earthenware, in exchange for *murwa*, maize and dyes and later these items were sold in the markets of Darjeeling.<sup>84</sup> One of the principal markets in Tibet was Shigatse and it was near to Tashi Lunpo, the palace monastery of Tashi Lama and was the place of interest in Tsang province of Tibet.<sup>85</sup> It was frequented by the *lamas* of Sikkim to pay their homage to him and the other purpose being trade. Shigatse received a large supply of potteries from the villages to the north-west of it and the Sikkimese traders brought a large numbers of potteries for sale. People of Sikkim used these potteries locally known as *ghempa* exclusively for storing wine and water. A number of Tibetan vessels were also brought to Sikkim by the herdsmen which were used in Sikkim for cooking and

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82. J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals, Vol. I, op. cit.*, p. 130

83. *Ibid.* p. 129

84. Sarat Chandra Das, *op. cit.*, p. 8

85. Clements R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. xxvii

preparing *murwa*.<sup>86</sup> The other items brought to Sikkim from Tibet included musk and gold. Musk deer were found abundantly in Tibet and its supply was very large. Tibet was very rich in gold mines and most of the monasteries in Tibet were adorned with gold. They were found abundantly in the form of gold dust in river beds.<sup>87</sup> Tibetans collected these and casted some rude ornaments and also exchanged with Sikkimese herdsmen who in turn exchanged with copper vessels with the Nepalese traders. These Nepalese traders came to lowlands of Sikkim along with their porters called *bhariya* during winters when these herdsmen of Sikkim returned from Tibet along with the items like gold and salt and exchanged copper and brass vessels. Sometimes the traders of Sikkim exchanged these vessels with yak tails and musk which was very profitable as these found ready a market in the plains and Nepal. The herdsmen from Sikkim went to Lhasa with *murwa*, maize and other food items in exchange with gold and salt. Some of them went to Tibet to work as porters and brought back Tibetan rock salt and gold.<sup>88</sup> These porters sometimes worked under Tibetan herdsmen and Tibetans paid them in gold however, the amount paid to them is unknown. They bought salt from their wages and the gold were later sold in Sikkim and Nepal.<sup>89</sup>

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the traders from Sikkim went to Chumbi in Tibet to buy salt along with their families. Some of the Bhutias had established themselves as the trading communities in Sikkim. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the Nepalese money were in use in Tibet where the Newar community of Nepalese had established

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86. Sarat Chandra Das, *op. cit.* p. 66

87. Macaulay, Colman, *Report of a Mission to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier, 1884, With a Memorandum on our Relations with Tibet*, Calcutta, 1885, p. 82

88. The abundance of gold and salt in Tibet is supported by fact that during three days' *tiwar* festival, the Nepalese belonging to the Hindus go around the villages and sing songs in praise of Lord Rama, the Hindu pantheon. This tradition is popularly known as *dewsi* in Nepali language. These people are granted some money and food stuffs by the owner of the house where these group play *dewsi*. At the end the singers offer blessings to the owner of the house as: "*Lhasa ki suna Bhot ki nuna yehi ghara bharun*", which means that, "Let this house be filled with the gold of Lhasa and the salt of Tibet." During earlier periods the Nepalese referred to Tibet as *Bhot*. The other fact that supports the abundance of gold in Tibet is the popular proverb among the Nepalese, "*Bhot ma sun cha kaan mero buchhai*", which means, "There is gold in Tibet however, my ear is without an ear ring."

89. Mahakavi Laxmi Prasad Devkota, *Muna Madan*, Kathmandu, 1938, p. 2

their trade marts in Shigatse.<sup>90</sup> Thus the traders of Sikkim started selling their items in cash as well in the form of barter and the value of these items were calculated in terms of Nepalese money. They sold *murwa* at Chumbi at the rate of six rupees per maund and bought salt which were later sold in the markets of Darjeeling. The rate of *murwa* at Gangtok was four rupees and eight *annas* per maund. The price of salt per maund at Chumbi is not available from any sources however it was sold at the rate of eight rupees per maund in Darjeeling in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>91</sup> The Tibetans found salt a very convenient commodity to exchange for *murwa*, rice, dyes and other foodstuffs of Sikkim as the Tibetan government levied no duty of the former item.<sup>92</sup> The people of Sikkim living on the borders also sold jerked meat of sheep in Tibet. They also sold sheep wool for the manufacture of carpets and rugs at Kamba in Tibet. Young lamb skins were sold in Shigatse by the Tibetans at the rate of four *annas* which were bought by Sikkimese for making linings of coats and trousers and was mostly used by rich merchants and officers both in Sikkim and Tibet.<sup>93</sup>

The Bhutias of Sikkim carried on trade on live-stocks such as sheep, goats and ponies with the Tibetans yak tails were brought from Tibet and sold to Indians in the plains. Tea formed another important item of import from Tibet to Sikkim as it was locally consumed by the people of Sikkim. In Lhasa the price of tea was eight *annas* a pound in the 19<sup>th</sup> century which was in the form of brick. The price for five pounds of brick tea was three rupees and was of two different qualities namely, *chupa* and *gyepa*. The value of *chupa* tea was twelve *annas* a pound and the value of *gyepa* tea was about nine and half *annas* a pound. However, the brick tea sold in Lhasa called *du tang-nyipa* was regarded as the best quality and it was priced at ten rupees for a brick of six pounds and it also formed an important item of barter in Tibet.<sup>94</sup> The tea available in Tibet was

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90. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet, op. cit.*, p. 124

91. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.* p. 32

92. Colman Macaulay, *op. cit.* p. 97

93. Sarat Chandra Das, *op. cit.* p. 67

94. *Ibid.* p. 159



imported from China and it was preferred by the people of Sikkim. It found a ready and profitable item of trade due to its universal consumption. Later, it was available in Darjeeling due to its large scale plantation by the British.<sup>95</sup> The Darjeeling tea was cheaper as compared to Tibetan tea however, reason for the people of Sikkim to prefer Tibetan was due to the convenience of storage as the Tibetan tea was in the form of bricks and the other reason was that the Tibetan tea was lighter as compared to strong and loose tea of Darjeeling.

Besides Tibet, Sikkim had a triffling trade relation with Nepal, Bhutan and Bengal. With the traders of Nepal they exchanged musk and yak tails with copper utensils, and iron implements. Ponies brought from Giantse were sold at the borders of Nepal and Bhutan by the agents of Sikkimese officials which formed a profitable business for them.<sup>96</sup> Sikkim's trade with Bhutan consisted of the exchange of yak tails, *munjeet* and rice with salt and wool of Tibet which were brought by the Tibetan merchants at Paro. Due to the monopoly of Bhutanese officials they did not allow any individual to trade except the exchange of salt and wool with rice.<sup>97</sup> Thus the trade with Bhutan was confined to the bordering villages and beyond the jurisdiction of Paro *Penlop*.<sup>98</sup> In days when Kalimpong was under Bhutan it acted as a trade mart between Sikkim and Bhutan. The villagers of Sikkim exchanged eggs, fowls, oranges and vegetables with salt, wool, blankets and iron implements.<sup>99</sup> Sometimes the officials of the frontiers monopolized the trade in rice by rice cheaply or by extortion from the tenants and sold to the Tibetans.<sup>100</sup> With Bengal Titalia acted as a mart and a site of annual fair where Sikkimese merchants and local people exchanged their items. Sikkimese exchanged yak tails and wool with cotton clothes of Bengal.<sup>101</sup> Since the

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95. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.* p. 46

96. Clements R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. *cxix*

97. *Ibid.*, p. 183

98. R. B Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 243

99. Asley Eden, *Political Missions to Bhutan*, Bibliotheca Himalayica, New Delhi, 1972 (reprint), P. 57

100. *Ibid.*, p. 59

101. J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals*, Vol. I, *op. cit.* p. 74

Bhutias and Tibetans were afraid of the heat of the plains the trade was carried by their agents who were Nepalese and few people from the plains.

With the growth of contacts of Sikkim with the British in the 1830s Sikkim exported fruits, vegetables, livestock, pulses, spices like cardamom and ginzer, and timber in large number to Tibet and Sikkim also exported these items to British India. The main items of import from British India in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were cotton manufactures, grains chiefly rice, pulse and building materials.<sup>102</sup> This increase in demand was due to the settlement of Nepalese in Sikkim. Thus the demands for cotton manufactures, food grains and building materials rose rapidly and the trade became profitable to the merchants and traders.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century some of the Tibetans themselves started showing interests in trade due to the contact of Sikkim with British India. The focus was now shifted from Tibet to Darjeeling and Kalimpong and the Tibetans flocked to these places along with Tibetan tea, salt, blankets, silk piece goods, ponies, mules, cows, sheep, yak skins and tails, musk, turquoise and gold. Darjeeling and Kalimpong became a central mart for trade to Tibet, towards Nepal and Patna. Kalimpong was made the headquarters of Tibetan trade from October to May when British trade route was opened through Jelep.<sup>103</sup> The people from Sikkim started to go to Kalimpong and Darjeeling to sell *murwa*, rice, oranges and dyes to the Tibetans. Tobacco became an item of import in Sikkim for the consumption of the officials. The positive result for the Sikkimese traders was that they were relieved from the difficult routes to Tibet and inconvenience caused due to bad weather. A large number of Marwaris came and settled down in these places and they controlled the trade between Sikkim, Tibet and British India. They

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102. *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the Year 1925-1926*, p. 9

103. L.S.S. O'Malley, *Darjeeling District Gazetteers*, Calcutta, 1907, p. 130

became bankers, moneylenders and cloth merchants and were shrewd men of business.<sup>104</sup>

### **Trade Routes to Tibet:**

Before the British administration trade between Sikkim and Tibet was carried on foot and the same was the case between Sikkim and British India. The trade route between Sikkim and Tibet was through mountain peaks which were covered with snow and inaccessible during cold seasons. Three routes of trade were noticed between Sikkim and Tibet during the early Namgyal period. 1) From the northern borders of Lachen and Lachung it was six days' journey to reach the borders of Tibet through Kongralama pass and Donkila pass respectively.<sup>105</sup> For the people of west Sikkim it was almost twenty five to thirty days' march to reach Tibet. 2) From the north-west, it was through the borders of Nepal at Morung along the banks of Tambur River to Walanchon and Khanglachen pass. It was the junction of three countries namely, Sikkim, Tibet and Nepal and the Nepal government had established a *golla* at Mai. However this route was considered unhealthy and later with the occupation of this area by Nepal it was less frequented.<sup>106</sup> 3) The eastern route to Tibet was through the passes of Yak-La, Cho-La and Jelep-La through frontiers of Bhutan adjoining Paro.<sup>107</sup> From Jelep, the traders went to Chumbi and then to Phari and from Phari they reached to Lhasa. It took thirteen days to reach Lhasa from Phari, fifteen from Chumbi and sixteen days from Jelep.<sup>108</sup> Later, with the opening of Darjeeling, British preferred to use this route as it was shortest as compared to other two routes. Chumbi and Phari became important trading mart for salt, wool and tea.

During the early Namgyal period a less frequented route through Kanglanamo pass was noticed for smuggling of salt from Tibet into Sikkim by the common people. It

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104. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet*, *op. cit.* p. 118

105. J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals*, Vol. II, *op. cit.*, p. 278

106. Clements R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 128

107. *Ibid.*, p. xxxvii

108. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.* p. 35

was evidently done to avoid taxes imposed by the frontier officials of east and north Sikkim in form of salt.<sup>109</sup> On the north-western border they had to pay a custom duty called *chua*, both in kind and cash in Tibetan *tanka* to the border officials of Nepal. Three *tanka* was equivalent to one Indian rupee.<sup>110</sup> This was a great hit in the pockets of ordinary Sikkimese. They crossed Kanglanamo pass from Yuksom which was less frequented full of jungle. They used this route during April and November. However due to heavy snowfall it was difficult to cross over to Tibet. Due to heavy duty and the remoteness of northern and eastern pass the people of west side of Sikkim were compelled to pay a heavy amount for salt.<sup>111</sup>

The traders from Sikkim had to cross Teesta to reach Darjeeling to buy goods for sale in Tibet. They had to cross the bridges made of canes and bamboos which were often swept away by floods resulting in great loss to the traders. Flooding caused great inconvenience to them and they had to wait on the banks of Teesta while coming from Tibet till the flood subsided. Any attempt to cross them would be risky leading to the death of their cattle and were drowned in the streams.<sup>112</sup> The traders had to halt in herdsmen's shed called *dong khang* by the Bhutias and *goth* by the Nepalese, on their way up and down. They even encamped in caves on the way during night. Between Sikkim to Phari mules carried most of the stuffs and from Phari to Lhasa yaks and donkeys were the chief beasts of burden. Yaks, mules and donkeys carried loads about hundred and seventy pounds. The mules took its burden twenty to twenty five miles a day, the donkey and the yak ten to fifteen miles a day and the traders also hired these animals for carrying loads. The hire of a mule from Gyantse to Phari was eleven rupees and two *annas* per day. The rate of yak and donkey was two to three rupees per day. In Tibet donkey and mules were much preferred for carrying loads as yaks depended on

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109. J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals*, Vol. I, p. 211

110. Sarat Chandra Das, *op. cit.*, p. 39

111. J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals*, Vol. I, p. 211

112. *Ibid.*, p. 81

grazing and the grazing was poor in Phari and Gyantse.<sup>113</sup> Besides these, porters were also engaged in carrying the loads.

### **Mining and Coinage:**

Sikkim had some mineral deposits however, it remained unexplored till 1860s. The people of Sikkim mostly the Buddhists, had a belief that the attempts to make use of the treasure below the earth are visited on those living above the surface by sickness of men and cattle, and by failure of the crops.<sup>114</sup> Thus the search for metals was in every way discouraged.

In 1868 Phodong *Lama* and Khangsa *dewan* granted the permission to explore copper mines in Sikkim to Luchmidas Pradhan, a Newar trader who had settled in Darjeeling. The lands along the western borders of Sikkim along the Teesta and Rangeet Rivers were granted to Luchmidas Pradhan on the payment of Rs. 500 to the *Chogyal* through these officers and Rs. 700 to Phodong *Lama* and Khangsa *dewan*. However, the permission was not obtained from the *Chogyal* and this was just an assurance from the officials of Sikkim. The above amount was to be paid annually and the profits were to be enjoyed by Luchmidas Pradhan and his descendants. He was granted full powers to settle cases and impose fines and was empowered to settle new cultivators within the area granted to him.<sup>115</sup> This was the beginning of mining in Sikkim. Thutob Namgyal granted permission to explore copper mining to the families of Luchmidas in south Sikkim on payment of Rs. 200 per year in 1883.

With the consultation of the British Government Thutob Namgyal granted permission to Luchmidas Pradhan to mint *dooba paisa* or copper coin. In 1883 he was granted to mint *chepte paisa* (flat coins) with an additional tax of Rs. 100 per year. The permission was granted for five years on the condition that the taxes were to be paid

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113. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet, op. cit.*, p. 114-115

114. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.* p. 75

115. *Family Papers Motichand Pradhan*

without any delay.<sup>116</sup> Luchmidas and his brother Chandrabir Pradhan extracted some thousand mounds of copper at Turuk and Pacheykhani and the amount of copper extracted is unknown. From 1883 they became the minters of Sikkimese coins. The coins had handwritten endorsement of “*Sri Sri Sri Sikkim Sarkar*”.<sup>117</sup> Being the first and the only minters of coins in Sikkim these two brothers were known as *taksaris*.<sup>118</sup>

Before the *chepte* and *dooba paisa* were minted Tibetan, Indian and Nepalese coins were in circulation in Sikkim along the borders of these three countries. The Namgyals also accepted revenues in these coins from the people living at the borders before the permission was granted to the *taksharis* to mint Sikkimese coins and a few Sikkimese copper coins began to be circulated in Tibet and Nepal. A few years later in 1884 the Nepal Government disallowed the circulation of Sikkimese coins.<sup>119</sup> This caused a great inconvenience to the traders in Sikkim and Nepal. A petition was made by the *taksaris* to the Prime Minister of Nepal to waive the restrictions imposed on the circulation of Sikkimese coins into the domains of Nepal. In 1885 the Governor of Illam, Col. Gajraj Singh Thapa Chettri, explained to Luchmidas Pradhan that the coin of Sikkim was found to be of lesser weight than that of Nepal.<sup>120</sup> The petition could not work out and this led to the natural death of minting business in Sikkim.

The method of working mines and extraction of metal from the ore in Sikkim undertaken by these *taksaris* was very rude in modern sense. Almost every mine was abandoned long before the vein of ore had been exhausted.<sup>121</sup> The copper was exported to Nepal and after 1885 the same was stopped by the Nepal Government. The Magars and the Kamis castes of Nepalese were employed in Sikkim to work in mines and were brought to Sikkim by the *taksaris*. This led to the emigration of large number of Kami

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116. *Ibid.*

117. Appendix-C, p. xxxii

118. *Family Papers of Chandrabir Pradhan*

119. *Family Papers of Motichand Pradhan*

120. *Ibid.*

121. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.* p. 75

caste from Nepal to Sikkim. This was the reason behind the closure of export of copper from Sikkim to Nepal.<sup>122</sup> To prevent further emigration of the Magars and Kami caste, the government of Nepal put a ban on the import of Sikkim copper, besides restricting the entry of Sikkim coins. The emigration of these service castes to Sikkim caused great difficulties for similar works in Nepal. Thutob Namgyal granted the title of *taksari* to Luchmidas Pradhan, Chadrabir Pradhan, Jitman Singh Pradhan, Mardhoj Gurung and Pratap Singh Chettri and brought the minting of coins to close.<sup>123</sup> Later during British administration the mining business was granted to Messrs. Burn and Company, a Calcutta based company of London.<sup>124</sup>

### **Money Lending:**

The growing trade activities in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century encouraged money lending as a prospering business and the people of Sikkim borrowed money from Tibetan merchants and the Marwaris of Darjeeling and Kalimpong. Indian rupees had poured into Tibet due to British free trade and the people of Sikkim borrowed money from them. Even the Newars of Nepalese community had started establishing themselves as businessmen.<sup>125</sup> The interest on money, grain or any other commodity was twenty per cent per annum. All contracts were required to be made in writing, attested by witnesses, and duly signed and sealed, and the interests were to be paid at the end of the year.<sup>126</sup> The rate of interest at Darjeeling and Kalimpong was up to twenty four per cent per annum. The traders from Sikkim borrowed money from the moneylenders and bought broadcloth in Darjeeling and exchanged for pony and sheep with the Tibetans. These animals were again brought to Darjeeling for sale.<sup>127</sup>

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122. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. 66

123. *Family Papers of Daya Prasad Pradhan*

124. *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the Year 1909-1910*, p. 5

125. *Ibid.*

126. Sarat Chandra Das, *op. cit.* p. 85

127. J. W. Edgar, *op. cit.* p. 56

Later the direct British administration in Sikkim led to the development of Gangtok as a modern town and with this Gangtok saw the settlement of Marwaris and plainsmen. These Marwaris established themselves as bankers, money lenders, businessmen and shop keepers at Darjeeling and Kalimpong before they settled down at Gangtok.<sup>128</sup> Earlier the people of Sikkim used to borrow money from these Marwaris at Darjeeling and Kalimpong at the rate up to twenty four percent per annum. These Marwaris who settled down in Sikkim carried their flourishing business in money lending. They also went to villages to lend money and to collect their *biyaz* or interests.<sup>129</sup> They even held agricultural lands in villages which were probably acquired from the peasants on account of interest on debt. This gave birth to a system in Sikkim called *dadani*. It was a system or a means by which a cultivator used to borrow money from a money lender where the borrower, probably the cultivator sold the produce of any land belonging to him in consideration of cash or kind. The price or the quantity of the produce was prefixed. It was a system by which a cultivator was compelled to sell the product of his land below the market rate at the price fixed by the money lender.<sup>130</sup> The money lending further gave birth to a system called *masikata*, by which a borrower mortgaged his fields to the creditor who enjoyed the produce of the field as an annual installment towards the repayment of loan.<sup>131</sup>

### **British Trade Missions to Tibet through Sikkim:**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the British penetration of Darjeeling and the development of British commercial interest in Tibet increased the importance of Sikkim. The British government's interest was developed mainly for two reasons, one the contacts of Sikkim government with Tibet, and other, easy access to Tibet from Sikkim. The British government of India sent several missions to Tibet to study the nature of trade routes

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128. Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet*, *op. cit.* p. 118

129. *Administration Rep[ort of the Sikkim State for the Year 1912-1913]*, p. 3

130. *Sikkim Darbar Gazettee*, No. 6, Gangtok, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1966

131. *Notice No. 794-94/ G*, Sikkim State, General Department, dated 13th May 1933



from Sikkim to Tibet. The first British trade mission to Tibet was sent by Warren Hastings in 1774 under George Bogle through Bhutan.<sup>132</sup> It was the beginning of British commercial interest towards Tibet. However due to the reluctance showed by the Bhutanese *lamas* and officials to open the doors for Europeans the mission did not bring any desired results. They did not want to lose their profit by allowing entry to the foreigners.<sup>133</sup> Earlier the trade between Tibet and Bengal was conducted through the passes of Bhutan where the Bhutanese officials themselves were the carriers of trade within their territories. Nepal on the other hand was not having good relations with Tibet.<sup>134</sup> So the British government chose Sikkim as reliable ally in this new venture. In 1873 J. Ware Edgar was sent on a mission to Tibet for opening up of trade relations with British India via Sikkim.<sup>135</sup> Edgar also had to face difficulties in the initial stage, the Sikkimese officials and the *lamas* objected his visit on the pretext that it would annoy Tibetan and Chinese governments. However, the reason was otherwise, the Sikkimese officials and *lamas* feared the loss of their profit and the Tibetans too had no concern for opening a new source. They also feared the entry of Christianity into their country and were satisfied with earlier route of trade between Patna and Tibet via Kathmandu. The fear of smallpox, a dreaded disease was another factor reason for their objection as they were ignorant of the proper treatment of this disease. Edgar was able to sort out these difficulties and came back from Tibet with valuable information on future trade prospects with Tibet and proposed the British Government to open up roads to Tibet through Sikkim.<sup>136</sup> Another mission on trade with Tibet through Sikkim was sent by the British Government of India under Sir Richard Temple in 1875. The result of the mission of Sir Richard Temple was the opening of road from Darjeeling to Jeylep in 1877.<sup>137</sup> In 1881, Sarat Chandra Das, Head Master of the Bhutia School at Darjeeling

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132. Clements R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. v

133. *Ibid.*, p. 201

134. *Ibid.*, p. 17

135. *Ibid.*, p. 11

136. *Letter of J. Ware Edgar to the Commissioner of Cooch Behar*, dated 20th January, 1874

137. H. H. Risley, *op. cit.* p. vi

was deputed by the Government of India to establish friendly contacts with the *Panchen Lama* of Tashi Lunpo. The Minister of *Panchen Lama* showed his concern for the establishment of trade relations with British India.<sup>138</sup> This was the beginning of British trade relations with Tibet through Sikkim.

After the return of Sarat Chandra Das to Darjeeling trade between Tibet and British India via Sikkim came to a halt due to the fear of the officials. Once again a mission on trade with Tibet through Sikkim was sent in 1884 under Colman Macaulay, the Finance Secretary of Bengal.<sup>139</sup> The mission of Macaulay was successful in solving the problems due to interference of the minister of *Panchen Lama*. After his return from Tibet, Macaulay proposed to the Government of India to remove the obstruction of trade through Sikkim and proposed the British Government to ask permission from the Chinese Government to allow Indian traders to Tibet. For the smooth trade the improvement in the condition of roads and bridges in Sikkim was a necessity for permanent communication with Tibet.<sup>140</sup> In 1886 a second mission under Colman Macaulay was sent to Tibet.<sup>141</sup> In the meantime a development in the political affairs of Sikkim took place and Mr. J. C. White took over Sikkim as the British Political Officer in 1889.<sup>142</sup> The Anglo–Chinese Convention of 1890 was important from the commercial point of view and it empowered the British Government to conduct trade activities between Sikkim and its neighbours. Free trade between British India and Tibet was opened to all British subjects and they were allowed to travel freely between British India and Tibet up to Yatung.<sup>143</sup> The British trade missions to Tibet opened Sikkim with the rest of India. These missions knew about the strategic position of Sikkim and presented their reports to the government regarding the opening of trade with Tibet

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138. *Macaulay's Memorandum to the Government of India on British Relations with Tibet*, F. S. E., May 1885, no. 752

139. *Ibid.*

140. Colman Macaulay, *op. cit.* p. 105

141. C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.* p. 317

142. *Ibid.*

143. *Ibid.* p. 333

through Sikkim. Sikkim's position was strategic in the sense that the way from Sikkim to Tibet was the shortest.

With the opening of British trade with Tibet, a strategic development was clearly visible in Sikkim. The focus of Sikimese traders now shifted from Tibet to Darjeeling and they used to trade there. This is supported by the following table showing the export and import of goods during 1886-1890.

**Table: 4.2**  
**Exports from Sikkim to Darjeeling**

<b>Articles</b>	<b>1886</b>	<b>1887</b>	<b>1888</b>	<b>1889</b>	<b>1890</b>
Coal (in maunds)	4647	1965	581	1156	77
Indian Cotton piece goods (in Rs.)	2521	2323	2628	1490	N.A.
Gram and pulses (in maunds)	6165	4891	4763	3385	5917
Other pulses (in maunds)	19,338	25,700	23,199	26,439	28,086
Copper (in maunds)	446	726	344	233	517
Hides (in nos.)	1197	1073	1077	789	1061

**Source:** compiled from Annual General Administration Reports of Darjeeling District (1886- 1894)

**Table: 4.3**  
**Imports to Sikkim from Darjeeling**

Articles Year	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890
Cotton piece goods (European) in Rs.	19,747	28,641	23,916	35,666	31,828
Cotton piece goods (Indian) in Rs.	6260	659	50	729	828
Rice (in maunds)	3413	1673	3512	4532	8573
Tobacco (in maunds)	752	1067	941	1404	1290
Wool (manufactured)	N.A.	N. A.	1212	2199	2075
Copper unwrought (in maunds)	241	71	N. A.	N.A.	76
Iron wrought (in maunds)	254	159	N.A.	N.A.	98
Salt (in maunds)	1004	949	891	1270	2390

**Source:** Compiled from Annual General Administration Reports of Darjeeling District (1886-1894)

From the above tables it is noticed that there was a satisfactory increase both under exports and imports. Sikkim exported coal, cotton piece goods, pulses, copper and hides among which pulses showed an increasing trend. However imports in Sikkim were higher than what she exported. Demand for European cotton piece goods was very high. Demand for rice also increased and it was due to the settlement of large number of Nepalese population in Sikkim. Imports of tobacco increased due to its availability at Darjeeling and increase in its consumption. By far the imports of salt shows an increasing trend due to its availability in stores at Darjeeling and the people being relieved from its import from Tibet. The opening of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway

brought these items within a week from Calcutta so the people of Sikkim need not travel to Tibet for procuring them.

### **Economy of Sikkim under British Administration:**

With the appointment of J. C. White as the British Political Officer in Sikkim a significant advancement in Sikkim's economy began. Prior to this date there was no money revenue as such, no particular system of public works and no programme for any social and economic development. The revenue received by the Namgyals consisted of agricultural products and transit duties. This made J. C. White to remark about the financial position of Sikkim thus: "The coffers were empty and the first thing to be done was to devise some means by which we could raise a revenue."<sup>144</sup>

Thus, J. C. White began his work on economic reforms in Sikkim. He set out to survey the lands in different districts and assessed in acres by taking into account the nature of soil. He constituted different departments and the annual revenue was raised from Rs. 8000 to Rs. 2, 20, 000 per annum within five years of his appointment. He encouraged the weaving of clothes by setting a weaving school at Lachung in north Sikkim. He encouraged the women to set up small looms in their houses and the use of vegetable dyes. Carpets and woolen manufactures were encouraged. The weaving school at Lachung was later controlled and supervised by *Maharani* Yeshey Dolma and a carpet factory was set up at Gangtok.<sup>145</sup> Later the weaving school at Lachung excelled in tweeds under the assistance of a Scandinavian Missionary, Miss Johanson. The village girls came to the weaving school for work. English fruit-trees were planted at Lachung, apple trees were planted at Lachung and the plantation of oranges and cardamom were encouraged in the lowlands.<sup>146</sup>

Mr. J. C. White tried his best to enhance the economy of Sikkim by setting weaving schools and plantation of fruits and cash crops. However, the

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144. J. C. White, *op. cit.* p. 28

145. *Ibid.* p. 26-27

146. *Ibid.* p. 294

commercialization of these products did not achieve expected success due to the non-availability of open markets. Due to the bad condition of routes and the absence of markets the cultivators had to travel long distances.<sup>147</sup> Mr. J. C. White enhanced the revenue of Sikkim by bringing more lands into cultivation. For this purpose he encouraged immigration of people from Darjeeling and Nepal. More road connectivity were brought out and bridges were laid. A basis of taxation was established and revenue was raised. Gangtok developed into a modern market and the new capital of Sikkim.<sup>148</sup>

It is noted that Mr. J. C. white adopted harsh measures to achieve the above discussed objectives. Even *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal was not happy with his activities and felt frustrated due to the usurpation of his power by Mr. White.<sup>149</sup> However, the work of Mr. White is justified in the sense that he was the first administrator of Sikkim who brought out different measures to enhance the revenue of the state. The Namgyals took no interest in the economic development of Sikkim and passed most of their time by retiring at Chumbi. The economic progress of Sikkim in the hands of *kazis* was least expected. They only looked upon their own interests and did not bother about the welfare of the people. The measures adopted by Mr. White were the need of the hour as it was acknowledged by *Maharaja* Thutob Namgyal and *Maharani* Yeshey Dolma during their visit to Calcutta.<sup>150</sup>

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147. *Ibid.*

148. *Ibid.* p. 26-27

149. Thutob Namgyal, *op. cit.* p. 104-106

150. *Ibid.*, p. 141

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

The history of Sikkim began with the installation of Phunsog Namgyal in 1642 as a ruler by the three Tibetan monks namely Lhatsun Chenpo, Kathog Kunto Zangpo and Ngadak Sempa of *Nyingmapa* sect. The prime object to install him as a ruler was the result of the ambitious projects of these three *lamas* who needed a spiritual and a temporal head to run a new kingdom on Tibetan lines in opposition to *Gelugpa* form of Buddhism of Tibet. Phuntsog Namgyal was the great grandson of Guru Tashi, one son of the chief of Kham province of Tibet who had established himself as the chief of the Bhutias and the Lepchas at Gangtok and levied tribute from the people living there.

The new ruler, Phuntsog Namgyal was to fulfill the project of the *lamas* and worked towards the spread of Buddhism. He as *Chogyal* was the protector of religion and as a temporal head he was supposed to lay the foundation of the centralized administration of the state. He divided the state into twelve *dzongs* or districts under Lepcha *dzongpons* or governors and appointed the Bhutias as his *kalons* as they were Buddhists. Phuntsog Namgyal left no stones unturned to establish the triumph of the Buddhist faith. After him, Tensung Namgyal, Chagdor Namgyal, Gyurmed Namgyal, Namgyal Phuntsog, Tenzing Namgyal, Tsugphud Namgyal, Sidkeong Namgyal and Thutob Namgyal, respectively ruled Sikkim till the coming of the British Political Officer, J. C. White. The third Namgyal ruler, Chagdor Namgyal, worked extensively towards strengthening the roots of Buddhism in Sikkim. The invention of alphabets for Lepcha language was intended towards the translation of Buddhist literatures from Tibetan which helped him in religious conversion of a large number of the Lepchas. To strengthen the hold of Buddhism in Sikkim he promulgated a law to send second of every three sons to Pemayangtse monastery by which he wanted to make Bhutias a superior people in the society.

The appointment of Mr. J. C. White was the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Sikkim. Revenue of the state increased due to the concern showed by him to bring large lands under cultivation and systematic assessment and collection of revenue. The coming of the British administrator was the beginning of roadways in Sikkim. Gangtok developed into the new administrative capital and a modern town. A change was also brought out in the administrative structure of Sikkim by including the representatives of all sections of people of Sikkim *viz.* the Bhutias, the Lepchas and the Nepalese.

The society of Sikkim during the early Namgyal rule consisted of the the Bhutias, Lepchas, Limboos and the Magars and with the passage of time other Nepalese and the plainsmen settled down in Sikkim by way of conquest, warfare and due to the necessity of the British administrators. The Lepchas, the Limboos, and the Magars, the original inhabitants of Sikkim, lived in north-east and west Sikkim respectively. The Bhutias came to Sikkim from Kham and Ha province of Tibet. Their movement continued after the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty in Sikkim. The Nepalese settle down in different periods of the Namgyal rule were the Newars, GurungThe Nepalese started settling in Sikkim in large numbers in 1780s when there were cross border settlement between Sikkim and Nepal. The frequent raids of the Gurkhas on the western borders compelled the earlier settlers to move towards further east. The Gurkha troops settled down in west Sikkim after occupying the tracts of west and south Sikkim. The Nepalese settlement further increased after 1835 due to British encouragement. The British Political Officer Mr. J. C. White too encouraged the Nepalese to settle down in Sikkim to bring more areas under cultivation thereby raising the revenue of the state. The other reason was to provide cheap porters for British trade with Tibet. The officials of Sikkim too were responsible for the settlement of Nepalese. The role of Lachmidas Pradhan, is also instrumental regarding Nepalese settlement who were brought to Sikkim to clear the forests and bring large tracts of lands under cultivation and to carry



out mining in Sikkim. He also brought few Nepali service castes such as Brahmins, barbers and artisans such as Kamis(smiths), Damais(tailors) and Sarkis(cobblers).

The society of Sikkim during the Namgyal period was stratified into *Chogyal*, *kutchap*, *lamas*, *kalons* and *dzongpons* (later *kazis*), *tumyangs* (later *mondals*), *singpos* (later *raitis* or *bustiwallas*), *drokpas* (later *gothalas*) and *zimchungpas*. At the top was the ruler known as *Chogyal*, *Raja*, *Maharaja* and finally as *Sikkimputtee Maharaja*, was the master of all lands in the kingdom. The Namgyal rulers were the most respectable figure in Sikkim. The next in order was the *kuchap* who was the agent and a close associate of the ruler. Next were the *lamas* who had much influence in the secular and administrative business of the state. The *lamas* were the religious teachers, preachers and administrators, and were generally the Buddhist monks who were learned in Buddhist scriptures. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries some of them became monopolists of trade and business in Sikkim. Next in the hierarchy were the *dzongpons* and the *kalons* who were the governors and ministers of Sikkim respectively and came under nobility; after the contact of Sikkim with Nepal they came to know as *kazis*. They formed the bureaucracy and the link between the common people and the rulers of Sikkim. They were the landlords and dispensers of justice. Later these landlords were the revenue contractors and were also known as *thikadars* by the Nepalese. The village headman was the chief of the village and was known as *tumyang* and *mondal* in the later period and enjoyed a respectable position in the society.

The majority of the people in Sikkimese society consisted of the cultivators and herdsmen known commonly as *singpos* (later *raitis* and *bustiwallas*) and *drokpas* (*gothalas*) respectively. They had a limited freedom and worked in the fields and tended cattle. They were to pay salutation to the landlords commonly known as *theki-bethi*. Later a system developed in Sikkim commonly known as *jharlangi* which was a system of providing free labour to the landlords and the contractors on the self arrangement of the cultivators themselves.

The Sikkimese women took part in agriculture and trade. Women of royal family and nobility enjoyed good social status and inherited property. The properties of women consisted of personal belongings such as ornaments and women of royal family and nobility inherited landed properties. The princesses were granted lands as gifts and the widows of the royal and the noble families enjoyed proprietorship over lands till their death. The common women received respect and obedience in the house as well as in the society. In Sikkim the widow enjoyed respect in the family and society.

The polyandry form of marriage practiced by the Bhutias was later adopted by the Lepchas. The Bhutias too adopted the system of serving the parents of bride from the Lepchas. Polygamy was common among the three sections of Sikkimese society. Dissolution of marriage was adopted by the Lepchas and the Bhutias from the Nepalese. Though adultery was common, however, taking king's and *lama's* wife was considered a grave crime.

The people of Sikkim had a very simple food habit and were both vegetarians and non-vegetarians. Among Buddhists non-vegetarian diet was restricted during some religious occasions. The food consisted of rice, *chapattis* made of wheat, millet and buckwheat and milk and its products. The non-vegetarian diet consisted of the meat of sheep, yaks and wild animals. Sikkimese people consumed tea and intoxicating drinks made of millet commonly known as *chang*, *murwa*, *chi* and *janr*. It was a common item of exchange with salt in Tibet during the Namgyal period. Later with British contact the rich people of Sikkim consumed *opium* and *ganja* which was available in government stores at Darjeeling.

Common diseases of the population of Sikkim were goitre and skin diseases and few cases of smallpox were also reported. Sikkim depended on local faith healers or shamans, natural remedies and Tibetan medicines for treating diseases in humans as well as their cattle. Before the 1890s many women of Sikkim including women of royal families died during childbirth. Crimes were very rare in Sikkim except few cases.

Crimes were considered as sins and grave sins such as murder were given harsh punishments and petty crimes were settled by paying fines. Dice was a common game and playing dice was allowed during festivals. *Khopi* was a common game among the Nepalese. The Bhutias celebrated *Loosong* as New Year, Lepchas called their New Year *Namsoong* and the Nepalese festivals included *Maghe Sakranti*, *Dassain*, *Tiwar* and *Chaite Dassain*.

Regarding the religion of the people, efforts were made by the Namgyals, throughout their rule, to convert the nature worshippers Lepchas and the Limboos to Buddhism. Monasteries were opened for them for their worship and learning. Bhutias worshipped Buddhist deities in their houses as well as in monasteries with the assistance of the *lamas*. The Lepchas worshipped nature along with worship in monasteries. The Nepalese were mostly Hindus and brought some of the Limboo and Magar people of Sikkim under the influence of Hinduism. Christianity too entered Sikkim in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Altogether Sikkim enjoyed full religious freedom and toleration.

Death rites were very elaborate among the Buddhists. The Buddhists cremated their dead with the help of the *lamas*. During the death of the king or the queen the Buddhist subjects of Sikkim had to observe two months state mourning. The rulers observed mourning for one full year and no important was performed during the period of mourning.

*Lamaistic* or monastic form of education existed in Sikkim before the coming of the British administrators. The aim of the education was to provide religious education, the study of Buddhist religious scriptures, prepare the learners for religious order and to propagate Buddhism and convert the Lepchas and the Limboos to it. The syllabus of monastic education in Sikkim was based on the model of Tibetan monasteries. The students were taught traditional ritualistic prayers, religion, uses of musical instruments during rites, practices and dances. Lessons depended on rote memory and the loss of

many of the lines from the original texts was probable. Emphasis was laid on paintings and engravings. The system was elaborate and very expensive however many of them did not want to go for higher studies to become a learned *lama* and preferred the life of ordinary monks. The strict monastic orders did not appeal much to the Sikkimese. The result was that many of the monks left these orders and took to cultivation and lived merely as followers and devotees. The *lamas* enjoyed a higher position in administration, the grant of free land and were exempted from other taxation. However, the monastic education encouraged landlordism among priests and monks and it encouraged the monks to lead a lazy and listless life.

It and it was only with the appointment of J. C. White as the first British Political Officer in Sikkim that education in modern sense developed. As there was no school in modern sense in 1890 Mr. J. C. White sent the young prince, Sidkeong Tulku along with the wards of the *kazis* and the influential *lamas* to Darjeeling.

The economy of Sikkim depended on agriculture and cattle rearing and this activity continued till the coming of the British administrators. They used forest products for fuel and timber, cultivated lands by clearing forests and moved to other virgin areas in search of greener pastures. With the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty the ruler became the formal owner of land and forests of Sikkim. However, there was no formality to occupy cultivable land during the early Namgyal period. The lands were not measured and the amount to be paid to the ruler was not fixed. The cultivators themselves assessed the amount and paid to the king in kind. The Namgyal rulers were satisfied with whatever contribution they got from people in kind. In 1748 Rapden Sharpa, a Tibetan Regent introduced new system of taxation known as *bah pa*, *zo lung* and *tsong-khyed*. The Namgyals also derived their revenue from the lands they had at Chumbi in Tibet cultivated by the Tibetans in the name of the king. From 1835 onwards Namgyals derived permanent source of income from Darjeeling rent.

The settlement of Nepalese in Sikkim towards the later part of the eighteenth century had brought some changes in the nature of land revenue system of Sikkim. The system of land revenue collection and other systems that existed in Nepal entered Sikkim. Lands came to be classified into three different categories on the basis of fertility and produce per seed sown. The terms vogue in Nepal namely, *mana*, *pathi* and *murhi* began to replace earlier Tibetan terms of measurements such as *kang*. The settlement of the Nepalese had its impact on the economic system of Sikkim due to cultivation in large numbers by terracing the fields and due to the use of new technology. The Nepalese system further penetrated into land grant system. The landlords started to grant lands to the *raitis* on the Nepalese system of *adhia* and *kut*. The system of paying salutation to the landlords in the form of gifts called the *theki-bethi* became common. The Nepalese settlement too increased the amount of revenue payments from the earlier family based payment to one fourth of the annual produce.

The Nepalese settlement also encouraged revenue farming among the *kazis* and the *lamas* in the monastic lands and the private estates of the Namgyals. These lands were granted to the revenue farmers or the contractors who were probably the *thikadars*. These *thikadars* encouraged the middlemen called *thui* to grow up between the *thikadars* and the cultivators. These *thuis* granted the lands to the *rai-yats* on behalf of the *thikadars* encouraging absentee landlordism in Sikkim. The settlement being made on verbal agreements and the uncertainty over the possession of land was the reason for the non-productivity of land.

Trade and commercial activities existed in Sikkim on a small scale during the Namgyal period and limited to the articles of daily living. The articles like salt, tea, wool, forests and dairy products were exchanged between traders of Sikkim and Tibet. The idea of earning profit in the earlier stage was almost unknown. The routes to Tibet were almost closed during cold seasons as these were covered by snow. Later the contact of Sikkim with Darjeeling due to its development by the British in the 1830s a

new phase of commercial contacts with this district of British India began. Direct interaction with Darjeeling had both negative and positive impact on Sikkim. The opening of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway and its extension brought Sikkim and Darjeeling closer. Sikkim also came closer to the plains and progressed in trade on fruits, livestock and food grains. The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway played an important role in increasing the value of Sikkim and her trade. The British on the other hand were keen to develop free trade relations with Tibet. Missions after missions were sent to Tibet for opening up trade relations. These missions probably led to the volume of trade of Sikkim with Darjeeling and shifting of focus to the latter in terms of trade.

With the appointment of the Political Officer saw changes in administrative structure, reforms in every sphere of Sikkim ranging from economic, social, education and culture which was a blessing in disguise for Sikkim. Without completely abolishing the old system Mr. J.C.White created the hierarchy of revenue officers. Lands were assessed and revenue payments were made in cash and Sikkim's income started increasing due to encouragement given them by to new settlers for cultivating lands. J. C. White's reforms in revenue administration by bringing out a number of uncultivated lands into cultivation by encouraging Nepalese settlements had its impact on the Sikkimese society in the next century.



## GLOSSARY

<i>Adhiya</i>	:	sharing half the produce on land
<i>Avatara</i>	:	incarnation
<i>Bazaar</i>	:	market
<i>Bijua</i>	:	shaman
<i>Bisa panja</i>	:	five out of twenty
<i>Cham</i>	:	dance
<i>Chang</i>	:	intoxicating drink
<i>Changzod</i>	:	prime minister
<i>Chepte paisa</i>	:	flat coin
<i>Che-se</i>	:	sharing half the produce on land
<i>Chogyal</i>	:	ruler who rules with righteousness
<i>Churpi</i>	:	dairy product made from butter milk
<i>Chyabrung</i>	:	drum
<i>Dewan</i>	:	chief administrator
<i>Dhami</i>	:	shaman
<i>Dharmaraja</i>	:	protector of religion
<i>Dharni</i>	:	equivalent to two and a half kilograms
<i>Doli paisa</i>	:	round coin
<i>Dooba paisa</i>	:	copper coin
<i>Drokpa</i>	:	herdsman
<i>Dutchi</i>	:	administrative body of monastery
<i>Dzong</i>	:	district
<i>Dzongpon</i>	:	governor of a district
<i>Gelugpa</i>	:	yellow hat sect of Buddhism

<i>Ghew</i>	:	dairy product made from milk and curd
<i>Gonpa</i>	:	monastery
<i>Gothala</i>	:	herdsman
<i>Jaari</i>	:	fine paid after taking others wife
<i>Jharlangi</i>	:	forced labour
<i>Kagyupa</i>	:	black hat sect of Buddhism
<i>Kalon</i>	:	minister
<i>Karmapa</i>	:	head of black hat sect of Buddhism
<i>Kazi</i>	:	landlord
<i>Kodali</i>	:	spade
<i>Kuchap</i>	:	agent of Sikkim ruler
<i>Kut</i>	:	condition on settling on a land
<i>Lama</i>	:	Buddhist monk
<i>Mana</i>	:	unit of measurement of grain
<i>Mantra</i>	:	religious hymn
<i>Murhi</i>	:	unit of measurement of grain
<i>Murwa</i>	:	intoxicating drink
<i>Nyingmapa</i>	:	red hat sect of Buddhism
<i>Pathi</i>	:	unit of measurement of grain
<i>Pow</i>	:	religious shaman
<i>Raiti</i>	:	cultivator
<i>Sanad</i>	:	deed of grant
<i>Ser</i>	:	equal to 900.50 grams
<i>Singpo</i>	:	cultivator
<i>Sopon</i>	:	cook employed in palace
<i>Taksari</i>	:	minters



<i>Tapa</i>	:	ordinary monks
<i>Theki-bethi</i>	:	gifts or salutation in the form of dairy and meat
<i>Thikadar</i>	:	revenue contractors
<i>Thui</i>	:	middleman in monastic lands
<i>Tolung</i>	:	wooden vessel for churning butter
<i>Torma</i>	:	cakes made from wheat and rice flour
<i>Tumyang</i>	:	village headman
<i>Vakeel</i>	:	agent
<i>Zimchungpa</i>	:	slave

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## **VI. INFORMANTS**

Dr. M. P. Kharel  
Lama Dup Tshering  
Phur Tshering Lepcha  
Parsuram Neopaney  
D. K. Rai  
Udaichandra Vasistha

□□□□



## Appendix A

### Researcher's interview with Lama Dup Tshering:

Lama, Dup Tshering, aged 72, is the head *lama* (*dorje lopen*) of Old Rumtek Monastery, East Sikkim. He is the member of the *dutchi* which is responsible for the administration of the monastery, its maintenance and settlement of cultivators. The researcher sought an interview with him on 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2011 and the following questions were put forward to him.

1. What is the meaning of the *dutchi*?
2. Who introduced it in Sikkim?
3. What are its functions?
4. Who are the members of the *dutchi*?

The respondent informed the researcher that the *dutchi* is the governing body of the *gonpas* of Sikkim which were built in Sikkim under the Namgyal rulers of Sikkim. These *gonpas* were allotted lands for the maintenance of these Buddhist religious institutions and for performing religious ceremonies. It was during the third Namgyal ruler, Chagdor Namgyal, *Chayik* was written by him which became the constitution of the *gonpas* and provided for a governing body called the *dutchi* for carrying out the smooth functioning of the *gonpas*. The *dutchi* has the power to settle the cultivators and fix the revenue to be paid by them. At the initial stage the *Chayik* was meant only for the Pemayangtse *gonpa*, later it was made uniform to all the monasteries built by the *Chogyals* of Sikkim. The *dutchi* is constituted of the *dorje lopen* himself, *khenpo* and *chultrim*. Chagdor Namgyal devoted most of his time in religious activities and ordered that every second son from the Bhutia family of Sikkim should be sent to Pemayangtse *gonpa* to become a *lama*. He also built a *gonpa* for the Limboos at Pemayangtse and the alphabets for Lepcha subjects were also invented by him. He was of the opinion that since it is not possible for the *dutchi* to settle the land affairs with the cultivators as they are busy with religious matters they have granted the lands through middlemen or leased out, however, the records of the functioning of the monasteries and details of accounts are kept by the *dutchi*.

### Researcher's interview with Uday Chandra Basistha:

Uday Chandra Basistha, aged 73, is the retired officer of Education Department, Government of Sikkim. He is the author of *Sikkimka Chadparva* (Religious Festivals of Sikkim) and gives various religious discourses. He is credited with having knowledge on religion and cultures of Sikkim among all the three communities *viz.* the Bhutias, Lepchas and the Nepalese. The researcher met him on 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2012 and information was received from him on the questions put in the following way.

1. What were the different forms of marriage in Sikkim especially among the Nepalese?
2. How was it organized?
3. Was dissolution of marriage permissible?
4. Could widow remarry?
5. Whether these forms of marriage exist today?

The respondent informed that in Sikkim different forms of marriage were prevalent. Among them polyandry among the Bhutias and the Lepchas was common. Child marriage was common among the Nepalese belong to Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Among other Nepalese marriage was arranged by their parents. Sometimes the boy and the girl married by eloping and the ceremonies followed. In this case a mediator called *kalia* was to be sent to girl's house to confirm the presence of the girl at boy's house and was generally referred to as *chor ko shor*. The marriage started right with *mangni* or asking the hand of the girl for the boy. The marriage was finalized by sharing *marwa* and the date was fixed and the presents to be brought to bride's house were consented. They had to bring marriage procession or *janti* on the day of marriage and formal declaration was made by their *shamans* by invoking spirits. The Nepalese except Brahmins and Kshatriyas married their elder sister-in-law and it was acceptable, however, they were required to pay fines or *jaari* if the husband was alive and were accepted as the member of the house after the ceremony of *daal bhat*. Dissolution of marriage was permissible after paying maintenance by the person who sought it. Among the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas marriage was arranged by their parents and child marriage was common till the mid of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After marriage the bride was required to be brought to her parents known as *duran* and if she did not return to her in-laws the marriage was said to have dissolved. She was not allowed to remarry and the widow marriage was absent in those days. However, if a child became a widow before her menarche she was allowed to remarry. He was of the opinion that most of these traditions have now faded away due to the influence of modern education.

#### **Researcher's interview with Phur Tshering Lepcha:**

Phur Tshering Lepcha, aged 78, is the ex *mondal* (village headman) of Marchak block, East Sikkim. Being a Lepcha and a headman of the village he is aware with the social activities regarding his village. The researcher met him on 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2011, and sought information on the following questions put forward to him.

1. How was the marriage among Lepchas and Bhutias arranged?
2. What were the different rituals organized by these communities during birth and death?
3. What were the different forms of music and dances among Bhutias and the Lepchas?

The respondent informed the researcher that among the Lepchas and the Bhutias marriage were arranged by their parents. In this case he informed that the role of maternal uncle among these communities was important. The Lepcha marriage was contracted in the early childhood and the boy had to serve the in-laws for two to three years before the marriage was finalized. The Bhutias adopted this custom from the Lepchas. The Lepchas also adopted the polyandry form of marriage from the Bhutias. They had to exchange *chang* or *murwa* or *chi* when the marriage was finalized. During the day of marriage the bride was required to come in a procession called *gyampu kundae* and had to bring live bull, pig, fowl and eggs along with ornaments as bride price. After days of feasting the marriage was said to be over. The new born baby was named after three to five days of its birth by the elders. *Bijuas'* service was taken to ward off evil spirits and for safe delivery. During illness they also employed their service. When the Lepchas started converting to Buddhism the birth ritual of naming was done by the *lamas*. They performed *pujas* for well being of the whole family and ward off the evil spirits. Earlier the Lepchas used to bury the dead with the latter facing Kanchanjanga however, the Lepchas later started following the Buddhist tradition of cremating of the dead.

#### **Researcher's interview with Dr. M. P. Kharel:**

Dr. M. P. Kharel, aged 57, is the Principal of Sikkim Government College, is among one of the learned figure in Sikkim. The researcher sought interview on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 2012 regarding the economic history of Sikkim and the following information were received from him on the basis of questions asked to him.

1. How was the land revenue collected from the people of Sikkim during Namgyals?
2. What were the changes brought about by the Nepalese and the British system?

He informed that the land revenue in Sikkim was never uniform the Chogyal used to stay at Chumbi for almost half the year. The officers collected the revenue of their behalf. It was the Newars who brought in the Nepalese system of land revenue in the form of *bisa panja* which was to be paid in kind. This was imposed on the Nepalese settlers by them after they got *thikadari* rights. *Bisa panja* literally meant five out of twenty. Later when the British came they abolished this system and collected revenue in kind.

#### **Researcher's interview with D. K. Rai:**

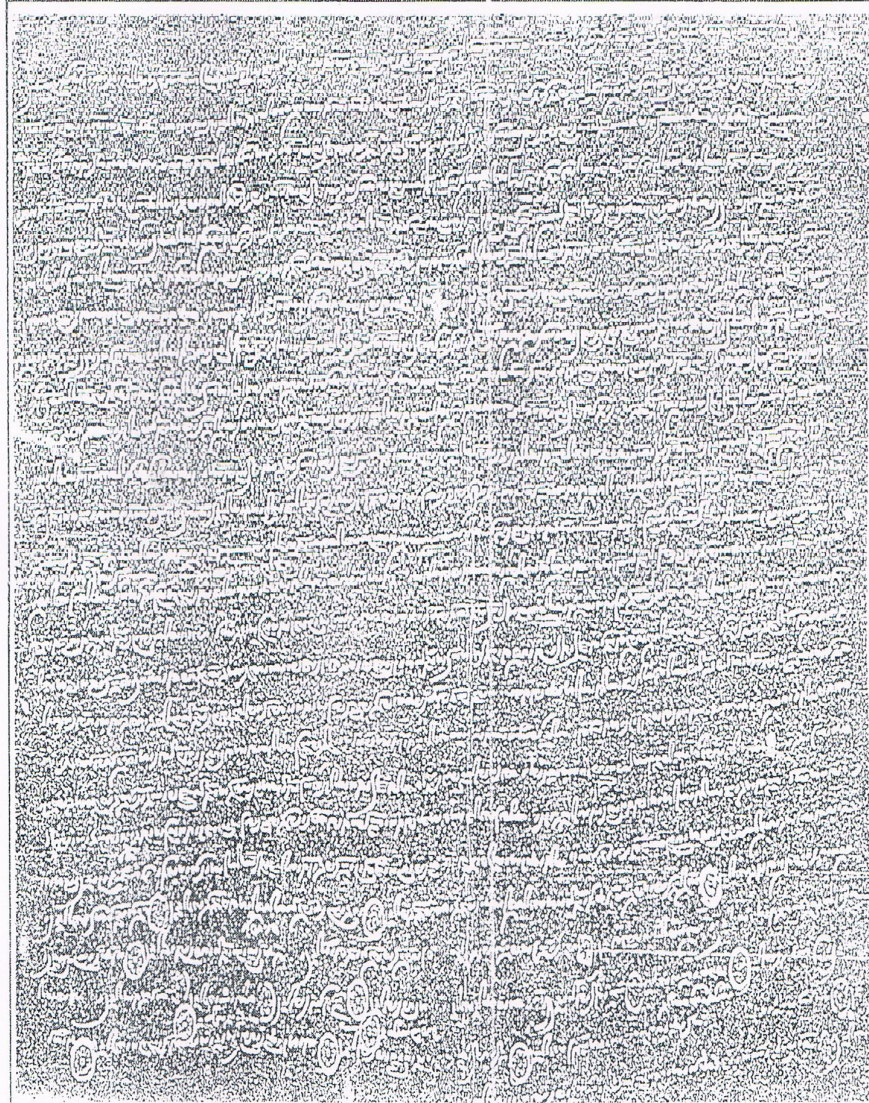
D. K. Rai, age 56, is the OSD of Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department, Government of Sikkim. He is well aware of the land systems, taxes, and land revenue management in Sikkim. The researcher met him on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2012 and the information received from him on the basis of the following questions asked to him are as follows.

1. How were the land revenue were collected in Sikkim in past?
2. Who granted land to the monasteries?
3. What was the measurement of those lands thus granted?

He informed that before the coming of the Nepalese he had no idea about the collection of land revenue however, after their settlement a sort of house tax called *dhuri khajana* from the new settlers. A *dhur* was an imaginary area of ten long steps of an average man on all four sides which was sufficient to build a house. At that time it was paid in kind of one *murhi* of paddy or at the rate of 1 rupee in cash per year. Lands were granted to the monasteries by the *Chogyals* measuring 15 to twenty acres of today's measurement, near to the monastery or at a distance. The boundary of the said land was either a river, a pathway, stream a big rock or a high mound.

## APPENDIX B

### Part-I



#### **The Treaty of *Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum***

**Translation :**

Hi! Please observe, please behold, please listen, name from Kuntu Zangpo the foremost Buddha, to the rest Guru of our time and their ocean like guardian deities of *Dharma* may please appear in their wrathful form and behold without your body, speech

and maid distracted elsewhere. All the ocean like guardian deities: the male *Dharma Palas*, female protectors of the *Chogyals* of this country and the *Dharma*; many also appear in their fiercely wrathful forms and behold at this occasion without distraction of their body, speech and mind, *Pal yeshe-kly Gompo Mahakala Manaiag Nagpo*; *Gompos* of body, speech, mind, quality and action; *Za-Yi Gehen Ra-Hula* and light division of Gods and demi-gods may please behold without being distracted, *Chogyal Chempo*, his ministers and followers to the Guru Rimpoche gave this command ; his followers Demons *Nagas* and *Tsem* ; Baishramana, Dorjee Shangden, Dorjee Dadul Peher Gyalpo and Gyalpos of recent and ancient with eight divisions of wrathful spirits may also appear in their wrathful form and behold this occasion not having their body, speech and mind distracted elsewhere. Moreover, *Zod-aga Taktse* the great treasure holder of this valley, *Thang Lho*, *Gabur Gangtsen*, Twelve *Termas*, *Ya-dud Cham-dral* the guardian deities of the lower valley. *Sride Rongtsen Ekazati* and all the female guardians, the guardians of middle valley- *pawe Hungry* and hundred thousand of millions of armies of Lha, Tsen, Dud and Lu may also appear in their wrathful form and behold at this occasion not having their body, speech and mind distracted elsewhere. In this hidden valley of Guru Rimpoche, the guardian deities of all the retreat centres holding the lineage of *Zongpo Chenpo*; the armies of Dud, Tsen, Lu and treasure holder residing in mountains, valleys, trees, rocks and lawn; the guardian deities of *Thek-chok Yangtse*, *Pema Yangtse*, *Rabdentse*, *Tashiding* and other places may appear in their wrathful form from the invisible and behold at this occasion. All the deities and guardians worshipped by us the people of four parts of *Ti-tiag Hkapa*, *Barpung*, *Lingduam*, *Dang*, *Zonga*, *Tsong* and *Mongpas*, may please behold undistracted. We the leaders and ministers have met here according to the wishes of Lord of *Men* and we hereby pledge and put our seals to the agreement that the people of *Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum* will hereafter integrate our wishes and will not have separate self government of Lho, Men and Tsong but will abide by one order only. During the last Mongpa war some action of people were noted and let them be beware of. Now from this year of water hare (1663) onwards we will abide by the commands of the king, his Guru and sons and will never let arise a bad thought against *chogyal*.

We the ministers and chiefs including those of the eight communities of Lhopas (Bhutias) hereby pledge that *Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum* will have one destiny and one

government. They will fight together with their foes and they will feast together with their friends. They will bring in the intelligence of others but they will never take out the secret of inside. If there be any not abiding not abiding by this pledge and does mischief and disturb the peace and harmony of *Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum*, whoever he may be, the above mentioned guardian deities will see the truth. In such a case the afore mentioned deities are beseeched to appear in their wrathful forms and with their fierceful sound of *Hung! Phat!* And they are beseeched to make the criminals go mad and devour their flesh, blood and heart without delaying for year, months, days, and even for a moment. *Kharram Kha Hi!* Those who abide by this pledge; respect the above mentioned deities; abide by the agreement made by us, ministers and chiefs, wish only good for the *Chogyal*, his *Gurus* and his sons, and serve the kingdom both physically and peacefully, may they be seen by the afore said guardian deities and may their life, fortune, glory and wealth be made increase like the waxing moon. If any among *Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum*, would not abide by this pledge will be made to pay three *srangs* (ounces) of gold as pledge breach fee and thereafter he will be punished according to the degree of crime he has committed from slight physical punishment to the extent of death penalty. No hesitation will be made in execution of those punishments so that all may keep those in their minds.

In presence of the following, the seal of the chiefs and ministers were stamped:

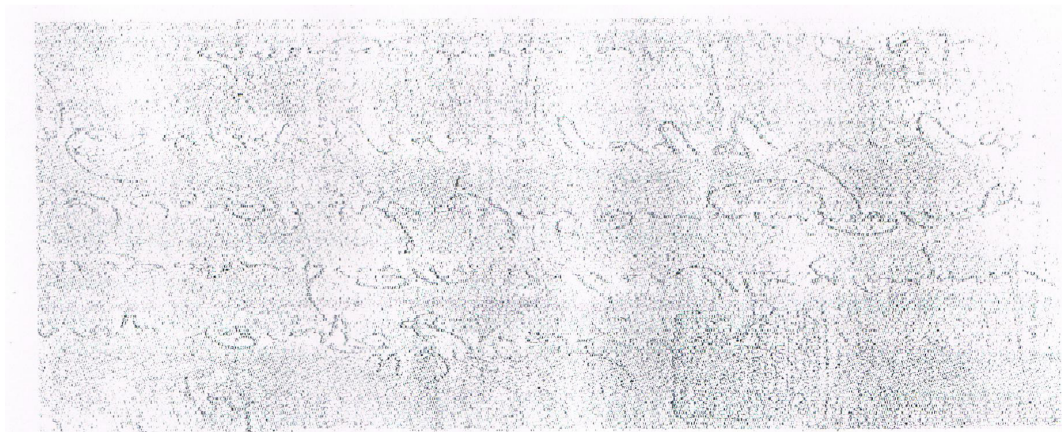
1. Dak Sar, the Minister of Sikkim,
2. Dechan Namgyal of Tri-tong Khapa (Tshangker Lak-ker),
3. Thar thin of Barpung,
4. Tamchin Darleg,
5. Tencho of Lingdam,
6. Choe Drup,
7. Gu-Ju of Drang Tod,
8. Nagpo of Bordongpa,
9. Tsong Subba Namphang,
10. Tsong Yug Shug,
11. Mo Zang (Morang) Mig Tsop,
12. Tsa Tai,

13. Poshing,
14. Matsi Ta,
15. Labung Thopa Kui,
16. Deshae Hang,
17. Mig Yon Ajamta,
18. Modempa,
19. Peghapa,
20. Bolobir,
21. Tapa Azod of Rathong Chung Gupa,
22. Tapa Shuphang of Ringhi Chungupa,
23. Taba Gon Kyab of Galed Chung Gupe,
24. Pelos

Thus, created on Water Hare Year (1663), at *Denzong Phuntsog Khangsar* (Palace).



## Part-II



### Deed Granted to Subba Suma Hang Thi by Tensung Namgyal

#### Translation :

Be it known to all monks, ministers, governors and all subjects that Subba Suma Hang Thi has been granted the forest and pasture lands at Rimbi. He is granted the permission to clear the forests of the surrounding areas for cultivation without disturbing the peace and tranquility of the country. Nor he should disturb the peace at the borders. He should serve the country faithfully and abide by the law of the land.

Taking consideration of the above orders he should not engage himself in such activities that would endanger the peace of the state.

Granted in the Wood Bull Year (1685), at *Wangdu* Palace.

## **Part-III**

### **The Treaty of Titalia – 1817**

Treaty, Covenant, or Agreement entered into by Captain Barre Latter, Agent on the part of His Excellency the Right Honourable the Earl of Moira, K. G., Governor General, &c., &c., &c., &c., and by Nazir Chaina Tenjin and Macha Teinbah and Lama Duchim Longdoo, Deputies on the part of the Rajah of Sikkimputtee, being severally authorized and duly appointed for the above purposes, - 1817.

#### **Article 1**

The Honourable East India Company cedes, transfers, and makes over in full sovereignty to the Sikkimputtee Rajah, his heirs or successors, all the hilly or mountainous country situated to the eastward of the Mechi River and to the westward of the Teesta River, formerly possessed and occupied by the Rajah of Nepaul, but ceded to the Honourable East India Company by the Treaty of peace signed at Segoulee.

#### **Article 2**

The Sikkimputtee Rajah engages for himself and successors to abstain from any acts of aggression or hostility against the Goorkhas or any other state.

#### **Article 3**

That he will refer to the arbitration of the British Government any disputes or questions that may arise between his subjects and those of Nepaul, or any other neighbouring state, and to abide by the decision of the British Government.

#### **Article 4**

He engages for himself and successors to join British troops with the whole of his Military Force when employed within the hills, and in general to afford the British troops every aid and facility in his power.

#### **Article 5**

That he will not permit any British subject, nor the subject of any European and American state, to reside within his dominions, without the permission of the English Government.

#### **Article 6**

That he will immediately seize and deliver up any dacoits or notorious offenders that may take refuge within his territories.

### **Article 7**

That he will not afford protection to any defaulters of revenue or other delinquents when demanded by the British Government through their accredited Agents.

### **Article 8**

That he will afford protection to merchants and traders from the Company's Provinces, and he engages that no duties shall be levied on the transit of merchandize beyond the established custom at the several golahs or marts.

### **Article 9**

The Honourable East India Company guarantees to the Sikkimputtee Rajah and his successors the full and peaceable possession of the tract of hilly country specified in the first Article of the present Agreement.

### **Article 10**

This Treaty shall be ratified and exchanged by the Sikkimputtee Rajah within one month from the present date, and the counterpart, when confirmed by His Excellency the Right Honourable the Governor-General, shall be transmitted to the Rajah.

*Done at Titalya, this 10<sup>th</sup> day of February 1817, answering to the 9<sup>th</sup> of Phagoon 1873 Sumbut, and to the 30<sup>th</sup> of Maugh 1223 Bengallie.*

BARRE LATTER

NAZIR CHAINA TINJIN

MACHA TIMBAH

LAMA DUCHIM LONGADOO

(Sd.) MOIRA

“ N. B. EDMONGTONE

“ ARCHID SETON

“ GEO. DOWDESWELL

Ratified by the Governor-General in Council, at Fort William, this fifteenth day of March, one thousand eight hundred and seventeen.

(Sd.) J. Adam,

*Acting Chief Secy. to Govt.*

### **Copy of a Sunnud granted to the Rajah of Sikkim, dated 7<sup>th</sup> April 1817.**

The Honourable East India Company, in consideration of the services performed by the Hill tribes under the control of the Rajah of Sikkim, and of the attachment shown by him to the interest of the British Government, grants to the Sikkimputtee Rajah, his heirs and successors, all that portion of low land situated eastward of the Meitche River, and westward of the Maha Nuddee, formerly possessed by the Rajah of Napaul, but ceded to the Honourable East India Company by the Treaty of Segoulee, to be held by the Sikkimputtee Rajah as a feudatory, or as acknowledging the supremacy of the British Government over the said lands, subject to the following conditions :-

The British Laws and Regulations will not be introduced into the territories in question, but the Sikkimputtee Rajah is authorized to make such laws and regulations for their internal government, as are suited to the habits and customs of the inhabitants, or that may be in force in his other dominions.

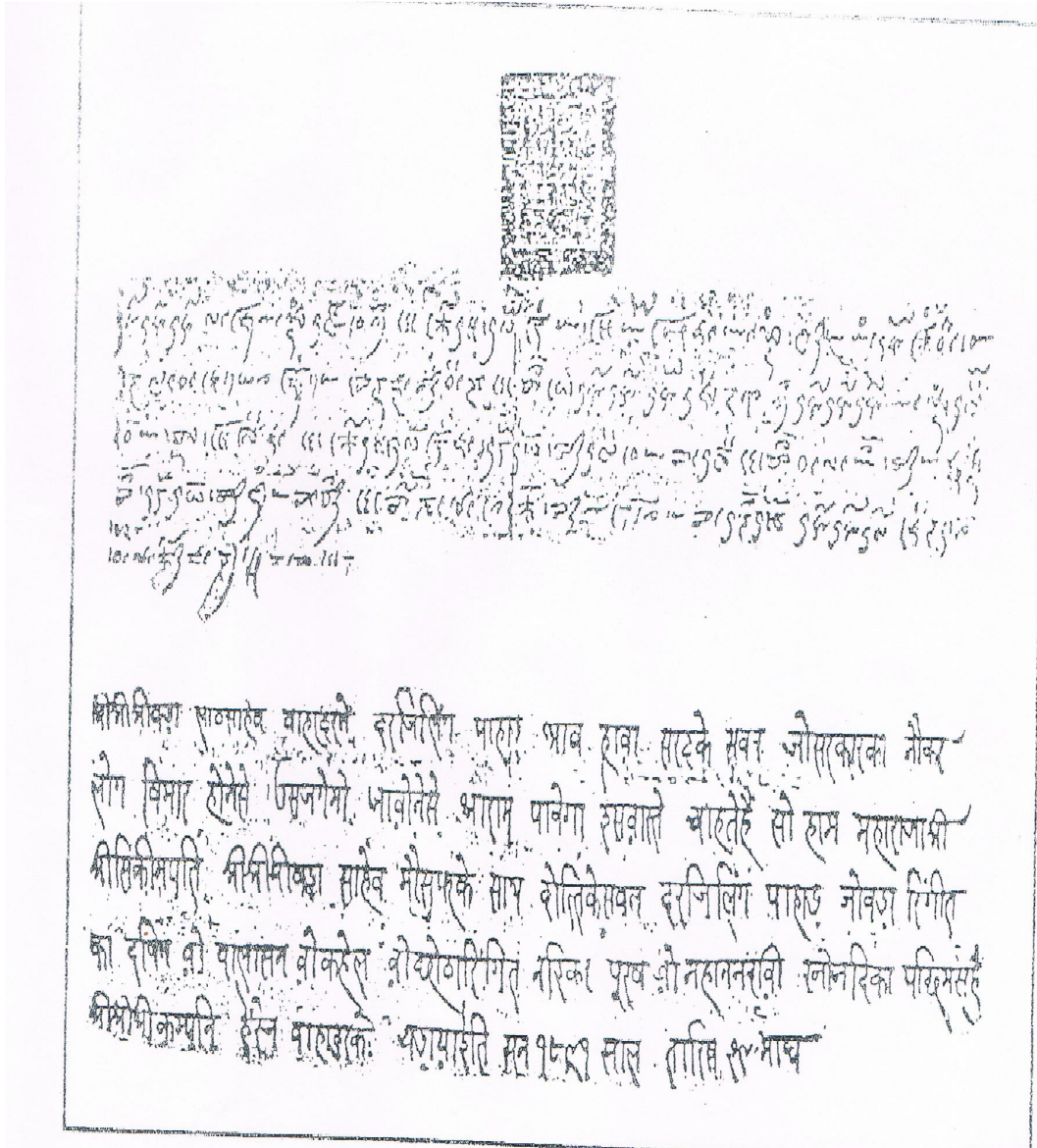
The Articles or Provisions of the Treaty signed at Titalya on the 10<sup>th</sup> February 1817, and ratified by His Excellency the Right Honourable the Governor-General in Council on the 15<sup>th</sup> March following, are to be in force with regard to the lands hereby assigned to the Sikkimputtee Rajah, as far as they are applicable to the circumstances of those lands.

It will be especially incumbent on the Sikkimputtee Rajah and his officers to surrender, on application from the officers of the Honourable Company, all persons charged with criminal offences, and all public defaulters who may take refuge in the lands now assigned to him, and to allow the police officers of the British Government to pursue into those lands and apprehend all such persons.

In consideration of the distance of the Sikkimputtee Rajah's residence from the Company's Provinces, such orders as the Governor-General in Council may, upon any sudden emergency, find it necessary to transmit to the local authorities in the lands now assigned, for the security or protection of those lands, are to be immediately obeyed and carried into execution in the same manner as coming from the Sikkimputtee Rajah.

In order to prevent all disputes with regard to the boundaries of the low lands granted to the Sikkimputtee Rajah, they will be surveyed by a British Officer, and their limits accurately laid down and defined.

## Part-IV



### Deed of Darjeeling Grant 1835

**Translation of the Deed of Grant making over Darjeeling to the East India Company, dated 29<sup>th</sup> Maugh, Sumbut 1891, A. D., 1<sup>st</sup> February 1835.**

The Governor-General having expressed his desire for the possession of the Hill of Darjeeling, on account of its cool climate, for the purpose of enabling the servants of his Government, suffering from sickness, to avail themselves of its advantages, I, the Sikkimputtee Rajah, out of friendship to the said Governor-General, hereby present Darjeeling to the East India Company, that is, all the land south of the Great Runjeet

River, east of the Balasur, Kahail, and Little Runjeet Rivers, and west of the Rungno and Mahanuddi Rivers.

(Translated)

(Sd.) A. Campbell,

*Superintendent of Darjeeling,*

*and in charge of Political relations with Sikkim.*

Seal of the Rajah prefixed to the document.

## **Part-V**

### **Treaty of Tumlong 1861**

Treaty, Covenant, or Agreement entered into by the Honourable Ashley Eden, Envoy and Special Commissioner on the part of the British Government, in virtue of full powers vested in him by the Right Honourable Charles, Earl Canning, Governor-General in Council, and by His Highness Sekeong Kuzoo, Maharajah of Sikkim on his own part, - 1861.

Whereas the continued depredations and misconduct of the officers and subjects of the Maharajah of Sikkim, and the neglect of the Maharajah to afford satisfaction for the misdeeds of his people have resulted in an interruption for many years past of the harmony which previously existed between the British Government and the Government of Sikkim, and have led ultimately to the invasion and conquest of Sikkim by a British force; and whereas the Maharajah of Sikkim has now expressed his sincere regret for the misconduct of his servants and subjects, his determination to do all in his power to obviate future misunderstanding, and his desire to be again admitted into friendship and alliance with the British Government, it is hereby agreed as follows :-

#### **1.**

All previous Treaties made between the British Government and the Sikkim Government are hereby formally cancelled.

#### **2.**

The whole of the Sikkim Territory now in the occupation of British forces is restored to the Maharajah of Sikkim, and there shall henceforth be peace and amity between the two states.

#### **3.**

The Maharajah of Sikkim undertakes, so far as is within his power, to restore, within one month from the date of signing this Treaty, all public property which was abandoned by the detachment of British Troops at Rinchinpoong.

4.

In indemnification of the expenses incurred in 1860 by the British Government in occupying a portion of the territory of Sikkim as a means of enforcing just claims which had been evaded by the Government of Sikkim, and as compensation to the British subjects who were pillaged and kidnapped by subjects of Sikkim, the Sikkim Government agrees to pay to the British authorities at Darjeeling the sum of 7,000 (seven thousand) Rupees in the following installments, that is to say:-

May 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1861 -----	1,000
Nov. 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1861-----	3,000
May 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1862 -----	3,000

As security for the due payment of this amount, it is further agreed that in the event of any of these installments not being duly paid on the date appointed, the Government of Sikkim shall make over to the British Government that portion of its territory bounded on the south by the River Rummam, on the east by the Great Runjeet River, on the north by a line from the Great Runjeet to the Singaleelah Range, including the monasteries of Tassiding, Pemonchi, and Changacheling, and on the west by the Singaleelah Mountain Range, and the British Government shall retain possession of this territory and collect the revenue thereof, until the full amount, with all expenses of occupation and collection, and interest at 6 per cent per annum, are realized.

5.

The Government of Sikkim engages that its subjects shall never again commit depredations on British territory, or kidnap or otherwise molest British subjects. In the event of any such depredation or kidnapping taking place, the Government of Sikkim undertakes to deliver up all persons engaged in such malpractice, as well as the Sirdars or other Chiefs conniving at or benefiting thereby.

6.

The Government of Sikkim will at all times seize and deliver up any criminals, defaulters, or other delinquents who may have taken refuge within its territory, on demand being duly made in writing by the British Government through their accredited agents. Should any delay occur in complying with such demand, the Police of the British Government may follow the person whose surrender has been demanded into



any part of the Sikkim territory, and shall, on showing warrant, duly signed by the British Agent, receive every assistance and protection in the prosecution of their object from the Sikkim officers.

7.

In as much as the late misunderstandings between the two Governments have been mainly fomented by the acts of the ex-Dewan Namguay, the Government of Sikkim engages that neither the said Namguay, nor any of his blood relations, shall ever again be allowed to set foot in Sikkim, or to take part in the councils of, or hold any office under, the Maharajah or any of the Maharajah's family at Choombi.

8.

The Government of Sikkim from this date abolishes all restrictions on travellers and monopolizes in trade between the British territories and Sikkim. There shall henceforth be a free reciprocal intercourse, and full liberty of commerce between the subjects of both countries; it shall be lawful for British subjects to go into any part of Sikkim for the purpose of travel or trade, and the subjects of all countries shall be permitted to reside in and pass through Sikkim, and to expose their goods for sale at any place and in any manner that may best suit their purpose, without any interference whatever, except as in hereinafter provided.

9.

The Government of Sikkim engages to afford protection to all travellers, merchants or traders of all countries, whether residing in, trading in, or passing through Sikkim. If any merchant, traveller, or trader, being a European British subject, shall commit any offence contrary to the laws of Sikkim, such person shall be punished by the representative of the British Government resident at Darjeeling, and the Sikkim Government will at once deliver such offender over to the British authorities for this purpose, and will, on no account, detain such offender in Sikkim on any pretext or pretence whatever. All other British subjects residing in the country to be liable to the laws of Sikkim; but such persons shall, on no account, be punished with loss of limb, or maiming, or torture, and every case of punishment of a British subject shall be at once reported to Darjeeling.

**10.**

No duties or fees of any sort shall be demanded by the Sikkim Government of any person or persons on account of goods exported into the British territories from Sikkim, or imported into Sikkim from the British territories

**11.**

On all goods passing into or out of Tibet, Bhootan, or Nepaul, the Government of Sikkim may levy a duty of customs according to such a scale as may, from time to time, be determined and published without reference to the destination of the goods, provided, however, that such duty shall, on no account, exceed 5 per cent, on the value of goods at the time and place of the levy of duty. On the payment of the duty aforesaid a pass shall be given exempting such goods from liability to further payment on any account whatever.

**12.**

With the view to protect the Government of Sikkim from fraud on account of undervaluation for assessment of duty, it is agreed that the customs officers shall have the option of taking over for the Government any goods at the value affixed on them by the owner.

**13.**

In the event of the British Government desiring to open out a road through Sikkim, with the view of encouraging trade, the Sikkim Government will raise no objection thereto, and will afford every protection and aid to the party engaged in the work. If a road is constructed, the Government of Sikkim undertakes to keep it in repair, and to erect and maintain suitable traveller's rest-houses throughout its route.

**14.**

If the British Government desires to make either a topographical or geological survey of Sikkim, the Sikkim Government will raise no objection to this being done, and will afford protection and assistance to the officers employed in this duty.

**15.**

In as much as many of the late misunderstandings have had their foundation in the custom which exists in Sikkim of dealing in slaves, the Government of Sikkim binds itself, from this date, to punish severely any person trafficking in human beings, or seizing persons for the purpose of using them as slaves.

**16.**

Henceforth the subjects of Sikkim may transport themselves without let or hindrance to any country to which they may wish to remove. In the same way the Government of Sikkim has authority to permit the subjects of other countries, not being criminals or defaulters, to take refuge in Sikkim.

**17.**

The Government of Sikkim engages to abstain from any acts of aggression or hostility against any of the neighbouring States which are allies of the British Government. If any disputes or questions arise between the people of Sikkim and those of neighbouring States, such disputes or questions shall be referred to the arbitration of the British Government, and the Sikkim Government agrees to abide by the decision of the British Government.

**18.**

The whole military force of Sikkim shall join and afford every aid and facility to British Troops when employed in the Hills.

**19.**

The Government of Sikkim will not cede or lease any portion of its territory to any other State without the permission of the British Government.

**20.**

The Government of Sikkim engages that no armed force belonging to any other country shall pass through Sikkim without the sanction of the British Government.

**21.**

Seven of the criminals, whose surrender was demanded by the British Government, having fled from Sikkim and taken refuge in Bhootan, the Government of Sikkim engages to do all in its power to obtain the delivery of those persons from the Bhootan Government, and in the event of any of these men again returning to Sikkim, the Sikkim Government binds itself to seize them, and to make them over to the British Authorities at Darjeeling without delay.

**22.**

With a view to the establishment of an efficient Government in Sikkim, and to the better maintenance of friendly relations with the British Government, the Maharajah of Sikkim agrees to remove the seat of his Government from Tibet to Sikkim, and reside there for nine months in the year. It is further agreed that a Vakeel shall be accredited by the Sikkim Government, who shall reside permanently at Darjeeling.

23.

This Treaty, consisting of twenty-three Articles, being settled and concluded by the Honourable Ashley Eden, British Envoy, and his Highness Sekeong Kuzoo Sikkimputtee, Maharajah, at Tumlong, this 28<sup>th</sup> day of March 1861, corresponding with 17<sup>th</sup> Dao Neepoo 61, Mr. Eden has delivered to the Maharajah a copy of the same in English, with translation in Nagri and Bhootiah, under the seal and signature of the said Honourable Ashley Eden and His Highness the Sikkimputtee Maharajah, and the Sikkimputtee Maharajah has in like manner delivered to the said Hon'ble Ashley Eden another copy also in English, with translation in Nagri and Bhootiah, bearing the seal of His Highness, and the said Hon'ble Ashley Eden. The Envoy engages to procure the delivery to His Highness, within six weeks from this date, of a copy of this Treaty, duly ratified by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India in Council, and This Treaty shall in the meantime be in full force.

Seal                      (Sd.) SEKEONG KUZOO SIKKIMPUTTEE

“      ASHLEY EDEN,                      Seal

*Envoy*

“      CANNING.                              Seal

Ratified by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India in Council at Calcutta on the sixteenth day of April 1861.

(Sd.) C. U. AITCHISON,

*Under-Secy. to the Govt. of India.*

## **Part-VI**

### **Convention between Great Britain and China relating to Sikkim and Tibet, - 1890.**

Whereas Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, and His Majesty the Emperor of China, are sincerely desirous to maintain and perpetuate the relations of friendship and good understanding which now exists between their respective Empires; and whereas recent occurrences have tended towards a disturbance of the said relations, and it is desirable to clearly define and permanently settle certain matters connected with the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet, her Britannic Majesty and His Majesty the Emperor of China have resolved to conclude a Convention on this subject and have, for this purpose, named Plenipotentiaries, that is to say:

Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, His Excellency the Most Hon'ble Henry Charles Keith Petty Fitzmaurice, G. M. S. I., G. C. M. G., G. M. I. E., Marquess of Lansdowne, Viceroy and Governor-General of India.

And His Majesty the Emperor of China, His Excellency Sheng Tai, Imperial Associate Resident in Tibet, Military Deputy Lieutenant-Governor.

Who having met and communicated to each other their full powers, and finding these to in proper form, having agreed upon the following Convention in eight Articles:-

1. The boundary of Sikkim and Tibet shall be the crest of the mountain range separating the waters flowing into the Sikkim Teesta and its affluents from the waters flowing into the Tibetan Mochu and northwards into other rivers of Tibet. The line commences at Mount Gipmochi on the Bhutan frontier and follows the above mentioned water-parting to the point where it meets Nipal territory.
2. It is admitted that the British Government, whose protectorate over the Sikkim State is hereby recognized, has direct and exclusive control over the internal administration and foreign relations of that State, and except through and with the permission of the British Government, neither the Ruler of the State nor any of its officers shall have official relations of any kind, formal or informal, with any other country.
3. The Government of Great Britain and Ireland and the Government of China engage reciprocally to respect the boundary as defined in Article 1, and to prevent acts of aggression from their respective sides of the frontier.
4. The question of providing increased facilities for trade across the Sikkim Tibet frontier will hereafter be discussed with a view to a mutually satisfactory arrangement by the High Contracting Powers.
5. The question of pasturage on the Sikkim side of the frontier is reserved for further examination and future adjustment.

6. The High Contracting Powers reserve for discussion and arrangement the method in which official communications between the British authorities in India and the authorities in Tibet shall be conducted.
7. Two Joint Commissioners shall, within six months from the ratification of this Convention, be appointed, one by the British Government in India, the other by the Chinese Resident in Tibet. The said Commissioners shall meet and discuss the questions which by the last three preceding Articles have been reserved.
8. The present Convention shall be ratified, and the ratifications shall be exchanged in London as soon as possible after the date of the signature thereof.

In witness whereof the respective negotiators have signed the same and affixed thereunto the seals of their arms.

Done in quadruplicate at Calcutta this seventeenth day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety, corresponding with the Chinese date the twenty-seventh day of the second moon of the sixteenth year of Kuang Hsu.

Seal (Sd.) LANSDOWNE Chinese seal and signature.

Part-VII

स्वामिश्री पाथिका जिहांगदेक सपत्रम्

आगेनेरा ४ किंवा भवमानदिउत्र रराणापानिपूर्व तंतापानिदधिरा सिटिलापश्चिम येति भिन्नकालावनामेर जिमिनवर्ष १ कातिविसवत  
 लेक ओलेनाहा ताहा चर गोठ घेतनरू ताहा ताहा जगलायेक पाहाउवस्ती कोवादासुहे किसमावि रस्ति लोहागिजगयलनरु-भा  
 रसभिसधिसर्पनु पानिघाट गोव कुलावाटमिदिघेतिनगर्नु आम्नाआतकवदले कुलोषनि धनोकयारसेत जाहाजाहाघेतनरू वा  
 तारफेचेतविहाइ त सालामिन्हा वाइ योधासालदे धिगे करमुार ट कादरलेर घे १ के त २ कादरलेघकोघजनावु हाइ सालवसाल  
 वसालरसियलिन पाहाउवस्ति ४ जात ३६ वरा जोजो आउरु जातविसेषकोधर्मक मथ्यानि रस्तिवलावतिवसवनु आनाव  
 लिमर्मा केहीमासलातुहापरिआयोभन्या योसुनी योक् प्यादाश्रीजगि पहात्या इकसुअसार डिगरोमुत्रो गीरुभोलेगोवलाइ  
 उंकउयुत्तुश्री १ - गोवांसहकोककल असादरी श्री - २ - मादिन्याकु रादिमान्यकु राघातु भोडियानेछोडिगवाकापुरताघरगी  
 मापिहाउवस्तिभन्या सुतलाकेरा जोधफलजलतेसेलेखानु पाहाउकागार गोरु भोटेला इनेववतु ब्राह्मणजातलाइभारि त गोकाव  
 नु आम्न नित्यकर्म गरि श्री - ३ - शिवाघजनातिरेवतु पाहाउकोचिज विज भेटेलेजव त्रिगारे योपिषायामन्यावाधिप कु लानु  
 फ डेरसालाउतु ब्राह्मणसमेत पाहाउका यज्ञसमाभादेतुलेगोव धनगर्नु अकउप्रात पनितिभिलेमागेको धितरितीदेदु  
 तातवादेशीतानतक हाजाइसंता नते आउलोदियाकोचितिकोविधितिगि जगाघोसमासगर्माखेनर् तोडुगि श्री - ४ कोसा  
 रोविताइ श्रीजिदशनेदेवान् सात्तवका घातिजोमासित जगाकोभागरतदुगाविसभनिश्री - ५ गोधीराजवाटआउना नुपला  
 लउषाधासुधि कपिवाहालाहाइ हात्रा ४ किंवा भिन्नकोजगामको मुक्तिपारि भइल गारइ छापसहि पहागी दिख्तीसव  
 त १६ ४ ४ सावमितिआम्नसुदिदिजया ११ राज ५ अम्ना

Deed of Land Grant Given to Nandalal Upadhaya Brahman

Translation :

Sri Pathing Kazi: Letter of Agreement

The lands lying to the north of Vardaman River, to the east of Rangapani, south of Tangla and to the west of Sitila belonging to me (Pathing Kazi) has been granted to Nandalal Upadhaya Brahman on the following conditions.

The fallow lands lying in these areas belonging to me, forests, pasture lands on the hills and the lowlands, the *Paharias* (Nepalese) have the right to settle down as per their convenience. The *Paharias* shall not cultivate lands above the canals dug for irrigation and they should terrace the lands lying below the canals for cultivation of paddy. For three years they are

exempted from taxation and from the fourth year onwards they should pay the *Kazi*, 8 (eight) murhi of paddy per family, and house tax at the rate of Re. 1/- (one), yearly. *Paharias* belonging to four castes and *varnas* (sub-castes), whoever comes should be granted permission to settle down as cultivators. The disputes among them should be settled by punishing and imposing fines according to the prevailing local laws. Liquors should be consumed only during *Dasai* (Dussera). The *Paharias* are free to use the lands, fruits and houses abandoned by the Bhutias. *Paharias* shall not sell their cattle to the Bhutias and Brahmans should not be asked to carry loads. The *Paharias* shall pay taxes without claim or objection and without any delay. If Bhutias try to interfere in the lands of the *Paharias* they should be brought to the *kutcheri* (courts) of the *Kazi*. Bhutias shall work for the Brahmans and shall respect them. The lands granted to you shall not be claimed by the *Kazi* and his children in future. This has been granted to you and has been entered in the register of Dewan Saheb. Granted to Nandalal Upadhaya Brahman, in presence of *mondal* and *mukhtiyar* with the seal of *Kazi* on 10<sup>th</sup> day of Asvin, Vikram Sambat 1843 (1887).



## **Part-VIII**

### **Revenue Order No. 1.**

With reference to Order dated the 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1897, it is hereby again notified to all Kazis, Thikadars and Mandals in Sikkim that no Bhutias and Lepchas are to be allowed to sell, mortgage or sub-let any of their land to any person other than a Bhutia or a Lepcha without the express sanction of the Darbar or officers empowered by the Darbar in their behalf, whose order will be obtained by the landlord concerned. If any one disobeys he will be severely punished.

In this order the term 'mortgage' means mortgaging the whole or part of holding on the Biyaz or Masikata system and the term sub-let means sub-letting the whole or part of holding on the Pakhuria system.

### **DEFINITION**

- (1) 'Biyaz' means mortgaging land to another person who enjoys the produce of the land as interest, so long as the principal loan remains unpaid.
- (2) 'Masikata' means mortgaging of fields to a creditor who enjoys the produce of the field as an annual installment towards the loan.
- (3) 'Pakhuria' means sub-letting, where a rayot allows another new rayot to settle upon a portion of his own holding, generally receiving from him some rent in cash and some assistance in cultivating his own fields.

**Gangtok,**

**The 17<sup>th</sup> May, 1917.**

**C. A. Bell,**

**Superintendent, Sikkim State.**

## Part-IX

SIKKIM STATE.

General Department.

Notification No. 4960-G.

His Highness the Maharaja of Sikkim has been pleased to decide

- (i) that *gharlangi*, which is a form of forced labour, shall, with effect from the date of this notification, be resorted to only when transport is required; but for no other purpose, except emergent occasions where the Public Works Department are concerned;
- (ii) that, in the case of State and Government officials:—
  - (a) every *gharlangi* coolie shall be paid not less than six annas per stage when employed below an elevation of 9,000 feet;
  - (b) *gharlangi* coolies, when employed at an elevation of or above 9,000 feet, shall be paid at the rate of annas eight per coolie per stage;
  - (c) for journeys between Gangtok and Lachung, or between Gangtok and Lachen, when coolies are taken more than one stage, an extra coolie for every six coolies must be allowed and paid for, for the carriage of rations;
  - (d) coolies engaged for a journey between Gangtok and Yatung shall be paid at rupees two and annas eight per coolie, from 1st May to 30th November of each year, and rupees three per coolie during the remainder of the year;
  - (e) coolies engaged for carrying dandies shall be paid at not less than ten annas per coolie per stage when employed below an elevation of 9,000 feet, and at annas twelve at or above an elevation of 9,000 feet;
- (iii) that, when *gharlangi* coolies, are procured by the Darbar for the Public Works Department on emergent occasions, that Department shall pay each coolie at the rate of six annas per day below an elevation of 9,000 feet, and annas eight per day at or above an elevation of 9,000 feet;
- (iv) that, in the case of tourists:—
  - (a) coolies engaged in Sikkim territory shall be paid at eight annas per stage per coolie when employed below an elevation of 9,000 feet, and at ten annas at or above 9,000 feet;
  - (b) for journeys between Gangtok and Lachung, or between Gangtok and Lachen, when coolies are taken more than one stage, an extra coolie for every six coolies must be allowed and paid for, for the carriage of rations; and
  - (c) coolies engaged for a journey between Gangtok and Yatung shall be paid at rupees three per coolie, from 1st May to 30th November of each year, and rupees three and annas eight per coolie during the remainder of the year;
  - (d) coolies engaged for carrying dandies shall be paid at the rates indicated at (iii)(e) above;
- (v) that, when riding and pack ponies or mules are hired, the rates shall be as follows:—
  - (a) riding pony, with good European saddle and equipment, rupees three per stage;
  - (b) pack pony or mule, with saddle and equipment, rupee one and annas eight per stage;

- (c) pack pony or mule, annas twelve per stage when employed below an elevation of 9,000 feet, and at rupee one per stage at or above an elevation of 9,000 feet;
- (d) for journeys between Gangtok and Lachen, or between Gangtok and Lachen, when ponies or mules are taken more than one stage, an extra pony or mule for every six ponies or mules must be allowed and paid for, for the carriage of ratios;
- (e) pack ponies or mules engaged for a journey between Gangtok and Yatung shall be paid for at rupees five each from 1st May to 30th November of each year, and at rupees seven and annas eight each during the remainder of the year;
- (f) when ponies or mules are taken to any distance of more than one stage (except between Gangtok and Rangpo by the cart road), they shall be paid for, for the return journey, at half of the rates prescribed at (a), (b), (c) and (e) above.

NOTES.—1. Any distance beyond four, but not beyond six miles, will be counted as a half-stage. Any distance beyond 6 and up to 12 miles will be considered a full stage. If any transport is detained for a whole day, half the hire for the stage that should have been completed shall be paid, provided no coolie gets less than 3 annas per day and that no halt or detention of transport goes beyond two days. Should a detention exceed two days, full fares must be paid, plus two annas per coolie and four annas per animal per day, to meet cost of food.

2. 24 hours' previous notice must be given when 6 or less than 6 coolies or animals are required at Gangtok. If they are required at any other place, at least 5 days' notice must be given. Should more than 6 coolies or 6 animals be required, 3 days' notice must be given if the transport is required at Gangtok, and 7 days' notice if required anywhere else. The notice in every case should be given to the General Secretary to His Highness the Maharaja. Emergent cases will be attended to specially, as far as possible, by the local landlord.

3. There is no objection to any one making his or her own arrangement, on the distinct understanding that, if there should be any breakdown or trouble, the Sikkim Darbar will not hold themselves responsible in any way.

GANGTOK :

The 8th May 1925.

PESTONJI JAMASJI,

General Secretary to

His Highness the Maharaja of Sikkim.

Memorandum No. 4961—21-G.

A copy of the foregoing notification is forwarded to

the Political Officer in Sikkim,  
the State Engineer, Sikkim,  
the Judicial Secretary to His  
the Financial Secretary to  
all the landlord in the Sikkim

His Highness the Maharaja of Sikkim,

His Highness the Maharaja of Sikkim, for information.  
State.

GANGTOK,

The 8th May 1925.

PESTONJI JAMASJI,

General Secretary to

His Highness the Maharaja of Sikkim.



## Appendix-C PHOTO PLATES



Religious *Cham* (Mask Dance)



A *Dhimi* warding off evil spirits



*Lamas inside the monastery*



*Mana and Pathi for measuring grains*



*Coins of Sikkim*



*Ser dhak for weighing ghew and churpi*





**Wooden *tolung* for churning *ghew***



***Gheh* (yellow in colour) & *Churpi* (white in colour)**